

Colonial nostalgia is back in fashion, blinding us to the horrors of empire

Kehinde Andrews, *The Guardian*, 24 August 2016

Team GB's historic success at the Rio Olympics has led to the mandatory swell of national pride. Britain is now a "sporting superpower", according to officials. As inevitable as the outpouring of national pride was the darker side of British imperial pomp being unearthed. Conservative MP Heather Wheeler captured this mood perfectly when she tweeted "Empire Goes for Gold", based on a colonial recount of the medal totals showing the "British Empire" ahead of the "Rest of World" and of course the "EU (Post Brexit)".

Unfortunately, it comes as no surprise that an elected member of parliament should be so offensive, not only to most of the world but to millions of descendants of the empire in Britain. The academic Paul Gilroy diagnosed such ideas as "postcolonial melancholia", the yearning for a time when Britain was great and a leader in the world. Britain's place on the world stage was built off the back of the empire, and when former colonies gained their freedom, it dented not only the power of the nation, but also its psyche. The loss of the empire heralded the decline of Britain's prowess and has left British nationalism looking for a symbolic pick-me-up ever since. Olympic success is proving quite the tonic.

And then add the backdrop of Brexit. A driving force behind the leave campaign was to "take the country back" and return to its former glories. With the insistence that we could make trade deals with the Commonwealth, this was an open call to return to the times when Britannia ruled the waves. Ethnic minorities saw through this and overwhelmingly voted remain. The wave of imperial nationalism stoked by the leave campaign certainly contributed to the spate of racial attacks post-referendum, and created the environment for an MP to send out such a vulgar tweet.

Colonial nostalgia is not just confined to the Brexiters though. It has become a common feature in TV, films and even restaurant chains. Gourmet Burger Kitchen sparked outrage with the launch of a burger called the Old Colonial, sanitising empire by superimposing palm trees in the advertisement. And while hosting a debate on reparations for slavery, the Oxford Union advertised a cocktail called the Colonial Comeback, alongside a less-than-subtle image of African hands in chains. A London bar recently had to change its name after protests that calling a place The Plantation was offensive. It speaks to the appalling collective ignorance of the horrors committed in British history that the owner, The Breakfast Group, was unaware that a bar specialising in Caribbean rum should try as hard as possible to avoid any connotations of slavery. But I suppose if you remember Britain as the nation that "abolished slavery", as David Cameron does, perhaps they thought the name would be a testament to abolition.

The liberation of the Caribbean from direct British rule has not spared the region from colonial nostalgia. My colleague at Birmingham City University, Karen Wilkes, is about to publish a book, *Whiteness, Weddings, and Tourism in the Caribbean*, that explores how the exotic, colonial paradise of the Caribbean is a key selling point for tourism and destination weddings. High-end resorts frequently adopt the name "plantation" to attract customers, apparently blissfully unaware of the sordid history of the islands. The Hilton Rose Hall Hotel and Spa in Jamaica is somehow proud to advertise itself as "once the site of an 18th-century sugar plantation". For an additional fee at the hotel you can even get married in the exclusive Rose Hall Plantation House; celebrating your nuptials on the site of the rape, torture and murder of countless enslaved Africans.

Key features of "postcolonial melancholia" are the minimising of the brutal history of the British empire, and the celebration of what Winston Churchill called "its glories and all the services it rendered to mankind". It is this image of empire that is remembered by the majority of the British public, with a 2014 YouGov poll showing that 59% of respondents thought the British empire was "something to be proud of". Almost half of respondents also felt that the countries "were better off" for having been colonised, presumably because the native savages were grateful for the civilisation brought by the enlightened British. Such results are an indictment of the failure of the British school system to provide even a cursory history of the empire. The defence of the white supremacist and colonial pioneer Cecil Rhodes, mobilised in response to the Rhodes Must Fall campaign at Oxford University, demonstrates how deeply ingrained these attitudes are in British education. [...]

Perhaps a recognition of the brutality, violence and horror at the dark heart of empire would shake the nation out of its postcolonial melancholia. To acknowledge the dark side of colonialism, however, would destroy the nostalgia that is such a strong part of British imperial identity. It is far easier to get lost in national pride from Olympic success than to reckon with Britain's history and real place in the world.

Chief Justice Roberts "Had It In for the Voting Rights Act"

Now the lower courts are pushing back.

Mother Jones Nov / Dec 2016

- 5 In 2013, when Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. issued the most far-reaching Supreme Court decision on voting rights in the 21st century, he finally succeeded in gutting a civil rights law he has been fighting his entire career. For three decades, Roberts has argued that the United States has become colorblind to the point where aggressive federal intervention on behalf of voters of color is no longer necessary—and this case, *Shelby County v. Holder*, was the pinnacle of that crusade.
- 10 Roberts honed his views on race and voting as a clerk for Justice William Rehnquist, a man who as a court clerk himself had written a memo endorsing *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the "separate but equal" doctrine upholding segregated schools. On the high court, Rehnquist helped redefine opposition to civil rights laws as a commitment to color blindness, and he used this theory to undermine the 1965 Voting Rights Act. [...]
- 15 Echoing Rehnquist, Roberts has long insisted the United States has achieved a postracial, colorblind society, a point he emphasized in his 2013 majority opinion in *Shelby County v. Holder*. That 5-4 decision eviscerated a critical component of the Voting Rights Act: the requirement that jurisdictions with a long history of voting discrimination submit any changes in voting procedures to the DOJ for "preclearance," to ensure those changes didn't have a discriminatory impact. Preclearance blocked more than 700 discriminatory voting changes between 1982 and 2006 alone. But in the *Shelby* opinion, Roberts asserted that "history did not end in
- 20 1965" and such protections were no longer warranted. Federal oversight of the jurisdictions in question, mostly states in the Deep South, along with Texas, Alaska, and Arizona, was outdated and unjustified, he said. In a scathing dissent, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg laid out evidence that those states have not grown colorblind—by any stretch. She recounted how federal investigators had secretly recorded Alabama officials referring to African Americans as "Aborigines" and openly plotting to block a ballot initiative they thought
- 25 would increase African American turnout, as "every black, every illiterate," would be "bused [to the polls] on HUD financed buses."
- "These conversations occurred not in the 1870's, or even in the 1960's, they took place in 2010," she wrote, indicating why preclearance "remains vital to protect minority voting rights and prevent backsliding."
- 30 Ginsburg proved prescient. After the 5-4 *Shelby* decision, states passed a torrent of new voting restrictions that overwhelmingly affected minorities. On the day the decision was handed down, Texas announced that the only two forms of state voter identification it would accept were a driver's license or a gun license—a measure the DOJ had previously blocked. Georgia moved some municipal elections in predominantly minority areas from November to May, depressing turnout by nearly 20 percent in one instance. Alabama implemented a strict voter ID law—and then shut down driver's license offices in every county where more than 75 percent of
- 35 voters were African American. Perhaps the most blatant was North Carolina's omnibus voting law. Passed shortly after the *Shelby* decision, the law imposed strict ID requirements, limited the registration window, and dramatically cut early voting during times traditionally used by African Americans.
- "The speed with which formerly covered states passed laws making it harder for people of color to register and vote shows that Roberts was engaged in little more than wishful thinking," says Richard Hasen, a
- 40 University of California-Irvine law professor who specializes in election law.
- The undoing of the Voting Rights Act may be one of Roberts' most lasting legacies. But "there's a lot of resistance among some lower-court judges to Roberts' views of the state of race relations and voting...and it is reflected in some of their decisions," Hasen says. In July the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals blocked enforcement of North Carolina's voting law, saying its provisions "target African-Americans with almost
- 45 surgical precision." In the wake of Justice Antonin Scalia's death, Roberts no longer had enough votes on the Supreme Court to prevent that ruling from taking effect before the election.
- Lower-court decisions rejecting the Roberts orthodoxy haven't fallen along ideological lines, either. The very conservative 5th Circuit Court of Appeals rejected Texas' harsh voter ID law. A George W. Bush appointee wrote the majority opinion. "The lower courts are coalescing around a broad view of the Voting Rights Act's
- 50 prohibitions on discriminatory results," says David Gans, a civil rights expert at the liberal Constitutional Accountability Center.
- Will any of these developments prompt Roberts to rethink his *Shelby* opinion? Probably not. In the August order the Supreme Court issued that blocked North Carolina's draconian voting law, Roberts wrote that he personally would have allowed most of the law to take effect. And despite the lower-court rulings, in
- 55 November 14 states will have new voting restrictions that didn't exist in 2012. "He probably still believes he is right, because he likely sees what is going on as simple partisan politics," says Hasen. "But for many of us, we see a world in which it is once again getting harder, not easier, for people—especially people of color—to cast a ballot which will count."

Bagehot: The machine splutters

The Economist, 10 November 2016

Unsexy as it may seem, Britain needs a big constitutional debate

5 The executioner's axe sailed through the January chill, the pointy-bearded head thudded into the basket and the crowd let out a moan. Spectators in Whitehall rushed to dip their handkerchiefs in Charles I's blood (in 2008 one would materialise at a genteel auction in Gloucestershire). On this final tableau of the English civil war, Parliament having vanquished the autocratic monarchy, were sketched the principles by which power in Britain is exercised today: Parliament is sovereign and the executive's latitude—known as the “royal prerogative”—has limits.

10 It was a struggle over where these limits lie that recently saw Theresa May improbably accused of a bid to “reverse the result of the English civil war”. The prime minister wields the royal prerogative in the monarch's name and wants to invoke Article 50 of the EU treaty, the legal route to Brexit, without consulting Parliament. But the High Court ruled against her and she announced her intention to appeal. Geoffrey Robertson, a human-rights lawyer, accused her of “claiming the power of the Crown could override the will of Parliament”. “If the prime minister [is] so ignorant of the constitution's obvious requirements then it's certainly time to write it down,” he kvetched.

15 Britons should get used to this sort of squabble. Instead of a codified constitution, the country has a series of laws and documents—the oldest being the Magna Carta of 1215—that together convey its traditions and conventions. This slowly evolving body of principles tends to mean good, flexible government. Yet the process of leaving the EU will put it under severe strain.

20 Britain's unwritten constitution requires three conditions that have broadly prevailed since the 17th century. First: a consensus among the country's rulers about certain enduring traditions. Second: a population willing to defer to that elite's application and interpretation of those traditions. Third: a steady, incremental evolution of those traditions rather than sudden, violent shocks (or as Vernon Bogdanor, a constitutional expert, describes them, constitutional moments). Each of these conditions was slipping even before the referendum. The past two decades have brought more constitutional changes—from devolution to human-rights laws—than the previous couple of centuries. Battles over conventions like the royal prerogative have raged. Voters have become less willing to give elites the benefit of the doubt.

25 Brexit accelerates all of these trends, as the conflict over Article 50 illustrates. Witness Mrs May's determination to take on the judges, the vitriol poured on them by newspapers, the battles over whether the House of Lords has a right to block the legislation, the McCarthyite menace looming over every MP tempted to vote against it and the Scottish government's announcement, on November 8th, that it plans to intervene in the legal case.

30 And this is just the start of it. Once Brexit negotiations begin, the cabinet, MPs, devolved legislatures, the House of Lords and sometimes the judiciary will find themselves in multi-dimensional tugs-of-war. Who, for example, should scrutinise all the legislation returning from Brussels to British statute books? Should those powers revert to the national level, or be devolved further down? Should Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast have the right to veto any final deal? Can MPs reasonably do so? What about the mayor of London, or the new regional city mayoralties? How can the competing interests and outlooks on Brexit of diverging regions be accommodated?

35 Then there are the tensions generated by the very fact of the Brexit vote. Not unlike Donald Trump's victory four months later, the result spoke of social disparities, of a powerlessness felt by many and a disdain for aloof elites in a seemingly distant capital city. These pathologies militate for decentralisation, reforms to the cronyish House of Lords and a more responsive electoral system. Over half of voters live in safe seats and many are barely represented (under proportional representation the UK Independence Party would have won 83 seats in Parliament last year. Under first-past-the-post it won one). That Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to stay in the EU could bring further turmoil there as voters are dragged out of the club by their English and Welsh neighbours. Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish first minister, has already published a draft bill for a new independence referendum. A move to a formal federal structure is probably the only long-term way to hold the United Kingdom together. [...]

45 Brexit will create rifts and ambiguities for which no clear precedent exists, and such a volume and tangle of them that attempting to “muddle through”—that is, botch together case-by-case settlements—could result in paralysis or disintegration. Better, surely, to confront all the interlocking quandaries in one big public discussion leading to reforms and perhaps a written constitution. They say Britain avoided the “constitutional moments” of continental Europe and America because it experienced no post-Enlightenment revolution (Charles I lost his head in 1649). But Britain may now be approaching such a moment whether it likes it or not. Brexit was that overdue revolution.

Education: Why do Tories love grammar schools?

By Jonn Elledge, 9 March 2017, *The New Statesman*

Why do Tories love grammar schools so much? Why the left would hate them is straightforward enough. Selective education entrenches class privilege via an exam, the 11 Plus, in which those who can afford tutoring have an advantage. It makes the vast majority of children feel like failures at the precious age of 11, leaving many – not least former deputy prime minister John Prescott – scarred for life. Oh, and best of all, it doesn't
5 work. Over the last few decades, England has been conducting a controlled experiment, in which some areas retain selective education while others go comprehensive. The results are clear: for all the claims that grammar schools create social mobility, attainment, especially among the poorest, is better in non-selective areas. Why would Labour want to abolish grammar schools? Take your pick.

10 But why the right would love grammar schools – how it was that, in a world so uninterested in public policy, a wonkish topic like selective education should have become one of the great Tory shibboleths – is rather harder to explain. More than that, it's a question that's rarely even asked. We simply accept it: Tories love grammar schools; dog bites man.

15 It certainly can't, as the party would have it, be because of any deeply held desire to increase social mobility in this country. Partly that's because, as noted, grammar schools do no such thing: they're populated overwhelmingly by rich kids. The only reason anyone even associates them with social mobility, I suspect, is that the golden age of grammar schools coincided with the post-war boom: the changing structure of the economy meant that more people would have moved up into the middle classes, regardless of which education system happened to be in place.

20 But I'm also not buying the idea that the Tories want to increase social mobility because of literally every other part of the party's platform. If the Tory membership really cared about social mobility, they'd want progressive taxes, infrastructure investment, Sure Start centres and libraries. The fact they're generally not fussed about such things suggests to me that social mobility is not really their big priority. There are, to my mind, three other possible explanations for why the Tory party should be so committed to a policy that basically every educationalist on the planet says will make things worse.

25 One is that it's a sort of fetish for a particular type of education. Grammar schools represent academic rigour, competing houses, school ties and so forth. Comps, by contrast, represent prizes for all, riots in the corridors and Zammo sniffing gluc. The fact that comprehensives aren't really like that at all is beside the point: Tory opposition is meant to communicate something about Tory values. It is, in other words, a sort of academic virtue-signalling.

30 Another possibility is that they know grammar schools are dominated by the middle classes, and they just don't care. In fact, they rather like the idea. This article on the Guido Fawkes blog (remember them?) argues that most Tories secretly think that kids from rich families are likely to be the clever ones anyway, and so it makes sense to give them the best education. This is self-serving, unscientific, and offensive – but it does have a certain logical consistency, even if it means the party is fibbing about its whole “social mobility” agenda.

35 The third option is something I'll term “It-worked-for-me-ism”. It's no coincidence that Theresa May is a grammar school girl herself: she may very well think academic selection is good because, well, she went to a selective school, and now she's prime minister. It-worked-for-me-ism is a common problem in education policy: if you've climbed the ladder far enough to become education secretary, then the odds are you think your own education must have served you pretty well. So it was that Michael Gove, a man whose life had been
40 transformed by a scholarship to the private Robert Gordon's College, determined that the way to fix state education was to make state schools look as much like private ones as possible.

45 Which leads us neatly to the fourth possible explanation for the Tory love of grammar schools – one which, as it happens, might explain the party's enthusiasm for Gove's free schools, too. Once upon a time, if a moderately affluent Tory family who believed their kids were special wanted to get them an old-fashioned academic education, there was an easy answer: send them private. But fees have exploded, from a pricy-but-achievable £3,000 per year in the late 1980s, to £15,600 by 2016. Many Tory parents, privately-educated themselves, will have found themselves unable to offer the same to their kids. So what to do with the little darlings? Send them to grammar school, of course. All they need is a prime minister who cares more about the views of the Tory faithful than about doing what's best for the country as whole. Remind you of anyone?

Review: In 'Loving,' They Loved. A Segregated Virginia Did Not Love Them Back.
New York Times, Nov. 3, 2016. By MANOHLA DARGIS

5 There are few movies that speak to the American moment as movingly — and with as much idealism — as Jeff Nichols's "Loving," which revisits the era when blacks and whites were so profoundly segregated in this country that they couldn't always wed. It's a fictionalization of the story of Mildred and Richard Loving, a married couple who were arrested in 1958 because he was white, she was not, and they lived in Virginia, a state that banned interracial unions. Virginia passed its first anti-miscegenation law in 1691, partly to prevent what it called "spurious issue," or what most people just call children.

10 The America that the Lovings lived in was as distant as another galaxy, even as it was familiar. The movie opens in the late 1950s, when Mildred (Ruth Negga, a revelation) and Richard (Joel Edgerton, very fine) are young, in love and unmarried. They already have the natural intimacy of long-term couples, the kind that's expressed less in words and more in how two bodies fit, as if joined by an invisible thread. It's a closeness that seems to hold their bodies still during a hushed nighttime talk on a porch and that pulls them together at a drag race, under the gaze of silent white men.

15 Those hard, reverberant stares are about the only hint that the world in "Loving" is going to be falling off its axis. Mr. Nichols ("Take Shelter," "Mud") has a way of easing into movies, of letting stories and characters surface obliquely. If their story didn't open when and where it does, there would be nothing remarkable about Mildred and Richard. But this is a Virginia still in the grip of Jim Crow, so when they decide to marry, they exchange vows in Washington. Not long after, the local sheriff (Marton Csokas) and his deputies — prowling like thieves — enter the couple's home in the middle of the night and arrest them for breaking the state's law against interracial marriage.

20 The Lovings have been the subject of both books and movies, including "The Loving Story," the 2011 documentary directed by Nancy Buirski that is partly the basis for Mr. Nichols's movie. Ms. Buirski's documentary primarily consists of archival film footage, including of both Lovings at home with their three young children, and with the lawyers who helped the couple in their legal fight. The footage is charming, in the way that some images from the past tend to be, with their old-fashioned clothes and recognizable yet faraway worlds. Part of the allure, though, is just the Lovings themselves and how they look at each other and how they look at the camera — her shy openness, his wary reserve.

25 With exacting economy, Mr. Nichols borrows from the documentary — its people with lined faces, its rooms with weathered walls — drawing on signifying minutiae, textures and cadences to fill in his portrait. He captures the era persuasively, embroidering the realism with details like Mildred's knee-skimming skirts and Richard's brush-cut hair. One sequence restages a 1965 visit to the Lovings from a photographer, Grey Villet (Michael Shannon, a bolt of lightning), who was on assignment from Life magazine and whose exquisite, artfully casual photographs remain the most recognizable images of the Lovings, partly because they suggest the unforced intimacy of family snapshots.[...]

30 The movie lightly traces the arc of the Lovings' story, including their decade-long legal fight to live in their home state as husband and wife, even as Mr. Nichols plays with time, omits certain facts and glosses over others. He's more interested in showing Mildred and Richard laughing with their friends than in hanging around courtrooms, watching their defense. Here, in scene after scene, the story of the Lovings is nothing if not wrenchingly personal. (The lawyers — played by a broadly funny Nick Kroll and a rather more subdued Jon Bass, with a sardonic twist — humorously sweep in like the cavalry, courtesy of Robert F. Kennedy and the American Civil Liberties Union.)

35 It's perhaps unsurprising that "Loving" elides how the real Mildred Loving saw herself, which apparently changed over the years. At times, she identified as part white, part black and part Indian; at other times, Ms. Loving said she was Indian and white, with no African-American ancestry. On the Lovings' D.C. marriage license, she is identified solely as "Indian." (The scholar Arica L. Coleman details these complexities in her book "That the Blood Stay Pure," which, among other things, looks at Virginia's contribution to white supremacy.) In "Loving," race is a fiction, but it is a lie that continues to justify terror long past slavery's end, reducing people to boxes, one checked black, the other white.

40 Movies get a lot of mileage from the fantasy that we are the heroes of our own stories. Life's regular hum — the effort and joy of making homes, having children and nourishing love — tends to be drowned out by speeches and dramas in which characters rob banks to get out of debt instead of struggling or despairing. It's why the insistent, quotidian quiet of "Loving" can feel so startling. It plucks two figures from history and imagines them as they once were, when they were people instead of monuments to American exceptionalism. It was, the movie insists, the absolute ordinariness of their love that defined them, and that made the fight for it into an indelible story of this country.

45
50
55
"Loving" is rated PG-13 (Parents strongly cautioned) for racist language. Running time: 2 hours 3 minutes.

Op-Ed: Theresa May's Empire of the Mind

By TOM WHYMAN, February 15, 2017, *The New York Times*

5 COLCHESTER, England — After Prime Minister Theresa May gave a bullish speech last month outlining her plans for Britain's negotiations to leave the European Union, the front page of *The Daily Mail*, a right-wing tabloid, displayed a triumphant cartoon depicting Mrs. May, head thrust proudly into the air, standing on the edge of what I assume is one of the White Cliffs of Dover. The Union Jack flew behind her as she trampled a European Union flag.

10 This image resembled nothing more than "The Rhodes Colossus," a famous jingoistic cartoon from 1892 in which the racist, empire-building diamond tycoon Cecil Rhodes stood similarly astride Africa, from Cairo to Cape Town. "We'll walk away from a bad deal — and make E.U. pay," read the text beside the illustration, as if the *Lord Kitchener Wants You* poster had been blessed with the eloquence of Mrs. May's new best friend, Donald J. Trump.

But was she supposed to look like she was about to jump off that cliff?

15 Sober analysts agree that Mrs. May's plans are deeply foolish. Her intention is to sacrifice Britain's membership in the European single market, something necessary for the economy to function as it is now configured, to gain full control over immigration policy, which is not. In short, she is planning to profoundly alienate key industries and trading partners to score populist popularity points.

20 Parliament will be afforded little oversight in relation to the process and frankly doesn't seem interested in opposing it, no matter how extreme Mrs. May's plans are. The House of Commons voted recently to give itself as little power as possible to reject whatever terms Mrs. May eventually puts to it, a bizarre move for a legislative body in an apparently functioning liberal democracy. The prime minister's Brexit plans will alienate Britain's regions as well: Scotland saw support for independence spike after the June 23 referendum result, while in Northern Ireland there are profound fears over what Brexit will mean for the Good Friday Agreement. All this domestic turmoil is indicative of the way in which Brexit goes to the heart of Britain's national identity. For this reason, it is hard to believe that the jingoistic associations of *The Daily Mail's* cartoon were a coincidence. Brexit is rooted in imperial nostalgia and myths of British exceptionalism, coming up as they have — especially since 2008 — against the reality that Britain is no longer a major world power.

30 This is evident in Mrs. May's rhetoric. Her Brexit speech, for instance, invited us to imagine the "Global Britain" that will somehow emerge once the country has left the European Union, its citizens "instinctively" looking, as she has claimed the British do, to expand their horizons beyond Europe and exploit opportunities across the world. This is simply a sanitized version of the dream of a British Empire in which every eastern and southern corner of the globe could be imagined as an Englishman's rightful backyard, ready for him to stride into, whenever he so chose, to impose his will and make his fortune.

40 The bullishness of the Brexiteers represents a progression from an earlier era of revived empire nostalgia that might be described as the "Keep Calm and Carry On" era. From the mid-2000s, tropes such as the titular wartime posters, alongside a rediscovered love for old-timey delicacies like tea, cupcakes and gin, offered a retreat from a world made freshly hostile to the middle class by the global financial crisis.

45 These tropes abide today — but they have ceased acting merely as a shelter, for those who live surrounded by them, against politics. They have now become an active, transformative political force. It's not just *The Daily Mail* cartoon, or Mrs. May's crypto-imperialist rhetoric. It's the U.K. Independence Party leader Paul Nuttall, striding about in a tweed jacket and matching hat like a Victorian country squire. It's the Brexit secretary David Davis, responding to complaints from the Civil Service that it lacks the budget to deal with the logistics of leaving the European Union by invoking the Blitz spirit of World War II. It's the foreign secretary Boris Johnson saying that France's president, François Hollande, "wants to administer punishment beatings to anyone who chooses to escape, rather in the manner of some World War II movie." Those most under the spell of imperial nostalgia have now become the sorcerers themselves, having somehow managed to conjure up a mandate to transform Britain in their image.

Trump Is Scaring Indian Americans Into Finding Their Political Voice*The Atlantic*, March 27, 2017

Highly educated immigrants from South Asia have often been able to live comfortably in America. With a new wave of hate crimes, that's changing. Manik Suri is the archetypical overachiever from an Indian American family. The 34-year-old runs a start-up in Silicon Valley. He speaks four languages. He's got two Ivy League degrees.

And yet, when the windows at an Indian restaurant near his house were shot out in late February, along with those of an Eritrean place nearby, he felt shaken. "We catered my wife's sister's wedding in that restaurant," he said. "The whole conception of the Indian community as a model minority—we benefitted from that perception." This is "the first time I've ever felt, 'Wow, it doesn't matter.'"

Many Indian Americans seem to be going through a period of disorientation during these first few months of the Trump administration. As more than one percent of the U.S. population, Indians are one of the country's largest immigrant groups, and they're also one of the most distinctive: They tend to be wealthier, more highly educated, and more geographically dispersed than other immigrants. While they do face discrimination, they're often referred to as a "model minority," as Suri noted: Middle- and upper-class Indians are more willing and able to assimilate to America's majority culture because of their educational and economic status. The quickly growing minority has not always been that politically engaged, and their political identity isn't necessarily connected to their ethnic or religious background: Mobilization around Indian or Hindu American identity is relatively rare compared to other minority groups, according to Sangay Mishra, a visiting assistant professor of political science at Drew University.

Especially with the recent violent attacks against a Sikh man in Washington, an Indian immigrant in South Carolina, and two Indian engineers in Kansas, Indian Americans have found themselves jolted out of this comfortable liminal space. For years, many middle- and upper-middle-class Indian Americans have largely escaped the kind of marginalization that other brown-skinned immigrants and religious minorities have faced. Muslim Indian Americans were often targeted as the subjects of hate crimes because of their religious identity after 9/11, as were Sikhs, who are sometimes mistaken as Muslims. Hindus are also likely to be caught in cases of "mistaken identity." To take one example, the shooter in the recent Kansas attack apparently thought his two Indian American victims were Iranian. Now, Indian Americans' sense of security is being shaken, which may give rise to a new political identity.

Despite the election-season hype about the Republican Hindu Coalition, which famously hosted a Bollywood-style Trump rally in October, only a small minority of Indian Americans voted for the president. New data from the National Asian American Survey shows that roughly 16 percent of this group chose Trump in November—the same share that voted for Romney in 2012. Among Hindus, 17 percent went for Trump—lower than other religious minority groups, including Jews and the unaffiliated. Indian Americans have been the most Democratic-leaning of any Asian American group, said Karthick Ramakrishnan, a professor in political science at the University of California, Riverside, who oversees the survey. "Discrimination plays a significant role in [their] political understanding."

In the same survey, roughly one-fifth of Indian Americans said they had been not hired for a job or denied a promotion for unfair reasons, or had been treated more poorly than others in a restaurant or store. Compared to answers from a similar survey in 2008, these results represented an uptick in perceptions of workplace discrimination. They were also gathered in December, right after the election. Especially following the shooting in Kansas last month, it's likely that perceptions of other kinds of discrimination—including threats to personal safety—would be even higher. "For a few days, that was the leading news in television and newspapers and social media," said Mishra. "There is definitely a greater sense of urgency. There is a greater sense of fear."

Ro Khanna, a second-generation Indian American Congressman, said he's gotten a few hundred calls, emails, and social-media messages from worried constituents—his Silicon Valley area is the only Asian American-majority district in the continental U.S., according to Mishra, and is home to many Indian immigrants. Like his constituents, Khanna said he feels a sense of urgency about discrimination toward ethnic minorities.

But Indian Americans' worries about discrimination may also look different than those of other groups because of their distinctive identity. A majority of Indians currently living in the U.S. arrived after 2000, and they're more likely than other immigrant group to have arrived recently. H1-B visas, which are given to foreigners in "specialty occupations" like tech, are also awarded to Indians more frequently than any other group. In early March, the Trump administration suspended expedited processing of these visas, inspiring angst from Silicon Valley to India itself, where families often receive cash from their immigrant relatives in the United States.

The Usefulness of a March for Science

By Alan Burdick, *The New Yorker*, April 23, 2017

5 Not quite promptly at six o'clock on Saturday morning, two dozen scientists whose fields of study can't be summarized in a sentence boarded a bus at the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, New Jersey, and headed south, bound for the March for Science, in Washington, D.C. "I hope it doesn't rain," Ed Witten, the first and only theoretical physicist ever to win the Fields Medal, the Academy Award of mathematics, said. Witten, who is in his sixties, is tall even when seated and speaks in a measured, almost sheepish tone. He was reading a book about the First World War on his Kindle, a device that, he conceded, he hadn't yet mastered.

10 The sky, still pale, was cloudy, and the forecast did indeed call for rain. Earlier this year, Princeton University Press published a slim volume called "The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge," a reissue of an essay by the same name, which originally ran in *Harper's Magazine*, in 1939. In it, Abraham Flexner, an educational reformer and the founder of the I.A.S., argued that institutions of learning should be more concerned with cultivating intellectual exploration than with finding immediate applications for scientific research. "Throughout the whole history of science," Flexner wrote, "most of the really great discoveries which had ultimately proved to be beneficial to mankind had been made by men and women who were driven not by the desire to be useful but merely the desire to satisfy their curiosity."

15 Many of the bus passengers seemed to fall easily into that category. At the moment, Witten was untangling the deeper mysteries of quantum entanglement—"how two distant particles can be interacting in a way that's counterintuitive"—for a paper that he was co-authoring with Douglas Stanford, a gangly, curly-haired postdoc who sat alone a few rows up. Stanford, for his part, was "trying to understand some conceptual aspects of black holes that are confusing." Having grown up in Washington State, he said, he was "rather happy about the weather today." He hadn't made a sign, though. "I'm not completely confident in my ability to capture the right sentiment on a piece of cardboard," he said. "But I'm not anti-sign, not at all." Across the aisle, Eva Silverstein—round wire-frame glasses, bright smile—said that her work was divided between early-universe cosmology and the physics of black holes. "I think of both as the dynamics of horizons," she said. "I can go into more detail if you'd like."

20 The March for Science was conceived in January, in the wake of the highly successful Women's March and in response to a series of increasingly egregious assaults by the Trump Administration on scientific truth and plain sense—the appointment, in Scott Pruitt, of an E.P.A. chief who saw no real need for the E.P.A.; the dismissal of climate change as a reality and even as a phrase; the proposed slashing of the budget of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, one of the agencies responsible for gathering climate data. In the ensuing weeks, there was much discussion about the proper boundaries between science and politics, the precise aims of the March for Science, and whether scientists should take part in it. But, by yesterday,

25 organizers were expecting tens of thousands of participants in D.C., and satellite marches had been planned in more than six hundred cities around the world. At nine-thirty, the I.A.S. bus reached R.F.K. Stadium, two miles east of the U.S. Capitol. The passengers filed off and, as a loose pod, headed down a long sidewalk in the supposed direction of the Metro. After a hundred yards, they stopped and looked around, puzzled. Witten pulled out his phone, queried Google Maps, and adjusted course. By the time the group had arrived on the National Mall, the rally was under way. Questlove was playing on a stage, interrupted occasionally by notable speakers, including the educator and television personality Bill Nye and Mona Hanna-Attisha, the pediatrician who helped alert the country to the water crisis in Flint. A light drizzle had begun to fall, and people approached from every direction wearing clever T-shirts and carrying handmade signs:

30 - Science > Silence / Wtf: the Element of Outraged Disbelief / Science is Real. Your Alternative Facts are $\sqrt{-1}$

35 There was an entrance to the rally ground on Seventeenth Street and Constitution Avenue, but the lines to get through the bag check were backed up several blocks. Sue Perna, an artist from Virginia, and her niece, Jessica Balone, stood halfway down the line with signs that read "Trump is Dumb and Also Stupid" and "Trump: Peer-Reviewed Imbecile." Perna said, "I see myself as a fill-in for all the scientists who aren't here."

40 I had arranged to meet Robbert Dijkgraaf, the director of the I.A.S., on the corner of Eighteenth Street. He arrived around eleven, tall and blond and brimming with enthusiasm under his umbrella. He had just given a speech at the National Math Festival, held in a nearby convention center. "I talked about the big bang and the future of the universe," he said. "Just small stuff! I'm half a mathematician and half a particle physicist. I sometimes feel like a quantum particle, trying to be in two places at once."

45 Dijkgraaf wrote the introduction to the new edition of Flexner's essay, but since Inauguration Day the concept of useless knowledge had begun to seem a little quaint.

50

55

The not-so-United Kingdom: Britain is sliding towards Scoxit

The Economist, 18 February 2017

The decision to leave the EU appears to strengthen the case for Scottish independence. In fact, it weakens it.

LITTLE more than half a year after the vote to leave the European Union, there is talk of another referendum in Britain. This time the people who could be offered the chance to “take back control” are the Scots. They voted against independence by a clear margin less than three years ago. But Brexit, which they also opposed, has put the issue back on the table. Scotland’s nationalist government has drafted a bill for another independence vote. Polls suggest that it could have a shot at success.

No wonder: the nationalists’ argument that Scotland is a different country has never looked more convincing. Regarding Brexit, the defining issue of the times, 62% of Scots voted to Remain but will be dragged out anyway by the English. The dominant parties in Westminster, the Tories and Labour, have a grand total of two of Scotland’s 59 MPs. And many of the arguments made in favour of the union in 2014 have evaporated. Scots were told that staying with Britain was their only way to remain in the EU, since independence would require them to reapply and face opposition from Spain, which wants to discourage its own Catalan separatists. Instead, being part of Britain has proved a one-way ticket out of Europe. The strong British economy that they were urged to remain part of is forecast to slow. And rousing talk about the union—the “precious, precious bond” that Theresa May evoked in her maiden speech as prime minister—rings hollow, given the casualness with which Scottish concerns have been cast aside.

Yet if Brexit was a political earthquake, Scotland has suffered a less-noticed economic earthquake, too. At the time of the independence referendum, Scotland was growing at a similar rate to the rest of Britain. Since then it has been on a different track. In two of the past five quarters it has failed to grow at all. The main reason is its reliance on fossil fuels and finance, which are doing badly. In 2014 a barrel of Brent crude cost \$110, leading the nationalist government to forecast that an independent Scotland would enjoy tax revenues from energy of £8.3bn (\$12.5bn) in 2015-16. Oil’s subsequent crash (it is now \$55) meant the actual figure was 1% of that forecast. And the black gold is running out: the original Brent rig will be dismantled this summer. Finance, which along with oil and gas has generated exports equivalent to up to a third of Scotland’s GDP in recent years, is also suffering. Since September 2014 Scotland has lost a tenth of its financial jobs. (London gained some.) Last year average pay in the industry fell by 5%.

For a country of 5m people that depends on two sputtering industries, to go it alone would be a gamble. Yet Scots may conclude that remaining in the Brexit-bound union would be riskier still. They would be wrong. For although Mrs May’s willingness to leave the single market and customs union is likely to be bad for Britain, it also makes independence more complicated. If the EU were prepared to readmit it, Scotland would face a harder border with England. Nationalists say they could import whatever arrangement is made in Ireland, where a similar problem exists. But there may be no such neat solution. And rejoining the EU’s single market at the cost of leaving Britain’s would make no sense: Scotland exports four times as much to the rest of Britain as it does to the EU.

Scotland the brave

This uncomfortable truth may be lost in the heat of another independence campaign. The ruling Scottish National Party has a knack for combining power with protest, claiming credit for Scotland’s successes while pinning blame for its failures on Westminster. As economic conditions in Scotland decline, the blame will fall on Brexit and Tory austerity. And whereas independence was once a frightening unknown, it now looks like a chance to turn back the clock to the safe old days of EU membership. When English ministers warn about the risks of secession, their own Brexit lines will be thrown back at them: Scots will be urged to seize control from distant politicians they never elected; those pointing out the costs will be branded members of “project fear”; the trashing by Brexiteers of institutions from the Treasury to the Bank of England will mean that impartial warnings can be dismissed as biased or incompetent.

Many of those Scots who voted to stay in the union in 2014 did so for clear economic reasons. Britain’s exit from the EU muddies that case. The alarming result is that Brexit has made Scottish independence more harmful—and more likely.

What Betsy DeVos's Emphasis on 'Choice' Means for School Segregation

The Nation, April 19, 2017. By Michelle Chen

5 When questioned on her commitment to principles of diversity and equality in public education, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos keeps repeating one conservative mantra: "choice."

When pressed during her confirmation process on school desegregation policies, her coy answer—"I do not support programs that would lead to increased segregation"—was laced again with that market-friendly code word: "Empirical evidence finds school choice programs lead to more integrated schools than their public school counterparts."

10 The concept of "school choice," which emphasizes individual family preferences in how students and funding are distributed, squares neatly with the neoliberal reform agenda of pushing public education into the realm of private business. Who could oppose self-determination for parents, after all? But in a "free market" built on an unjust system, not all choices are created equal.

15 Yet that seems to be DeVos's vision of "diversity." Her abrupt decision to cancel an Obama administration program designed to help communities desegregate schools, known as Opening Doors, Expanding Opportunity, has outraged education advocates, who fear Trump will aggravate social barriers in K-12 education. The program was relatively small-scale—just \$12 million in seed grants issued to school districts across the country seeking to develop "locally driven strategies to increase socioeconomic diversity in schools." The grants would barely dent the system-wide civil-rights crisis of school segregation, but DeVos
20 claimed even this fledgling program was unworthy of taxpayer dollars because it was focused on planning and not "implementation," *The Washington Post* reports.

Advocates say the cuts mark a setback for creative school-diversity programs that are trying to uphold the constitutional precepts established in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the precedent that commits the government to correcting institutionalized racial barriers in education by proactively desegregating schools.

25 DeVos argues the private sector should be trusted to help schools redistribute opportunity, by expanding corporate charter schools and giving families vouchers to finance private schooling, as a supposedly higher-quality alternative to neighborhood schools. But often, these programs end up slowing or reversing desegregation for the families who most need it.

30 Given the option to transfer to more affluent schools, parents typically make the "rational choice" to perpetuate "white flight" from poorer, blacker urban centers. The flip side of choice is the de facto exclusion of children of color, who get left behind with underfunded, understaffed "inner city" schools.

35 According to the Century Foundation's analysis of the long-term impact of school vouchers on segregation: *Two-thirds of school transfers in one program and 90 percent of transfers in the other program increased segregation in private schools, public schools, or both sectors... There is a strong risk that voucher programs will be used by white families to leave more diverse public schools for predominantly white private schools and by religious families to move to parochial private schools, increasing the separation of students by race/ethnicity and religious background.*

As with Jim Crow, classrooms don't integrate when individuals make nice choices—but when lawmakers act for the collective good.

40 But can't voucher funds help poor families escape poor school districts? According to the Network for Public Education, "The amount of money contributed by the voucher is hardly ever enough to pay for full private school tuition," so poor parents likely still couldn't afford a much better private alternative to their regular neighborhood schools. Private and parochial schools, moreover, can more freely discriminate in their admissions on the basis of race, sexual orientation, gender, or religion, and are subject to less oversight on
45 standards and curricula. So private institutions might have greater leeway to flout state standards by teaching, say, "intelligent design" instead of evolution, or downplaying the history of the slave trade. [...]

50 Some districts have used "controlled choice" desegregation plans, for example, which can provide voluntary ranked-choice systems, in which school assignments are structured to prioritize the needs of disadvantaged students without aggravating existing socioeconomic gaps. According to Potter, "If DeVos is actually interested in school choice, then expanding public school choice options like these would be a fantastic way to meet the goals of integration and choice at the same time. Unfortunately, DeVos seems to have a very narrow definition of choice focused on school vouchers."

55 The Trump administration may be regressing to the days of "separate but equal" through deregulation and privatization, but in the face of a neoliberal assault and eroding federal support for educational justice, the one choice local communities all have now is to resist Trump's agenda, and instead work collectively to renew the lessons of *Brown v. Board of Education* for a new generation.

***Al-Britannia, My Country* by James Fergusson review – a compelling survey of British Islam**

By Christopher de Bellaigue, 1 June 2017, *The Guardian*. His book, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, is published by Bodley Head.

Assimilation, identity, conservatism and sex are among the issues explored in this study of Britain's fastest-growing minority population.

5 That Islam is on the rise in the United Kingdom is one of the few things that Islamophobes and Islamophiles agree on. Since 2001, the number of Muslims has doubled, to more than 3 million, or 5% of the population; for years, Muhammad in its various spellings has been at the top of the list of names for baby boys. By 2020, half the population of Bradford, one of the most Muslim cities in the UK, as well as one of the most fecund, will be under 20. A question that has grown even more salient in the light of the recent Manchester bombing – the handiwork of Salman Abedi, a 22-year-old Mancunian of Libyan background – is: what to do with our young Muslims?

10 A condition for answering this, as James Fergusson makes clear in his compelling and compassionate survey of British Islam, is to recognise that the story of Muslims in this country isn't solely – or even mainly – one of faith. To take the example of Bradford once more, its schools are way down the league tables, and poverty and drug dealing are widespread, while in early 2016 – when Fergusson made his research trip to the city – a gang of Asian men from neighbouring Keighley were jailed for using an underage white girl as a sex slave.

15 The story of Islam in Britain is one of integration and segregation, education and employment, family cohesion and criminality. It's also a story of British nativists sticking it to all those interlopers who bomb "our" concert venues and groom "our" girls. Ultimately – and trickiest of all – it's the story of a community that used to feel at home in the socially conservative wing of the Labour party, but which now, amid the ruins of Christianity and trade unionism, finds itself morally isolated. Is it wise for the liberal British establishment to urge conservative Muslims to "catch up" – to get with the new programme of borderless sexuality and girl power? From Michael Gove to Polly Toynbee, Fergusson finds plenty who think it is. He also finds Muslims – firm of faith, professing themselves to be irreversibly British – who won't swallow morality from the long spoon of the state. The official goal of "assimilation", one tells him bitterly, in fact means "being more like us".

25 *Al-Britannia, My Country* is a travel book about home – the Muslim enclaves of Sparkbrook, Govanhill and Luton are pretty alien to this long-time foreign correspondent, whose sole experience of High Wycombe (before arriving to investigate "the terrorist convert capital of the country") was to visit his sisters at school there. Yet Fergusson, an Edinburgh Scot who voted for Scotland to remain British and for Britain to remain European, and who has written extensively about Muslims around the world, turns out to be well placed to discuss the issues of identity, inclusion and the state that are central to the Muslim predicament.

30 He envies some aspects of Islam – its culture of philanthropy, its ability to transcend petty material concerns. But his book is mostly about British Muslims as they chafe painfully against themselves or the host culture. What he doesn't find is the sinister, hegemonic community of xenophobic caricature – no surprise there – but rather a map of contradictions, tensions and travesties: mosques so terrified of being labelled extremist they film their own preachers; a woman who wears the niqab not for religious or political reasons but because it flatters her eyes; and a sharia council that, far from trampling on women's rights – as critics claim – appears to provide "an essential service to abused Muslim women". More than evidence for radicalisation, Fergusson detects a structural malaise in the communities he visits. Listening to case after case of domestic violence in the sharia council – "why is it," he asks, "that so many Muslim men behave so appallingly?" – convinces him that there is a "crisis of masculinity" linked to a growing estrangement between the generations. [...]

40 The question of whether modern Britain is prepared to tolerate enclaves of illiberal Muslim thought crystallised around Birmingham's "Trojan Horse" controversy. In March 2014, an anonymous letter purported to provide evidence of a Salafist plot to take over the city's schools. Amid the ensuing storm, Gove, then education secretary, overhauled the schools in question, despite the fact that a House of Commons select committee found "no evidence for extremism or radicalisation". What there was, undoubtedly, was a very conservative ethos, heavily informed by Islam and coloured by rebarbative views on gays and women. Some schools in question, furthermore, were achieving excellent results. Tahir Alam, the senior educationist who was also the plot's alleged ringleader, tells Fergusson that the government response to the affair has sunk standards and revealed a gulf in understanding. Fostering a strong Muslim identity made for more grounded British citizens, Alam argues – citizens less likely to find jihadism attractive. "For us," he regrets, "the term 'Islamic' is a synonym for excellence, but for non-Muslims it has become pejorative." And that, when you are talking about the UK's fastest-growing population, is a problem.

OPINION | ALAN M. DERSHOWITZ

Checks and balances can slow Trump

The Boston Globe, February 22, 2017. By Alan M. Dershowitz.

5 When President Trump was in high school, he, like the rest of us, learned about our system of checks and balances. He learned that we have three coequal branches of government: the executive, which is the presidency; the legislative, which consists of the Senate and House of Representatives; and the judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, with the numerous federal appellate and trial judges. Under our theory of separation of powers, each branch, which is coequal in status, is supposed to check the other.

10 When Alexis de Tocqueville came to America early in our history, he was looking for where sovereignty lay in the new Republic. He was used to the European system under which the king or parliament was sovereign. Here in America, he could not find a single sovereign; instead he discovered the process of sovereignty, entailing our complex system of checks and balances, with the ultimate sovereignty residing in the voters (of which there were very few back then). That is what we learned in high school civics. But after only a month in

15 office, Trump has learned an important lesson that does not get taught in school — or even in many colleges and universities: Our system of checks and balances extends well beyond the three formal branches of government. It is far more complex and nuanced than we were taught.

Let me catalogue some of the many institutions that now serve as checks and balances, especially on the president. Without a doubt our president is the single most important and powerful player in our government.

20 There is no leader in the free world — no prime minister, no president, no chancellor, no king — who has anywhere close to the power that our president can wield through executive orders, vetoes, military actions, and more. But here are some of the institutions — both formal and informal — that serve as realistic checks on even this enormous power.

We saw in the lawsuits filed by the states of Washington and Minnesota against the president's executive order on immigration that the states can serve as a check on the power of the president. This would have made Thomas Jefferson happy and Alexander Hamilton sad, but it is a new reality. We have also seen that, in our enormous bureaucracy, holdovers from the prior administration can serve as a check on the new administration, as evidenced by the decision of Acting Attorney General Sally Yates to refuse to defend the president's immigration order. Holdovers are almost certainly responsible for some of the damaging leaks that

25 have plagued the new administration. They can slow down presidential actions, at least for a while.

And speaking of leaks, both the FBI and the CIA, although formally part of the executive branch, can serve as important checks on the White House by selectively leaking damaging intelligence information. Whistleblowers also serve to check by exposing secrets. Before he became president, Trump praised WikiLeaks for disclosing information that was damaging to Hillary Clinton. Now, as president, he damns these "illegal"

30 leakers. Intelligence agencies of foreign countries can also serve as checks on our president by threatening and/or disclosing damaging material. One of the reasons given for the firing of General Michael Flynn was the fear of blackmail by Russia.

Then there are the conflicts within the White House itself — internecine palace warfare — that result in some members of the administration checking other members of the administration, both within the White House and by selective leaks to the media. The media — both traditional and social — serve as important checks. Those who live by tweets can be checked by tweets. Churches and religious leaders, in our most religious of Western nations, can check the excesses of presidential power by invoking eternal values. The values can promote both liberal and conservative ideologies. The academy, through research, teaching, and advocacy, can serve primarily as a left-wing check on the right-wing tendencies of an administration. There are other

45 institutions as well — ranging from family, to friends, to businesses — that can check and balance a president. Trump is learning the hard lesson that in the world we now inhabit there are no perfect secrets. Everyone is listening to and recording everyone else, as General Flynn painfully learned. And he or she who has the recording holds the power to extort or coerce and check.

The question is, is this a good or bad thing? It is both. It is good because it sends a powerful message to the most powerful person in the world that even he is subject to multiple checks and balances, that he cannot act with impunity, and that he will be held accountable for his actions, either in the court of public opinion or perhaps in the court of law. It is bad because some of these checking institutions are undemocratic and need to be checked themselves.

50 So welcome to the new world of multiple checks and balances. Like democracy itself, it is imperfect but better than its alternatives.

Alan M. Dershowitz is professor emeritus of law at Harvard University and author of "Taking the Stand: My Life in the Law" and "Electile Dysfunction: A Guide for Unaroused Voters."

Does Brexit mean England can have Englishness?

David Goodhart, 23 April 2017, *The Spectator* – Coffee House Blog

Brexit is often said to be driven by English nationalism. In recent decades England has certainly become a less shy country, made aware of itself thanks to the growth of Scottish and Welsh national consciousness and the banal fact that we now talk about the English NHS, English schools, and so on, in a way that we never used to prior to devolution.

5 Yet on today's English national day I saw not a single flag of St George flying on the train journey from London to Cambridge and back (travelling through Essex, supposedly one of the heartlands of English nationalism). And when I opened my Sunday papers I found no reference to it at all. (Though Jeremy Corbyn did briefly grab the lead item on the BBC News with his suggestion of a national holiday on St George's day.)

10 As I argue in my new book *The Road to Somewhere* (about the value divides that have led to Brexit) one of the unspoken fault lines in modern politics is between those, mainly conservatives and centrists, who see racism and nationalism as hostility to out-groups and those, mainly liberals and leftists, who see them as not only that but also about too strong an attachment to your own ethnic or national group.

15 It is, of course, possible to have too strong an attachment to your own group which is why we have the rule of law and anti-discrimination laws. But for too many people Englishness is one of those identities that is almost by definition 'too strong'.

20 This is a quirk of history reinforced by England's demographic domination of these islands. The great historic nation of England disappeared more thoroughly into Britishness than any of the Celtic countries—consider all those British Union Flags when England beat West Germany in 1966. And as Britishness has faded in recent decades and the 'home' nationalities have grown in strength, a mainstream Englishness has emerged only falteringly.

It was not taken up by the English political or cultural elites for whom a 19th century imperial distaste for narrow national feeling had easily mutated into a liberal 1960s anti-nationalism. Englishness that had once disguised itself in order to make its superiority more complete now disguised itself out of embarrassment and, at least until recently, the symbols and language of Englishness was left to cranks and extremists.

25 For while the Irish, Scots and the Welsh could quietly escape any moral responsibility for empire by claiming (most implausibly in the case of the Scots) that they had in fact been the first victims of English colonialism, that option was not there for the English. It could not easily exchange a bad-dominant nationalism for a good-egalitarian one.

30 Today's Scottish nationalists often claim that their nationalism is civic and progressive, while the English variety is ethnic and nostalgic. There is some truth in this but all national identities are a mix of the civic and the ethnic and England can reasonably point out that it has actually been living multiculturalism (16 per cent of the English population are non-white minorities compared with 4.5 per cent of the Scottish) while the Scots have mainly just been talking about it, and have had a more deeply entrenched religious sectarianism too. And for all the SNP's pieties about openness and wanting more immigrants, a higher proportion of Scots say you have to be white to be truly Scottish than the more mongrel English.

35 Scotland has, however, shown the plasticity of national identities. A new version of Scottishness has been conjured up by the SNP in the past few years, framed by the modern independence project. Could Brexit do the same for England? Probably not without the more active embrace of Englishness by the educated middle class and ethnic minority England, two groups that were notably unenthusiastic about Brexit.

40 And can a more normal, self-interested Englishness co-exist happily with the other nations of these islands? Brexit has already conjured up memories of an over-mighty and domineering England in Scotland and Ireland apparently oblivious to the interests of the smaller countries over the Good Friday Agreement and so on.

45 At least we start from the position that most English people, and the Tory party, which has some claim to being the English party, want to preserve the union in some form. A more public, confident but still restrained, Englishness, that sees one of its tasks as preserving this unique multinational state called Britain is surely not just a St George's Day dream.

Our Brexit-driven disregard for Ireland is perilous

Nicholas Searle, 12 April 2017, *The Guardian*

If the nationalist mood revives the campaign for a united Ireland, economic pain will be the least of our worries.

5 Driven by its headlong rush towards a clear-cut break with the EU, Britain appears to be entering one of its periodic fits of amnesia where the island of Ireland is concerned. Its insensitivity and lack of touch in managing the Scottish dimension of Brexit demonstrates that we have a good deal to fear, even as the latest political deadlock over power-sharing in Northern Ireland threatens the re-imposition of direct rule from Westminster.

10 Today we're in the most dangerous period of the two decades since the Good Friday agreement. The European Union, in 1998 seemingly a permanent reality, is embedded in the agreement. Whatever fears British voters had of a European superstate, the existence of an EU in which both the UK and Ireland were partners lessened the emphasis on the division between the two states (though the common travel area was in existence long before) and reduced the incentive to militate for a united Ireland.

15 Northern Ireland's existence may well be the result of the flawed agreements between the British government and the fledgling Irish Free State in 1920, but for the moment it is where we are. Talk of the sectarian demographics of Northern Ireland changing (a bigger nationalist population outnumbering unionists) is one thing. But until the will of the Northern Irish people is otherwise, it is impossible to envisage it being subsumed peacefully into the republic, whatever logic Gerry Adams or I might ascribe, post-Brexit, to that endpoint.

20 The Good Friday agreement was no stitch-up of the Provisional IRA by the UK and Irish governments. It was the product of years of inching forward and finding the formulations and language to see the scope for the next inch. It was an exercise in methodical moderation and close attention to the detail of history and language. The political heroes of the peace process include names not normally associated with conspicuous acts of gallantry but rather with caution or political weaselling (or both): among them, Mayhew, Brooke, Major, Hume, Mandelson, Mallon, Trimble, Mowlam, Reynolds, Ahern and – yes, yes, thrice yes – Blair, assisted by officials and functionaries of the Irish and British governments, Sinn Féin and the other parties to the agreement. It does not include Thatcher, Paisley, Adams, McGuinness or Ervine, or Corbyn or McDonnell. But when the historians (or the poets, who often hold the pen when it comes to Irish history) come to write this episode, they may have it differently.

25 The eventual installation of the extremists – Sinn Féin and the DUP – rather than more moderate factions as the winners in assembly seats was a price worth paying, though it may seem a perverse outcome to some. The assembly's relative stability until recently was a marvel of design, incorporating institutionalised brinkmanship ("Be careful what you wish for; we can go back to rule from Westminster in a trice") and behind-the-scenes fixes.

30 Sinn Féin's aspiration to a united Ireland has never been abandoned but became muted under the Good Friday agreement, which ingeniously packaged up an accommodation over the island of Ireland in the context of both countries' membership of the EU.

35 Now we're in a different place. Something will be required to replace the existing arrangements between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Whether it is a single Ireland as part of the EU, a "soft" border between south and north (Ireland and Britain might quickly arrive at such an arrangement, but the rest of the EU, which has a stake, may be wary of it) or a hard border is yet to be hammered out.

The last option is conceptually the simplest, but politically and practically the most perilous. The optimal solution may lie in edging towards a united Ireland – but that would require a level of political courage not readily visible, as well as the stated will of the people of Northern Ireland.

40 We cannot afford to have a UK government asleep at the wheel, driven by Brexit and internal Conservative party politics; preoccupied with Scottish independence; viewing this as a small local issue, easily ironed out; hoping that larger EU politics does not rule out a fudged compromise that sees free movement between the two countries; and smugly confident that something will turn up. It may. Chances are it will. [...]

45 As nationalism generally stokes up once more, it is inevitable that Irish nationalism will as well. The new impetus given by Brexit to calls for Scottish independence will be watched vigilantly on the other side of the Irish Sea. It is for the EU, the UK and Ireland to come up with solutions. Britain in particular needs to take this very seriously if it wants to avoid not domestic inconvenience but existential concern. We need to remember the past and not be condemned to repeat it.

Who were the big donors to the African American Museum? You'll know the minute you walk in.
The Washington Post, September 22, 2016. By Peggy McGlone.

5 Visitors to the National Museum of African American History and Culture will pass the Robert Frederick Smith Orientation Pavilion on their way to the Walmart Welcome Center. If they go down the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Staircase, they can nosh at the "Sweet Home Café generously supported by Kaiser Permanente," catch a performance in the Oprah Winfrey Theater or enter the David M. Rubenstein History Galleries. If they decide to go up — using the United Technologies Corp. escalator — they will find the Earl W. and Amanda Stafford Center for African American Media Arts and galleries named for Michael Jordan and Family, Time Warner, and the Rhimes Family Foundation.

10 Welcome to the 21st-century Smithsonian, where the founding donor, James Smithson, gets trumped by corporate giants and captains of industry. The Englishman whose bequest launched the museum complex 170 years ago has his name on a small sidewalk sign outside. But today's philanthropists, including Gates, Rubenstein and Smith, and 20th-century titans, like Rockefeller and Ford, have their names in brass letters on walls throughout the building.

15 When the museum opens Saturday, 27 spaces — from the grand staircase to the VIP reception suite — and six programs will be named for brands such as Nike, 3M, American Express, GE and Target and less well-known organizations including the Kovler and Stavros Niarchos foundations. In addition, the lobby features a list of all the founding donors.

20 The large number of names reflects the Smithsonian's need to raise more private funds, said Amir Pasic, a professor of philanthropic studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. The new museum cost \$540 million, with Congress footing half the bill.

25 "Some of the museums that were built more than 30 or 40 years ago would have gotten more government funding," Pasic said. "Naming benches, chairs, pieces of lab equipment is increasingly common." The fact that so many individuals and companies signed on points to the perceived value of the project, he added. "People love the notion that you would have your name associated with the National Mall, connecting yourself to something so lasting and . . . historic."

30 Partnering with the museum was an easy decision for Prudential, which is sponsoring the Hometown Hub, an interactive element in the "Power of Place" exhibition. The museum approached the insurance company after it gave \$1 million in 2009 to fund the construction. This year, Prudential gave \$2 million more for a five-year sponsorship of the multimedia hub, which highlights the importance of place and region to African American culture. "What the museum is trying to accomplish is in direct alignment with our values and beliefs," said Prudential Foundation President Lata Reddy, noting that the company has been an anchor in Newark for 140 years. "We have seen firsthand the power of place, and what opportunities a place can afford people, or not.

35 During challenging times, we've been a part of rebuilding, standing shoulder to shoulder with the African American community. We know we have a role to play in society."
Naming opportunities are definitely on the rise at the Smithsonian. When the Renwick Gallery reopened last year after an extensive renovation, it named nine galleries for private donors. At the Cooper Hewitt, the Smithsonian Design Museum in New York, 15 donors are acknowledged in spaces throughout its Carnegie Mansion, which reopened in 2014 after a three-year renovation. In addition to galleries, the staircase, shop, study room, cafe, education center and garden and terrace are linked to Target, Henry Luce, Nancy and Edwin Marks and Peter Krueger.

40 The National Museum of the American Indian had been the newest Smithsonian museum, opening in 2004. The federal government paid two-thirds of its construction costs, and 82 founding donors were listed inside. Donors are also linked to the outdoor fire pit, entry pavilion, theater, reference library, gift shop and "pause areas." Inside the theater (named for the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation) there are 135 seats with donor labels.

45 Although these deals help the museum raise much-needed funds, the agreements also benefit the companies. Bank of America, which is stalwart supporter of museums, signed on early by giving \$2 million and sponsoring the Save Our Treasures program before the museum broke ground. It was one of four corporations to give \$2 million to sponsor this weekend's opening ceremonies.

50 Rena DeSisto, the bank's global arts and culture executive, said the corporation understands the educational power of all museums and appreciates this museum's diversity. "I am hopeful it creates a sense of tolerance for diversity, and embracing of diversity instead of fear of it," DeSisto said. "Museums are places where people are drawn to think, to learn and to reflect. I think they can enhance your world view, open up your mind and your life to different possibilities."

55 Pasic said associating yourself with a diverse project such as the African American Museum can be a powerful symbol. "People find value if they see themselves -if it's an ad or a campaign- they feel the institution recognizes them."

If the Church of England continues to smother liberal Anglicans, it is heading for a split

Michael Fabricant (Tory MP for Lichfield), 16 February 2017, *The Telegraph*.

Is it time for the Church of England to come out of the closet as a fully-fledged liberal institution and reject the less inclusive elements of Christianity? Apparently not. While the Church's General Synod has voted not to "take note" of the bishops' decision that holy matrimony can only ever be between one man and one woman, they have thrown the whole matter back into the long grass for a few more years of indecision.

5 Now, I cannot claim to have seen the Light of the Lord – I am agnostic. I do not know whether there is a Supreme Being or not but I want the church to thrive. I live by a beautiful and historic cathedral in Lichfield and I see for myself how its great tradition of music, community and worship is a valuable part of many people's lives. It can also be prescient. I took part in a 2015 General Election Hustings held in the Cathedral as well as a packed out debate on Brexit.

10 There is much to admire about the Church of England. Compared to many Christian and other denominations it is liberal-minded and almost laid-back. Instead of preaching about sin and the wrath of God, the message is mostly one of love and tolerance - "love thy neighbour as thyself". The same can be said for the Episcopal Church, the American constituent of the Anglican Communion, which ordains women and LGBT people. The sense of community that churches bring should not be understated. For all the scoffing anti-religious sentiments that exist
15 in modern Britain, it is worth remembering that they are a key driver of charity and of helping the least-fortunate in our society. You don't need to be a Christian to recognise this.

Like most religious denominations however, there is a schism within the Anglican Communion. Supporters of traditional socially conservative values are finding themselves in conflict with those of more open and liberal ideals. Gay marriage and abortion are the prime hot-button issues but others include sex before marriage and the
20 role of women in the clergy. In Lichfield, some wealthy gay donors to the church feel themselves alienated by an attitude which forces gay vicars to be celibate and fails to recognise equal marriage.

The more "traditional" family values may not be something we all buy into, but one of the main tenants of a truly liberal society is that that liberalism can't be forcefully imposed on the people from above. The UK, and more specifically the Church of England, are clearly places of diverse opinion. The question is: how do they all come
25 together?

At present, the worldwide Anglican Communion is undergoing a demographic shift. As the average British churchgoer becomes older and older, much of the growth is coming from socially conservative African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda.

30 With the UK and the US increasingly secular and accepting of gay marriage, the Communion is faced with a dilemma: embrace liberalism and risk alienating many Anglican communities from the developing world or court those same communities and become out-of-step with 21st Western liberal values.

Now may be the right time for an amicable split within the Church. Let the liberals and the conservatives go their own separate ways so that the bishops and vicars can spend less time squabbling over gay marriage or women bishops, and more time on the things that really matter. [...]

35 Some may argue that going down a liberal path would take the Anglican Communion too far away from the teachings of the Bible. They are probably right, but Christianity has already evolved a lot since the Bible was written. For example, Deuteronomy 22:11 commands that "You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together", while Exodus 31:15 states that those who work on Sundays should be put to death. Even on something as heinous as slavery, the message is mixed. The Bible is a product of its time.

40 The social trends are stark. What counted for social liberalism 25 years ago now borders on conservative. In another 25 years the liberal attitudes of today will become the mainstream. These trends are only moving in one direction. Perhaps the Church should take a tough line on its less progressive elements: get with the times or get out. The longer the Anglican Communion shies away from modern liberal values, the greater the chance that its British, American and Commonwealth Churches will become mere shells of their former selves. Liberal
45 Christianity will suffer.

Surely the most important thing is that the core teachings of Jesus, based around love and charity, are heard by all? If some in the Communion want to break away and follow a more conservative version of Christianity so be it, but let the Church of England and the Anglican Communion fully embrace the 21st century. Its voice might then be heard by all and not just by a small minority in our land.

Migrants are always the scapegoats. But now they're taking on Ukip's lies

Migrants' honest and compelling stories of contributing to Britain every single day can win over xenophobes.

Owen Jones, 16 February 2017, *The Guardian*

Ake Achi doesn't remember when he started working on his family's plantation in Ivory Coast. "Since I could walk," he says. There was no nursery or childcare, so he and his sister would go to the fields with his mother. But his parents had relatives in France; and so the two children, at the age of 11, were awoken in the middle of the night and bundled into a car for hope of a better life.

5 Just over a decade ago he moved to London to improve his English and seek opportunities. It was a life of hard graft. He juggled a full-time job as a security guard with full-time studies at Kingston University. Today he is a full-time union organiser, helping workers to combat injustices perpetrated by the powerful but all too often blamed on migrants. He has also founded Right2workuk, to protect Britain's migrants' right to work.

10 Achi is part of a new movement – One Day Without Us, or 1DWU – that seeks to give Britain's frequently demonised migrants their own voice. On Monday, as thousands again take to the streets to protest at Theresa May's kowtowing to Donald Trump, migrants will also organise to challenge the xenophobia surging on our own side of the Atlantic. Across Britain migrants and non-migrants alike will be encouraged to link arms, grip their placards and take a picture in a national show of solidarity.

15 "Immigrants have always been blamed when things go wrong in a country," says Achi. The government now bans non-EU skilled workers from settling in Britain permanently if they have lived here for less than a decade and earn less than £35,000 a year. That has an impact on many NHS workers, for example. As Achi points out: "The NHS wouldn't survive without us." It is all too convenient to turn on migrants propping up Britain's beleaguered health service, rather than addressing the government that plunged it into what the Red Cross describes as a "humanitarian crisis".

20 The arrival of 1DWU is not before time. Migrants have lacked a prominent collective voice: the debate has all too often been about them rather than with them. But it is critical for another reason. Those who have defended the contribution of migrants have frequently fallen back on facts and statistics. But the case made by the likes of Ukip is about emotion and, all too often, the power of stories.

25 When statistics highlighting the net financial contribution to Britain's coffers were put to Nigel Farage, who was then Ukip leader, he replied: "I'd rather we had communities that were united and where young unemployed British people had a realistic chance of getting a job." It was, as ever, based on myths: many of the communities that have had the highest youth unemployment have experienced the lowest levels of immigration. But that wasn't the point.

30 Farage positioned himself as the champion of community against money-obsessed ideologues. There are more important things in life than money, he was saying, in an audacious raid on the left's traditional emotional message. "The social side of this matters more than pure market economics." [...]

35 It will not be easy to transform the debate on migration. Successive British governments have failed to build housing, provide the secure well-paid jobs people need, defend living standards, and – in recent times in particular – properly invest in public services. Immigration has become a catch-all narrative to explain problems caused by the powerful. Turning the debate around will be very hard indeed: it will mean engaging sensitively with millions of people who are not convinced about the contribution migrants have made to British society.

40 But this is not a debate that can be won with facts and statistics. When we consider issues, emotions and gut feelings play a critical role. Migrants have been missing from the debate about them. If their collective voice is heard, the debate could be transformed. They will be able to make the emotional case for the contribution they make every single day. Ukip is a party of con artists, myth peddlers, charlatans and professional shysters. But they have succeeded in poisoning the debate on immigration – leaving many migrants anxious about the future – because they have monopolised the emotional case for too long. The migrants' fightback has begun, bringing a reminder that the problems we suffer are not caused by those who have enriched this country in ways words alone cannot describe.

A California-led alliance of cities and states vows to keep the Paris climate accord intact

Los Angeles Times, June 2, 2017. By Evan Halper.

5 President Trump may be quitting the Paris accord on climate change — but forcing the rest of the nation to go along with him is proving more of a challenge. Led by California, dozens of states and cities across the country responded Friday to Trump's attack on the worldwide agreement by vowing to fulfill the U.S. commitment without Washington — a goal that is not out of reach. The defiance is a signal to the world that the political forces behind America's climate fight aim to outmaneuver this White House and to resume the nation's leadership role when Trump changes jobs or changes his mind.

10 The pushback also reflects how far most of the country — including many Republican parts — already have moved in transitioning to cleaner energy, even as Trump works to slow that momentum. "The American government may have pulled out of the agreement, but the American people remain committed to it — and we will meet our targets," former New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, a special envoy for cities and climate change to the United Nations, said Friday after meeting in Paris with French President Emmanuel Macron and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo.

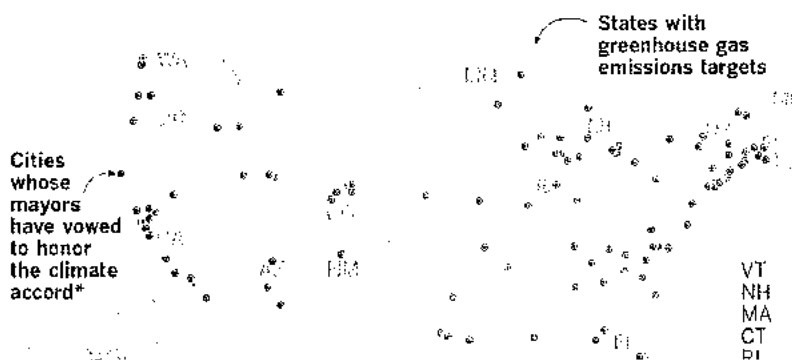
15 It will be a heavy lift. States and cities would need to meet a pledge to reduce America's greenhouse gas emissions to 26% below 2005 levels by 2025, America's self-declared target under the deal. Even with buy-in from the federal government, there were doubts about hitting that nonbinding target. Trump has made it a lot more complicated by spurning the accord — but not impossible.

20 California, the nation's leader in emissions reduction, has already joined with New York and Washington state to build an alliance of states that will guide the nation to Paris compliance in the absence of leadership from the federal government. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti is leading cities in a parallel effort that already has enlisted 150 members.

25 "Cities and states are already where most of the action on climate is," Garcetti said Friday. "Our message is clear to the world: Americans are with you, even if the White House isn't.... Trump's move is going to have unintended consequences of us all doing the opposite of what the president wants. It will in many ways greatly backfire."

Fighting climate change

More than 160 U.S. mayors have promised to honor the Paris climate agreement despite President Trump's decision to withdraw. Several states have done the same or have emissions laws that move them in that direction.



30

Garcetti estimated that 70% to 80% of the work on reducing emissions is happening at the state and local level, regardless of federal policy. That includes renewable energy mandates set by utility commissions, fuel mileage standards and efficiency rules for appliances.

35 While mayors and governors can't sign onto to the Paris agreement — only heads of state can do that — they can prove effective shadow participants. Many of them have forged close relationships with the key climate players in other countries over the years, signing their own climate pacts abroad and participating in various capacities in landmark climate negotiations, such as those that took place in Paris and Kyoto, Japan.

40 Bloomberg, a billionaire philanthropist, has already pledged to cover the \$15 million the U.S. is renegeing on by personally paying into the operations fund of the U.N. agency overseeing the Paris accord. He announced Friday that he would officially inform the U.N. that the U.S. will meet its emissions obligations, noting it is already halfway there — thanks to better fuel economy standards, the shale gas revolution and more renewable energy sources — and is positioned to step up its efforts without any help from Washington.

45 None of this is new for California. It was amid the climate inaction of President George W. Bush's administration that the state passed AB 32, one of the world's most aggressive climate change laws at the time. Decades before that, California imposed vehicle emissions standards before the federal government had

The Martian's Guide to British Politics, or: Is There Intelligent Life on This Island?

It looks like the belligerent, self-serving martinets are going to trounce the quiet, bedraggled lot on the other side.

By Maria Margaronis, 28 April 2017, *The Nation*

London—A peaceful Martian landing here the week after Prime Minister Theresa May called her June 8 snap election might well be mystified by the opinion polls, which consistently put the Tories at least 20 points ahead of Labour. Almost everyone (including former former prime minister Tony Blair, who refuses to lie down quietly in his coffin) seems to accept that a Tory victory is inevitable. The only question is how big a majority May will have—and whether there will be a functioning opposition in Parliament to Brexit at any cost, deeper cuts to public spending, and the final dismantling of the tattered welfare state.

Our Martian might observe that day after day, Labour is issuing moderate, center-left proposals (raising the minimum wage, building affordable housing, integrating health and social care, reversing cuts in corporation taxes), while Tory politicians rant about the danger Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn presents to Britain's security, call him childish names, and bang on about the need for "strong and stable" government. Why, it might reasonably ask (for peaceful Martians are surely gender neutral), would a nation choose these belligerent, self-serving martinets over the quiet, bedraggled lot on the other side?

Announcing the election, May claimed that after last year's Brexit referendum, "the country is coming together but Westminster is not." ("Crush the Saboteurs," roared the Tory Daily Mail.) In fact, the opposite is true. Tory and Labour MPs voted like lambs for the bill to trigger Brexit, 498 in favor to 114 against. It's the country that's divided, disoriented, and afraid.

Like Trump's election in the United States and the first round of the presidential poll in France, the Brexit vote smashed the illusion that the politics of the past could be trimmed and stitched to fit the future. The Leave-versus-Remain rift cut across the old left-right axis, setting the global economy's winners against those left behind and cosmopolitan liberals against pull-up-the-drawbridge nationalists. The right has long experience of banking on global capitalism while profiting from xenophobia. But how does the left position itself across those two related, but not identical, divides? The landscape's all churned up, and no politician has yet managed to map it clearly.

So the Tories play on Corbyn's unpopularity and feed the anxieties that led many to vote for Brexit with dire warnings about a "coalition of chaos," wrapping an illiberal streak that sees dissent as disloyalty in the usual talk of "strength." So Labour, lost and fatally supine during the referendum, continues to live in the past, turning the other cheek and proposing progressive policies while studiously avoiding the sore topic of Brexit, which will frame British politics for years to come. May's harsh robotic mien hides deep uncertainty and a dizzying string of U-turns while appealing to the British penchant for the dominatrix style. Corbyn's holier-than-thou, too-good-for-politics manner is not just electoral death and parliamentary poison but the eye of a vicious storm that's tearing Labour to bits. First gutted from the right by the Blairites, Labour is now in the grip of a backlash from its left, which seems more intent on consolidating internal power than on winning elections or mounting an effective opposition.

Elsewhere in Europe—in France and Spain, for instance—the shifting tectonic plates have begun to throw up new political formations. But here in Britain, the future is being shaped by the old parties' determination to hold on to their shared monopoly. David Cameron called the EU referendum to contain the Tory right and see off the upstart UKIP; he seems to have succeeded in the second by catastrophically failing in the first.

On the left, there are some gestures toward a more open politics. The think tank and campaign group Compass has launched a "progressive alliance" to persuade local parties to unite behind the Labour, Green, or Liberal Democrat candidate most likely to hold the seat or defeat a Tory incumbent. Local parties in three constituencies have signed on so far, and there's interest from more, but the Labour and Lib Dem leadership are, of course, opposed. Working partly in concert and partly at cross purposes with that project, there are also single-issue tactical voting initiatives aiming to block a "hard" Brexit—which includes targeting Labour MPs who campaigned to leave the EU.

It's pie in the sky to think that such plans can put more than a dent in the oncoming Tory juggernaut. But they are an invitation to future organizing—and just now, with Labour MPs in once-safe seats fearing annihilation, pulling progressive votes together (though I still mistrust that p-word for its evasive vagueness) seems as good a plan as any. If my imaginary Martian has any better ideas, I would love to hear them.

The white working class is another form of identity politics

The working class and whiteness are not one and the same.

Maya Goodfellow, 23 November 2016, *The New Statesman*

5 Brexit and Donald Trump's success in the US presidential elections have intensified an already existing trend: politicians' and commentators' obsessive fixation with the white working class. The left has been told – and is telling itself – that it must prioritise connecting with this group. But there are many problems with this, not least because it means privileging whiteness above all other forms of identity and solving white people's problems at the expense of people of colour.

None of this is to say that white people aren't victims of economic injustice, or that poverty among white people doesn't matter - it does. But the argument du jour is that the American election result symbolised a roar of dissent from the "left behind" and Brexit was a "working class revolt". This is not entirely true in either case; wealthy voters in both instances formed a large part of the vote.

10 In fact, research from the Economic Policy Institute found people of colour will be a majority of the working class by 2032 - that's 11 years before the US is predicted to become a so-called "majority minority" country. This suggests there are more working class people of colour than in any other class bracket. In the US, although we do not have a breakdown of earnings along race lines, African Americans and Latinos are more likely to be poor, but they were far less likely to vote for Trump. And in the UK, people of colour are more likely to be in poverty than white people but they were far less likely to vote for Brexit.

15 As political sociologist Professor Akwugo Emejulu and the *The New Statesman's* own Stephen Bush have explained, when politicians doggedly pin Brexit and Trump on the white "left behind" voter, poor people of colour are ignored. The implication of this obsession is that poverty and disenfranchisement is only worth paying attention to when experienced by white people.

20 The left has bought into this dangerous thinking at a time when white nationalism is stronger than it's been in decades. The Labour MP Stephen Kinnock has called for Labour to abandon "diversity" and stand up "for everyone in this country" including "the white working class". These two subjects need not be so mutually exclusive, and positioning them as such means abandoning the concerns of minorities in order to pander to racism. This is, in part, because Labour think people of colour have nowhere else to go. How wrong they could be proved.

25 Rather than an argument grounded in economics, then, this rhetoric comes down to whiteness, which is, contrary to what many seem to think, a form of identity politics. In fact, whiteness has long-been the most prevalent and powerful form of identity. It is, in the words of academic Gloria Wekker "not seen as an ethnic positioning at all". Like an animal well adapted to its environment, it camouflages itself as part of the societal landscape. Yet it works in insidious ways. It places white peoples' experience as most important and works on the basis that they need to be protected from the impure "other". It structures the world we live in.

30 What this rhetoric does is allow the middle and upper politicians to use anti-migrant rhetoric and claim it symbolises a paternalistic show of support for the white working classes, whatever that group's actual views. Ukip's Nigel Farage, a former stockbroker, suggested he stood up for this downtrodden group through the xenophobic Leave campaign. But this obscures a more complex reality. As University of London researcher David Wearing has found, "the Leave vote correlates much more strongly with social attitudes than with social class". Indeed, 81 per cent of people who think multiculturalism is a force for ill voted Leave. It is about more than the working class. The "left behind" narrative conceals a deep-rooted desire to protect whiteness among more prosperous voters.

35 Whiteness in this instance is rooted in innocence and victimhood. The assumption is people of colour are undermining poor white people; the nation as a whole is being steered off course by "diversity". A recent rally in Washington D.C. encapsulated this well. "America was until this past generation a white country designed for ourselves and our posterity," white nationalist Stephen B. Spencer told a room full of people performing the Nazi salute. "It is our creation, it is our inheritance, and it belongs to us." This is one of the results of the constant obsession with whiteness: the nation is for white people. Flaws in the nation can be fixed by reclaiming it in the name of whiteness.

45 Focussing solely on the white working class in the wake of Brexit and Trump will not redress society's problems; it will not even try to sort out poverty among white people. The fetishisation of the white working class helps reaffirm the racial hierarchy and stamp out forms of dissent voiced by people of colour, LGBTQ communities and other minorities. We should not pretend that it is anything else.

Opinion: By choice, I've never voted before. But Jeremy Corbyn has changed my mind

Akala, 12 May 2017, *The Guardian*. Akala is a Mobo award-winning hip-hop artist and founder of the Hip-hop Shakespeare Company.

For the first time in my adult life someone I consider to be fundamentally decent has a chance of being elected, which is why Labour will get my vote.

5 I have a confession to make: I have never voted in a general election in my life. Despite attending more demos with my parents than I care to remember, I have never yet cast a vote. I can hear the voices of disapproval. Don't bother; it has been a conscious choice. Many people have been trained to see the Houses of Parliament as the only site of political activity and their vote as their only, or at least primary, obligation. I was, thankfully, not raised with such a narrow view of political engagement.

10 However, I will be voting for the first time in June and I will – I am shocked to be typing this – be voting Labour. I am not a Labour supporter; I do not share the romantic idea that the Labour party was ever as radical an alternative as some would like to think. Despite building the welfare state, Labour has been an imperialist party* from Attlee to Wilson to Blair, thus as a “third world” internationalist I have never been able to vote for them.

15 So why will I be voting now? Jeremy Corbyn. It's not that I am naive enough to believe that one man (who is, of course, powerless without the people that support him) can fundamentally alter the nature of British politics, or that I think that if Labour wins that the UK will suddenly reflect his personal political convictions, or even that I believe that the prime minister actually runs the country. However for the first time in my adult life, and perhaps for the first time in British history, someone I would consider to be a fundamentally decent human being has a chance of being elected.

20 I recognise that Corbyn is an imperfect “leader”. He was abysmal during the Brexit campaign for example. He is a politician, and he will make more mistakes. We do not need perfect politicians, because we are not perfect people ourselves. As well as his historical stances on apartheid and other issues, Corbyn has consistently voted against the UK's worst acts of foreign aggression, including being one of only 13 MPs to vote against Nato's horrific intervention in Libya in 2011 – an intervention that has played no small part in the subsequent refugee crisis and the direct spreading of terrorism.

25 We keep being told Corbyn is unelectable. Yet we were also told that he would not win the Labour leadership. He may not have the “electric” personality that electorates are concerned about in these days of celebrity culture, but politics should not – primarily – be about personalities; it should be about policies – and Theresa May hardly exudes charisma. Bill Clinton and Barack Obama are probably the most charismatic English-speaking politicians of my lifetime, but their actual policies were horrendous.

30 I understand that for much of the UK electorate British foreign policy is not a priority. But for those of us that still have family in the global south and/or have political worldviews shaped by ideas of human solidarity, this is a primary concern. What would happen if at some point in the future the Jamaican (or any other global south) government decided to nationalise what little bauxite (or other commodity) it has left, or to default on its IMF repayments? What would be the US response? Blockade? Invasion? Would Jamaica's homophobia and police brutality suddenly get bumped up into the “human rights issues” club? [...] These scenarios may seem far-fetched to some, but when we hear these revisionist imperial morons chanting about Empire 2.0 like it's a new flavour of sugar-free drink what are we to think?

40 There are a great many other progressive policies that make Corbyn a genuinely different candidate from what we have seen before, but another key area is the NHS. If you want to see what privatised healthcare looks like just ask any American. The ethos behind the NHS is one of the most egalitarian ideas ever: it must be protected at all costs. The Tories have made their intentions in this area quite plain – as has Corbyn.

45 Let's be quite clear, I am not suggesting that we cease any other sort of progressive political activity. I simply think we cannot afford, in this very particular set of circumstances, to not vote. You may believe Labour has no chance of winning and therefore it is pointless. I disagree. Let's at least show how many people need and want the progressive ticket that Corbyn is running on. Then, at least, we have something to build on. Though of course the aim is to win – and there are more than enough people like me that did not vote in the last election to swing it entirely.

Bob Dylan Wins Nobel Prize, Redefining Boundaries of Literature*The New York Times*, October 13, 2016

- 5 Half a century ago, Bob Dylan shocked the music world by plugging in an electric guitar and alienating folk purists. For decades he continued to confound expectations, selling millions of records with dense, enigmatic songwriting. Now, Mr. Dylan, the poet laureate of the rock era, has been rewarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature, an honor that elevates him into the company of T. S. Eliot, Gabriel García Márquez, Toni Morrison and Samuel Beckett.
- 10 Mr. Dylan, 75, is the first musician to win the award, and his selection on Thursday is perhaps the most radical choice in a history stretching back to 1901. In choosing a popular musician for the literary world's highest honor, the Swedish Academy, which awards the prize, dramatically redefined the boundaries of literature, setting off a debate about whether song lyrics have the same artistic value as poetry or novels.
- 15 Some prominent writers celebrated Mr. Dylan's literary achievements, including Stephen King, Joyce Carol Oates and Salman Rushdie, who called Mr. Dylan "the brilliant inheritor of the bardic tradition," adding, "Great choice." But others called the academy's decision misguided and questioned whether songwriting, however brilliant, rises to the level of literature. "Bob Dylan winning a Nobel in Literature is like Mrs Fields being awarded 3 Michelin stars," the novelist Rabih Alameddine wrote on Twitter. "This is almost as silly as Winston Churchill." Jodi Picoult, a best-selling novelist, snarkily asked, "I'm happy for Bob Dylan, #ButDoesThisMeanICanWinAGrammy?"
- 20 Many musicians praised the choice with a kind of awe. On Twitter, Rosanne Cash, the songwriter and daughter of Johnny Cash, wrote simply: "Holy mother of god. Bob Dylan wins the Nobel Prize." But some commentators bristled. Two youth-oriented websites, Pitchfork and Vice, both ran columns questioning whether Mr. Dylan was an appropriate choice for the Nobel.
- 25 As the writer of classic folk and protest songs like "Blowin' in the Wind" and "The Times They Are a-Changin'," as well as Top 10 hits including "Like a Rolling Stone," Mr. Dylan is an unusual Nobel winner. The first American to win the prize since Ms. Morrison in 1993, he is studied by Oxford dons and beloved by presidents.
- 30 Yet instead of appearing at the standard staid news conference arranged by a publisher, Mr. Dylan was in Las Vegas on Thursday for a performance at a theater there. By late afternoon, Mr. Dylan had not commented on the honor. Mr. Dylan has often sprinkled literary allusions into his music and cited the influence of poetry on his lyrics, and has referenced Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine and Ezra Pound. He has also published poetry and prose, including his 1971 collection, "Tarantula," and "Chronicles: Volume One," a memoir published in 2004. His collected lyrics from 1961-2012 are due out on Nov. 1 from Simon & Schuster.
- 35 Literary scholars have long debated whether Mr. Dylan's lyrics can stand on their own as poetry, and an astonishing volume of academic work has been devoted to parsing his music. The Oxford Book of American Poetry included his song "Desolation Row," in its 2006 edition, and Cambridge University Press released "The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan" in 2009, further cementing his reputation as a brilliant literary stylist.
- 40 Billy Collins, the former United States poet laureate, argued that Mr. Dylan deserved to be recognized not merely as a songwriter, but as a poet. "Most song lyrics don't really hold up without the music, and they aren't supposed to," Mr. Collins said in an interview. "Bob Dylan is in the 2 percent club of songwriters whose lyrics are interesting on the page even without the harmonica and the guitar and his very distinctive voice. I think he does qualify as poetry." In giving the literature prize to Mr. Dylan, the academy may also be recognizing that the gap has closed between high art and more commercial creative forms. "It's literature, but it's music, it's performance, it's art, it's also highly commercial," said David Hajdu, a music critic for *The Nation* who has written extensively about Mr. Dylan and his contemporaries. "The old categories of high and low art, they've been collapsing for a long time, but this is it being made official."
- 45 In previous years, writers and publishers have grumbled that the prize often goes to obscure writers with clear political messages over more popular figures. But in choosing someone so well known, and so far outside of established literary traditions, the academy seems to have swung far into the other direction, bestowing prestige on a popular artist who already had plenty of it.
- 50 It's not the first time it has stretched the definition of literature. In 1953, Winston Churchill received the prize, in part as recognition of the literary qualities of his soaring political speeches and "brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values," according to the academy. And many were surprised last year, when the prize went to the Belarussian journalist Svetlana Alexievich, whose deeply reported narratives draw on oral history. In its citation, the Swedish Academy credited Mr. Dylan with "having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition."
- 55 Sara Danius, a literary scholar and the permanent secretary of the 18-member academy, which called Mr. Dylan "a great poet in the English-speaking tradition" and compared him to Homer and Sappho, whose work was delivered orally. Asked if the decision to award the prize to a musician signaled a broadening in the definition of literature, Ms. Danius responded, "The times they are a-changing, perhaps." [...]

Bronze Plaques Matter

National Review, May 20, 2017. By DEROY MURDOCK

5 New Orleans — Robert E. Lee lost again. The statue of the Confederate Army's general in chief vanished Friday from atop a 60-foot-tall column in the middle of Lee Circle. This work is the fourth of four Confederate-oriented statues that the city of New Orleans has removed in recent weeks, amid considerable and well-deserved controversy. [...]

Say what you will about these statues, they tend to be excellent works of art. Despite the horrors at their roots, they beautifully capture the human physique and, very often, the equestrian form. If nothing else, they added 10 vivid, dramatic images to this lovely city.

This effort to — ahem — whitewash history is chilling and, indeed, Orwellian. It echoes Winston Smith, the protagonist of *1984*, as he sits at his desk in the Ministry of Truth, clips politically incorrect articles from old newspapers, and stuffs them down the memory hole — never to be seen again.

Likewise, removing these figures snatches them and all that they did from public view and, eventually, from 15 the collective recollection of the people. Out of sight, out of mind.

“You can't sanitize history,” a white man in a black shirt at Lee Circle lamented to CBS affiliate WWL-TV last night. “Our history is not all good. And it's not all bad. But it's all true.”

So, who's next? Once those who fought to maintain slavery have been erased, what about those who owned slaves? Why should their tributes be spared?

20 American slave owners included George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and even Ulysses Grant. Why not remove all of the landmarks to Washington and Jefferson, starting with the Washington Monument and the Jefferson memorial on the National Mall? Grant's Tomb? Who needs it? Manhattan's Upper West Side really could use a new parking lot.

The recently celebrated Alexander Hamilton also owned slaves. The Annapolis-based *Maryland Gazette's* 25 April 10, 1783, edition announced the sale of “a number of valuable slaves; consisting of men, women, and children; late the property of Alexander Hamilton.” Perhaps it's time to wind down Hamilton's smash-hit Broadway run.

Cities and thoroughfares also bear the names of slave owners and other evildoers. Take Washington, D.C. Let's just call it the District of Columbia. Oops! Columbia refers to Christopher Columbus, the white 30 imperialist who first injected the virus of Western Civilization into this hemisphere. So, we better call it District. As for Columbus, let's yank him down from high above Columbus Circle. We can re-name that part of Manhattan simply Circle.

Here is a better idea: Let's stop this Stalinesque historical airbrushing and leave the damn statues in place.

35 Instead, where controversial statues still exist, organize contests for high-school students to compose the best 250-word essays that sum up the good, the bad, and the ugly about these historical figures. This 250-word limit parallels America's 250th birthday — July 4, 2026. These competitions could preview that momentous occasion.

There already is talk about excising the magnificent statue of Andrew Jackson that dominates Jackson Square, 40 in the heart of this city's world-famous French Quarter. Before that outrage ensues, this contest should reward the best 250 words about him. It likely would cite the good: Jackson stymied British invaders at the War of 1812's Battle of New Orleans. The bad: He owned slaves. The ugly: His Trail of Tears forcibly relocated some 100,000 American Indians from their homes in the South in the 1830s. An estimated 15,000 died in the process.

45 Before another statue of Robert E. Lee disappears elsewhere, a winning essay on him might mention that he commanded the Confederate military, defended the ownership of slaves (of which he was guilty), but also served as president of what is now Washington and Lee University. In a spirit of post-war reconciliation, he welcome students from the North. Lee also expelled white students from his school who attacked local black men and successfully promoted state-funded schools for black students.

50 A panel of historians would judge these essays for their accuracy, thoroughness, and give the winning high-school students generous college scholarships. At \$10 per word, \$2,500 per winning entry would be a decent starting point. More important, each such essay would be cast in bronze and placed adjacent to its corresponding statue. Visitors could weigh the pros and cons of these individuals while viewing their statues in their greater (if summarized) context. Eventually, a coffee-table book of these works could present a color photograph of each monument on one page with its attendant essay on the page opposite. Sales of these books 55 could finance additional scholarships for students of American history, particularly slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Proceeds and donations would help send copies of this book to high-school and college libraries across America.

And the name for this initiative? Bronze Plaques Matter.

Stifling the freedom to mock and attack will reduce our universities to irrelevant echo chambers

Arif Ahmed, 14 March 2017, *The Telegraph*. Dr Arif Ahmed is a Reader in Philosophy at Cambridge University.

A new report on free speech in British universities makes clear to everyone what was already clear to many within them: free expression in many places is threatened and in many others actively curtailed.

5 Of 115 institutions, 73 "ban and actively censor ideas on campus"; 35 "chill free speech through intervention". Students' unions have banned "offensive" fancy dress (Edinburgh) and Charlie Hebdo (Manchester); university
10 authorities have banned many forms of speech, including criticism of Israel "that might reasonably be taken to be anti-semitic" (Leeds); numerous universities or unions have also banned or tried to prevent the expression of "fascist" or "racist" ideologies or of any views by speakers belonging to some objectionable category. Academics, journalists and students will address these issues in a debate at Gonville & Caius College at Cambridge University on March 14. The aim is to force an open confrontation between the arguments in favour of what has been happening and those against.

I myself believe that the freedom to express and to defend your opinion, pretty much regardless of who you are or what that opinion is, is our society's most precious asset. Those who would compromise it need to explain to the rest of us how anything could compensate for its loss. I hope to hear the explanation on Tuesday night.

15 To those who oppose speech based on what is said, I am tempted to say: do you understand the point of higher education? To those who oppose speech based on the identity of the speaker, I am tempted to say: do you understand the point of thinking?

20 Higher education supplies specialised knowledge and scientific training to those equipped and willing to get them. But equally importantly, and in the humanities especially, it gets across not only knowledge but that intellectual attitude that Kant regarded as a precondition for our maturity as a species: of not respecting authority, not believing everything that it tells you; and more generally of thinking for yourself about things that matter.

My own subject – philosophy – illustrates this as clearly as any. It imparts methods of rational criticism and logical analysis and it applies them to the most deeply held, and the most vigorously contested, values and beliefs of our own society and of other societies.

25 These include religious ideas, to many of which the best response is not respectful dialogue but hostile scrutiny. If anything should be a "safe space" then the universities should be a safe space from which to attack – and even to mock – Judaism and Islam as well as Christianity (which frequently does get an enthusiastic kicking). The report reveals how far, and how willingly, they – staff and students – have instead adopted Orwellian speech codes that would probably have censored Hume and Voltaire alongside Maryam Namazie, the ex-Muslim human rights
30 campaigner that Warwick Student Union tried to ban in 2015 on the grounds that her views were "inflammatory and could incite hatred on campus".

They also include ethical ideas. When we stop emoting and start thinking about a subject like (say) abortion, the instruments that we apply are those of abstract thought: logic, conceptual analysis and scientific knowledge. We all have access to those instruments. Everyone who can think can think about these things; and they can debate about them too, productively and in public. Being a man doesn't stop you thinking about them; being two or three
35 men shouldn't stop you debating them. And yet it has: in 2014, student outrage at the fact that both advertised speakers were male led to the cancellation of a debate on abortion to have been held in Christ Church, Oxford.

They also include political ideas. Another report – by the Adam Smith Institute – implies that 80% of university lecturers are left-wing. True or not, it reflects a widespread perception that the values of the university are not those of the society around it – a society that returned a Conservative government in 2015 and which has now
40 voted for Brexit. Cambridge's Vice-Chancellor warned as much in a recent speech. But part of what makes universities reflective of the political ideas present in the wider society is the freedom to express any of them within its halls – including those of Julie Bindel and Milo Yiannopoulos, whom the University of Manchester students' union banned in 2015 from a debate on free speech. And what makes them responsive to our ideal of rational and fearless enquiry is the freedom to discuss those, and all other ideas, abrasively and without fear.

45 Without that, they risk becoming political echo chambers annexed to centres for scientific inquiry. Important and worthwhile, yes – but not, as they could be, the wellsprings of that scepticism and independence of mind that are essential to a healthy democracy.

The last big frontier. Wilderness living
The Economist, August 6, 2016

5 *Feds, liberals and Californians Keep Out. A movement of staunch conservatives and doomsday-watchers to the inland north-west is quietly gaining steam.*

10 Asked by an out-of-stater where the nearest shooting range is, Patrick Leavitt, an affable gunsmith at Riverman Gun Works in Coeur d'Alene, says: "This is Idaho--you can shoot pretty much anywhere away from buildings." That is one reason why the sparsely populated state is attracting a growing number of "political refugees" keen to slip free from bureaucrats in America's liberal states, says James Wesley, Rawles (yes, with a comma), an author of bestselling survivalist novels. In a widely read manifesto posted in 2011 on his survivalblog.com, Mr Rawles, a former army intelligence officer, urged libertarian-leaning Christians and Jews to move to Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and a strip of eastern Oregon and Washington states, a haven he called the "American Redoubt".

15 Thousands of families have answered the call, moving to what Mr Rawles calls America's last big frontier and most easily defensible terrain. Were hordes of thirsty, hungry, panicked Americans to stream out of cities after, say, the collapse of the national grid, few looters would reach the mostly mountainous, forested and, in winter, bitterly cold Redoubt. Big cities are too far away. But the movement is driven by more than doomsday "redoubters", eager to homestead on land with lots of water, fish, and big game nearby. The idea is also to bring in enough strongly conservative voters to keep out the regulatory creep smothering liberty in places like California, a state many redoubters disdainfully refer to as "the C-word".

20 Estimates of the numbers moving into the Redoubt are sketchy, partly because many seek a low profile. Mr Rawles himself will not reveal which state he chose, not wanting to be overrun when "everything hits the fan". But Chris Walsh of Revolutionary Realty says growing demand has turned into such a "massive upwelling" that he now sells about 140 properties a year in the north-western part of the Redoubt, its heart. To manage, Mr Walsh, a pilot, keeps several vehicles at landing strips to which he flies clients from his base near Coeur d'Alene.

30 Many seek properties served not with municipal water but with a well or stream, ideally both, just in case. More than nine out of every ten Revolutionary Realty clients either buy a home off the grid or plan to sever the connection and instead use firewood, propane and solar panels, often storing the photovoltaic power in big forklift batteries bought second-hand. They also plan to educate their children at home. The remoter land preferred by lots of "off-the-gridders" is often cheap. Revolutionary Realty sells sizeable plots for as little as \$30,000. After that, settlers can mostly build as they please.

35 Lance Etche, a Floridian, recently moved his family into the Redoubt after the writings of Mr Rawles stirred in him "the old mountain-man independence spirit--take care of yourself and don't complain." He chose a plot near Canada outside Bonners Ferry, Idaho, cleared an area with a view, put down gravel, "and they dropped the thing [a so-called "skid house", transported by lorry] right on top of it", he says--no permit required.

40 Some newcomers are Democrats keen to get back to nature, grow organic food or, in Oregon and Washington, benefit from permissive marijuana laws. Not all conservatives dislike this as much as Bonny Dolly, a Bonners Ferry woman in her 60s who says: "We don't want liberals, that's for sure," and carries a .45-calibre handgun "because they don't make a .46". But lefties who move in and hope to finance tighter regulations with higher taxes often get the cold shoulder. Mr Walsh weeds out lefties from the start, politely declining to show them property, noting that they wouldn't fit in anyway. This discrimination is legal, he says, because political factions, unlike race or sexual orientation, are not legally protected classes.

45 A red dawn

Todd Savage, who runs Survival Retreat Consulting in Sandpoint, Idaho, works with the more usual sort of client: political migrants who rail against "morally corrupt" nanny government elsewhere. He does a brisk business helping them set up their food-producing fortress-homesteads. Staff train clients in defensive landscaping, how to repel an assault on their property with firearms, and the erection of structures "hardened" to withstand forced entry and chemical, biological, radiological or explosive attack.

50 Very few redoubters, however, wish to secede from the United States. The Confederacy's attempt fared badly, notes Mr Rawles. He did, however, exclude the politically conservative but mostly flat Dakotas from the Redoubt because mechanised units could manoeuvre easily there. The same went for swathes of Utah, a state also left out because it has little water.

55 Purists have criticised him for including eastern Oregon and Washington in the Redoubt, since their larger liberal populations near the west coast dominate state politics. But he believes that the designation will quicken efforts in the eastern reaches to form new, freedom-minded states within a generation. [...]

Trump boasts about his philanthropy. But his giving falls short of his words.

The Washington Post, October 29, 2016. By David A. Fahrenthold.

5 In the fall of 1996, a charity called the Association to Benefit Children held a ribbon-cutting in Manhattan for a new nursery school serving children with AIDS. The bold-faced names took seats up front. There was then-Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani (R) and former mayor David Dinkins (D). TV stars Frank and Kathie Lee Gifford, who were major donors. And there was a seat saved for Steven Fisher, a developer who had given generously to build the nursery. Then, all of a sudden, there was Donald Trump.

10 "Nobody knew he was coming," said Abigail Disney, another donor sitting on the dais. "There's this kind of ruckus at the door, and I don't know what was going on, and in comes Donald Trump. [He] just gets up on the podium and sits down."

Trump was not a major donor. He was not a donor, period. He'd never given a dollar to the nursery or the Association to Benefit Children, according to Gretchen Buchenholz, the charity's executive director then and now. But now he was sitting in Fisher's seat, next to Giuliani.

15 "Frank Gifford turned to me and said, 'Why is he here?'" Buchenholz recalled recently. By then, the ceremony had begun. There was nothing to do. "Just sing past it," she recalled Gifford telling her. So they warbled into the first song on the program, "This Little Light of Mine," alongside Trump and a chorus of children — with a photographer snapping photos, and Trump looking for all the world like an honored donor to the cause. Afterward, Disney and Buchenholz recalled, Trump left without offering an explanation. Or a

20 donation. Fisher was stuck in the audience. The charity spent months trying to repair its relationship with him. "I mean, what's wrong with you, man?" Disney recalled thinking of Trump, when it was over. For as long as he has been rich and famous, Donald Trump has also wanted people to believe he is generous. He spent years constructing an image as a philanthropist by appearing at charity events and by making very public — even nationally televised — promises to give his own money away. It was, in large part, a facade. A

25 months-long investigation by *The Washington Post* has not been able to verify many of Trump's boasts about his philanthropy. Instead, throughout his life in the spotlight, whether as a businessman, television star or presidential candidate, *The Post* found that Trump had sought credit for charity he had not given — or had claimed other people's giving as his own. It is impossible to know for certain what Trump has given to charity, because he has

30 declined to release his tax returns. In all, *The Post* was able to identify \$7.8 million in charitable giving from Trump's own pocket since the early 1980s. In public appearances, Trump often made it appear that he gave far more. Trump promised to give away the proceeds of Trump University. He promised to donate the salary he earned from "The Apprentice." He promised to give personal donations to the charities chosen by contestants on

35 "Celebrity Apprentice." He promised to donate \$250,000 to a charity helping Israeli soldiers and veterans. Together, those pledges would have increased Trump's lifetime giving by millions of dollars. But *The Post* has been unable to verify that he followed through on any of them. Instead, *The Post* found that his personal giving has almost disappeared entirely in recent years. After calling

40 420-plus charities with some connection to Trump, *The Post* found only one personal gift from Trump between 2008 and the spring of this year. That was a gift to the Police Athletic League of New York City, in 2009. It was worth less than \$10,000. The charity that Trump has given the most money to over his lifetime appears to be his own: the Donald J. Trump Foundation. But that charity, too, was not what it seemed.

45 The Trump Foundation appeared outwardly to be a typical, if small, philanthropic foundation — set up by a rich man to give his riches away. In reality, it has been funded largely by other people. Tax records show the Trump Foundation has received \$5.5 million from Trump over its life, and nothing since 2008. It received \$9.3 million from other people. Another unusual feature: One of the foundation's most consistent causes was Trump himself.

50 New findings, for instance, show that the Trump Foundation's largest-ever gift — \$264,631 — was used to renovate a fountain outside the windows of Trump's Plaza Hotel. Its smallest-ever gift, for \$7, was paid to the Boy Scouts in 1989, at a time when it cost \$7 to register a new Scout. Trump's oldest son was 11 at the time. Trump did not respond to a question about whether the money was paid to register him. At other times, Trump used his foundation's funds to settle legal disputes involving Trump's for-profit companies and to buy two large portraits of himself, including one that wound up hanging on the wall of the sports bar at a Trump-

55 owned golf resort. [...]

Post reporter David Fahrenthold won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for his pioneering work exposing the distance between image and reality in Donald Trump's philanthropy.

Why British Hip-Hop Just Might Save the Labour Party

By DAN HANCOXJUNE, 1 June 2017, *The New York Times*

LONDON — In April, after Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain announced that she would hold a general election on June 8, the first celebrity endorsements were for Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party. And they came from an unlikely source: Britain's thriving answer to rap music, known as grime.

The spontaneity and extent of the endorsements, most of them appearing within a day or two of Mrs. May's announcement, caught people by surprise. Jme, a grime star and the founder of Boy Better Know records, instructed his 700,000 Twitter followers to vote for Mr. Corbyn. Professor Green, a popular rapper and television host, posted a long endorsement on Instagram. Akala, another rapper, followed a string of tweets in support of "homie Jeremy Corbyn" with an op-ed essay in *The Guardian*. On the face of it, Mr. Corbyn, a teetotal, vegetarian, 68-year-old bicyclist, and the hip, young grime M.C.s make for unlikely allies. But the pairing makes sense: Like rap music in the United States, grime emerged from some of the poorest parts of the country, dilapidated inner-city housing projects. Mr. Corbyn's left-wing policy proposals — like increased spending on public housing and free university education — are exactly what poor Britons, ethnic minorities and urban youth have been waiting to hear from a politician.

Stormzy, who scored a No. 1 album in March with his debut "Gang Signs and Prayer," put it best when he endorsed Mr. Corbyn last year: "My man, Jeremy! I dig what he says," the M.C. said. "I feel like he gets what the ethnic minorities are going through and the homeless and the working class." As grime M.C.s and their fans have generated support for Labour ahead of the vote, they are proving why Mr. Corbyn's centrist critics within the party might be wrong about their leader — and showing how the party could someday find a path to victory.

Since Mr. Corbyn's grass-roots campaign and resounding victory in the 2015 Labour leadership election, the attacks from the news media, as well as from many Labour members of Parliament, have been histrionic. Mr. Corbyn and his supporters are regularly described as "out of touch" leftists. Even at the start of his campaign, Mr. Corbyn was forced to deny that he epitomized an "Islington elite" running (and ruining) the Labour Party, a reference to the North London borough Mr. Corbyn has represented since 1983, an area with affluent neighborhoods alongside extreme poverty.

The smears have continued. Alan Johnson, a former senior Labour minister and Tony Blair ally, has railed against "worse than self-indulgent" and "tyrannical" left-wingers, "mainly middle-class people who are not going to feel any difference with changes of government." Simon Danczuk, a centrist Labour member of Parliament, has condemned the "sniffy metropolitan elites." These attacks from the right wing of the party paint Mr. Corbyn's supporters as affluent, elitist urbanites, out of touch with traditional working-class Labour voters who have been left behind by globalization. This demographic — at least according to its ventriloquists — is angry about immigration, pro-Brexit and socially conservative, and hates the vegetarian intellectuals who have taken over Labour. It is true that many areas that historically voted for Labour also voted to leave the European Union in last year's referendum, even though a majority of Labour voters supported remaining in the union. [...]

Labour needs both ex-miners in South Wales who voted Leave in the referendum as well as urban youth who have never voted. Mr. Corbyn's team has presented a bold, unabashedly socialist program that targets deprived postindustrial communities and big-city grime M.C.s alike, with tax hikes for the richest, a huge spending program on social housing, a big increase in the minimum wage, the abolition of university fees and a ban on unpaid internships, among other things. Immediate polling has found overwhelming support for these policies.

But for Labour to achieve a shock as big as Donald Trump's presidential victory, it needs an unprecedented high youth turnout on June 8. To this end, homemade posters and fliers have started appearing in parts of London with a "grime for Corbyn" message. The music scene has been rallying around youth voter registration. Turnout is historically low among 18- to 24-year-olds and in the black community, the two demographics that make up grime's core fan base. These two groups are also far more likely to vote Labour.

Halfway through the campaign, a new website, www.grime4corbyn.com, started up and promised free tickets to a secret grime show for anyone registering to vote. Jme met Mr. Corbyn for a televised conversation about youth engagement with politics. AJ Tracey, another young M.C., recorded an official pro-Labour video, while fellow rising star Novelist specifically endorsed Mr. Corbyn for being in touch with ordinary people. This surge to get young people registered before a May 22 deadline seemed to work, with about a million people under 25 registering in the past few weeks. With an electorate of around 45 million, they could swing several key seats. "Political change doesn't always come from politicians, does it?" Mr. Corbyn asked Jme when they met recently. To provide a seismic shock to the British establishment, the Labour leader will be counting on the grime scene to prove him right.

How Brexit damaged Britain's democracy

Bagehot, 30 March 2017, *The Economist*

TO CALL Britain's referendum on Brexit a great act of democracy is both to describe it and to debase the word "democracy". Campaigners traded not hard facts last June but insults to the electorate's intelligence. Remainers foresaw immediate economic Armageddon outside the EU, while Leavers insinuated that millions of scary Muslims would move to Britain if the country stayed in the club. 5 Aspersions were cast on opponents' motives and character. Dodgy statistics were shoved through letterboxes and plastered on the sides of buses. On the big day turnout was mediocre for such an epoch-making decision: the 52% who backed Brexit constituted just 37% of eligible voters.

A low-rent, bilious referendum has begotten low-rent, bilious politics. It has cowed the House of Commons, the "despotic and final" authority of the British system, in the words of Walter Bagehot, the 10 Victorian constitutionalist and former editor of *The Economist* whose name dignifies this column. MPs are paid to be representatives, not delegates, obeying their own judgment over the roiling opinions of their constituents. But the force of the referendum, a McCarthyite mood in the Brexiteer press and a prime minister whose original support for Remain seems more baffling by the week combined to neuter the legislature. Hundreds of parliamentarians filed, dead-eyed, through the lobbies granting Theresa 15 May the untrammelled power to conduct and conclude exit talks most of them believe will do Britain harm. The referendum has tamed an institution meant to be constructively feral.

Parliament's spinelessness is matched only by its marginalisation. In his book, "The English Constitution", Walter Bagehot described the "nearly complete fusion" of executive and legislature as a 20 foundation of the British political system. ("To belong to a debating society adhering to an executive... is not an object to stir a noble ambition," he noted.) Mrs May's Great Repeal Bill, the coming legislation putting European laws on British books, offends this tradition. Its "Henry VIII" clauses would enable the prime minister to fiddle unilaterally with the tide of rules as it washes into Britain's environmental, employment, legal and tax regimes.

25 Ordinarily the opposition might be relied on to stand up to this sort of thing. But Jeremy Corbyn is no ordinary opposition leader. Only he could convene an "emergency" rally outside Parliament to protest against the triggering of Article 50 and then fail to turn up, while simultaneously whipping his own MPs to support it. If Mr Corbyn causes the prime minister any worry it is that she might forget his name in an interview. At this rate, domestic scrutiny of the government's negotiations with the EU will be patchy and, freshly Brexited, Britain will not face a serious choice at the 2020 election.

30 Then there is the cultural legacy of the referendum, which created the ugly precedent that someone's views on things like trade, immigration and financial regulation are matters of policy second and expressions of his very faith in the nation first. This elision of Brexit and the national interest has curdled British politics. "ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE", bellowed the right-wing *Daily Mail*, when judges ruled that Mrs May had to consult Parliament on launching the talks. More than that, it goes against the 35 Westminster system's way of doing things: unlike, say, France or America, Britain mostly keeps the tribalism and ceremony of the state (the "dignified" parts of the constitution, as Walter Bagehot put it) separate from the practical functioning of government (its "efficient" parts). Brexit has forced them together.

40 To follow some of the coverage of British politics you would think that the Scots, now closing in on a second independence referendum, all hated the English and adored the EU; that the old cared nothing about the prospects of the young; that the young were all vacuous virtue-signallers; that Remainers were snobby metropolitans who can state their bank balances only to the nearest thousand pounds and that Leavers were knuckle-dragging racists. It is odd to live in a country whose very name—the United Kingdom—sounds increasingly sarcastic.

45 This Britain feels quite unlike the one that hosted the Olympics with such cheer five years ago. These two moments, London 2012 and Article 50, 2017, bookend your columnist's time covering its politics. Now he is moving on, to a new beat in Berlin. He leaves as prone to gloom about Britain as he was to optimism when he started. [...]

So, who are the DUP?

Adam Ramsay, *Open Democracy*, 9 June 2017

5 The Democratic Unionist Party now look like the Tories preferred coalition partners. The DUP, which is the biggest Unionist (ie pro-UK) party in Northern Ireland, are often treated as though they are just the same as the other Unionist party they have essentially replaced – the Ulster Unionists. But while the UUP have a long running relationship with the Tories, and are a centre right party, the DUP are another thing entirely. The idea that they are near power in Westminster should worry us all. Here are some things you need to know.

10 Theresa May's new partners in government have strong historical links with Loyalist paramilitary groups. Specifically, the terrorist group Ulster Resistance was founded by a collection of people who went on to be prominent DUP politicians. Peter Robinson, for example, who was DUP leader and Northern Ireland's first minister until last year, was an active member of Ulster Resistance. The group's activities included collaborating with other terrorist groups including the Ulster Volunteer Force, to smuggle arms into the UK, such as RPG rocket launchers.

15 Of course, Northern Ireland has moved towards peace, and the DUP, like their opponents in Sinn Fein, have rescinded violence. As part of that normalisation, the fact that parties which include people who have rescinded violence can be brought into the democratic process is a good thing. But for the Tories to end an election campaign which they spent attacking Corbyn for his alleged links to former Northern Irish terrorists by going into coalition with a party founded by former Northern Irish terrorists would be a deep irony.

20 It's also important to know their politics. When Enoch Powell was expelled from the Tory party after his fascist turn, he moved to Northern Ireland. There, his campaign manager was a young man named Jeffrey Donaldson, who says on his website:

25 "I worked alongside two of the greatest names in Unionism in the 20th century. Between 1982 and 1984 I worked as Enoch Powell's constituency agent, successfully spearheading Mr. Powell's election campaigns of 1983 and 1986 when the South Down seat was retained despite the fact the constituency contained a natural 'nationalist' majority."

Donaldson is now the longest serving of the DUP's MPs.

The DUP also fights hard against women's right to choose to have an abortion, making them the biggest pro-forced pregnancy party in the UK. The results in Northern Ireland are utterly grim for the many women each year who are in need of an abortion.

30 Despite being climate change deniers, they used their role in government in Northern Ireland to set up a subsidy scheme for biofuels, which gave those who bought into it more money than they had to pay out. The Northern Irish exchequer ended up paying out around half a billion pounds to those who knew about the scheme, leading to a scandal known as 'cash for ash', and a major investigation into whether DUP staff and supporters personally benefitted.

35 The DUP have fought to stop equal marriage, making Northern Ireland the only part of this archipelago without equal relationship rights. Last year, DUP MP Sammy Wilson was caught up in a scandal when a member of the public said that Northern Ireland ought to "get the ethnics out", and he appeared to reply "you are absolutely right".

40 The party backed Brexit, and as openDemocracy exposed earlier in the year, accepted a donation of £435,000 to pay for campaign materials across the UK. Under pressure, they admitted that the cash came from a shady group called the Constitutional Research Council, which is chaired by Scottish Tory Richard Cook. openDemocracy research showed that Cook founded a company in 2013 with the former head of the Saudi intelligence service [...]

45 We don't know what the DUP will demand from the Tories in exchange for supporting them – perhaps just more cash for Northern Ireland, which would be no bad thing. But the idea of a government involving the DUP should worry us all, and the failure to ask any questions about their involvement during the BBC's coverage last night was fairly astonishing.

The world loves our grammar school system – so why don't we?

James Tooley, 27 May 2017, *The Spectator*

On the *Today* programme a month ago, Education Secretary Justine Greening was asked whether she could name any 'respected figure or institution' in favour of more grammar schools. She declined to answer, which was taken to mean that she couldn't, and that there wasn't.

5 I've been travelling a lot this year, so wasn't around to offer my support. I'm back now. Assuming that a professor of education at a Russell Group university is respectable enough, let me wade into the debate: yes, I'm in favour of more grammar schools.

Educational experts against more grammar schools — of which there are plenty — point to the current evidence from England and international evidence in their support. They're wrong to do so on both counts.

10 On current evidence, you can't read too much into it. Only 5 per cent of secondary schools in England are grammar, serving 5 per cent of students. These schools can afford to be ultra-selective, because there is so much demand for a tiny number of places. Any fool knows that this will lead to the parents with the sharpest elbows getting their kids in. And sure enough, that's what the evidence suggests happens.

15 Children going to grammar schools travel twice as far as those going to comprehensives, while proportionately three times as many children in grammars as in comprehensives cross local authority boundaries. All evidence is of pushy parents travelling far and wide to secure a grammar school place for their kids, even if they live in areas where there aren't any. A startling 13 per cent of grammar entrants come from fee-paying prep schools. This is not normal. If there were more grammar schools, you would not get these distortions.

20 One distortion that experts highlight is that less than 3 per cent of grammar students in England are on free school meals, the normal indicator of poverty. Agreed, that's not good — although less remarked upon is that it's similar to the situation in the top 500 comprehensives, which also have a much lower proportion of children on free school meals than other secondary schools in their local authority areas. The top 500 comprehensive schools of course are also selective: practising selection by postcode. I agree
25 with Theresa May: this is unfair, much more unfair than selection by merit. If you had more grammar schools, then you'd have schools which were far more open to all kinds of students, including those on free school meals.

30 How do I know? Because that's the case in Northern Ireland, where 45 per cent of youngsters go to grammar schools, which are ever increasing in popularity. As a proportion, there are more than four times more children on free school meals than in the singular grammar schools of England. Indeed, one grammar serving the lower Falls Road in deprived West Belfast has 38 per cent of its 1,180 pupils on free school meals. This is what you'll see in England as grammar schools become more commonplace.

Regarding international evidence, there's an elephant in the room that our educational experts, wilfully or otherwise, refuse to acknowledge.

35 What's the highest performing country on all international tests? Singapore, of course. What do the educational experts and the BBC put this down to? They invest more in their teachers, of course. No one mentions the feature of the Singaporean education system that cries out to be noticed: it's highly selective. What's more, it's explicitly modelled on the erstwhile grammar-school system of England and Wales that Mrs May is attempting to revitalise here.

40 [...] Those against selection in England tend to portray its supporters as mad swivel-eyed loon types. Not at all; we want England — and other parts of the UK if only they'd follow — to be as modern and competitive as Singapore, which boasts the world's third highest per capita GDP and its most open economy. Selection is not a throwback to the 1950s, but an embracing of a world of sophisticated 21st-century possibility.

Brexitland: People can't find homes. No wonder they were angry

23 March 2017, Owen Jones, *The Guardian*

"As a local mum, there's no way you can get on a housing register anymore," says Fay. It's a familiar story of what happens when government puts markets ahead of people's needs.

5 Mould was growing on the walls of Fay's ageing home; but she was told her son's disability was not extreme enough to be classified a priority. The council housing in the east London borough of Barking and Dagenham simply isn't there: with the failure to replace stock sold under right-to-buy, what remains is reserved for those most in need. And Fay does not qualify.

10 Britain's housing crisis has all sorts of consequences: it damages the health and education prospects of young people; it puts strains on families; and it inflames tensions by making locals feel they are in competition with one another. These tensions were part of what led to many communities voting to leave the European Union: in Barking and Dagenham 62% backed Brexit.

Locals are at pains to stress the community solidarity, the warmth, the liberty to knock on a neighbour's door for help. But pride at Ford's Dagenham factory – in its heyday it employed 40,000 locals – is accompanied by a sense of loss at its decline.

15 There are bright spots – the excitement about new film studios – but zero-hour contracts and low-paid service sector jobs are the reality for many youngsters. A housing crisis and a demographic shift – the white British population fell from 80% to 50% between 2001 and 2011 – led to resentment that was exploited. The BNP won 12 council seats in 2006.

20 Thankfully, the far right was soon voted out and every council seat went to Labour at the last elections. But the borough is far from united. The government's failure on housing is catastrophic: apart from the years when the Luftwaffe pounded Britain, you'd have to revert to the 1920s for a time when so few homes were being built. In a pokey office near Dagenham East tube station, councillor Margaret Mullane tells me that housing is the top issue in local surgeries, and the number one issue on the doorstep. As home ownership plummets to the lowest level in three decades, a generation is being driven into an unregulated and often unaffordable private rented sector. No wonder the borough voted for Brexit: force
25 people to feel they are competing for scarce resources, and some will start to question if the competition is legitimate.

30 As I drive around the borough with Darren Rodwell – who grew up on a local estate and now leads the council – he speaks passionately about efforts to resist government policy. The government, he says, has looked at the housing crisis and found innovative ways of making it even worse. Four of 10 council flats sold under right-to-buy are now rented out more expensively by private landlords, sometimes the children of parents who benefited from the policy.

35 The government is extending right-to-buy to housing associations, and abolishing lifetime security for council tenants. Unwilling to build houses with no security of tenure, the council has found an ingenious way around it: setting up its own private company, Reside, which offers secure tenancies of up to five years. A range of homes are on offer: rents for those on minimum wage, and homes at 65% and 80% of market rates.

40 There are criticisms, even from the local party. Phil Waker, a councillor who used to have the housing portfolio, doesn't believe the council is building enough homes for social rents. Indeed, the 30-year-old Labour activist Andrew Achilleos lives in a pilot offering rents at 65% of the market rate, and knows residents who have had to leave because they couldn't afford it. Yet it's difficult not to sympathise with a council that has limited options with a government determined to shred social housing.

So housing fuels tensions, but one should not downplay the impact of prejudice. I meet an elderly ex-Ford worker on his way to pay his rent at the council office. A Ukip supporter – he didn't vote before they came along – he peddles out-and-out myths.

45 "If you're the same colour as me you can't get a flat or anything like that. If you're one of the other colour you're alright. It's all wrong isn't it!" [...]

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Death and Tax Cuts

February 24, 2017 Paul Krugman

1 Across the country, Republicans have been facing crowds demanding to know how they will protect the 20 million Americans who gained health insurance thanks to the Affordable Care Act, and will lose it if the act is repealed. And after all that inveighing against the evils of Obamacare, it turns out that they've got nothing. Instead, they're talking about freedom — which these days is the real refuge of scoundrels. Actually, many prominent Republicans haven't even gotten to the point of trying to respond to criticism; they're just whining about how mean their constituents are being, and invoking conspiracy theories. Talk about snowflakes who can dish it out but can't take it!

5 Thus, Representative Jason Chaffetz insisted that the public outcry is just "a paid attempt to bully and intimidate"; Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, calls all anti-Trump demonstrations a "very paid, AstroTurf-type movement." And the tweeter in chief angrily declared that protests have been "planned out by liberal activists" — because what could be worse than political action by the politically active? But perhaps the saddest spectacle is that of Paul Ryan, the speaker of the House, whom the media have for years portrayed as a serious, honest conservative, a deep thinker about how to reform America's safety net. That reputation was never justified; still, even those of us who long ago recognized him as a flimflammer have been struck by his utter failure to rise to this occasion.

15 After years to prepare, Mr. Ryan finally unveiled what was supposedly the outline of a health care plan. It was basically a sick joke: flat tax credits, unrelated to income, that could be applied to the purchase of insurance. These credits would be obviously inadequate for the lower- and even middle-income families that gained coverage under Obamacare, so it would cause a huge surge in the number of uninsured. Meanwhile, the affluent would receive a nice windfall. Funny how that seems to happen in every plan Mr. Ryan proposes.

20 That was last week. This week, perhaps realizing how flat his effort fell, he began tweeting about freedom, which he defined as "the ability to buy what you want to fit what you need." Give me consumer sovereignty or give me death! And Obamacare, he declared, is bad because it deprives Americans of that freedom by doing things like establishing minimum standards for insurance policies.

25 I very much doubt that this is going to fly, now that ordinary Americans are starting to realize just how devastating loss of coverage would be. But for the record, let me remind everyone what we've been saying for years: Any plan that makes essential care available to everyone has to involve some restriction of choice. Suppose you want to make insurance available to people with pre-existing conditions. You can't just forbid insurance companies to discriminate based on medical history; if you do that, healthy people won't sign up until they get sick. So you have to mandate the purchase of insurance; and you have to provide subsidies to lower-income families so that they can afford the policies. The end result of this logic is ... Obamacare.

30 And one more thing: Insurance policies must meet a minimum standard. Otherwise, healthy people will buy cheap policies with paper-thin coverage and huge deductibles, which is basically the same as not buying insurance at all. So yes, Obamacare somewhat restricts choice — not because meddling bureaucrats want to run your life, but because some restrictions are necessary as part of a package that in many ways sets Americans free.

35 For health reform has been a hugely liberating experience for millions. It means that workers don't have to fear that quitting a job with a large company will mean loss of health coverage, and that entrepreneurs don't have to fear striking out on their own. It means that those 20 million people who gained coverage don't have to fear financial ruin if they get sick — or unnecessary death if they can't afford treatment. For there is no real question that Obamacare is saving tens of thousands of lives every year.

40 So why do Republicans hate Obamacare so much? It's not because they have better ideas; as we've seen over the past few weeks, they're coming up empty-handed on the "replace" part of "repeal and replace." It's not, I'm sorry to say, because they are deeply committed to Americans' right to buy the insurance policy of their choice. No, mainly they hate Obamacare for two reasons: It demonstrates that the government can make people's lives better, and it's paid for in large part with taxes on the wealthy. Their overriding goal is to make those taxes go away. And if getting those taxes cut means that quite a few people end up dying, remember: freedom!

45

*THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE***New Orleans mayor made a speech on race and history we all need to hear**

Mary Schmich

May 23, 2017

Some diehard defenders of the Confederacy are swearing that they'll never spend another nickel in New Orleans. No more Mardi Gras for these rebels. Bourbon Street will have to party on without them. They'll get their po' boys somewhere else, thank you. "Boycott NOLA!" is their battle cry. And their chief enemy? Mitch Landrieu. Landrieu, known in the boycott camp by names like "moron" and "monster," is officially known as the mayor of New Orleans.

A few days ago, as the last of the city's four giant Confederate statues came down, Landrieu, who is white, gave one of the great modern speeches on history and race in America, a speech that's as significant in Chicago as it is along Lake Pontchartrain. "Profound," tweeted Cory Booker, the African-American U.S. senator from New Jersey. I hadn't planned on reading it. Who reads a whole speech? By a mayor, any mayor anywhere? But after the accolades kept floating past on social media — "stunning," "moving," "must-read" — I clicked on the speech out of curiosity. I've been thinking about its eloquence, power and humility ever since.

I grew up in the South, surrounded by "rebel" flags and the legends of Confederate "heroes." I learned, as other white children did, that cheering for the Confederacy was an act of local pride, a defiance of the Northern invaders, a way to honor the valiant dead. Slavery was a side story. It's a measure of the era's segregation that I don't know what black children were taught. I was fortunate to have parents who didn't share the prevailing racial bigotry, but even so, the paraphernalia of the Confederacy was so ubiquitous that I didn't recognize it for what it was. Only after I left the South, at the end of eighth grade, did I grasp the full nature of those statues, flags and legends, the history they represented and perverted.

The perversion of history is a major point of Landrieu's speech. "These statues are not just stone and metal," he said. "They are not just innocent remembrances of a benign history. These monuments purposefully celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring the enslavement, and the terror that it actually stood for." The statues were erected, he said, some years after the South was defeated in the Civil War, under the influence of "The Cult of the Lost Cause." "This 'cult' had one goal," he said, "through monuments and through other means — to rewrite history to hide the truth, which is that the Confederacy was on the wrong side of humanity."

Many Americans, wherever they live, don't know as much as they think they do about American history. Many don't recognize that Northerners collaborated in and profited from the slave economy. Many prefer not to admit that the legacy of slavery continues to permeate every corner of our country. It's not just a Southern thing. But the South, which is also a land of deep beauty, confronts our shared past in a unique way, in the form of flags and statues that warp history. "To literally put the Confederacy on a pedestal in our most prominent places of honor is an inaccurate recitation of our full past," Landrieu said. He pointed out that New Orleans was once America's largest slave market, but there are no slave ship monuments on its soil, no prominent markers on public land to commemorate the lynchings and slave blocks. "So for those self-appointed defenders of history and the monuments," he said, "they are eerily silent on what amounts to this historical malfeasance, a lie by omission." Like many white Southerners, Landrieu had to grow into this understanding, despite growing up in a family that fought for civil rights. He had to see the problem before he could see what needed to change. "I must have passed by those monuments a million times without giving them a second thought," he said. "So I am not judging anybody, I am not judging people. We all take our own journey on race." Then he talked about the friend who asked him to imagine an African-American parent trying to explain to a child who the Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was and why he had a statue in the city. "Can you look into that young girl's eyes and convince her that Robert E. Lee is there to encourage her?" he asked. "Do you think she will feel inspired and hopeful by that story? Do these monuments help her see a future with limitless potential? Have you ever thought that if her potential is limited, yours and mine are too?"

Our racial problems, north, south, east and west, go far beyond Confederate statues, but removing them from glorified display isn't a loss of history. On the contrary, history is corrected and amplified. "Mitch Landrieu destroys New Orleans," tweeted a member of the Boycott Nola brigade on the day of Landrieu's speech. "#NOLA is officially dead to me," tweeted another. I think it's time for the rest of us to go spend some tourist dollars in New Orleans.

An American trade deal raises the prospect of more private involvement in British health care

Feb 9th, 2017, *The Economist*

AS BRITAIN considers its future outside the European Union, its main target for a post-Brexit trade deal is the United States. The prospect of opening up the American market is an enticing one. Yet some in Britain worry about what might be demanded in return. Perhaps most emotive is the suggestion that America could negotiate greater access for its companies to the National Health Service. Jonathan Ashworth, the shadow health secretary, has warned that a trade deal could lead to "stealth privatisation" of the NHS. "It is beyond belief that our prime minister is bartering away our health service in her desperation for post-Brexit trade deals," he recently said.

Private involvement in public health care has been growing in Britain for some time. After 1997 Tony Blair encouraged private providers to take on more NHS work, to help the service cope with increasing demand. That trend has continued. Government funding to the private sector reached £8.7bn (\$11bn) in 2016, or 7.6% of the NHS's total revenue budget.

Almost all American investment in British health care so far has been in the private sector, through acquisitions. Acadia, a Tennessee-based health-care giant, now owns the Priory Group, a chain of posh drying-out clinics and mental-health centres. Hospital Corporation of America owns several private hospitals in Britain, including the Portland, a favourite place for celebrities to give birth.

The involvement of foreign companies in providing services to the NHS, meanwhile, is marginal. Some believe that after Brexit the government might be tempted to open things up if it thought such a move could buy Britain better access to foreign markets. It would have leeway to do so, since it alone would be responsible for conducting the trade talks. "There is no involvement of civil society, trade unions or parliamentary oversight at all," complains Mark Dearn of War on Want, a campaigning charity. Others point to a precedent in the form of concessions that Australia made regarding its scheme for public drugs-purchasing, as part of a free-trade agreement with America in 2004.

It is conceivable that American firms might be allowed to tender for, say, a regional ambulance contract or community health services, just as European companies can, says Nick Fahy of Oxford University. British firms such as Virgin Care already do. But the government is unlikely to allow foreign firms to run large parts of the NHS such as hospital trusts, he believes. In the only example of its kind so far, Circle Health, a British company, took over management of Hinchingsbrooke hospital near Cambridge in 2012. The experiment was not considered much of a success and ended after three years. It is not likely to be repeated soon.

And there is a prior question: would American companies actually want to invest in the NHS? Public health-care systems in western Europe are among the only ones in the world where the money involved is enough to make investment worthwhile for American firms, if they could gain access. An American company that could demonstrate the ability to run a British hospital might persuade countries like Germany and France to open up to more outside investment. That is something European governments would not budge on during talks over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a now-doomed trade deal that America and the EU had explored in the pre-Trump era.

At the moment, however, there is little enthusiasm "in America or anywhere" to invest in British health care, says Richard Murray of the King's Fund, a think-tank. Government spending on health as a share of GDP is lower in Britain than in most of western Europe and the gap is forecast to increase. Many NHS trusts are in deficit. And dealing with the NHS can be a messy and frustrating business, far removed from the cash-rich American health-care machine. "Britain is just not a very attractive market," says Mr Murray.

[...] America will negotiate hard. But given the complexity, unprofitability and political sensitivity of dealing with the NHS, it seems unlikely that the feared "stealth privatisation" will take place. American companies will continue to invest in private health care in Britain—and leave the NHS to stagger on

Hipsters, heritage and Handel – how cities can escape London's shadow

28 April 2017, Simon Jenkins, *The Guardian*

Now it is Birmingham's turn. After two years in which Manchester has hogged the headlines as England's "second city", Birmingham is out to reclaim what was once its title. Next Thursday, both cities and four others are choosing elected mayors in what is billed as a rehearsal for the 8 June general election. The vote is also a chapter in the devolution of Britain, and in Theresa May's "rebalancing" of the economy away from London.

With Manchester looking a shoo-in for Andy Burnham, the focus is on Birmingham. Here the contest is neck-and-neck, between the Labour stalwart Siôn Simon and former John Lewis boss Andy Street. The Birmingham Mail last week had Simon slightly ahead after second preferences. Whoever wins will have the biggest personal mandate of any politician, apart from the London mayor.

[...] The question – and it applies to the new mayors across the country – is whether the winner can mobilise their "soft power" to put their region on the national map. Simon is aware of the problem. "West Midlands has lost our pride in itself, our sense of our story. We have the most vital culture outside London, with the youngest population in Europe after Turkey." Yet his fellow Midlanders keep talking themselves down. "The worst thing you can be in Birmingham is a bragger."

Less a politician than a chief executive, Street is energetic and pragmatic. To him, the mayoral job is to "keep out of the hair" of the council leaders and be their regional coordinator and champion. As chairman of the Birmingham local enterprise partnership, which he claims has brought the region 300,000 private sector jobs, he views the mayoralty as being about lobbying, "cutting deals with government".

Birmingham's challenge to Manchester is plausible. The conurbations have similar populations. Birmingham claims primacy as the richer city and the most business-friendly outside the capital. It leads Manchester in the startup stakes. Last year it won 1,200 jobs from the coup of the new headquarters for HSBC. It entices 6,000 people a year to migrate north from London, largely in search of a cheaper home. As a magnet it claims to lead both Bristol and Manchester.

Birmingham's relative proximity to London could be either a boon or a curse. Critics have suggested the much-vaunted HS2 will make Birmingham "the Croydon of the Midlands", joining East Anglia and the south coast as commuter suburbs of the capital. Rather than links to London, Birmingham most needs better internal road and rail links.

If the city's secret weapon is the state of London's housing market – which at the last count had helped send 60,000 thirtysomethings out of the capital – its most oft-cited handicap is its image, of bleak 60s architecture and Spaghetti Junction motorways, a legacy of the car crash that was its postwar rebuild under council leader Frank Price and his chief planner, Herbert Manzoni. They turned central Birmingham into somewhere more appropriate to a Formula One circuit. To Manzoni, "tangible links with the past" were pointless. Swaths of a central area that rivalled Manchester as a Victorian masterpiece were razed to the ground.

Today's Birmingham is fighting back. The city has "more canals than Venice", say the property ads. The fast-gentrifying Jewellery Quarter is Britain's finest concentration of still-active craftsmen. Oases of urban civility such as Gas Street basin and Digbeth offer respite from the inner ring roads. Birmingham planners should imitate Boston and create linear parks by grassing over its downtown motorways.

These days it is the old parts of cities that attract the start-up businesses and leisure uses that induce the young not to take the royal road to London. Inner cities need fizz. Inter-city rivalry lies not in HSBC and Deutsche Bank; it lies in Birmingham's orchestras and Jewellery Quarter, versus Manchester's Halle and Northern Quarter. It lies not in corporate HQs but in Handel, hipsters and heritage.

Birmingham, like Manchester, is about to experience the new politics that London has enjoyed since 2000. It is a measure of this politics that neither candidate's manifesto mentions Theresa May or Jeremy Corbyn. Simon barely even mentions the Labour party. But both call in aid the great Joe Chamberlain, creator of modern Birmingham.

As it was my birthplace, I long for Birmingham to come up to the mark. But what matters most is that Britain's cities can find a new political potency to rival not each other but London. From such rivalry everyone wins.

*THE ATLANTIC***The Conservative Case for Voting for Clinton**

David Frum, November 2, 2016

1 [...] That Donald Trump has approached so near the White House is a bitter reproach to everybody who had the power to stop him. I include myself in this reproach. Early on, I welcomed Trump's up-ending of some outdated Republican Party dogmas—taking it for granted that of course such a ridiculous and obnoxious fraud could never win a major party's nomination. But Trump did win. Now, he stands within a percentage point or two or at most four of the presidency of the United States. Having failed to act promptly at the outset, it's all the more important to act decisively before it's too late. The lesson Trump has taught is not only that certain Republican dogmas have passed out of date, but that American democracy itself is much more vulnerable than anyone would have believed only 24 months ago. Incredibly, a country that—through wars and depression—so magnificently resisted the authoritarian temptations of the mid-20th century has half-yielded to a more farcical version of that same threat without any of the same excuse. The hungry and houseless Americans of the Great Depression sustained a constitutional republic. How shameful that the Americans of today—so vastly better off in so many ways, despite their undoubted problems—have done so much less well.

15 I have no illusions about Hillary Clinton. I expect policies that will seem to me at best counter-productive, at worst actively harmful. America needs more private-market competition in healthcare, not less; lighter regulation of enterprise, not heavier; reduced immigration, not expanded; lower taxes, not higher. On almost every domestic issue, I stand on one side; she stands on the other. I do not imagine that she will meet me, or those who think like me, anywhere within a country mile of half-way.

20 But she is a patriot. She will uphold the sovereignty and independence of the United States. She will defend allies. She will execute the laws with reasonable impartiality. She may bend some rules for her own and her supporters' advantage. She will not outright defy legality altogether. Above all, she can govern herself; the first indispensable qualification for governing others.

25 So I will vote for the candidate who rejects my preferences and offends my opinions. (In fact, I already have voted for her.) Previous generations accepted infinitely heavier sacrifices and more dangerous duties to defend democracy. I'll miss the tax cut I'd get from united Republican government. But there will be other elections, other chances to vote for what I regard as more sensible policies. My party will recover to counter her agenda in Congress, moderate her nominations to the courts, and defeat her bid for re-election in 2020. I look forward to supporting Republican recovery and renewal.

30 This November, however, I am voting not to advance my wish-list on taxes, entitlements, regulation, and judicial appointments. I am voting to defend Americans' profoundest shared commitment: a commitment to norms and rules that today protect my rights under a president I don't favor, and that will tomorrow do the same service for you.

Vote the wrong way in November, and those norms and rules will shudder and shake in a way unequaled since the Union won the Civil War.

35 I appreciate that Donald Trump is too slovenly and incompetent to qualify as a true dictator. This country is not so broken as to allow a President Trump to arrest opponents or silence the media. Trump is a man without political ideas. Trump's main interest has been and will continue to be self-enrichment by any means, no matter how crooked. His next interest after that is never to be criticized by anybody for any reason, no matter how justified—maybe most especially when justified. Yet Trump does not need to achieve a dictatorship to subvert democracy. This is the age of "illiberal democracy," as Fareed Zakaria calls it, and across the world we've seen formally elected leaders corrode democratic systems from within. Surely the American system of government is more robust than the Turkish or Hungarian or Polish or Malaysian or Italian systems. But that is not automatically true. It is true because of the active vigilance of freedom-loving citizens who put country first, party second. Not in many decades has that vigilance been required as it is required now.

40 Your hand may hesitate to put a mark beside the name, Hillary Clinton. You're not doing it for her. The vote you cast is for the republic and the Constitution.

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

Trump's One Public Service Was Exposing the Misogyny of the GOP

Rebecca Traister, October 10, 2016

1 [...] The worldview that Trump has affirmed over and over and over again, during decades in the public
eye, is one in which women are show horses, sexual trophies, and baby machines, and, therefore, their agency,
consent, and participation don't matter. Misogyny isn't always contained within or proven by a single instance
of crowing about nonconsensual kissing; it's communicated via a far larger web of attitudes about women as
5 subsidiary objects, as having solely erotic or aesthetic value, as existing only in relationship to men. How can
anyone be shocked that a man who calls women pieces of ass also talks about grabbing them by the pussy?

Republicans are not shocked; they're scared. Donald Trump is losing and they are beginning to
understand that his loss is going to expose them, not simply to partisan defeat, but as a party that has been
covert in its cohesion around the very biases that he makes coarse and plain.

10 Trump's attitudes about women are not different from the attitudes that have been supported by the
contemporary Republican Party via their legislative agenda. Many of the very politicians who led the stampede
away from Trump this weekend — from House Speaker Paul Ryan and Utah representative Jason Chaffetz to
former Republican presidential candidate John McCain and Trump's running mate, Mike Pence — have
dedicated themselves in recent years to shutting down Planned Parenthood, thus preventing women from
15 controlling their own reproduction. The 2012 Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, who said he was
"offended [and] dismayed" by the Trump tape, vetoed a Massachusetts bill that would have provided rape
victims access to emergency contraception, told college students to hetero-marry early and opposed the Lilly
Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. These are politicians who regularly vote against the Paycheck Fairness Act and oppose
paid-family-leave legislation and the raising of the minimum wage that would make millions of women more
20 economically stable. Chaffetz voted against the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2013,
while Pence, Ryan, and Chaffetz co-sponsored a bill that would have limited the definition of rape to include
only "forcible" assaults; Pence signed an Indiana law that requires funerals or cremations for fetuses, tried to
ban women from aborting because of fetal genetic abnormalities, suggested that legalizing gay marriage would
lead to "societal collapse," and in 1997 wrote a letter to the Indianapolis *Star* decrying the harm done to
25 children when mothers go to work and rely on day care.

Which is worse: Threatening to grab someone by the pussy or forcing someone to carry and give birth to
a baby that is the result of rape? Which is worse: Popping a Tic Tac in preparation for forced extramarital
kissing with a stranger or actively discouraging women's full participation in the workforce? The answer is:
None of these is worse; they are all of a kind. The view of women as yours to control via political power, star
30 power, or simply patriarchal power, is what Republicans — not just Trump, but lots of Republicans — have
been doing for years as they work to reduce reproductive-rights access and reinstall women in early marriage
and traditional hetero homes where their competitive, independent, threatening power might be better contained.

In other words, the party's policies are built on the same frame that Trump's words and personal actions
are: a fundamental lack of recognition of women as full human beings. If you doubt it, look no further than the
35 words these guys used in their theatrical disavowals of Trump this weekend. "Women are to be championed and
revered," said Ryan, making women sound like quailing damsels or icy goddesses, but not actual humans.
Mitch McConnell expressed his disapproval as "the father of three daughters," while Pence said in
a statement that he was offended "as a husband and a father" and Romney railed that Trump's comments
"demean our wives and daughters." Here is their apprehension of women: They are discernible as worthy of
40 respect only as extensions of male identity — as wives, daughters, their recognizable subsidiaries. Has none of
these men ever had a female colleague or friend on whose behalf they might reasonably be offended? Are they
not moved by the treatment of women even with whom they have had no personal interaction?

THE WASHINGTON POST

The Trump Pivot: Make the Plutocrats Happy. Keep Feeding his Voters Nativism.

Greg Sargent April 14, 2017

1 [...] Please — let's not forget two really important storylines that continue to mark the Trump presidency, both of which are damaging the country. First, for all the talk about how Trump is backing off of Stephen K. Bannon's "economic nationalism," Trump remains fully committed to the policies that embody the *nativist and xenophobic* side of his nationalism. Second, for all the chatter about how Trump is suddenly getting more conventional, his serial
5 shredding of our norms on ethics and transparency continues to run rampant.

The Wall Street Journal reports this morning that Trump's reversal on the value of the Export-Import Bank and on whether to label China a currency manipulator reflect a "growing reliance on former corporate executives in his White House — and business leaders outside of it." Meanwhile, the Post reports that White House "moderates" aligned with Wall Street, such as Cohn and Jared Kushner, are "racking up successes in a battle over ideology and control" with
10 the Bannon wing. This will be clear in the coming prioritization of tax reform. But it has long been obvious that Trump was going to govern in ways that Wall Street aligned GOP elites are perfectly comfortable with. Trump's agenda has long included elements that conventional conservative Republicans support: deregulation of Wall Street; a rollback of regulations to protect the environment and combat climate change; deep tax cuts for the rich and businesses. All of that has been underway or in the planning stages since the beginning.

15 Trump's reversals on trade and Ex-Im should only be surprising if you took his economic populism seriously during the campaign. But there was never any grounds for thinking it amounted to anything concrete at all in policy terms. Trump blustered a lot about trade, but he never detailed an actual agenda on it, let alone one that would help workers. He talked tough about raising taxes for the rich before releasing a tax plan that would slash them dramatically. Pundits told us for months that Trump's economic nationalism represented a heterodox combination of hard-line
20 immigration restrictionism and a decisive break with Paul Ryan's Ayn Randian Republicanism on Keynesian spending and social insurance and the safety net. But the second half of that was always mostly nonsense, and all that's happening now is that this is getting confirmed.

Bannonite populism supposedly held out the promise of massive infrastructure spending, but it looks more likely we'll end up with a cronyist tax break and privatization scheme, not a genuine public expenditure. White House
25 budget director Mick Mulvaney declined to say in a recent interview whether Trump would veto a bill that contains Ryanesque Medicare "reforms," i.e., cuts. In other words, Ryanesque entitlement reform is alive as a real possibility. Meanwhile, on Obamacare, Trump continues to pursue a deal with conservatives on repeal, which means he is moving towards *more* deregulation, even as he remains fully committed to rolling back health coverage for 24 million people.

30 But the first half of the equation — the immigration restrictionism — remains fully in force on the level of policy. The administration continues to defend the travel ban in court and remains fully committed to building the Mexican wall. On deportations, the reign of fear is kicking in. Parents are yanking kids from day care out of fear of removal; longtime residents with no other offenses are getting deported; the administration continues to try to strong-arm sanctuary cities into enforcing the federal immigration crackdown. As ABC News reports this morning: "The
35 deportation force looks like it's coming together — just more quietly than anticipated." At the same time, as Matthew Yglesias points out, Attorney General Jeff Sessions is busily implementing a number of xenophobic and draconian policies, even as the Beltway press extols Trump's "moderation": "Over the course of the past few weeks, Sessions has indicated a desire to roll back civil rights oversight of abusive police departments, stampeded over states' objections to immigration enforcement raids at courthouses, dropped efforts to improve forensic science, directed federal prosecutors to dedicate a larger share of their resources to deporting immigrants, launched a new crackdown on high-tech guest
40 worker visas, and indicated a desire to bring back old-school "war on drugs" policies, including a stepped-up federal crackdown on marijuana use."

Wall Street and GOP elites may be glad to see Trump reverting to form on the issues that matter to them. But — while these elites would perhaps like to see immigration reform — how much do they really care about the ugly nativist stuff that's proceeding under the radar? Meanwhile, the trips to Mar-a-Lago (which use the White House to enrich the
45 Trump family) and the refusal to release Trump's tax returns and show transparency about his finances (which allows untold other conflicts of interest to remain undetected) doesn't appear to concern them too much, either. The "economic" nationalism is no longer operative (if it ever was), but the ethno-nationalism and the corruption are running as strong as ever.

The cause of death that dare not speak its name: austerity

15 April 2017, Gary Younge, *The Guardian*

[...] There have over the years been a number of explanations for both the existence, prevalence and growth in knife crime among the young. David Cameron laid some of the responsibility on BBC Radio 1 and its hip-hop output; Tony Blair just came straight out and blamed black kids: "We won't stop this by pretending it isn't young black kids doing it." Gangs, drugs, culture, lenient sentencing, absent fathers, police being too sensitive to be effective – and police being insufficiently sensitive to be trusted – have all been suggested at various times. In an editorial this week the London Evening Standard argued: "education and better parenting, coupled with greater responsibility from the minority of retailers who still sell knives to juveniles, offer the best solutions."

10 Some of these explanations make sense. (Drugs, for example, have been a factor at some points.) Some are nonsense. (Britain's parenting, for example, hasn't suddenly become worse.)

15 Race appears to be a false flag. National statistics that break down knife crime by ethnicity are not publicly available. Research indicates that once social class is taken into account, black kids are no more likely to be involved than their white counterparts. Of the 11 children and teens who have been killed by knives so far this year, most have been white – but in the national press the term "knife crime" has only been used when black people are killed.

20 But it seems there is one enduring explanation for why things have been deteriorating among young people in particular in recent years: austerity. In 2011, the government scrapped the education maintenance allowance, the £30 weekly grant to low-income students who are in school or college. Funding for the education of 16- to 19-year-olds fell by 14% in real terms between 2010 and 2014, leaving sixth-form colleges struggling for survival. Since 2010 there has been a £387m cut in youth services, and between 2012 and 2016 603 youth clubs were closed. In London, £28m has been slashed from youth services budgets in the last five years, leading to 36 youth centres in the capital closing. A starved NHS is unable to adequately provide mental health assistance to the young. The government now plans to cut funding to schools in urban areas.

25 Once the government has made the political choices that effectively produce a crisis, it then expects the police to establish order and calm over the instability. Only it's cutting the police too. "We're leading to a very serious conclusion regarding the potentially perilous state of policing," said Zoë Billingham, Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary, recently. "It's a red flag that we're raising at this stage. A large red flag."

30 Police say that young people who are carrying knives increasingly do so not through gang affiliation but for protection; youth workers say they are scared and don't trust the police to protect them. In short, as a nation we are actively and consciously underfunding our kids.

35 Few would make the claim that there is a direct, seamless, causal link between these cuts and the rise in violent crime. Government policy does not put a knife in a child's hand and encourage them to use it. But any insistence on personal responsibility must be weighed against the collective responsibility societies assume when it comes to keeping children safe.

Nor could anyone reasonably claim that this is the exclusive reason for the increase – the causes of knife crime are multilayered and complex and it was trending down for the first few years of the coalition before its recent rise

40 But as the cuts go deeper, leaving vulnerable people more desperate, the contextual connection is compelling. If you make it harder for young people to stay in education, harder for them to get treatment if they are mentally ill, harder for them to find safe and productive places to spend leisure time with each other and with adults who are trained to work with them, then we should not be surprised to see an increase in social problems among the young – including social violence in general and knife crime in particular.

45 Austerity has become such an established feature of our political economy that many are becoming blind to its ramifications. Keep tightening the belt by degrees for long enough and we forget why it is we are struggling to breathe. In all sorts of ways we are creating obstacles for our young people to succeed, and in so doing setting too many of them up for failure. In this particularly gruesome way, we are seeing the results.

Corbyn is leading his party into the grave

26 January 2017, Philip Collins, *The Times*

There is more than a phonetic association, wrote Theodor Adorno in *The Culture Industry*, between museum and mausoleum. Items have to become relics before they become exhibits. The museum is a space reserved for artefacts that are now curiosities because time has taken their purpose. Tristram Hunt, who has resigned as a Labour MP to direct the Victoria and Albert museum, may be the first person to
5 abandon a mausoleum because he could sense more life in a museum. Written out of the story by bigger events and real politics, the Labour party might be turning into a museum piece.

An inexperienced prime minister is struggling to command the most intractable policy problem in modern British history. A not notably talented cabinet communicates little imagination or energy. The NHS is struggling. Industrial relations are poor. Yet Labour is at 24 points in the latest opinion poll, 16 points
10 behind the Conservative Party. There is no political question to which Labour is genuinely relevant. No pressure is exerted on the government. They might as well not be there, which prompts the thought that perhaps they won't be.

The settled strategy of MPs who know Mr Corbyn is a calamity is to wait for the party to be thrashed at a general election. From that low base, held in place by the resilient 25 per cent of the nation they believe
15 to be inveterately Labour, they will then rebuild. That process will take a decade and, remember, these are the party's optimists talking. The conventional two-party view might now be wrong. Labour MPs may be reckoning without the change that two referendums have done to politics. Scotland has gone and it is not beyond the realm of the conceivable that England might follow. Harold Wilson once bound his split by going to the people for a vote on Europe. If that first referendum helped to shore up the Labour Party,
20 the second may be its gravedigger.

The dilemma is now widely acknowledged but rarely confronted. Gareth Snell, the newly selected Labour candidate for Tristram Hunt's vacated seat in Stoke-on-Trent Central, spoke for one section of the party and its voters when he declared that leaving the European Union was "a pile of shit". The small problem with that stance is that it was a pile that 70 per cent of the people of Stoke-on-Trent voted for. There is,
25 rather improbably, a story by Jorge Luis Borges that has a scene in Stoke-on-Trent. It is called *The Garden of Forking Paths*. That is what you have here. The path marked Remain leads you to trouble in Stoke-on-Trent. The path marked Leave leads you to trouble in university towns where the Lib Dems offer an alternative to Labour.

This need not be a terminal dilemma. A clever leader would do three things. First, change the subject as
30 often as possible. Talk about the NHS, education and productivity. Keep reminding the nation that, while the government is preoccupied with the self-inflicted task of leaving the EU, the world goes on and it is not looking good. Second, change the conversation about immigration so it is about more than the numbers. Make a point of applauding work (the clue is in the name Labour) and start an argument about a welfare state that respects contribution as much as need. Third, define the nation after leaving the EU in
35 your own image. Argue that a country that is less reliant on immigration is now going to have to take the training of its own workforce, and its own problem with low pay, much more seriously.

On all three points, the apparent dilemma of Labour's position disappears. The working class and the middle-class supporters of the Labour Party come back into coalition. These are the lines a good leader would be developing. When the economy dips, as it will, a Labour leader who was a viable alternative
40 prime minister could do really well. There is no point moaning about the predicament the party faces after the referendum. Good politicians find a garden path that they can walk down.

Unfortunately, Labour does not have such a leader, nor the political wit at the top to devise ingenious ways through a contradiction. Mr Corbyn is more likely to suffer the fate of the Stoke character in HG Wells's short story *The Cone* who is pushed into an ironworks melting-pot and is consumed by the flames.

45 It is time to take seriously the prospect that he may take the Labour Party with him. [...]

*THE NEW YORKER***Making America White Again**

Toni Morrison November 21, 2016

1 This is a serious project. All immigrants to the United States know (and knew) that if they want to become real, authentic Americans they must reduce their fealty to their native country and regard it as secondary, subordinate, in order to emphasize their whiteness. Unlike any nation in Europe, the United States holds whiteness as the unifying force. Here, for many people, the definition of "Americanness" is color. Under slave laws, the necessity for color rankings was obvious, but in America today, post-civil-rights legislation, white people's conviction of their natural superiority is being lost. Rapidly lost. There are "people of color" everywhere, threatening to erase this long-understood definition of America. And what then? Another black President? A predominantly black Senate? Three black Supreme Court Justices? The threat is frightening.

10 In order to limit the possibility of this untenable change, and restore whiteness to its former status as a marker of national identity, a number of white Americans are sacrificing themselves. They have begun *to do things they clearly don't really want to be doing*, and, to do so, they are (1) abandoning their sense of human dignity and (2) risking the appearance of cowardice. Much as they may hate their behavior, and know full well how craven it is, they are willing to kill small children attending Sunday school and slaughter churchgoers who invite a white boy to pray. Embarrassing as the obvious display of cowardice must be, they are willing to set fire to churches, and to start firing in them while the members are at prayer. And, shameful as such demonstrations of weakness are, they are willing to shoot black children in the street.

20 To keep alive the perception of white superiority, these white Americans tuck their heads under cone-shaped hats and American flags and deny themselves the dignity of face-to-face confrontation, training their guns on the unarmed, the innocent, the scared, on subjects who are running away, exposing their unthreatening backs to bullets. Surely, shooting a fleeing man in the back hurts the presumption of white strength? The sad plight of grown white men, crouching beneath their (better) selves, to slaughter the innocent during traffic stops, to push black women's faces into the dirt, to handcuff black children. Only the frightened would do that. Right?

25 These sacrifices, made by supposedly tough white men, who are prepared to abandon their humanity out of fear of black men and women, suggest the true horror of lost status.

30 It may be hard to feel pity for the men who are making these bizarre sacrifices in the name of white power and supremacy. Personal debasement is not easy for white people (especially for white men), but to retain the conviction of their superiority to others—especially to black people—they are willing to risk contempt, and to be reviled by the mature, the sophisticated, and the strong. If it weren't so ignorant and pitiful, one could mourn this collapse of dignity in service to an evil cause. The comfort of being "naturally better than," of not having to struggle or demand civil treatment, is hard to give up. The confidence that you will not be watched in a department store, that you are the preferred customer in high-end restaurants—these social inflections, belonging to whiteness, are greedily relished.

35 So scary are the consequences of a collapse of white privilege that many Americans have flocked to a political platform that supports and translates violence against the defenseless as strength. These people are not so much angry as terrified, with the kind of terror that makes knees tremble.

40 On Election Day, how eagerly so many white voters—both the poorly educated and the well educated—embraced the shame and fear sowed by Donald Trump. The candidate whose company has been sued by the Justice Department for not renting apartments to black people. The candidate who questioned whether Barack Obama was born in the United States, and who seemed to condone the beating of a Black Lives Matter protester at a campaign rally. The candidate who kept black workers off the floors of his casinos. The candidate who is beloved by David Duke and endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan.

45 William Faulkner understood this better than almost any other American writer. In "Absalom, Absalom," incest is less of a taboo for an upper-class Southern family than acknowledging the one drop of black blood that would clearly soil the family line. Rather than lose its "whiteness" (once again), the family chooses murder.

Nigel Farage is still King Ukip - but Paul Nuttall is learning fast

Kirstie McCrum, 17 February 2017, *The New Statesman*

The new Ukip leader found his audience when he promised "Brexit means exit".

It's been a tricky week for Ukip, but you wouldn't guess from the way Nigel Farage came to the stage at the party's spring conference.

With the *Game Of Thrones* theme booming across the hall in Bolton's Macron Stadium, the former leader 5 strutted down the aisle buffeted by security detail and photographers, stopping to warmly shake hands and beaming all round.

It turned out that the grand old man of Ukip has no need for the leadership title which Paul Nuttall now wears - to his fanbase, he was already the star.

But it seems like there may be room for both men at the top. The reception for each scaled dizzying heights of 10 excitement in a hall pumped up on post-Brexit fervour.

First out was would-be UK Ambassador Farage, his ruddy cheeks aglow with the praise of US President Donald Trump.

Introduced by party chairman Paul Oakden as "a man who has changed and continues to change the course of history", the larger-than-life character of the Brexiteer-in-chief has only grown bigger in the last seven months.

15 "It's remarkable to think that 2016 is one of those years that children will read about in history books in 100 or 200 years' time," he declared. "They will read that 2016 was a year of political revolution. And it was all started by Ukip."

Farage also clearly relishes the part that he has played, by his own declaration, in the election of Trump. In his speech, he touched on his own special relationship with the new Commander-in-Chief.

20 "People like myself or Trump have been held up to hold the most outrageous political views," he said. He cited Chatham House figures suggesting more than 50 per cent of the population in eight European countries said they wanted a "total end to all immigration from predominantly Muslim countries".

"Far from leading public opinion, we now find ourselves firmly on the left of public opinion," he declared. Karl Marx no doubt turned in his grave.

25 Next up was present Ukip leader Paul Nuttall, who stormed onto the stage to the Lightning Seeds' *Marvellous*, his face shining in the flashing lights of masses of press photographers.

Where Farage's speech featured his own place in the sweeping political changes, Nuttall zeroed in more closely on manifesto affairs. He demanded that the government repeal the 1972 European Communities Act.

30 "We have nothing to fear, Project Fear has failed," he claimed. "Manufacturing is up, unemployment is down, we are the fastest growing economy in the G7." Nuttall also elaborated on a plan to slash VAT on everything from domestic energy bills to hot takeaway food "so we can return to the days when things were cheap as chips".

Where Farage and Nuttall had the same message, it was for Labour - Ukip is coming for you. "Ukip will eventually replace the Labour party as the voice of the patriotic people of Britain - starting on February 23," 35 Nuttall declared, referencing the Stoke by-election in which he is standing. Both men tried to present it as being in the bag.

He did offer an apology for erroneous information which somehow ended up on his website suggesting he had lost close friends at Hillsborough (he hasn't), but also claimed there was a smear campaign against him.

Still, for all the discussion of policies and personality, the new leader clearly understands what the Ukip party 40 members' catnip is.

"We must hold the government's feet to the fire and ensure that Brexit means exit," he said. The last lines of his speech could easily have been transposed from Farage, who has been chanting the same refrain for decades.

"We want our country back and we're going to get it," Nuttall roared, and applause in the hall rose again.

May has my vote but only with gritted teeth

Matthew Parris, 3 June 2017, *The Times*

This has been a stupid election and the British do not like stupid elections. Conservative voters certainly don't. Theresa May and her team have insulted our intelligence with their silly slogans, parroting what people needed no help in working out for themselves, that Jeremy Corbyn is unsuited to be prime minister. It looked unthoughtful and undignified and did not play to Mrs May's strengths. This Tory campaign has given every appearance of having been laboratory-tested on rats.

We will never entirely forgive the Tories for insulting our intelligence and we will surely retain a sliver of respect for Jeremy Corbyn for not having done so. The Conservative Party will end up next weekend with more seats and less admiration than they had two months ago. To have irritated the electorate to the point where they tell pollsters they might actually send to Downing Street a man they have already told pollsters they don't think is up to the job is some achievement by the Tory campaign team.

Arrogance? Over-confidence? Maybe. But have you detected from the start — even in those heady days when majorities approaching 200 were being gaily predicted by some — a whiff of panic at the top of the Conservative Party? Not just Mrs May but the whole leadership seemed to start this campaign all pumped-up and angry: shouty and personal, a bit like Jeremy Paxman in his interviews with Corbyn and May this week. Why? This was a governing party predicted to romp home against weak and uncertain opposition. They could have shown grace, a willingness to listen, a quiet confidence. They could have looked like the party trying to raise the tone; they could have been polite. They could have reflected in their demeanour the uplifting and inclusive language of their manifesto.

Instead we've had bluster and abuse. On everything that didn't matter, wasn't a serious threat or was an argument already won, noise. And on the one thing they actually said they'd called the election to settle, silence. Silence, too, from the Labour Party. And silence from much of the press.

Our silence should worry us. Nobody dares talk about Brexit. On this page last week I listed some of the huge questions to which we should be seeking answers, opinion and advice. Yet by Thursday next week all we shall have heard is silence. Many of those who cried "stay" are disheartened and many of those who cry "leave" are scared.

A third group, however, are key to the silence. There is a tendency in human beings to plough on with a bad decision simply because it has already been made: to see our fate before our eyes, and march on into it. Only a fifth of British voters now say they'd like to see the referendum result overturned, although about half still think the referendum gave the wrong answer. This dangerous mental process is amplified in the House of Commons. Only 158 MPs in the last parliament backed Leave, according to BBC estimates. About 490 backed Remain, but with the referendum result hanging above them like a great iron weight, parliamentary support for the triggering of Article 50 was crushing.

Of course if you'd been a Remainer who had also voted to hold the referendum, you'd be hard put to explain why you didn't now want to proceed. So the general election silence from Remain politicians of both main parties is explicable if not admirable. The silence from those who backed Leave needs a more subtle explanation. It is the ominous silence of the salesman whose insistent patter dries up as he watches the pen hover above the signature. Even at this eleventh hour, could the whole Brexit adventure go wrong?

For the signs are that it is. Our appreciation of the sheer complexity of disentanglement and our ill-preparedness for the task is growing.

[...]

On Thursday I shall grit my teeth and do my duty without hesitation, voting Conservative for the very good reason that the alternative is unthinkable. Millions will do the same. But a few million of us now, and potentially tens of millions in the year to come, will not despair of stopping what Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn both call unstoppable. It has not yet happened. The thought has not yet occurred. But it may. And it may happen as fast as respect for the Tories gave way to anger. The electorate are getting nervy.

THE DAILY BEAST

New Year's Resolution for the Left: Make Sure 'Multiculturalism' Includes White People

Michael Tomasky

December 30, 2016

1 [...] Liberalism needs people who can talk about middle-class and working-class people the right way and in the right places. It also needs, desperately, to spread facts and smother anti-facts. The triumph of anti-facts—a presidential candidate who lied as naturally as he drew breath, the rise of fake news, the plain refusal of 30 or 40 percent of the population to believe true things—is a major crisis for democracy.

5 This loomed large in the Brexit vote and was arguably dispositive as Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson and others sold the Leave position by boasting about the windfall it would bring the NHS and other government services, which they quickly and casually walked back after the vote. And I'm sure you know in gory detail than you'd prefer how, the movement against fact, in its many guises, mattered here.

10 We need a strategy for combatting this. Rich liberals trying to think of ways to spend their money could do a lot worse than to create an organization that simply promulgates known facts in ways that will educate at least some percentage of Americans. A poll came out before Christmas showing that more than a third of Americans think the number of uninsured *increased* in the last five years. Even one in five Clinton voters thought this. The news media can no longer be relied upon to state these plain truths. So liberals need to think of ways to get more Americans to know more factual things. The point would not be to persuade conservatives; half of Trump voters said in the same poll that they still think Obama comes from Kenya, so they're unpersuadable. But if 8 percent of the middle 30 percent of voters can be reached, that will be enough to swing elections and public opinion.

20 But here is American liberalism's biggest short-term job, what should be its 2017 New Year's Resolution, and some of you aren't going to like it: See to it that multiculturalism includes white people. And not urban white people or Jewish white people or gay white people or white people who live in hipster neighborhoods and wear ironic eyewear. Suburban, gray-haired, church-going white people.

Mark Lilla got a lot of praise, and took a lot of heat, for that *New York Times* op-ed on how this election should toll the death knell of identity politics on the left. I don't understand why that struck like such a thunderbolt. I was making such arguments 20 years ago, as were several others, notably Todd Gitlin.

25 Lilla was criticized on the left for seeming to take the concerns of marginalized groups lightly and to open the door for a liberal politics in which those concerns are relegated to the kids' table. I can see why liberal readers reacted that way, especially considering the larger context that the White House had just been snapped up by the most openly racist and misogynistic candidate in modern history.

30 But Lilla's money paragraph said something liberals need to think about. Clinton, he wrote, had tended to call out explicitly to "African American, Latino, LGBT and women voters at every stop, the noting that "if you are going to mention groups in America, you had better mention all of them. If you don't, those left out will notice and feel excluded."

35 I don't know how true this was of Clinton herself, but it's true of liberalism in recent years in a broad sense. In our political-media shorthand, adjectives like *white* and *church-going* and *suburban* connote *conservative*, but it just isn't necessarily so. I know lots of these people. My dear mom was one, and virtually all her friends from church. Loads of old high-school classmates. Most are more middle class than working class, though some are the latter. They may not check every single box. They may squirm a little when the trans-bathroom issue comes up. They think political correctness can be kind of ridiculous.

40 But they're solid, wonderful people, and they live in small towns in purple states. Millions are in fact liberals, to some degree or another, and many millions more may not be liberals but sure aren't conservatives. For many, their political views are not distinct from their Christian beliefs but indeed are a direct expression and fulfillment of them. They are, in fact or in potential, part of our team, and we need to treat them that way. The Democratic Party needs to identify leaders who can connect with these folks. But more generally, liberals in New York and Washington and San Francisco and so on need to go talk to them, too, and see them as just as important a part of the gorgeous mosaic as the kinds of people we more commonly associate with the word multicultural.

*THE DAILY BEAST***An Open Letter to Swing Voters Still Considering Donald Trump**

Michael Tomasky, September 20, 2016

Exactly seven weeks remain until Election Day, which means I have 14 columns (perhaps a few more) to do my modest part in stopping Donald Trump from being president. Because that's really all this is about. It's so clear. As clear as cyanide. He can't be president under any circumstances.

This should be evident to anyone. I understand that there are conservatives out there who despise Hillary Clinton and the things she stands for, and there are some other folks who want a border wall and a Muslim ban and all the rest, and they'll vote for Trump. They're 40 to 45 percent.

But what about the people in the middle? Judging from my Facebook feed and other evidence, there are voters out there, swing voters, who (a) don't like either candidate and (b) therefore don't see much difference. I want to address these next 14 columns, in various forms, to them. You can think (a) all you want. But the key thing here is that (b) doesn't follow from (a). Not even close.

One candidate is someone you've seen for 25 years, and you may be tired of her and unenthusiastic about her, and you don't like the way her voice sounds, and you believe she's constantly cutting ethical corners. Or you may think even worse than that. Fine. But you do concede she's intelligent and temperamentally within the normal range of presidential contenders. The other candidate is...

Well, let's just take two things he's said in the last few days, because these two things, setting aside everything else, the making fun of the disabled reporter, the attacks on the parents of a dead U.S. soldier, are themselves disqualifying.

The first was his assertion that Hillary Clinton was initially behind the lie that Barack Obama wasn't born in America. Trump said this last Friday at a press conference—along with the claim that he, Trump, put an end to birtherism. Both are monstrous lies. Birtherism did start on the left, as The Daily Beast's John Avlon reported back in 2010, by a renegade Clinton supporter who was a more extreme member of the PUMA (Party Unity My Ass) brigade. But as Avlon notes, she didn't start the crusade until after Clinton had already conceded and endorsed Obama. So there's no way this person had Clinton's blessing. PolitiFact asked last fall whether Clinton started the birther movement. They answered it was flat-out false.

As for Trump's other claim, that he "finished" the birther accusations, that was an even bigger lie than the bit about Clinton. He was the most prominent person in America who kept it going for years. Watch this CNN report from a few days ago. He kept doing so well after Obama produced his long-form birth certificate in April 2011. More than a year after that, Trump was tweeting things like: "An 'extremely credible source' has called my office and told me that @BarackObama's birth certificate is a fraud."

OK, swing voter. This is not "oh, they all lie" territory. Please examine with me the types of falsehoods. Clinton's involve trying to explain away or cover up unflattering revelations—she used a private email for convenience's sake, notably. That is unless you think she lied about Benghazi, which no one has ever proven she did, and if you believe she lied on that one I doubt you're actually a swing voter. So her prevarications are within the standard political realm. Trump's birther lies are altogether different. Here, he is saying precisely the opposite of the truth, imputing to his opponent the thing he himself did—and did in plain view of the entire country. That is not in the normal realm. That's in the Goebbels realm. It's a 2016 American equivalent of "the Czechs are the aggressors in the Sudetenland." And on an issue that injected such poison into the body politic. For years. Total lie. That "very credible source" in that tweet; think that person even existed?

The second thing Trump did in recent days was make his second suggestion that perhaps Hillary Clinton should be shot. You remember the first one, when he said that "Second Amendment people" might be able to do something to block Clinton from appointing judges who oppose gun rights. Of course he said it was a joke. Other supporters said he meant they must mobilize and vote. But come on. Watch the clip. The way he let it hang there. It's obvious what he meant, and it wasn't that gun enthusiasts should hold bake sales to raise money to promote the right to bear arms. He meant maybe someone should shoot her.

Here's how naive I am. I thought at the time that that was so beyond the pale—a presidential candidate in effect calling for his opponent's assassination!—that Republicans would finally say, "OK, enough," and maybe even force him off the ticket. But of course, the Republicans did what they always do. Oh, he didn't really mean *that*. [...]

English nationalism is rising: but hard Brexit is not the way to assuage it

Michael Kenny, *The Observer*, Saturday 18 March 2017

Last week saw the opening moves in a high-stakes game of poker between Nicola Sturgeon and Theresa May. It has left us peering into the future, trying to figure out how their row over the timing of a second Scottish independence referendum will play out.

5 But we need to look backwards as well to grasp the significance of last week's events. For the emergence of a potent seam of nationalism in Scotland – powerfully accentuated when a different female Conservative leader was in office 30 years ago – laid the foundations for the current ascendancy of the SNP. But the rising tides of nationalism are by no means confined to Scotland. Deep-seated changes to English feelings about their own interests and identity are an important factor behind May's intransigent response to Sturgeon.

10 For something profound has stirred in the English psyche over several decades, and this is now having a powerful effect on British politics. A pride in British institutions and traditions has gradually been displaced by a different kind of nationalism. This depicts the English as a people denied the rights enjoyed by other nations, whose cultural traditions are eclipsed while those of other nations are celebrated, and who were overlooked while devolution was offered to every other part of the UK, and
15 to London. This sentiment has taken root most deeply, research suggests, in the coastal towns, the shires and the outskirts of our largest cities.

But, strikingly, a growing sense of attachment to England is also palpable in big cities, among ethnic minorities and younger cohorts – a finding which undercuts simplistic accounts of the chasm between Leavers and Remainers. Importantly, there is evidence that this emerging sense of English national
20 identity appeals to people with different political views, not just Conservatives.

For a good while, this sentiment was primarily visible in cultural forms – the sudden appearance of crosses of St George among England fans at the Euro 96 football tournament being a striking early example. Then, somewhere in the middle of the first decade of this century, it began to spill into politics. Polls started to report that those who felt most English were most likely to favour leaving the EU, and they also revealed growing disquiet at issues such as the distribution of funding across the UK.
25

Indyref1 was an important staging post on this journey. And then, during the 2015 election campaign, an increasingly rattled Tory party stumbled across the tactic of connecting Ed Miliband's weakness as a prospective prime minister with the fear that he would be in hock to the SNP if Labour tried to govern without a majority.

30 The Conservative party, first under David Cameron and now under May, read this national mood as something that needed to be assuaged. This was in part because, if they didn't address it, Ukip would. And it was also a realisation that Labour was unable to engage with the increasingly disaffected mood of the English, a perception that has been reinforced during Jeremy Corbyn's time as leader.

35 Over several centuries the English have been taught that their nationhood is expressed in entities that are larger than England. Empire, the Anglosphere, the Commonwealth and, of course, Britain have all been presented as havens for the English idea. But this no longer holds. Brexit represented the culmination of the unforeseen development of a deep-seated contrarianism and growing feeling for self-government among the English.

40 But have the Conservatives read this emerging national mood correctly? By making the reduction on inward migration a priority, they do appear to be moving in step with it. But in opting for a version of Brexit that involves leaving the customs union and the single market they may well find that they are running against, not with, the tides of English opinion.

45 For this form of Brexit requires a reassertion of the ethos of the unitary state, and is the antithesis to the kind of flexible, pragmatic statecraft that has kept the union together for so long. The English themselves still, for the most part, favour the union and want the Scots to be part of it, even though many now want a clearer English dimension reflected in it. [...]

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

Will We Abandon Women's Rights in the Name of Progressive Politics?

Rebecca Traister April 21, 2017

1 The most disturbing thing to emerge from this week's badly bungled Democratic "Unity Tour" staged by Vermont senator Bernie Sanders and new DNC head Tom Perez was the fact that the only thing on which the two men seemed to easily agree was that reproductive rights are not necessarily fundamental to progressive politics. This led to uproar and outrage among some precincts of the left, and eventually to mea culpas and "clarifications" from Sanders and Perez. But it is worth closely examining this fight over the importance of reproductive rights in the party because it is an argument that the Democrats seem to rehash over and over and over again.

5 To recap: On Wednesday, Sanders gave an interview in which he said that he "didn't know" if Jon Ossoff, the Democrat who the day before had earned more than 48 percent of the primary vote in a longtime Republican House district in Georgia, was a progressive. It was an odd move for a powerful left-wing politician on a tour to rejuvenate Democratic politics to fire a shot of ambivalence at a Democratic candidate in any tight race, but it felt especially egregious given that Ossoff was now facing Karen Handel, a virulently anti-choice Republican who was forced to leave the Susan G. Komen Foundation in 2012 after trying to sever the organization's ties with Planned Parenthood, and who actively supported voter-suppression efforts as Georgia's secretary of State.

10 Sanders's definition of what constitutes a progressive became even murkier when he suggested that the election of Heath Mello, who's running for mayor of Omaha, Nebraska — and who as a state senator sponsored a 20-week abortion ban and mandatory ultrasounds for women seeking abortions — would represent a "shot across the board, that in a state like Nebraska a progressive Democrat can win." Not to be outdone, Perez amplified the message that reproductive rights are negotiable for the Democratic Party. "If you demand fealty on every single issue," Perez said, "then it's a challenge. The Democratic Party platform acknowledges that we're pro-choice, but there are communities, like some in Kansas, where people have a different position."

20 Well, sure. There are also communities in Kansas where voters have different positions from Democrats on immigration reform, labor protections, climate change, voting rights, and health care, and it would be vexing — and *not at all progressive* — for post-2016 Democrats to alter their stances on any of those issues.

25 This Unity Tour was supposed to be a means for Perez and Sanders to pull together left-leaning voters, still divided after the spirited primary between Sanders — the democratic socialist whose campaign brought in millions of voters excited about a left-leaning populist agenda — and Hillary Clinton, who was pulled to the left by Sanders and beat him by 3 million votes, becoming the ultimately unsuccessful nominee. Sanders, who is an Independent, has been describing this moment as a chance to "radically transform the Democratic Party," and his aims are by many measures righteous: He wants to get big money out of politics and reduce the enormous power of what he calls the "millionaire and billionaire class;" he advocates for single-payer health care, free college tuition, and a higher minimum wage, and on this tour has insisted that "it has got to be that those ideas are allowed to become the dominant theme of the Democratic Party and that's the choice Democrats are going to have to make."

30 The problem is that Sanders's vision — and the vision of Perez and the DNC — as they laid it out this week, looked less like a radical transformation of the Democratic Party and more like a return to mistakes the party has made in the past. These mistakes have *nothing* to do with economic equality, and everything to do with a willingness to sacrifice the rights of much of the party's base.

35 For some time now, Sanders — who, it should be noted, has an extremely strong legislative record on reproductive rights — has spoken somewhat carelessly about a populist strategy that exchanges some core Democratic beliefs for the set of issues that are most important to him. "Once you get off the social issues — abortion, gay rights, guns — and into the economic issues, there is a lot more agreement than the pundits understand," he said in 2015. In January of this year, at a CNN Town Hall, he reiterated, "Yes, of course, there are differences on issues like choice or on gay rights ... But on many economic issues, you would be surprised at how many Americans hold the same views."

40 Sanders is wrong that reproductive rights (or gay rights, for that matter) are separate from economic issues. The ability to control reproduction is central to women's social, professional, and economic stability, and the women most likely to require abortion services and to be negatively affected by restrictions on access to reproductive health care are poor and low-income women, disproportionately women of color. [...]

The strange rebirth of Scottish Conservatism

6 May 2017, Alex Massie, *The Spectator*

Twenty years ago, Conservatism all but died in Scotland. Tony Blair's landslide victory made Scotland, at least in terms of its Westminster representation, a Tory-free zone. At no point since has the party won more than a single Scottish seat, and the last time the party won more than a quarter of the Scottish vote, in 1983, its current leader, Ruth Davidson, was four years old. Two years ago, the Tories won just 14 per cent of the vote, an even worse result than 1997. This seemed to fit a broader narrative: Toryism had been beaten back into England, a sign of the union's exhaustion and a Scotland moving inexorably towards independence.

How different it all looks now. The most recent opinion polls in Scotland suggest the Tories could win as many as one in three ballots cast on 8 June. One opinion poll even suggested that, albeit on a uniform swing, the party could win as many as a dozen Scottish seats — including Moray, seat of the SNP's Westminster leader Angus Robertson. In an era where elections are delivering extra-ordinary results, one might just be a stronger union and a strange rebirth of Scottish Conservatism.

The general election here is a very different beast to the one taking place in England. The Scottish Tories do not talk very much about the need for a 'strong and stable' government. Nor do they warn voters about a vanishingly improbable 'coalition of chaos' that would arise were the SNP to prop up a Labour government. With a Tory majority at Westminster all but assured, it is little surprise that the latest episode of the battle for Scotland should become a matter of greater interest.

Just as it remains hard to imagine how the SNP could have risen to its current state of supremacy without Alex Salmond, so it is difficult to underestimate Ruth Davidson's importance to the Scottish Tory revival. Her personal background — working-class, lesbian, BBC journalist — is often used to explain her ability to reach a wider audience than previous Tory leaders, but there is more to it than that. Viewed from one angle, she is every inch the modernising Tory — her influence played a large part in persuading Theresa May to maintain the commitment to spending 0.7 per cent of GDP on international aid. But seen from a different perspective, she is also a traditional Conservative: a god-fearing Christian and former army reservist. She believes in gay marriage because she is a Conservative, not despite it.

Most of all, she offers an alternative to SNP orthodoxy. Sturgeon warns that only a vote for the SNP can 'protect' Scotland against an 'unfettered' Tory government whose values are alien and inimical to those of Scotland. Davidson observes that 'the SNP is not Scotland'. Unionists are Scots too. Labour, not so long ago the party of Scotland, might even finish fourth in this election, at least in terms of seats won. If Ian Murray retains Edinburgh South, he will be Scotland's only red panda.

Political anthropologists are already asking why the Scottish Tory party, previously thought close to extinction, has made such a remarkable recovery. For more than a generation on the left, the idea of the Tories being an invasive species in Scotland has been the foundation of first Labour and then SNP politics — but it no longer holds. If at least one in four Scots are prepared to endorse Tory candidates, can one really maintain the fiction there is something grubbily disreputable or even unpatriotic about voting for a Conservative candidate?

Still, there's an unspoken alliance in Scottish politics, whereby the SNP and the Conservatives collude to crop Labour out of the national political picture. 'We couldn't have had a better person than Nicola Sturgeon to amplify our message that it is now the Tories versus the SNP in Scotland,' Ms Davidson told me when we met last week. 'As the Americans say, she has done us a solid.'

The prospect of a new independence referendum has focused minds in Scotland. Just as the post-referendum realignment of Scottish politics shifted Yes voters from Labour to the SNP to give the SNP their astonishing 2015 triumph, so a second, more gradual, shift has been happening on the unionist side of Scotland's constitutional equation. The Tory message can be reduced to a bumper sticker: 'We said No to independence in 2014. We meant it.' [...]

*THE DAILY BEAST***The Grand Old Party's Last Lions Roll Over**

Michael Tomasky

June 12, 2017

1 [...] I just can't see how a party as brain dead, soulless, mercenary, and unprincipled as Donald Trump's
 Republican Party can survive for long. I know; the party still does represent a set of positions—one would be hard-
 pressed at this point to call them principles—to which millions of Americans attach themselves. And it serves as a
 5 great megaphone for many Americans' racial and sexual repressions and resentments, and the unfortunate staying
 power of all that is not to be gainsaid. But the party just has no intellectual integrity or credibility left. These
 thoughts barged their way into my mind as I was thinking Sunday about John McCain and Orrin Hatch. Here were
 two once-respectable Republican members of the Senate. They were conservative, to be sure; anyone they weren't
 conservative enough for was an extremist.

10 But yes, they did some things with Democrats. They compromised. They did, in other words, their jobs!
 McCain on campaign finance and tobacco legislation. Hatch on health care and all manner of domestic policy,
 usually working with none other than the Mephistopheles of Chappaquiddick himself. One used to read stories in
 the 1980s and 1990s of the two of them spending time together. Teddy, who was getting around town pretty good in
 those days, let's just say; and Hatch, the Mormon teetotaler, who wrote these religious songs that Teddy used to sit
 15 down and listen to and, no doubt, praise to the skies. That's what the founders wanted senators to be: high-minded
 and transpartisan. And that's what Hatch, as often as could reasonably be expected of a Utah conservative, was.
 McCain too. And what did we see last week?

20 Well, we saw McCain bumble his way through incoherent questioning of James Comey. But more interesting
 than McCain's discombobulated mental state was what he was apparently trying to do, so far as anyone could tell.
 He was trying to pin a double-standard charge on Comey because Comey exonerated Clinton before the election but
 left an investigation hanging over Trump. Never mind that Comey hammered Clinton publicly in July and then
 announced with flimsy justification the reopening of the Clinton probe in late October but never spoke of the Trump
 campaign probe. What McCain was doing was trying to carry water for Trump. That is to say—to carry water for
 the man who had mocked his time as a hostage in Vietnam, and who once had the gall to say his efforts to make it
 through the Sixties without contracting venereal disease were his "personal Vietnam."

25 Back to McCain: How self-abasing can a man get? How little self-respect must a man have to behave like
 that? Let's review the full quote: "He's not a war hero. He's a war hero because he was captured. I like people that
 weren't captured, OK? I hate to tell you." And here's McCain two years later, using the mental candlepower he has
 left to comport himself as a sycophant for a man he surely knows to have no morals or scruples. A glimmer of hope
 emerged Sunday when The Guardian reported that one of its reporters asked McCain if America's global standing
 30 was better under Barack Obama than now, and McCain said: "As far as American leadership is concerned, yes."
 Who knows, maybe McCain is starting to turn a corner. Maybe he doesn't want "gave America Sarah Palin" and
 "sucked up to Donald Trump after Trump humiliated him" in the first paragraph of his obituary.

35 As for Hatch, this other ex-lion of the Senate—at almost the exact same time McCain was making a fool of
 himself last Thursday—was offering his body up to a different god, but one equally false. This was the now-famous
 Claire McCaskill smackdown of Hatch at a Senate committee hearing on the health-care bill. If you've not seen the
 video, take a few minutes and treat yourself to it. McCaskill challenged Hatch, the committee's chairman, on
 whether he planned on holding even one single hearing on the GOP Obamacare alternative. Hatch stayed stony
 silent until he finally muttered that Democrats have been "invited" to "give your ideas" on the bill. Right. As
 McCaskill and everyone else in Washington knows, it's an invitation that leads directly to the majority staff's
 40 shredding machine. Everyone knows that if Senate Republicans hold any hearings at all, they will be a) brief, b)
 completely unsubstantive, and c) two in number so that Republicans can then go on TV and say they held
 "hearings," plural, on the bill.

45 McCain abased himself before Trump and Trumpism. Hatch, before the intellectual corruption that has
 swallowed his party lock, stock, and barrel. But the distinction hardly matters any more. The two impulses need
 each other and feed off each other. This is why so many intellectuals and writers—David Frum of course (long ago),
 but now Max Boot, Peter Wehner, Jennifer Rubin, and even, tentatively, Bill Kristol!—are disentangling themselves
 from these rancid entrails.

*THE NEW YORKER***Why Republicans Could Regret Overturning *Roe v. Wade***

Eyal Press January 19, 2017

1 [...] During his campaign, Trump vowed to appoint Justices to the Supreme Court who will overturn Roe, and he has repeated his promises since the election. How many such appointments he will actually make remains to be seen. But it is not inconceivable that, during Trump's time in office, both of the high court's senior liberal members—Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who is eighty-three, and Stephen Breyer, who is seventy-eight—will depart
5 from the Court. If Trump fulfills his promise to replace them with “pro-life” Justices in the mold of the late Antonin Scalia, he could pave the way for Roe's demise.

For members of the anti-abortion movement, this would be a dream scenario. But is hastening Roe's demise something the Republican Party really wants? To liberals who have grown accustomed to hearing Republicans denounce the opinion in the most strident terms, the question may sound naïve. There is nothing they want *more*,
10 it often seems. But the denunciations mask an irony: for the conservative movement, Roe has not been such a bad thing. Conservatives may indeed benefit more from Roe's preservation than from its being overturned.

The most direct beneficiaries of Roe have been women of all political persuasions, whose right to control their own bodies and to avoid forced childbirth was not recognized before the ruling. But conservatives have also reaped benefits since the late nineteen-seventies, when strategists like Paul Weyrich, the co-founder of the Moral
15 Majority, shrewdly recognized that social issues like abortion could broaden the Republican Party's base beyond the business class. “Yes,” social issues “are emotional issues, but that's better than talking about capital formation,” Weyrich said. As the recent election showed, this strategy can yield dividends even for candidates who have never seemed especially moved by the plight of the unborn. For much of his life, Trump described himself as pro-choice. He was more likely to be spotted at a night club than at a pro-life rally. All of this changed
20 when Trump ran for President, at which point he began courting evangelicals like Jerry Falwell, Jr., and rebranding himself as a committed right-to-lifer. The transformation may have been cynically motivated, but it appears to have paid off. According to exit polls, eighty per cent of white evangelicals supported Trump, compared with only sixteen per cent for Clinton. Trump also won the Catholic vote. Trump's crude denigration of women, his multiple divorces, the “Access Hollywood” tape in which he boasted about sexual assault: all of this
25 was forgiven by evangelical leaders like James Dobson, who in the nineteen-nineties advocated impeaching Bill Clinton for his sexual indiscretions. Like much of the religious right, Dobson endorsed Trump last fall, citing his “stellar” list of potential Supreme Court nominees.

Of course, promising to appoint anti-choice Justices to the Supreme Court risks alienating other voters—in particular, millions of women who may be loath to undergo the horrors and indignities of the pre-
30 Roe era, when terminating a pregnancy was dangerous and illegal. (Many of them will be gathering in Washington on Saturday, for the Women's March.) Being forced to live in a country where abortion at any stage of pregnancy, for whatever reason, is equated with murder—a standard view on the Christian right—would almost surely arouse opposition, if not fury, among millennial women who have grown up in a pro-choice country and, like most Americans, show few signs of wanting to turn back the clock. A recent survey by the Pew Research
35 Institute found that sixty-nine per cent of Americans oppose overturning Roe, the highest level since researchers began sampling opinion on the question. Polls have consistently shown that most Americans oppose barring abortion under all circumstances.

As long as Roe remains in effect, however, this spectre is distant and abstract. Since the Supreme Court, as it has been constituted in recent years, could be counted on to strike down a blanket ban on abortion, Republicans
40 have been able to embrace anti-abortion absolutism while avoiding the political repercussions of putting this absolutism into practice. They have focussed instead on passing measures that chip away at Roe, a less incendiary approach that has proved highly effective. Since 2010, states have adopted three hundred and thirty-eight new abortion restrictions, according to the Guttmacher Institute, which estimates that fifty-seven per cent of women now live in states that are “hostile or extremely hostile” to abortion rights. Meanwhile, the abortion rate has
45 declined sharply, in part because of better access to contraceptive services and in part because of punitive restrictions. From state-mandated counselling to lengthy waiting periods to onerous regulations targeting clinics, opponents of reproductive rights have succeeded in limiting access to abortion while putting advocates of choice on the defensive. [...]

*THE WASHINGTON POST***The two sins that defined this election**

Fareed Zakaria November 10, 2016

1 For those of us who opposed Donald Trump, the response to Tuesday's vote could be anger or honest reflection. I'm not by nature an angry person, so I will try the latter. Trump remade the political map with a huge surge of support from working-class whites, particularly in rural communities. Let me be honest, this is a world I don't know — and many people probably don't know very well — and that's part of the problem. We have all managed to ignore the pain of rural America.

5 An essay on the satirical website Cracked, by David Wong (who grew up in a small town in Illinois), gives voice to the rage of rural Americans. "The whole goddamned world revolves around [America's cities]," he wrote. The vast majority of the country's pop culture is all about city dwellers. Most new movies, shows, songs and games are about New York or Los Angeles or Chicago or some fantasy version of them. Nearly every trend comes from a metropolis. All the hot new industries are in hip cities. "If you live in [rural America], that f---ing sucks," he wrote. Cities get disproportionate attention from media and other elites, who also all live in and around a handful of cities. Wong writes that Hurricane Katrina, in the popular imagination, is all about New Orleans. "To watch the news (or the multiple movies and TV shows about it), you'd barely hear about how the storm utterly steamrolled rural Mississippi. ... What's newsworthy about a bunch of ... hillbillies crying over a flattened trailer? New Orleans is culturally important. It matters." "To those ignored, suffering people, Donald Trump is a brick chucked through the window of the elites. 'Are you a----- listening now?'"

15 In fact, many more people died in New Orleans than in rural Mississippi, and the bulk of physical destruction took place there as well. And there was a lot of coverage of the devastation of rural areas. But the broader point is true: Cities capture our attention in ways that rural communities do not. Over the past three or four decades, the United States has sorted itself into a highly efficient meritocracy, where people from all economic walks of life can move up the ladder of achievement and income (usually ending up in cities). It is better than using race, gender or bloodlines as the key to wealth and power, but it does create its own problems. As in any system, some people won't ascend to the top, and because it is a meritocracy, it is easy to believe that that's justified.

25 A meritocracy can be blind to the fact that some people don't make it because they have been unlucky in some way. More profoundly, it can be morally blind. Even those who score poorly on tests or have bad work habits are human beings deserving of attention and respect. The Republicans' great success in rural communities has been that even though they often champion economic policies that would not help these people — indeed, policies that often hurt them — they demonstrate respect, by identifying with them culturally, religiously and emotionally.

30 So, the great sin of the modern left is elitism. But another sin was also highlighted in this election: racism.

35 Trump won among whites without a college degree by a staggering 39 points, but he won those with a college education by four points as well. He won working-class whites but also middle-class whites. As Nick Confessore and Nate Cohn put it in the New York Times, "He electrified the country's white majority and mustered its full strength against long-term demographic decay." In this respect, Trump is not unusual. Right-wing populism is on the rise across many Western countries. It is rising in countries in Northern Europe, where economic growth has been robust; in Germany, where manufacturing jobs have stayed strong; and in France, where the state provides many protections for the working class. The one common trait everywhere is that white majority populations have faced a recent influx of immigrants.

40 Perhaps the phenomenon might be better described as a cultural reaction to change, but it often expresses itself simply as hostility to people who are different, and usually brown and black. Consider, for example, that 72 percent of registered Republican voters still doubt that Barack Obama was born in the United States, according to an August NBC News poll.

45 Donald Trump's political skill was to speak defiantly about both of these sensitive issues — elitism and race — in simple, direct and politically incorrect ways that connected with white voters, particularly white men. But in doing so, he also terrified tens of millions of other Americans.

A government that includes the DUP is profoundly bad news for women

Sarah Ditum, 9 June 2017, *The New Statesman*

The Tories' new coalition partners are deeply socially conservative.

5 This extraordinary election has seen one horrible irony for women traded for another. At the start of the campaign, when Theresa May looked to turn her high personal ratings (lol) into an even higher Conservative majority (lololol), it seemed that the UK's second female prime minister was going to bring about a depressing decline in female MPs: because only Labour has a substantial record of getting women into parliament (thank you, all-women shortlists), anything that hurts Labour hurts sexual equality on the benches.

10 Back when a 1930s style collapse seemed plausible (lololololol), names on the line included Jess Phillips and Thangam Debbonaire, among other redoubtable feminists who have brought their feminist politics into parliament. Well that didn't happen. Instead, Labour's surge saw Phillips add 10,000 votes to her majority; Debbonaire's vote share went from 33.7 per cent to a dizzying 65.9 per cent.

15 Instead of losing women, Westminster gained a record intake of them. And the Tories lost, lost, lost (one final lol here). But this is where the next irony comes in, because the only way for the now-diminished Tories to form a government is for them to join a coalition with the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland. And a ruling coalition that includes the DUP is profoundly bad news for women.

20 The reason for that comes down to one issue in particular: abortion. The DUP is a deeply socially conservative party, and has consistently blocked both the extension of equal marriage to Northern Ireland and the roll-out of the 1967 Abortion Act. While abortion is still criminalised throughout the UK under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, the 1967 Act allows for terminations to be legal, under certain conditions. It does not apply in Northern Ireland.

Instead, Northern Irish women must travel to England – at their own expense. They must pay for the procedure – in 2014, the High Court ruled that Northern Irish women were not entitled to NHS-funded abortions.

25 Getting the money together takes time, and longer gestation makes abortions more complex and more expensive. (The charity Abortion Support Network helps provide funding to thousands of Northern Irish women dealing with crisis pregnancies each year.) You could order abortion pills, but then you could be prosecuted under the 1861 Act – as happened to a woman in 2016.

30 This cruel law applies to women in Northern Ireland whether they are victims of rape, whether they are victims of incest, and whether the foetus they are carrying is even capable of life outside the womb. And the DUP is fine with that. However urgently women in Northern Ireland have made the moral case for reform, the DUP – along with all Northern Ireland's parties – has ignored it.

35 After a high court judgement held that Northern Ireland's abortion case was breaching women's rights, DUP leader Arlene Foster (because yes, women have the equal opportunity to be depressing misogynists too) said that she would not want abortion to be as "freely available" to women in Northern Ireland as it is elsewhere in the UK, which surely provoked some bitter laughter from any woman who's had to negotiate patchy provision and the two-doctors requirement in England, Scotland or Wales.

40 Now, as the minority party without which the Tories cannot govern, the DUP gets to impose its anti-freedom agenda on women nationwide. Never mind extending the '67 Act to Northern Ireland: a DUP-beholden Conservative party will be careful to respect the principle of denying women choice wherever they are in the UK.

45 And all this because of an election which showed – among other things – that the electorate really does not want a return to old-style illiberal Toryism. 2017's female MPs have strength in numbers, but the ten MPs of the DUP have an outside influence that could have a chilling effect on women's rights at Westminster.

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

Why Do Democrats Feel Sorry for Hillary Clinton?

April 14, 2017 Andrew Sullivan

1 I've done what I could in this space to avoid the subject of Hillary Clinton. I don't want to be the
perennial turd in the punchbowl. I'd hoped we'd finally seen the last of that name in public life — it's been a
long quarter of a century — and that we could all move on. Alas, no. Her daughter (angels and ministers of
5 grace defend us) seems to be positioning herself for a political career. And Clinton herself duly emerged last
week for a fawning, rapturous reception at the Women in the World conference in New York City. It simply
amazes me the hold this family still has on the Democratic Party — and on liberals in general. The most popular
question that came from interviewer Nick Kristof's social-media outreach, for example, was: "Are you doing
okay?" Here's Michelle Goldberg: "I find myself wondering at odd times of the day and night: How is Hillary?
Is she going to be all right?" Seriously, can you imagine anyone wondering the same after Walter Mondale or
10 Michael Dukakis or John Kerry blew elections?

And everywhere you see not an excoriation of one of the worst campaigns in recent history, leading to the
Trump nightmare, but an attempt to blame anyone or anything but Clinton herself for the epic fail. It wasn't
Clinton's fault, we're told. It never is. It was the voters' — those ungrateful, deplorable know-nothings! Their
sexism defeated her (despite a majority of white women voting for Trump). A wave of misogyny defeated her
15 (ditto). James Comey is to blame. Bernie Sanders's campaign — because it highlighted her enmeshment with
Wall Street, her brain-dead interventionism and her rapacious money-grubbing since she left the State
Department — was the problem. Millennial feminists were guilty as well, for not seeing what an amazing
crusader for their cause this candidate was. And this, of course, is how Clinton sees it as well: She wasn't
responsible for her own campaign — her staffers were. As a new book on her campaign notes, after Clinton lost
20 the Michigan primary to Sanders, "The blame belonged to her campaign team, she believed, for failing to hone
her message, energize important constituencies, and take care of business in getting voters to the polls." So by
the time the general-election campaign came round, they'd fix that and win Michigan, right?

Let us review the facts: Clinton had the backing of the entire Democratic establishment, including the
president (his biggest mistake in eight years by far), and was even married to the last, popular Democratic
25 president. As in 2008, when she managed to lose to a neophyte whose middle name was Hussein, everything
was stacked in her favor. In fact, the Clintons so intimidated other potential candidates and donors, she had the
nomination all but wrapped up before she even started. And yet she was so bad a candidate, she still only
managed to squeak through in the primaries against an elderly, stopped-clock socialist who wasn't even in her
party, and who spent his honeymoon in the Soviet Union. She ran with a popular Democratic incumbent
30 president in the White House in a growing economy. She had the extra allure of possibly breaking a glass
ceiling that — with any other female candidate — would have been as inspiring as the election of the first black
president. In the general election, she was running against a malevolent buffoon with no political experience,
with a deeply divided party behind him, and whose negatives were stratospheric. She outspent him by almost
two-to-one. Her convention was far more impressive than his. The demographics favored her. And yet she still
35 managed to lose!

"But ... but ... but ..." her deluded fans insist, "she won the popular vote!" But that's precisely my point.
Any candidate who can win the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes and still manage to lose the Electoral
College by 304 to 227 is so profoundly incompetent, so miserably useless as a politician, she should be
drummed out of the party under a welter of derision. Compare her electoral college result with Al Gore's, who
40 also won the popular vote but lost in the Electoral College: 271 to 266. For that matter, compare hers with John
Kerry's, who lost the popular vote by 1.5 percent — 286 to 241. She couldn't even find a halfway-decent
speechwriter for her convention speech. The week before the election, she was campaigning in Arizona, for
Pete's sake. And she took off chunks of the summer, fundraising (at one point, in the swing states of Fire Island
and Provincetown). Whenever she gave a speech, you could hear the air sucking out of the room minutes after
45 she started. In the middle of an election campaign, she dismissed half of the Republican voters as "deplorable."
She lost Wisconsin, which she didn't visit once. I could go on.

And so I find myself wondering at odd times of the day and night: Why is Trump in the White House?
And then I remember. Hillary Clinton put him there.

5

THE VOX

There's a new "silent majority," and it's voting for Hillary Clinton

Matthew Yglesias October 19, 2016

1 [...] In 1972, Nixon's silent majority, grounded firmly in the white working class, delivered a smashing victory for the GOP, dashing the hopes of George McGovern supporters that a new coalition of young white professionals and racial minorities could upend American politics. Forty-four years later, America is facing another silent majority election — one in which the
5 *story* has been all about Trump's supporters but the victory will go to Clinton's. Ironically, the basic contours of the coalitions are essentially the same as in Nixon's day.

Data from the Pew Research Center shows that Republicans enjoy the allegiance of the vast majority of white voters without a college degree — a trend that Trump will, if anything, accelerate. Democrats, meanwhile, enjoy overwhelming majorities among people of color, who
10 now comprise almost 40 percent of their party — a trend that Trump will, again, accelerate. White Democrats these days are mostly college graduates, and mostly women. And while white male Democrats will back Clinton over Trump, they went pretty overwhelmingly for Sanders in the primaries. Clinton's core coalition is composed of racial minorities and well-educated women, especially unmarried ones. Clinton also enjoys the support of more than 70 percent of
15 LGBTQ Americans and is trouncing Trump with Jewish voters by higher margins than any 21st-century Democrat.

Clinton led in the Democratic primary from the first day to the last, and has consistently led in general election polling since the beginning of the campaign. Yet the Clinton voter has not made the same kind of impression on the media, in part because the new silent majority voter offers less visible evidence of being fired up and the new silent majority's signature politicians —
20 Clinton and Obama — do not do grand performance of anger, even at a time when rage is all the rage in American politics. This is almost certainly not a coincidence. As Rebecca Traister wrote after the Iowa caucus, "No one likes a woman who yells loudly about revolution". And no, it's not just *this* woman. This is a paradigm; it's why Mom is the disciplinarian and Dad is the fun
25 guy, why women remain the brains and organizational workhorses behind social movements while men get to be the gut-ripping orators, why so many women still manage campaigns and so many men are still candidates.

Obama, of course, is in a similar boat. Trump can deliver a speech excoriating establishment elites in business and government who don't care about his people and sound like a
30 populist champion to white America. An angry black man talking about his desire to burn down the system would sound like, well, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, whom Obama had to loudly and immediately disavow to be deemed acceptable to a sufficiently large minority of white voters to win.

There is, of course, something lost in this. The financial crisis of 2008 and the ensuing
35 Great Recession were genuine outrages, and it's understandable that many voters yearn for politicians who'll give voice to that rage. But ability to perform anger without coming across as the wrong kind of person is still a privilege in the 21st-century United States, and the new silent majority values other forms of representation that a woman can bring to the table over the performance of rage that her rivals bring.

Clinton's signature weakness is that she is an ultimate insider — a veteran of a system
40 many Americans have come to despise. This is, however, another way of saying that she has an unusually impressive résumé for a presidential candidate, with a longer and wider range of experience than any president since the Civil War. Clinton's silent majority values competence and experience, and recognizes that it's no coincidence the first plausible woman president had to
45 be the most well-qualified candidate in generations and equally un-coincidental that in the hands of her enemies her great asset has been relabeled as a weakness.

Labour's slick online campaign outguns Tory press

David Bond, 9 June 2017, *The Financial Times*

Nearly 10m people watched leftwing videos on Facebook that appear to have turbo-charged Jeremy Corbyn's campaign. The cost to make them was less than £2,000.

At the same time, a campaign by traditional rightwing newspapers seems to have fallen flat with voters, even when the Daily Mail attacked Labour's leadership over 13 pages for spending "their careers cosy up to those who hate our country".

The persuasiveness of online media, and the apparent decline in influence in this election of Britain's newspapers, will be picked over in the aftermath of the shock result.

"Despite the bias within the media, [Mr Corbyn] actually managed to connect," the Labour supporting filmmaker Ken Loach told Sky News. "That's not only a triumph for him. That's a triumph against the media presentation of him, which has been extraordinary."

With the Conservatives spending more than £1m on direct advertising on Facebook and other social media channels to attack Mr Corbyn and target floating voters, Labour played a different game combining online ad spending with a low budget grassroots campaign. Giles Kenningham, a former director of communications for the Tories, said: "Labour have used Momentum to devastating effect. The Tories do not have an equivalent campaigning group pushing out their message."

According to Momentum, the activist group that played a key role in Mr Corbyn's election as Labour leader in 2015, its election videos were watched by nearly 13m unique users on Facebook, including 9.8m in the UK — more than 22 per cent of the site's British users. "That our videos have been viewed by nearly a quarter of UK Facebook users in the last week shows how slick, timely content that speaks to the issues people care about can help Labour match the millions the Tories are spending on dark Facebook advertising," said Emma Rees, Momentum's national organiser.

The group said its highest performing video online, which features a father explaining to his daughter why she doesn't get free school meals because he voted for Mrs May, achieved 5.4m views in just two days.

By contrast the Conservatives' highest performing ad on Facebook — a highlights reel of Mr Corbyn talking about security and terrorism — achieved 6.6m views.

Fuelled by the rapid growth of Facebook and smartphone use since 2015, Labour supporting websites such as The Canary, Evolve Politics and Skwawkbox also did their bit, building up huge audiences online by attacking the Tories and the mainstream media.

"The content discovery mechanisms on Facebook in particular are shaking up the UK's partisan press landscape," said the media research company Enders. "Highly opinionated, pro-Labour online publications with no direct print equivalents are reaching larger Facebook audiences . . . than most national news brands."

This was backed up by research from BuzzFeed that found that the most popular articles shared on Facebook were largely pro-Labour, including endorsements of Mr Corbyn, stories on young voter registration and the NHS.

With turnout among 18 to 24-year-olds rising at the election, it appears support for Labour online transferred to the ballot box. Social media platforms such as Snapchat worked with the UK electoral commission to persuade young people to register to vote.

Mr Corbyn's campaign team bypassed much of the mainstream press, focusing instead on younger media outlets. He appeared on the cover of music magazines Kerrang and NME and was interviewed by the grime artist JME in a Facebook video viewed 2.5m times.

Meanwhile, the UK's rightwing newspapers, which looked so powerful following last year's vote to leave the EU, appear to have been wrong footed by the swell of support for Mr Corbyn.

As polls narrowed in the closing stages of the campaign, newspapers such as The Sun and the Daily Mail stepped up their attacks on Labour.

But Charlie Beckett, of the London School of Economics, said as newspapers battle falling circulations and ageing readerships, their power to influence elections is on the wane.

"This kind of bitter, negative coverage might play well with older readers but it's very short termist as a business strategy," Mr Beckett said. "Young people didn't like it and it may have even galvanised younger support for Labour."

THE VOX

A Donald Trump presidency would bring shame on this country

Ezra Klein October 7, 2016

This isn't about fitness for the presidency. This is about basic human decency.

As Emily Crockett writes, Donald Trump's leaked 2005 conversation with *Access Hollywood's* Bill Bush isn't merely lewd or colorful. It is an explicit description of sexual assault, and of Trump's comfort with using his power to take what he wants, and to harm others. "When you're a star," he says, "they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything."

This isn't an observation so much as a threat. It comes as Trump sees Arianne Zucker, an actress waiting to lead him to a set. "I've gotta use some Tic Tacs, just in case I start kissing her," Trump tells Bush. "You know I'm automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait."

The audio is devastating. It elicited Trump's first apology of the campaign.

"This was locker room banter, a private conversation that took place many years ago," he said. "Bill Clinton has said far worse to me on the golf course — not even close. I apologize if anyone was offended." The apology is perhaps the most telling part of all this. Trump doesn't think what he said was so bad. He thinks it's ... normal. He thinks it's how men talk in locker rooms. He is sorry if anyone was offended.

This is not normal. This is not how men speak in locker rooms. And the problem here is not that someone, somewhere, was offended. The problem is if the rest of us are not offended.

After the audio broke, I saw some on Twitter quoting Joseph Welch's famous comment to Joseph McCarthy. "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"

But the question isn't whether Trump has any decency. We've known for some time that he doesn't. The question is whether we have any decency — whether we will elect this man, or even come close to electing this man, knowing all we know about him.

Here is the compliment I can pay Donald Trump, and I pay it with real gratitude: He never hid who he was. Perhaps he lacked the self-control, or the self-awareness, but whatever the mechanism, he never obscured his cruelty, or his misogyny, or his greed, or his dishonesty. He is not a clever demagogue but a crude one. He mocked a disabled reporter while the cameras were rolling. He accused his opponent's father of conspiring to kill John F. Kennedy. He attacked the parents of a fallen war hero. He retweeted white supremacists. He accused a judge of bias because of his "Mexican heritage." He directed the world to watch a nonexistent sex tape of a woman he body-shamed a decade ago. He lies, constantly, fluently, and shamelessly. He insults his opponents with schoolyard nicknames while retweeting slavish sycophants.

Trump knows nothing about policy and has learned nothing about it. He has incited violence at his rallies, joked about the assassination of the Democratic nominee, and casually thrown the NATO alliance into doubt. He has proven himself a man of little discipline and less grace, incapable of either forgiving or forgetting, and completely unable to control his own reactions. He believes only what he wants to believe, trusts only the polls that show him ahead, listens only to the people who flatter his ego.

He has done all this in public, and he has done all of it repeatedly, almost gleefully. If we elect him, there will be no excusing our actions to future generations, no pleading ignorance in the face of threat. It was all here. It was all obvious. It will all be visible to our children, and to historians.

Trump told us who he was, showed us who he was, again and again. The test here is not of his decency, but of our own.

Millennials are being forgotten in this general election – so it's time we had our own political party

Charlotte Gill, 29 April 2017, *The Independent*

Now that Theresa May has called for a snap election, there has been the most extraordinary reaction from her political opponents, many of whom have gone into wild panic about the vote.

Though it turns out that this mass anxiety has not been wholly detrimental; it has, in fact, made some MPs the most creative they have been in years, desperately searching for ways to get the Conservatives out of power.

It's the women who have been particularly innovative. Caroline Lucas has been busy drumming up support for what has been called a progressive alliance – which sounds like a terrible bank to me, but nonetheless poses a threat – and Gina Miller has even started her own anti-Brexit crowdfunding campaign. I would scoff, but I cannot help but admire their ingenuity. Clearly this is a great time to become radical with one's politics – when you have nothing to lose (apart from the election).

I'll confess that although I am a Conservative, as the election veers up I have been feeling somewhat deflated myself by the prospect of May – the zombie – for another however-many years. So much so that when I choose her on 8 June, I will feel as though I have chosen Wagamama over Zizzi, for all of my enthusiasm about the personalities involved.

This has made me think rather creatively about my own politics, and what I feel I am missing from the current system. I jest not when I say that it is a millennial party.

The fact is that this group – which I'm a part of and includes people aged 25-34 – is in need of urgent help, none of which will come from the next government, no matter which party wins. For years millennials have been sidelined in Parliament, where the average age of members is 50, so our problems continue to spiral. Unfortunately, our plight is only ever mentioned when someone needs to promote the EU ("think of the young people!") No one dares bring up the practical, everyday issues millennials struggle with. Like, where are we going to live? Will we be able to have beautiful babies? And so on.

Indeed, the situation is so bad that MPs were recently given a handbook to understand my generation. I suspect some thought it was to fill them in on Instagram, Snapchat and other cool phenomena associated with being young, though was in fact to share appalling statistics. Our wages have suffered more than any other age group since the recession in 2008, we have an average net wealth of £700 or less, and will have to wait longer than previous generations to receive a state pension. The list goes on and on, with nothing very positive to negate the reality.

The trouble is that everyone thinks millennials are *ok* with the situation. Perhaps because we are young; perhaps because commentators keep conflating us with "snowflakes", a precious group of students far smaller than portrayed. Last week, Sam Kiley wrote that "Thin-skinned millennials need a spanking", before accusing my generation of having an "immediate entitlement to unearned greatness". It couldn't have been further from the truth.

Millennials are in a rut, and no one can be bothered to step in. Which is unfortunate because one day we will be entrusted to care for the very population that neglected our needs.

When I have pointed out the issues millennials face, people have dismissed my argument, saying unhelpful things like "World War II was worse!" But as the millennial crisis goes unsolved, society collectively will have to face up to the challenges it will bring. The old will continually prop up the young, birth rates will decrease, and divorce rates are likely to go up – thanks to the instability millennials have become accustomed to.

There is no party that has done anything to convince me they understand the potential issues bubbling up with millennials, let alone that they are the ones to stop them. When I vote on 8 June, nothing will change. Even Parliament's youngest member, Mhairi Black, has threatened to leave recently because she feels so redundant there.

Perhaps it's time for a change; perhaps it's time for a millennial party.

A balancing act to manage on second independence poll

The Herald, 14th October 2016

IN one sense, there was no surprise in Nicola Sturgeon's rapturously received pledge to pave the way for a second independence referendum at the SNP's conference in Glasgow.

Ms Sturgeon said little she has not already said or suggested in the immediate aftermath of the vote to leave the EU. Also, this was not a pledge to hold a referendum. It was the announcement of a consultation on plans for a bill to allow a referendum. Nevertheless, could the SNP leader be painting herself into something of a corner?

Her conference opening speech contained messages for her party, for the UK Prime Minister and for the wider public. Many in the SNP feel Brexit has changed everything and demand a second, prompt vote on independence. Yet the polls suggest that the SNP has been denied the Brexit bounce it hoped would bolster support for independence. But many feel Alex Salmond is right and that support can increase, as in the 2014 referendum campaign, aided this time by the argument that Scotland needs a continuing relationship with Europe and the best way to achieve that is never to leave.

That would entail a gamble, of course, and there were caveats in Ms Sturgeon's speech about a referendum taking place if needed to protect Scotland's interests. She told the conference: "Whatever I choose, I'm sure you will back me." But that may be optimistic. The faithful might see it as a promise of a referendum soon. Polling might tell a different story; that a Yes vote might not win. Also, we remain in the dark about Brexit. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson added, typically, to the fug of obfuscation yesterday by insisting that the concept of a European single market (to which Theresa May is keen to retain access) was increasingly useless.

The First Minister will be heartened that trusted ally Angus Robertson won the election for deputy leader so emphatically. Had his nearest rival Tommy Sheppard done so, the pressure would have been greater still as he wants to start the ball rolling on a second referendum. Notably, Mr Robertson did little to rein in the enthusiasm of the conference audience, declaring that "We are very, very close to independence". The SNP has pledged to have two million doorstep conversations about independence. Now we are to have a referendum bill. If the party leadership intended to manage expectations, it is managing them in one direction.

The message to Mrs May was quite different. Demands for rejection of a hard Brexit, and new powers over international deals, immigration, fisheries and farming saw Ms Sturgeon adopting an aggressive stance. It is traditional to be polarised at the outset of negotiations but she has certainly put her cards on the table.

Yet the UK Government might feel it has little incentive to listen to a party with independence as its reason for being. In addition, Ms Sturgeon implies she will walk away from the negotiating table if talks falter, opening her up to accusations of acting prematurely.

The First Minister appears to believe Mrs May will be persuaded to allow a referendum, necessary for any result to be binding. Is this likely? The UK Government is unlikely to want Scotland to become like Catalonia; opting for separation by a majority of votes whose validity is rejected.

To the wider public, particularly to previous No voters, Ms Sturgeon's appeal is more complicated. She seeks to appear reasonable and still to wish to strike a positive Brexit deal. Yet we seem to be moving inexorably closer to a second independence referendum. Could it be won? There are too many imponderables at present to know. We still know little, of course, of what Brexit will ultimately mean. Scrutiny of a deal is denied by the democratic deficit of blocking MPs a vote on the terms. Ms Sturgeon could not be clearer that Scotland will not be denied its say and a second referendum seems increasingly to be the vehicle. [...]



Locals fear Brexit means new barriers along the UK-Irish border

Vincent Boland, January 30 2017, *The Financial Times*

The people of Killea, a village half in the Irish Republic and half in Northern Ireland, are concerned about Brexit but none more so than Micheál Doherty.

5 Mr Doherty's timber products business lies a couple of metres inside Ireland in the centre of Killea, 10km south-west of Londonderry, which is in the UK. A stream running behind his yard marks the border, the only visible manifestation of an invisible line that cuts the village in two.

On Monday, Theresa May is due in Dublin for talks with Enda Kenny, the Irish Taoiseach, about the Irish dimension to Brexit. The discussions will include preserving Irish-British trade, which runs to €1.2bn a week, and the common travel area, which has facilitated travel and work arrangements between the two islands for almost a century.

10 But it is the nature and future status of the border that looms largest in Irish concerns, and the disruption a "hard Brexit" could mean for trade and immigration. Whatever arrangements are put in place after the UK leaves the EU, says Mr Doherty, they must not reconstitute what used to be there in Killea: a closed road, concrete bollards and checkpoints.

15 Although Mrs May has pledged "no return to the borders of the past" after Brexit, Mr Doherty would like to know exactly what she means. "I'm concerned that we don't know what is going to happen, and I don't think even Theresa May knows," he says.

20 And he makes a plea to those involved in the exit negotiations. "I hope they are not going to sacrifice border businesses just to get things done," he says. "Otherwise we'll all end up as smugglers." The border question resonates in every community along the frontier's 500km length, from Lough Foyle in the north-west to Newry in the south-east. Most of all, it resonates in Londonderry — or Derry, to Irish nationalists, and the city where Northern Ireland's Troubles began in 1968 — and its hinterland, which includes Killea and a growing slice of Co Donegal in the Republic.

25 Londonderry is a cross-border town, which helps to explain why its vote for Remain in the EU referendum, at 78.3 per cent, was the fourth-highest in the UK (after Gibraltar and two London boroughs). "Derry is one of the few cities to straddle an international border today, and it will be probably the only one that will straddle an EU/non-EU border after Brexit," says John Kelpie, chief executive of Derry and Strabane district council.

30 Even during the Troubles — the 1972 Bloody Sunday killings took place here and paramilitary violence was a regular occurrence — the citizens crossed from one country to another without worrying too much about the border.

Since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, which ushered in a fragile but enduring peace to Northern Ireland, Londonderry has been trying to move on, but with mixed success. It is still one of the poorest parts of the UK. "Derry is at the top of every league table you don't want to be on top of," says Deirdre Heenan, a professor at Ulster University.

35 [...]

Preventing a "hard border", even in the event of a hard Brexit, has fostered an unusual degree of consensus across Ireland, from the DUP on the right to the socialist party People Before Profit. "There has never been such unity across this island as on no return of the border," says Eamonn McCann, who represents People Before Profit in the outgoing Northern Ireland assembly.

40 But at the moment that consensus may achieve nothing. Northern Ireland faces a snap election on March 2; the collapse of the devolved executive has left it without a voice in the noisy debate about the terms of Brexit. The two main parties — the DUP and Sinn Féin — have outsourced whatever negotiating positions they might possess, the former to Westminster and the latter to Dublin. "The conversation has been closed down here," laments Ms McLaughlin.

*THE NEW REPUBLIC***Why Conservative Intellectuals Are Pledging Loyalty to General Trump**

Jeet Heer

May 31, 2017

1 The Trump wars are still raging among conservative intellectuals. Indeed, the divide between Never
Trump writers and broader pro-Trump conservatives remains as wide now as it was during last year's
elections. In *National Review* on Tuesday, syndicated columnist Dennis Prager argued that this battle isn't
5 over the president himself, but competing visions of America. Whereas pro-Trump conservatives "believe
that America is engaged in a civil war, with the survival of America as we know it at stake," anti-Trump
conservatives have a less Manichean view of politics. "While they strongly differ with the Left, they do not
regard the left-right battle as an existential battle for preserving our nation," he wrote. "On the other hand, I,
and other conservative Trump supporters, do. That is why, after vigorously opposing Trump's candidacy
during the Republican primaries, I vigorously supported him once he won the nomination. I believed then, as
10 I do now, that America was doomed if a Democrat had been elected president." Prager returned to the military
analogy at the end of his essay, calling on anti-Trump conservatives to do their duty and fall in line behind the
commander-in-chief: "They can join the fight. They can accept an imperfect reality and acknowledge that we
are in a civil war, and that Trump, with all his flaws, is our general. If this general is going to win, he needs
the best fighters. But too many of them, some of the best minds of the conservative movement, are AWOL. I
15 beg them: Please report for duty."

In democracies, political leaders don't normally exercise the kind of power given to generals in
command of troops. While military leaders are to be obeyed, presidents have to rely on the tools of politics
(argument and persuasion, coalition-building and compromise) to achieve their goals. Objecting to
Prager, *National Review* senior editor Jonah Goldberg rightly noted, "Donald Trump is literally no one's
20 general, because the president isn't a general. Even figuratively, the idea that conservatives should operate
like loyal troops to a political leader is fraught with intellectual, philosophical, and historical problems."
Goldberg skirts over what these "problems" are, so it's necessary to fill in the gaps. Prager's argument is
inconsistent with certain strands of conservative thought, but not all. And for those who subscribe first and
foremost to anti-liberalism, the question is less about who will lead them into battle than whom they're
25 battling against.

The great conservative English thinker Michael Oakeshott (1901-1990) expounded on the dangers of
thinking of political activity as analogous to military life. While war might be necessary, it is a centralizing
activity that is inimical to conservatism as Oakeshott understood it. "War has accustomed the subjects
of modern governments to the experience of having their wealth, their property, their occupations, and their
30 activities managed by those in authority," Oakeshott explained in posthumously published lectures. "It has
reinforced all other circumstances from which the single, independent, centralized, powerful government of
modern states have sprung. It has been a generator of 'equality' more important than any other—the equality
of the besieged." In another set of lectures, he said that the analogy of military leadership "has little or
nothing to offer to subjects engaged in enterprises of their own choosing and who are disposed to want to
35 choose their opinions and beliefs for themselves and to change them when they feel inclined to do so." In
Oakeshottian terms, conservatives who see politics as a war led by generals (be it Trump or anyone else)
have already lost because conservative virtues of privacy and individualism can't exist in wartime.

Oakeshott's quaint, gentlemanly Toryism is just one form of conservatism, of course. In many ways,
Trump-era conservatives are closer to Oakeshott's German rival, Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), who believed it
40 was delusional to hope for a respite from political warfare, either domestically or in foreign relations. The
"friend-enemy distinction," for which he's famous, asserts that politics is inherently combative, everyone an
ally or foe. "The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that
between friend and enemy," he wrote in *The Concept of the Political* (1927). "Only the actual participants
can correctly recognize, understand, and judge the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict."
45 Prager struck a Schmittian note in calling for conservatives to follow Trump into battle, as did *Townhall*
columnist Kurt Schlichter in a Monday tweet declaring war on liberals. Trump, then, is justified with the
argument that politics is war, and that liberals are not just folks with a different political opinion, but an
enemy to be destroyed.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Census Won't Collect L.G.B.T. Data. That's a Problem

Praveen Fernandes

May 10, 2017

1 In my roughly 20 years working in the federal policy arena, few things have become clearer to me than the importance of data. If something is not counted, it is neither seen nor understood. For all intents and purposes, it does not exist. That's why the Trump administration's decision not to collect data on the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans threatens these communities in ways that are both symbolic and practical.

5 It was announced Tuesday that the United States Census Bureau director, John H. Thompson, had abruptly stepped down from his job, drawing national attention to the agency. But I and others in the L.G.B.T. community have been focused on the bureau's work for months — for reasons related not to its leadership, but to the collection of information. In March, when it published a list of planned subjects for data collection that included a proposed question on these topics, many of us were optimistic. After years of advocating this very change, there was a possibility that we might be more fully counted. But that cheer was to be short lived. The
10 Census Bureau quickly clarified that it had "inadvertently listed sexual orientation and gender identity as a proposed topic" and made changes to the online document within hours.

15 During the same month, the Department of Health and Human Services eliminated questions about L.G.B.T. people from drafts of two critical surveys: the National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants, which helps inform social and nutritional support programs for seniors; and the Centers for Independent Living Annual Program Performance Report, which helps inform programs designed to allow people with disabilities to live independently. This is concerning, because sound policy relies on good data, which in turn relies on robust data collection. The federal government needs to understand the American public if it is to devise policy that directly affects it. Such understanding is impossible without data collection.

20 That's why the U.C.L.A. School of Law's Williams Institute think tank and SAGE, an organization dedicated to improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults, have called for better data on older L.G.B.T. people. Given the discrimination, social isolation, health disparities and economic fragility that L.G.B.T. populations as a whole face, this need is especially urgent. The data collection rollbacks don't just prophesy bad policy. They recall a time of deep discrimination and pain that we have spent decades trying to
25 reverse.

30 Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in a major American city, famously urged gay Americans in 1978 to come out to their relatives, neighbors, friends and co-workers to "break down the myths" and "destroy the lies and distortions" about this community. The national coming-out movement was premised in part on the notion that if L.G.B.T. Americans went from a "them" to an "us" — people's own brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, neighbors and colleagues — it would reduce callousness and undercut the ability to deny
35 them rights. When people came out, it made it harder for others to cling to the belief that they did not have L.G.B.T. people in their families, or that no L.G.B.T. people lived in their neighborhoods, attended services at their houses of worship or worked alongside them.

40 Failing to collect good data on sexual orientation and gender identity allows policy makers and elected officials to hold the utterly false belief that no L.G.B.T. people use their services and that no L.G.B.T. people live in their electoral districts. It robs policy makers of the ability to understand us and it makes evidence-based policy more difficult. It puts L.G.B.T. Americans as a group back into the closet. Without collecting data on sexual orientation or gender identity, we don't know the size of the L.G.B.T. population or how that population is geographically distributed. We aren't able to learn about how many L.G.B.T. individuals have children, or
45 whether that differs in urban versus rural areas. We have no official information about the component groups that make up the L.G.B.T. community and no insight into their income or housing status — topics that are especially salient for transgender people. And we can't possibly know how sexual orientation or gender identity combines with other identities (such as race) and whether that correlates to differences in employment, housing or geographic location. This information affects the way the federal government designs and delivers services to the American people. Without the data formerly collected through the Survey of Older Americans Act Participants, for instance, H.H.S. can't meaningfully assess whether L.G.B.T. individuals have greater difficulty getting access
50 to programs that provide transportation, caregiver support or home-delivered meals.

THE NATION

After the Fumble

March 1, 2017 Matt Stoller

The results of the election have left liberals and Democrats scrounging for explanations—often those that don't require accepting their share of the blame for one of the greatest electoral upsets in American history. According to some, it was Putin's meddling in the election. Others point to a press that has been hostile to Hillary Clinton for decades; or to the various strains of racism and sexism in America that Trump exploited; or to the Republicans' scorched-earth strategy against Obama, obstructing his policies and political appointments; or to the Electoral College, since Clinton won the popular vote by several million. As with any complex event, there is no single cause for Trump's election. But what is clear is that the Democratic Party revealed much deeper weaknesses in its foundations. The collapse of the party in most states, and the weakness of the center-left globally, underscores a larger ideological problem: a crisis not only of policies but of the theories justifying them. Two books published before the election—Steve Fraser's *The Limousine Liberal* and Thomas Frank's *Listen, Liberal*—issued prescient warnings of this crisis and offer some clues as to the ideological problem facing the Democrats. Fraser's book examines the 20th-century right-wing populists who attacked liberalism using a frame similar to Trump's. Frank argues that the Democratic Party has become a group of coddled elites who have embraced the ideology of meritocracy and the inequality and injustice that come with it. In Frank's attempt to shatter the delusions of Democratic partisans concerning what their party has become, he also offers some hope for a populist organizing model that the Democrats would be wise to adopt in the future. A historian by training and a founder of the magazine *The Baffler*, Frank has long skewered the cultural assumptions of the liberal professional class and its relationship with big business. At the height of the dot-com boom in 2001, he published *One Market Under God*, an analysis of what he called "market populism": the use of democratic rhetoric to argue on behalf of markets and against democratic governance itself. But it was his subsequent book, *What's the Matter With Kansas?*, that finally caught the attention of many of his intended targets. In *What's the Matter With Kansas?*, Frank sets out to examine why middle-class Republicans vote against their own self-interest, and argues that the Republican Party has cunningly exploited explosive social issues like abortion. The book was published in 2004, at the height of the Bush presidency, and spent 18 weeks on the best-seller list; Frank followed it up with *The Wrecking Crew* and *Pity the Billionaire*, books that turned their attention away from Middle America's voters to the Republican operators and financial elites that benefited from their votes.

While many Democrats absorbed his analysis of the conservative movement, it appears they ignored another message in Frank's books: that the Democrats themselves had abandoned heartland voters by ridding the party of its traditional class politics. In *Listen, Liberal*, Frank poses this challenge directly. He begins the book with an indictment: "There are consequences to excessive hope, just as there are to other forms of intemperance." While the Republicans are the party of the plutocrats, they succeed only because of the Democratic Party's stark failures. These failures, Frank says to his fellow Democrats, are "ours," and "it's time to own up."

Listen, Liberal is actually two books in one: a political history of the Clintons and the professional class they sought to represent, and a cultural history of the ideology that the Democrats have used to justify their abandonment of class politics. This is the ideology of meritocracy, a "progressive" view of social hierarchy in which talent and ability are the natural arbiters of who should rule in a society. Meritocracy, Franks argues, is the ideology that allowed Democrats to self-consciously claim the mantle of social justice and egalitarianism while subverting both. In this framework, one's race, creed, color, gender, or sexual orientation shouldn't matter when it comes to achieving success in America; what does matter is having the talent and ability to graduate from a place like Harvard Law. But at the same time, meritocracy demands inequality—not everyone, after all, can go to Harvard Law or become a doctor or a high-tech executive. In fetishizing meritocracy, therefore, the Democratic Party has embraced an ideology based on inequality. Frank contrasts this ideology with the GOP's more traditional plutocratic one. In the United States, as elsewhere, having a lot of money gives you power. But this "hierarchy of money," as he puts it, is rivaled by another: a "hierarchy of merit, learning, and status." The lawyers, doctors, and academics who compose "the liberal class" (to use the journalist Chris Hedges's term) have erected their own edifice of power—one that has also come to ignore the interests of working-class people and reproduced structures of extreme racism, particularly in the prison system. According to Frank, this meritocratic ideal marks a stark break from the origins of the Democratic Party, which was founded as the "party of the people," in open rebellion against the political and banking elites. [...]

*THE LOS ANGELES TIMES***Yes, Trump's hard-line immigration stance helped him win the election — but it could be his undoing**

Philip Klinkner April 17, 2017

1 Ever since he announced his presidential campaign in July 2015, Donald Trump has made opposition to immigration central to his political strategy — and pundits have debated whether this strategy was effective. He won, of course, but did he win despite his aggressive rhetoric, or because of it?

5 Data from the recently released American National Election Study has finally provided an answer: Immigration was central to the election, and hostility toward immigrants animated Trump voters. The results of the 2012 and 2016 ANES surveys shows that Trump increased his vote over Mitt Romney's on a number of immigration-related issues. In 2012 and 2016, the ANES asked respondents their feelings toward immigrants in the country illegally. Respondents could rate them anywhere between 100 (most positive) or 0 (most negative). Among those with positive views (above 50), there was no change between 2012 and 2016, with Romney and Trump each receiving 22% of the vote. Among those who had negative views, however, Trump did better than Romney, capturing 60% of the vote compared with only 55% for Romney.

10 Attitudes toward immigrants in the country illegally speak to why some voters switched parties between 2012 and 2016. Among those who voted in both elections but didn't switch their vote, the average rating of immigrants in the country illegally was 42. Among those who switched from Romney to Hillary Clinton, it was 41. But those who switched their vote from President Obama to Trump were much more negative, with an average rating of only 32.

15 However, Trump's support wasn't limited to just those who oppose immigrants residing in the country illegally — he also picked up votes among those who want to limit *all* immigration to the United States. In 2012, Romney received 58% of the vote among those who said they think that "the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States" should be decreased. In 2016, Trump got 74% of the vote among those who held this view. Overall, immigration represented one of the biggest divides between Trump and Clinton voters. Among Trump voters, 67% endorsed building a southern border wall and 47% of them favored it a great deal. In contrast, 77% of Clinton voters opposed building a wall and 67% strongly opposed it.

20 Trump and Clinton voters were also deeply divided on the importance of speaking English. Eighty percent of Trump voters said that speaking English is very important for being "truly American," but only 43% of Clinton voters took the same view. Nearly half of Trump voters (49%) favored changing the Constitution so that children born to undocumented immigrants would no longer automatically receive U.S. citizenship. Only 18% of Clinton voters took this view. Trump voters, finally, said they don't want to let Syrian refugees into the U.S., with 80% opposed to such a policy, compared with only 23% of Clinton voters. This result reflected Trump voters' overall negative views of Muslims. On the 100-point scale mentioned above, 71% of Trump voters had a negative view of Muslims (50 or below). In contrast, only 31% of Clinton voters rated Muslims negatively. Trump's hard-line stance on immigration, then, likely helped him win in 2016. But a word of caution: Many of his positions actually fall on the wrong side of public opinion.

25 In the ANES survey, a large majority of Trump voters (68%) said that "immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children and have lived here for at least 10 years and graduated high school" should be allowed to stay in the U.S. They want a border wall; they're divided on the 14th Amendment — and yet, when push comes to shove, they don't want to deport kids who have done nothing wrong. Broadening out from Trump voters to the population at large, public opinion is even more dovish. Only 32% said they want to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. Most (56%) oppose decreasing immigration levels. Only 21% said they think that immigration is bad for the economy.

30 Trump won in 2016 by mobilizing the minority of Americans with anti-immigration views — but only because he avoided an offsetting counter-mobilization by the majority of Americans with pro-immigration views. Now that he is president and his immigration views can't be dismissed as mere campaign rhetoric, that counter-mobilization may finally be manifesting itself. Widespread protests against Trump's executive order barring individuals from several Muslim countries, congressional skepticism about the effectiveness and cost of Trump's proposed wall, and increased awareness of the negative effect that his policies are having on U.S. businesses, schools and families suggest a growing backlash. Should that backlash develop and sustain itself, the immigration views that helped Trump in 2016 might prove to be his undoing.

THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Black Voters vs. Populism: Why African-Americans so powerfully resisted the siren song of Donald Trump—and before him, Bernie Sanders

James Kirchick October 15, 2016

1 [...] In the final stages of his campaign, critics have lambasted Trump for patronizing to African-American voters with dystopian descriptions of their neighborhoods (frequently referred to as "inner-city") and job prospects. But these criticisms miss the point of Trump's narrative about black America, which has nothing to do with attracting blacks and everything to do with energizing whites. "You're living in your poverty, your schools are no good, you have no jobs, 58% of your youth is unemployed" — a falsehood like 5 many other uttered by Trump — "what the hell do you have to lose?" he recently asked at a campaign stop in Michigan.

That's been the pattern of his belated courtship of African-Americans: pretending to campaign for their votes when what he's really doing is appealing for white ones. Trump's offer to black voters was entirely rhetorical; given his own history of discriminating against black renters as a young real estate mogul, there's 10 no reason to believe he cares one whit about the fate of his black countrymen. And considering how he's been endorsed by the likes of David Duke and seemingly every other professional racist in the United States, the answer to the question of what African-Americans have to lose by electing him is: presumably a lot.

Before I'm accused of "whitesplaining," let me state clearly that I don't think it's possible for a white 15 person to fully understand what it's like to be black in America. I can only speak of my own experience. Personally, more than any other racially charged phenomenon I have witnessed in my 32 years as a citizen of the United States — the L.A. riots, the O.J. Simpson trial, the rise of Black Lives Matter — this current presidential campaign has forced me to empathize with the black perspective and confront the pervasiveness of racism in American society.

20 The method by which it has done so is circuitous. So shocked have I been at the degree of Trump's support — the manifest nonsense, bigotry and mendacity he gets away with on a daily basis — that I began to experience a sense of estrangement from my own country I had never before felt. I remain utterly flabbergasted at how tens of millions of fellow Americans could vote for this malicious charlatan. Given the blatantly racist nature of Trump's campaign and my own incomprehension at its success, I tried to imagine 25 what it must feel like to be a non-white American citizen, particularly a black one.

That led to a thought experiment in which I questioned how America would respond to a black Donald Trump — that is, a *black* adulterer with five children by three different wives, who talked about money and women in the lewd and lascivious way Trump does, earned notoriety for unsavory business ethics, spoke at a fifth grade reading level, and was a conspiracy theorist to boot. Needless to say, I don't think this 30 hypothetical black reality television show star would be the presidential nominee of one of our major political parties. More likely, he would be condemned as a "thug" by the screaming mobs flocking to Trump's Nuremberg-esque rallies.

Viewed through this lens, the ongoing existence of the Trump campaign — the fact that his winning the presidency is even feasible — is not just evidence of a dangerously broken political and educational 35 system, as many critics have observed, but of a gaping racial double standard.

None of this will be news to black Americans, whose experience of this double standard can only have been reinforced by Trump's success. In light of their wholesale opposition to the Sanders and Trump candidacies, it's not unreasonable to infer that African-American voters are by and large more suspicious than their white countrymen of populism, even a left-wing one that would include them as part of its virtuous 40 coalition of the downtrodden. Perhaps because of their historical experience as an oppressed minority, black Americans have a deeper, more expansive conception of American pluralism, and better understand the consequences of targeting small subsets of the population for society's ills. Though Trump has not threatened the black community explicitly in the way he has Muslim and Mexican-Americans, surely many black voters implicitly understand that an attack on one minority group inevitably leads to attacks on others.

Now, finally, we can have a real debate about immigration

10 September 2016, *The Spectator*

Brexit doesn't mean xenophobia; it does mean choice

5 Calm is slowly returning to the debate about Britain and Europe. The shrillness of the referendum campaign, and the hysteria from people who ought to have known better, is giving way to an acceptance that the end is not nigh and that things could be as good, if not better, than before. The idea that the British public had somehow voted for a recession is being steadily abandoned. The next stage is to accept that Brexit was not a populist yawp about protecting our borders. It was not a demand to stop immigration, but to manage it better.

10 So when Theresa May rejected an Australian-style points-based immigration system this week, it did not mean that she had betrayed Brexit or shown her desire to water down the whole process. That was the suggestion of Nigel Farage, but the Australian system was at best an example of what countries do when they have the power to control their borders. [...]

15 That a majority of the public voted to remove Britain from the powers of the European Commission and European Parliament does not oblige Mrs May's government to follow any particular policy on migration. It just means that in future Britain's immigration policy will be decided by our own Parliament.

20 The debate can now start, and it would be one much improved if it were joined by those who had argued for Britain to stay in the EU. Surely, for example, both sides can agree that immediate assurances ought to be granted to EU nationals who are currently living in Britain? They were fully entitled to make the move here and have established careers and family lives in the belief that they would retain the right to live in Britain. It is wrong to put their residence here in doubt, and Theresa May should rule out any suggestion that their rights will be used as bargaining chips during Brexit negotiations.

25 A wise migration policy would go on to recognise that open labour markets are generally a good thing. They make it easier for British businesses to fill vacancies they would otherwise be unable to fill and attract entrepreneurs who will go on to set up businesses in Britain. Some of these future entrepreneurs begin their working lives in Britain doing fairly lowly jobs, and would therefore probably be excluded by a points-based migration system. This itself is a very good argument against adopting such a system. There are others, too. The Australian system, for example, is shamelessly ageist — it excludes applicants over the age of 50 and yet automatically gives half the required points to people in their twenties, regardless of how many or how few skills they have.

30 For all the good which comes of migration, a well-constructed policy would also recognise that immigration can sometimes overwhelm labour markets and public services. It needs to address the problem of migrants taking advantage of our benefits system — which is very generous by the standards of many EU states — and to tackle the issue of migrants with criminal convictions. Neither proved possible under the EU's diktats on free movement.

35 There is no need for a British immigration policy to treat all EU citizens the same. The government could adopt a policy of completely free movement with prosperous western European countries but exert more control over migration from poorer eastern European states until such a time as their per capita income comes closer to Britain's. Migration only tends to be a problem when it occurs between countries with a large disparity in average incomes.

40 These are some ideas at least. Others will have different suggestions. Remain voters who wish to speak up for mass migration have every right to present their case. But they should do it in the context of helping to develop a British policy on migration, not pretending that they can reverse the will of the people in wanting Britain to depart from the EU. They might even find, to their pleasant surprise, that the re-establishment of full British sovereignty makes it easier for their ideas to be heard.



Posturing behind "the people"

14 February 2017, Nick Cohen, *Prospect Magazine*

Propaganda hides best behind simple words. The plainer the language, the more devious it can be. A speaker's apparent lack of pretence promises the audience that in front of them is a man of "the people", who scorns political correctness, and "tells it like it is."

5 Ah, "the people." What lies are told in your name. To be with "the people" is to be a good neighbour and a good citizen. To be against "the people" is to be against the sole source of legitimacy in a democracy. If you are not a traitor or an agent of a hostile foreign power, you are at the very least an "enemy of the people"; an aloof member of "the elite" that fixes the system for its own benefit. Who does not want to be on the people's side? Who will admit to standing with their enemies in the "elite"?

10 "The people," "the elite," "traitor," "enemy." To the astonishment of those who grew up in the long period of calm between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of Lehman Brothers, these Pavlovian words are now the language of power. The astonishment takes two forms: first at the depth of deceit; then at the brass neck of the liars who so effortlessly rig the debate.

15 Successful democracies are wary of the twin ideas of a unified people and of a homogeneous elite. Electorates are made up of competing interests. Rival elites fight for power. If a social democratic party loses an election, no one thinks of accusing its activists of "refusing to accept the verdict of the people" if they continue to campaign for a strong welfare state and the redistribution of wealth. That is their job, after all.

20 And yet in Britain, the 52 per cent who voted to leave the European Union are now "the people," while the 48 per cent who voted to remain are now "the elite." Hitherto, elites have been tight and cliquy. No longer. At 48 per cent, Britain now has the largest elite in political history. This supposed elite breaks with another precedent. Uniquely, it is an elite which is everywhere except the one place an elite needs to be: in power. A powerless elite is not much of an elite at all. It exists only as a propaganda target for the holders of real power.

25 If they were truly sovereign, meanwhile, "the people's" strength would be limitless. But like mayflies that live for a day, people power is a fleeting thing. The British people had one vote on membership of the EU, and that was it. "The people," it turns out, does not have the prerogative of changing its mind. It cannot reconsider if the economy suffers or if Brexit leaves us dependent on a United States that is under the control of a president whose policies on Russian imperialism, climate change, ethnic relations and nuclear proliferation run directly against British interests. As soon as individual persons reconsider, they leave "the people" and join "the elite."

30 Just as disconcerting as the fraudulence of the language is the fraudulence of the speakers. For anyone from the liberal-left, the rise of the new authoritarians is staggering. After the post-war settlement collapsed, inequality shot up across the west. The new gilded age ended in a bank crash. But far from turning on the rich, "the people" have turned to them.

35 Donald Trump is a rich man, although nowhere near as rich as he pretends. He promised to drain the Washington swamp, then appointed a cabinet with a combined worth of \$4.5bn. In Britain, we are told that the leave vote was a protest by the "left behind," even though there was almost the same proportion of leave supporters in the wealthy southeast of England (51.8 per cent) as depressed Wales (52.5 per cent).

40 Members of the elites of wealth, then, now also populate the new elite of power, as the British government has made all too clear with its threats to turn the UK into a low-tax, low regulation Hong Kong of the north Atlantic. Meanwhile, whichever way you cut it, the Leavers won by playing the race card, as so many authoritarian movements have done in the past. This is not to say that everyone who voted for Brexit or Trump was a racist. It is simply to acknowledge the truth that fears about immigrants, stoked by lies, carried them over the line. [...]

45

How can we tackle hate crime with four school systems?

28 February 2017, Tim Brighouse, *The Guardian*

There's no such thing as 'British values' – Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland all teach different things

5 Exactly what did Theresa May mean when she determined to “strengthen the union of the four countries of the United Kingdom” as one of the 12 essential requirements of a successful Brexit? Tempting though it is to assign her words to a banalities basket, along with “Brexit means Brexit”, perhaps it was more than that.

10 Could it have been a coded way of acknowledging there is a job to be done in healing the wounds of a nation so divided by the strong feelings of the leave-or-remain debate that it has led to a significant increase in crimes born of xenophobia and racism? To heal those is an urgent necessity to retain our claim to be civilised.

Most developed countries seek to do that, and to secure their economic wellbeing in an increasingly uncertain world, through their educational systems, especially their schools. They re-emphasise long-established and agreed educational purposes. But in the case of the UK, there are none.

15 This comes as a surprise to most people. The reality, however, is that Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish and English schools march to different drumbeats – increasingly divergent after the establishment of the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Stormont in 1998. Even though their pupils emerge with the same right to call themselves citizens of the UK, they do so under very different dispensations. Different exam and testing systems, different school inspection regimes, different rules for school admissions and widely divergent school curriculums mean almost nothing unites our future citizens' schooling experience.

20 In England, there are academies and free schools and a sprinkling of university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools; in the other three countries, there are none. A key feature of English schools is the vital supervisory role of governing bodies; in Scotland there are no governors. Secondary schools in Wales and Scotland are almost entirely organised along comprehensive lines; in Northern Ireland there is a selective system dominated by the Catholic and Protestant churches and in England a hybrid arrangement depending in which part of the country you live.

25 But curriculum does matter. Surely there should be agreement, however generally expressed, about what skills and shared values we want our next generation to take on. Even “British values”, which in 2014 Westminster stipulated should underpin daily life in all schools, weren't really shared. The clue lay in the requirement that all pupils should develop “respect for English [sic] law”. Schools in the other three countries know nothing about this version of “British values”. Nor do they all know of – still less pursue – the time-intensive Prevent training, allegedly essential in countering extremism.

30 Next weekend at a hotel near Edinburgh 20 teachers, five from each of the four countries, are getting together to examine [different school practices across the UK].

35 [...] If the Edinburgh group sends a report of their findings to the four education ministers, it will be more in hope than expectation that ministers will compare notes. After all, they have never done so. Devolution in 1998 to Stormont, Holyrood and the Welsh Assembly, was to be welcomed and the subsidiarity that went with it: England remains the poor relation with its centralised system and weakened local government. If a sense of powerlessness is the enemy of democracy, England is more at risk than the other three countries. To compare notes nearly 20 years on from devolution would not be hasty although it would involve suspending for a brief period educational tourism to the far east and Scandinavia.

40 If there is any ambition to preserve the UK as an entity, schools have an essential role to play. It is hard to think of anywhere else that has abandoned schools as a key means of nation building. Post Brexit, it will be interesting to see if that ambition exists in the four countries of the UK.

45 *Sir Tim Brighouse is the former chief commissioner for school*

SLATE

The Empire Strikes Back

Michelle Goldberg

December 27, 2016

1 [...] I never wore one of those T-shirts proclaiming "The Future is Female," but I came close to believing it. Certainly, I've always known that many women don't identify as feminists, and don't see their interests as being bound up with those of womankind. But in 2016, the polls foretold a history-making gender gap. Donald Trump's bombastic campaign seemed like the terminal stage of aggrieved American machismo rather than simply the terminal stage of America.

5 In the days before election, I kept returning to a 4,000-word essay by Christopher Caldwell that the *Weekly Standard* ran 20 years ago. Titled "The Feminization of America," it was meant to be apocalyptic, but it gave me a giddy hope. "Women are now thought to have more in common with other women than they do with men of similar ethnicity, religion, or income level, their interests coinciding more with those of other women than with those of their own fathers and brothers and husbands and sons," Caldwell wrote with palpable alarm. "Women now constitute a class -- a dominant class." It wasn't true in 1996, but in 2016 the world that Caldwell warned of was just visible on the horizon. It seemed significant that his piece both began and ended by griping about Hillary Clinton. In America, men have always ruled, and right now I wonder if they always will.

15 For 25 years, after all, Clinton was reviled as a synecdoche for unseemly female ambition. That's part of what made her candidacy so fraught. If she'd become president, it would have been in the teeth of widespread male opposition; even the models that showed her winning had her losing the majority of men. She proposed policies that would have increased women's power and autonomy at every level of society: equal pay, paid family leave, subsidized child care, abortion rights. For all her manifold faults, her election would have both signified progress toward gender equality and made more such progress possible. Before Nov. 8, it looked as if the arc of history was bending toward women.

20 Trump's victory has obliterated this narrative. In many ways it was a fluke; had a few thousand votes in a few Rust Belt states gone another way, we'd be talking about Clinton's popular vote landslide and the decisive defeat of Trumpian reaction. However freakishly contingent his triumph, it forecloses the future feminists imagined at least for a long while. We're going to be blown backward so far that this irredeemably shitty year may someday look like a lost feminist golden age. The very idea that women are equal citizens, that barriers to their full human flourishing should be identified and removed, is now up for grabs. A pastor warming up the crowd at a post-election Trump rally in Louisiana promised that with Trump in office, the White House would be a place "where men know who men are, women know who women are." The massive power of the American state is about to be marshaled to put women in their place.

25 We might well lose *Roe v. Wade* in the next four years. Trump has said the issue would then go back to the states, but there's no reason to think that Republicans would settle for anything less than a national ban. There is a particular insult at the thought of a sybarite like Trump, who still won't say whether he's ever paid for an abortion himself, imposing a regime of forced birth on American women. When and if Trump strips us of bodily autonomy, there won't be any illusions that he's doing it to protect life or the family or sexual morality. It will be because he has power, and women's hopes and plans for their own lives don't matter to him at all.

30 Controlling the course of our own lives is going to get harder in many different ways. We can say goodbye to Department of Education pressure on colleges to address campus rape. We can expect the end of federal aid for Planned Parenthood and of federal government action to promote equal pay and fight sexual harassment and pregnancy discrimination. The Women's Bureau, the one department in the federal government tasked with responding to the needs of women in the workforce, will now fall under the aegis of former Carl's Jr. honcho Andrew Puzder, whose company is known for commercials featuring near-naked women in orgasmic communion with sandwiches. "I like beautiful women eating burgers in bikinis," he said. "I think it's very American." Like top Trump adviser Steve Bannon, Puzder has also been accused of assaulting his now-ex wife.

35 In *Achieving Our Country*, a 1998 book much discussed since Trump's election, Richard Rorty discussed how culture would change after the ascension of an American strongman. "Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion," he wrote, adding, "All the sadism which the academic Left has tried to make unacceptable to its students will come flooding back." This will likely prove prescient.



Red Theresa's manifesto

Fraser Nelson, 20 May 2017, *The Spectator*

Never has the Conservative party been more confident about winning a general election. Theresa May's popularity ratings have broken all records; her aim in this campaign is not just to defeat the Labour party but to destroy it. The Tory MPs who talk about ten years in power are the more cautious ones; some talk about staying in government until the 2040s.

5 The party's name is seldom mentioned in this campaign. We instead hear only about 'Theresa May's team', and voters seem to approve. As to what the Conservatives stand for, they'd rather not say. At times it seems they're not even quite sure. The Tory messages revolve around Jeremy Corbyn and not much else.

10 Just two years ago the Tories were denouncing ideas such as an energy price cap as 'Marxist'. Trying to fix prices, they said, was as naive as trying to legislate for the weather. Now price caps are Conservative party policy. In 2015, Ed Miliband's plan for an £8 minimum wage was a job-killer that would render unemployed anyone whose skills were worth less than this sum. Now Mrs May is going for £9 an hour. And her published plans involve the tax burden rising to a 35-year high.

15 The Ed Stone, the much-mocked slab of limestone on to which Ed Miliband inscribed his agenda, was smashed up soon after the election. He ought not to have been so bashful. Within months, several of his ideas — a national infrastructure commission, a mansion tax, grandparents sharing parental leave, that national living wage — had been adopted by Conservatives. The idea of taxing employers to fund apprenticeships was discussed before the Labour manifesto but didn't make it in because Miliband thought it a step too far. It is now Tory policy.

20 May's embrace of the energy price cap was significant because it had been the flagship Miliband idea. And while Osborne could have been accused of raiding the old Labour manifesto, May has gone one better and seems to be actually running ahead of Jeremy Corbyn. The cap on executive pay, one of the ideas in the 2017 Labour manifesto, was a policy she ran past her own (horrified) cabinet colleagues last year. Corbyn's plan to make it harder for foreign companies to buy British firms was also floated by
25 Mrs May, and blocked by Philip Hammond. The disagreements between Prime Minister and Chancellor have been frequent, but they were initially kept quiet — not least because Hammond was worried about what the City would make of her interventionist instincts. But in recent weeks, the secret seems to be out and reports about Hammond's screaming matches with May's aides are surfacing. Strikingly, he doesn't deny them. 'I'm not going to say I've never occasionally sworn,' he admitted this week. She,
30 for her part, has refused to say that his job will be safe after the general election.

Many of Hammond's colleagues admire his courage in defending free-market conservatism but wonder if it is politically wise — especially if the Prime Minister doesn't really believe in it. The tension between them has become a theme of the May government: she wants to move to the left, but has been unable to do so because her Chancellor has positioned himself as a Thatcherite roadblock. He suspects Nick
35 Timothy, Mrs May's chief of staff, is behind this what might be crudely described as Trump-style, Britain-first economic policies.

Just as Nigel Lawson resented the influence of Alan Walters over Mrs Thatcher — and ultimately resigned in protest at being second-guessed — Mr Hammond has refused to yield to the Prime Minister's ideas. But there is no denying that her main interest has seemed to be in committing the Tories to dirigiste
40 policies that her colleagues had thought defeated.

[...]

Disraeli once said that the Conservative party is the party of low taxation or it is nothing. But there are, now, other options. The Conservatives are mutating from being the party of low taxation to the party of Brexit. The Tories might regain their love of free enterprise when Britain has left the EU. Or they
45 might not. But what does look likely is that, in ten years' time there will still be a safe Tory majority. And for now, that seems to be all that matters

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

The Law Can't Stop Trump. Only Impeachment Can.

Jonathan Chait

May 15, 2017

1 Shortly after the *Washington Post's* devastating report that President Trump "revealed highly
classified information to the Russian foreign minister and ambassador" and "jeopardized a critical source of
intelligence on the Islamic State," Republicans in Congress began to weigh in. "We certainly don't want any
president to leak classified information but the president does have the right to do that," insisted
5 Senator John McCain. "It's no longer classified the minute he utters it," explained Senator Jim Risch.

The argument was eerily familiar. Trump, as his supporters pointed out, had a legal right to fire FBI
Director James Comey. Likewise legal, Trump's decision to hold on to his vast and non-transparent business
empire, the value of which he can increase through his powers as president. ("The law's totally on my side,
meaning, the president can't have a conflict of interest," he exulted.) That is true, and the legality Trump
10 enjoys extends much further than even his supporters have suggested. Since the president can pardon
anybody, probably including himself, he can operate with hardly any legal restraint at all.

The president has a massive amount of leeway because the system is set up with the unstated
presumption that the president is a responsible person who will act in a broadly legitimate, competent
15 fashion. Trump's brief tenure in office so far has supplied a constant stream of evidence that this reasoning
does not apply. Fears that Trump could not be trusted with classified intelligence have circulated among
allies and the American intelligence community since his election. "U.S. officials and analysts fear other
countries will hesitate to share information with a Kremlin-friendly Trump
administration," reported *Politico's* Nahal Toosi in January. "Israeli intelligence officials are concerned that
20 the exposure of classified information to their American counterparts under a Trump administration could
lead to their being leaked to Russia and onward to Iran," reported *Haaretz* that same month." Now those
fears have been vindicated. As one former senior intelligence official tells conservative *Weekly
Standard* editor Stephen Hayes, "Sharing of another country's intel w/o permission is one of the brightest
red lines in the intel world."

25 One of the oddities of the moment is that Republican officials who work closely with Trump almost
uniformly regard him as wildly unfit for office. Trump's gross unsuitability for office is the subtext of the
constant stream of leaks that have emanated from his administration (and, before that, his campaign). James
Comey told associates he found the president "outside the realm of normal," even "crazy," reported the *New
York Times* recently. A Republican close to the White House told the *Washington Post* Trump is "in the grip
30 of some kind of paranoid delusion." A friend of Trump, trying to spin the latest debacle in the most forgiving
way, tells *Politico*, "He doesn't really know any boundaries. He doesn't think in those terms ... He doesn't
sometimes realize the implications of what he's saying. I don't think it was his intention in any way to share
any classified information. He wouldn't want to do that." (This was offered as an alternative to the suspicion
that Trump is deliberately undermining U.S. intelligence to benefit his Russian friends.)

35 And yet, outside the inner circle of Republicans with access to the commander-in-chief, Trump's
popularity remains respectable, even solid. The conservative base is largely unaware of the constant
revelations of Trump's gross incompetence, or has been trained to ignore them as propaganda emanating
from the administration's enemies in the deep state or the liberal media. In red America, Trump remains a
hero at best, and a competent, normal president at worst.

40 And so, at the moment, Congress remains in the hands of a party that conceives of its role as Trump's
junior partner. His erratic behavior is disconcerting to them, but their pain is mostly private, and mostly
confined to the risks it implies to their domestic agenda. The system is designed so that the only remedy for
a president who cannot faithfully act in the public interest is impeachment. For the moment, that course of
action — the only one that can save the country from the dire risk of its man-child president — is
unfathomable to the Republicans who have a hammerlock on government.

Nordstrom drops Ivanka Trump brand: Business or politics?

Josh Kenworthy

The Christian Science Monitor (web site)

Business, Friday, February 3, 2017

Department store chain Nordstrom said on Thursday that it will not be selling this season's line of Ivanka Trump merchandise, following months of controversy over what some see as conflicts of interest between her business and political connections.

5 The company said poor sales had led to its decision to wind down its relationship with Ms. Trump's brand. But after months of pressure by the #GrabYourWallet campaign to boycott all retailers with Trump brands, it has also raised questions of whether the move might have a political edge to it, a trend that has become more common in the fashion sector, an industry that has traditionally opted to stay clear of politics.

10 "We've got thousands of brands," a Nordstrom spokesperson told The Seattle Times. "Each year we cut about 10 percent and refresh our assortment with about the same amount. In this case, based on the brand's performance we've decided not to buy it for this season."

The company did not indicate whether the move to stop buying the Ivanka Trump Brand would be permanent, saying "we make buying decisions season by season."

15 Back in November, Nordstrom co-president Pete Nordstrom sent an email to employees saying that he heard from customers on both sides of the issue who said they were preparing to boycott the company. Trump supporters vowed to stop shopping at the store if the line were to be pulled, and opponents said they would do the same if Ivanka Trump merchandise remained.

20 "This is a sharply divisive subject," he said. "No matter what we do, we are going to end up disappointing some of our customers. Every single brand we offer is evaluated on their results - if people don't buy it, we won't sell it."

But Shannon Coulter, a co-founder of the #GrabYourWallet online boycott campaign, which started last October after tapes emerged of President Trump making lewd comments about women, saw Nordstrom's decision as a victory.

25 "I am absolutely thrilled, and I know the vast majority of Grab Your Wallet participants will be as well," she said, according to The Seattle Times.

The fashion world has become increasingly entangled in politics since Mr. Trump's election last November.

30 In the lead-up to Inauguration Day, Melania Trump had fewer options to choose from than former first lady Michelle Obama, after some designers refused to work with the Trump family on political grounds.

Rejecting an opportunity to dress the first lady is a big deal for designers who are missing out on substantial industry exposure and a spike in sales.

35 "The impact of the first lady is really, really powerful," Naeem Khan, an Indian-born American designer who has dressed Michelle Obama close to 20 times, told the Associated Press. "It turned us into a global business."

Outdoor clothing chain L.L. Bean got in a tangle with #GrabYourWallet earlier this year, following Federal Election Commission allegations that L.L. Bean heiress and board member Linda Bean had exceeded legal donation limits by about \$55,000 to a political action committee that supported Donald Trump.

40 "I understand why L.L. Bean is concerned, but they need to face the reality there are repercussions for their company's brand and bottom line when consumers learn what their leaders are up to in terms of their politics," Ms. Coulter told the Portland Press Herald in January. "If L.L. Bean thinks a part-owner and board member can engage in this activity and have it not affect their bottom line, that's very naive."

45 But Shawn Gorman, the company's executive chairman, countered that idea in a Facebook statement. "Our owners, employees, and customers hold views and embrace causes that are individual and diverse," Mr. Gorman wrote. "We are united by our love for the outdoors and our guiding principles established back in 1912 by Leon Leonwood Bean himself who believed 'do unto others' was not just a saying, but a way of life."

50 Meanwhile, Ivanka Trump's brand seems relatively undeterred by the Nordstrom hiccup, according to the Seattle Times, having recently expanded into baby bedding and fashion jewelry.

When the controversy over Nordstrom selling her brand ramped up in November, the company responded via Twitter to an open letter by a customer asking the company to stop carrying the brand.

55 "We hope that offering a vendor's products isn't misunderstood as us taking a political position; we're not," Nordstrom said at the time. "We recognize our customers can make choices about what they purchase based on personal views and we'll continue to give them options."

Diversity progress at elite exam schools is lagging, study says

By Travis Andersen

The Boston Globe (MA)

Friday, June 2, 2017 - 00:17 UTC -0400

Boston's elite exam schools are not admitting enough students of color to reflect the racial diversity of the public school district, according to a study released Tuesday by several civil rights organizations.

Boston Latin School especially lags in the admission of minority students, while Boston Latin Academy and the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science are faring better, the study found.

5 The breakdown of minority students admitted to BLS — where federal investigators last year found a climate of racial discrimination and harassment — is 11 percent black, 16 percent Latino, 43 percent white, and 26 percent Asian, according to the study.

Students admitted to Latin Academy are 23 percent black, 26 percent Latino, 31 percent white, and 17 percent Asian. The O'Bryant is set to admit a new group of students that is 35 percent black, 35 percent Latino, 13

10 percent white, and 15 percent Asian, according to the study.
"No exam school enrolls Latino students at a rate proportional to their enrollment in BPS (41.8 percent)," according to the study, which is titled "A Broken Mirror: Exam School Admissions Fail to Reflect Boston's Diversity." "Only the O'Bryant enrolls black students at a rate proportional to their BPS enrollment (31.8 percent)."

15 Currently, total enrollment in the nearly 54,000-student district is 31.8 percent black, 41.8 percent Latino, 14.2 percent white, and 8.8 percent Asian, the study said.

The exam schools are elite public schools whose seats are coveted by BPS families intent on sending their children to college. Applicants must take an entrance exam.

20 The seven-page study was released by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, the ACLU of Massachusetts, the NAACP Boston branch, Massachusetts Advocates for Children, and the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts.

Boston School Superintendent Tommy Chang defended the district's efforts to improve diversity at the city's most prestigious schools.

25 "[The district has taken] unprecedented steps over the past year to provide all students access to the pathways for our exam schools," he said.

In his statement, he cited expanding the number of seats in the Exam School Initiative, a test preparation course, and launching Excellence For All, an enrichment program for fourth-graders at 13 pilot schools that provides the same rigorous instruction offered to students enrolled in the district's Advanced Work classes.

But those efforts have fallen short, according to the civil rights advocates.

30 "The city has long held out exam schools as a means of upward mobility for children of all backgrounds," Matt Cregor, education project director at the Lawyers' Committee and lead author of the study, said in a statement. "The new admissions data make it very hard to stake that claim, especially at Boston Latin."

Racial tensions have been a flashpoint at Boston Latin since two students went public with allegations of discrimination in January 2016, including an incident in which a black female student was called a racial slur by

35 a male student who also threatened to lynch her.

Then-US Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz's office launched an investigation and announced in September that the school's mishandling of the incident was a violation of the Civil Rights Act.

Kim Janey, senior project director at Massachusetts Advocates for Children, referenced Ortiz's investigation in a statement Tuesday.

40 "As the recent crisis and Department of Justice finding of discrimination at Boston Latin remind us, we fail our children when we ignore issues that deprive them of equal educational opportunity," Janey said.

School officials provided additional information pointing to gains made in the racial makeup of the exam schools.

45 The number of black and Latino students who accepted entrance into one of the three exam schools next fall as seventh-graders is 341, up from 281 in the current year. The number of black and Latino students accepting entry as ninth-graders for the fall is 324, up from 128 this year, according to the BPS data.

In addition, 62 percent of black students and 68 percent of Latino students who enrolled in the Exam School Initiative last summer were admitted to an exam school, compared to 42 percent and 44 percent, respectively, who did not attend the program, the data shows.

50 "We look forward to engaging the organizations that put this report together," Chang said. "I know that we have the shared goal of giving all BPS students equitable access to the exam schools."

Colorado becomes latest state to legalize physician-aided death

Gretel Kauffman

The Christian Science Monitor (web site) Thursday, November 10, 2016

USA - Society

Coloradans voted overwhelmingly in favor of a measure to legalize physician-aided death for terminally ill patients on Tuesday, making the Centennial State the sixth to adopt so-called "Death with Dignity" laws.

The "End-of-Life Options Act," which will allow patients ages 18 and older with a prognosis of six months or less to request self-administered medicine to bring on death, was approved by two-thirds of voters despite 5 opposition from some religious and medical groups. Now, thanks to the "Yes on Colorado End-of-Life Options" campaign, Colorado will join Oregon, California, Vermont, Washington, and Montana, all of which have legalized the practice in some form.

Despite failed measures in a number of states including Massachusetts and Connecticut, support for "Death with Dignity" laws has grown in recent decades as the demand for physician-aided death rises, partly because of an 10 aging population, medical advancements that prolong the death process, and high-profile advocates for the cause, experts say. A yearly Gallup poll shows that nearly 7 in 10 Americans say that a doctor should be allowed to end a patient's life by painless means if the patient requests it, a significant increase from the 35 percent of Americans supporting euthanasia in 1950.

But debate over the issue is far from settled, as demonstrated by opposition to the Colorado measure. Democrats 15 in the state Legislature had attempted to pass legislation allowing for physician-aided death in recent years, but Republicans rejected the initiatives in the split Legislature.

Although opposition to the End-of-Life Options Act, otherwise known as Proposition 106, came primarily from religious groups, the question of whether to legalize medical aid in dying is not necessarily a partisan one, says Margaret Battin, a professor of philosophy and of medical ethics at the University of Utah. Instead, she sees it as 20 an "issue of liberty."

[...]

While a "Death with Dignity" law has existed in Oregon since 1997, several high-profile advocates for legalization have helped to bring the issue into the national spotlight in recent years. Brittany Maynard, the 29-year-old woman diagnosed with a brain tumor who moved from California to Oregon to take advantage of the 25 state's Death With Dignity law in 2014, was an especially "game-changing advocate." Her story gave "new life to the pro-assisted suicide movements" and prompted a new wave of legislation among state lawmakers, Charles Camosy, an associate professor of theology at Fordham University in New York, told the Monitor at the time.

But support for such laws is far from unanimous. Legislation in Colorado and elsewhere has consistently faced opposition from religious groups, particularly those affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, whose United 30 States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2011 called the practice a "grave offense against love of self, one that also breaks the bonds of love and solidarity with family, friends, and God." The American Medical Association has also spoken out against legalization, arguing that it is "fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer, would be difficult or impossible to control, and would pose serious societal risks." And disability rights advocates in Colorado expressed concerns that allowing the practice would cause insurance companies to 35 determine that providing medical aid in dying is more cost-effective than lifelong medical care.

As Harry Bruinius reported for the Monitor last year:

Opponents - and even some advocates - worry about how these policies will evolve into the future. Current laws limit the assisted suicide option to terminal patients diagnosed with six months to live, usually after expensive 40 treatments have been exhausted. But a "slippery slope" argument suggests that as the situation evolves over years or decades, people might begin to clamor for assisted suicide for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and [early] onset dementia.

These concerns, experts say, highlight the need for sufficient safeguards built into physician-aided death legislation. The Colorado law, like others, has certain requirements, including that the patient must be at least 18 45 years old, diagnosed with a terminal illness and a prognosis of six months or less as confirmed by two physicians, and be deemed mentally capable by two physicians of making and communicating an informed decision.

Some opponents of the legislation, however, argued that Proposition 106 did not go far enough in its safeguards, as it does not require that a doctor is present at the time of death, does not prevent patients from "doctor shopping," and does not adequately prevent an heir from plotting the death of a relative to reap their inheritance.

Nearly as controversial as the contents of the Colorado measure itself was the language used to describe the act. 50 As elsewhere, proponents for the legislation tended to use terms such as "dying with dignity" and "right to die," where as opponents favored "physician-assisted suicide," as The Denver Post reports.

While such language reflects stances on the issue, it can also shape perceptions, experts say. And adding to the nationwide movement toward legalization is "the growing acceptance that [physician-aided dying] is not assisted 55 suicide," Arthur Svenson, a professor of political science at the University of Redlands in Redlands, Calif., writes in an email to the Monitor, noting that no states that allow the practice include the word "suicide" in their laws.

"Suicide describes a healthy person who chooses death, while [physician-aided dying] describes a terminally ill person who would rather live," he adds.

Trump Defends Twitter Use as Aides Urge Him to Cut Back

By GLENN THRUSH

The New York Times (web site)

Wednesday, June 7, 2017 - 01:06 UTC -0400

WASHINGTON — President Trump — under pressure to cut back on 140-character cannonades — shot back Tuesday morning with two tweets defending his use of social media and slamming “fake” news organizations for trying to deny him his political sword and shield.

5 “The FAKE MSM is working so hard trying to get me not to use Social Media,” he wrote at 7:58 a.m., turning his sights on the mainstream media after two warm-up tweets linking to “Fox & Friends” clips. “They hate that I can get the honest and unfiltered message out.”

Seventeen minutes later, Mr. Trump — who will meet with congressional Republicans on Tuesday to brief them on last month’s overseas trip — tweeted again. “Sorry folks, but if I would have relied on the Fake News of CNN, NBC, ABC, CBS, washpost or nytimes, I would have had ZERO chance winning WH,” he wrote.

10 Even though the mainstream media was the target of his Tuesday morning ire, it is Mr. Trump’s own team that has been pointedly critical of his tweeting habits, with members of his legal, communications and political staffs urging him to cut back on self-expression in the interest of political self-preservation.

15 Mr. Trump has mostly brushed them off, although he has intermittently stuck to anodyne pronouncements about policy or feel-good meetings with foreign leaders, as he did during his nine-day trip to the Middle East and Europe. During that time, aides said, he was simply too busy to tweet.

But mornings belong to Twitter for the president, and most of the social media damage — or good, in Mr. Trump’s view — has taken place as he is revving up to start his day.

20 Mr. Trump’s lawyers, inside and outside the White House, have grown increasingly concerned about his social-media ruminations, outbursts and angry self-defenses on legally sensitive topics. These include the investigation into whether his campaign colluded with Russia, his sudden firing of the F.B.I. director, James B. Comey, and the legal battle over his revised executive order barring migrants from some predominantly Muslim nations.

25 Publicly, Mr. Trump’s embattled press secretary, Sean Spicer, has continued to defend the president’s tweeting — often telling reporters “the tweet speaks for itself” when pressed on an especially controversial statement during briefings. But he has privately urged his boss to self-edit more, according to three people familiar with the situation.

30 On Monday night, Mr. Trump’s legislative affairs director, Marc Short, said that “many” of the president’s tweets helped to get out his message of change to voters and legislators. But he also said the president’s woes, especially continuing congressional investigations, were making it harder to stay “focused” on passing ambitious tax reform, health care and infrastructure bills.

35 And Mr. Trump’s legal effort to have his travel ban upheld, which he hopes to wage in the Supreme Court, has been undermined by his repeated tweets suggesting that the measure was intended to block Muslims from entering the country, legal experts said.

In a series of tweets, he undermined his own lawyers by poor-talking the rewritten executive order, which was drafted to defend against lawsuits asserting that the ban discriminated on the basis of religion. Mr. Trump praised “the original Travel Ban, not the watered down, politically correct version” issued in March — and attacked both the Justice Department and the federal courts.

40 He went on to contradict his own aides, who have avoided the use of the hot-button phrase “travel ban,” calling the order “what we need and what it is, a TRAVEL BAN!” He said it would be imposed on “certain DANGEROUS countries” and suggested that anything short of a ban “won’t help us protect our people!”

45 That prompted a noteworthy response from a prominent conservative lawyer, George T. Conway III, who is also the husband of the Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway. Mr. Conway mocked the president with his own tweet.

50 “These tweets may make some ppl feel better, but they certainly won’t help OSG get 5 votes in SCOTUS, which is what actually matters. Sad,” Mr. Conway wrote, referring to the Office of the Solicitor General. Mr. Conway recently withdrew his name from consideration for a top post at the Justice Department.

VOICES

The black vote is more important than ever at this election – only Jeremy Corbyn can offer us a stake in Britain's future

In 31 out of the top 50 marginal seats in the country, the number of black voters dwarfs the majority that the MP holds, highlighting the crucial and decisive role of ethnic minority voters

Huda Elmi, *The Independent*, 30 May 2017

Unemployment among black 16-24 year olds currently sits at 30 per cent, well over double the rate for their white counterparts. In-work poverty is significantly higher in black households and the harsh effects of Tory austerity, including stagnation of wages, cuts to vital services and attacks on worker's rights, have been most keenly felt by those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds (BME), especially black women. The prospect of five more years of Tory rule is unspeakably bleak for black communities in Britain.

For decades, the BME vote has been in decline with large-scale disillusionment. As voters we felt that the political sphere had nothing to mitigate our daily realities and provided no hope of meaningful action or change. However, the egalitarian, socialist manifesto put forward by Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party, has reinvigorated many of the left behind.

The Labour Party has committed to ending austerity, scrapping tuition fees, zero hour contracts and the public sector pay cap. It will invest in the economy to end the stagnation that is overwhelmingly failing black workers.

The party is promising to create new jobs and pledges a £10 minimum wage for all by 2020, as well as taking a tougher line against discrimination in employment, notably by pledging to end the pay gap between black and white workers.

Powered by the most diverse Shadow Cabinet in British history and with a record 58 candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds standing for Parliament, Labour has also declared that it will implement the Parker Review, which seeks to establish greater black representation on the boards of the UK's largest companies. It will also review the controversial "Prevent" programme that has perpetuated state-sponsored institutional racism. Jeremy Corbyn himself has a strong history of anti-war and anti-racism campaigning that presents an opportunity for the Labour Party to move forward from its problematic foreign policy legacies that alienated much of Labour's BME supporters in particular.

Despite the Conservative Party's push to increase ethnic minority representation during the last General Election, Theresa May has done little to advance black representation in government. There is not a single Black MP in her cabinet. Andrew Lansley, former Conservative Health Secretary, has accused his party of "endemic racism" and there's a dossier of racist remarks and hate speech by Conservative politicians, many of which went entirely without censure.

In the wake of soaring post-Brexit racism and hate crimes, Theresa May has done nothing to stop the rising tide of bigotry and abuse. In fact, her oppressive state-sponsored surveillance laws under the guise of counter-terrorism, her aggressive foreign policy, and her dog-whistle immigration policies that saw 48,000 students illegally deported last year alone, exacerbate the increasing stigmatisation and isolation of ethnic minorities in Britain.

Faced with the stark contrast between the prospect of a further five years of devastating Tory rule and the tangible positive vision that Jeremy Corbyn is proposing for Britain's future, over two million overwhelmingly young people signed up to vote in the few weeks between the general election being called and the deadline to register last week. This was spurred on by initiatives such as #Grime4Corbyn which saw artists such as JME reach out to potential black voters to encourage them to make their voices heard in this vital election.

Jeremy Corbyn defends immigration: The contribution that is made by people who come here is huge. This was an incredibly important initiative as the BME vote could make all the difference come 8 June. A recent survey by Operation Black Vote showed that in 31 out of the top 50 marginal seats in the country, the number of black voters dwarfs the majority that the MP holds, highlighting the crucial and decisive role of ethnic minority voters.

For too long, politicians from across the spectrum have got away with targeting old, white people who will turn out to vote them back into power. For the first time in a generation, we are faced with a real choice at the ballot box and every vote counts. Statistics show that if only the under-40s voted, Labour would win and, with the most recent polls showing only a five point difference between the two major parties, this election offers a unique opportunity to make our voices heard.

Whatever the result we wake up to on 9 June, it is imperative that black people turn out to cast our votes – only then can we stake our claim in the political future of this country, combat Tory destruction of our services and society, and build the radical, progressive, anti-racist society Britain desperately needs.

The GOP's punitive, cruel new health care bill

By Michael A. Cohen

The Boston Globe (MA)

Tuesday, May 23, 2017 - 00:13 UTC -0400

Of all the crazy things that have happened in American politics over the past several years, the vote Thursday in the US House of Representatives may very well top them all.

House Republicans narrowly approved legislation that a) takes health care coverage away from as many as 24 million people b) is deeply unpopular and c) has little chance of ever becoming law. From a policy and political perspective, the situation is simply mind-boggling.

Amazingly, the Republican bill passed on Thursday is actually more awful than an earlier version of the legislation, which failed to get a vote in the House in March. According to the Congressional Budget Office, that legislation would have potentially stripped coverage from 24 million people — and had the support of 17 percent of voters.

Indeed, the only way for Republicans to get a bill passed in its caucus was by making it more restrictive, more punitive, and more cruel.

The new version of the bill, modified to pacify far-right conservatives, undermines one of the most popular aspects of Obamacare— regulations that prevent insurers from denying coverage for pre-existing conditions. It includes massive cuts in Medicaid spending and insurance subsidies for poor and middle-class Americans — and it gives a nearly trillion-dollar tax cut for the wealthiest Americans

While the legislation is devastating to the individual insurance market, it also takes aim at the employer-based health market by weakening protections that limit out-of-pocket costs for catastrophic illnesses.

So, for example, if just one state eliminated a cap on lifetime benefits, other states could follow suit, thus returning the health care system to a time when insurers could simply stop paying out benefits once a patient reached their limits.

Another provision would cut Medicaid benefits that help school systems across the country pay for special education services.

As if all of this isn't bad enough, the sheer hypocrisy of the GOP's tactics in passing this legislation is breathtaking. For years, Republican lawmakers dishonestly claimed that the Democrats rammed Obamacare through Congress with little public debate and no effort to reach across the aisle.

Republicans are pushing a bill that would affect the entire health care system in America and there have been no committee hearings, no CBO score, and no effort to entice Democrats to support it. In fact, the same party that regularly attacked Democrats for not having read the Obamacare bill has now approved legislation that many of its own members have not seen or read.

Republicans don't know how many people will lose care and how much the bill will cost. The reason is clear: They don't care and they don't want the public to know. In the end, this is all about upholding their craven promises to repeal Obamacare, the impact on the nation's health care system be damned.

Indeed, perhaps the craziest thing about this situation is that it even happened at all. It's highly likely that this measure will be dead on arrival in the Senate — and speculation is rampant that House Republicans acted now simply to pass to Senate Republicans the blame for failing to repeal Obamacare.

But why GOP members would want to be on record supporting a bill that will take health insurance away from millions of Americans, devastate special education programs, and weaken provisions regarding pre-existing conditions is, to put it mildly, a head-scratcher.

Republicans can now say they've repealed Obamacare, but at an enormous political cost. This vote will embolden Democrats and give congressional candidates ready-made campaign ads to run against Republicans in 2018. Even GOP voters who say they want to repeal Obamacare are not likely to look kindly on a party that takes away their health care coverage.

It's rare you see a political party openly commit political suicide, but that is what happened today.

But putting aside the politics for a moment, that so many Republicans were willing to vote "yay" on a bill that would harm millions of Americans (many of whom voted for them) tells you pretty much everything you ever need to know about the moral bankruptcy of the modern Republican Party. Truly, this is a dark day in American history.

Michael A. Cohen's column appears regularly in the Globe. Follow him on Twitter @speechboy71

Nobody talks about it, but too many rich kids are at university who shouldn't be there
JULIA SHERVINGTON, *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 MARCH 2017

As a society, we need to ask ourselves why students from the most affluent homes are almost 2.5 times more likely to go to university than those from the poorest. Usually we focus on the latter, and indeed there are far too many poor kids who should go to university and don't. But if that's true, so is the corollary: there are too many rich kids who go to university, but shouldn't.

When I was 17, everyone assumed that, of course, I would go. It wasn't just because I was predicted to do well in my A-levels, nor that my parents or my school expected it. It was also because I was one of the 7 per cent of Britons who attend an independent school. As such there was no discussion about whether I should go – only about which subject I should study and which university I could realistically aspire to.

I wasn't convinced it was the right decision. I had spent years studying for exams and I wasn't sure I wanted to go straight into yet more rigorous learning. I turned down my offers and took a year out; got a job, visited friends at their universities, and made up my own mind. In the end I was lucky: while not one of the brightest students, I was hard-working and knew how to organise my time. Having been at boarding school for two years, I also knew about living away from home, managing my allowance, and mixing with new people. I had the personal and academic skills to do well at university.

A friend, also at an independent school, had the same expectations upon her. Although she had a higher IQ, her learning style was very different; hours spent in front of a book did little for her. But still she went, and after a number of years she left university without a degree. Should she have gone in the first place? And why were we both subjected to assumptions about what was right for us?

What our experiences illustrate is the toxic power of expectations. It's not a question of intelligence; many people are very smart but unable to thrive in a university environment, while others simply have no desire to. But the expectation that they will go is so strong they never get to really choose. My friend should have been advised of alternatives to university, offered something that would better suit her learning style and help her progress into the professions. No wonder 6.2 per cent of students fail to complete their university degrees.

Yet the negative expectations placed on lower-income students are even more powerful. Far fewer will have family members who have gone to university, so they may lack role models, and therefore do not consider it a viable option. Even if they do consider it, they are more likely to focus on lower-tier institutions out of a misplaced sense of inadequacy. The results are stark: children eligible for free school meals achieve grades 20 to 30 per cent lower at GCSE.

The truth is that everyone learns and progresses in different ways. Some people, rich and poor, would be better suited to higher level apprenticeships; some to on-the-job training; some to specialist schools (such as arts or drama); and, yes, some to university. Why should that question be decided by class rather than ability and affinity? This "class ceiling" is morally wrong, but also bad for the country: educational inequality costs us an estimated £1.3 trillion a year.

How can we fix this? Partly by changing expectations. At Villiers Park Educational Trust where I work, we show bright students from low-income homes what they can achieve. In 2016, 82 per cent of them made an informed decision to go to university, compared with 19.5 per cent of students from the lowest national income bracket. But universities must also consider what they can do to ensure students are prepared for university before they apply. Businesses, too, should consider their expectations, and recruit from a wider range of institutions and backgrounds.

We should all be doing everything we can to ensure all students feel empowered to research their options, analyse what best suits them, and pursue their own best path. And if you're a student who is expected to go to university, and you're not sure it's right for you, please consider all your options.

Julia Shervington is a Communications Executive at Villiers Park Educational Trust

Colonial nostalgia is back in fashion, blinding us to the horrors of empire

Kehinde Andrews, *The Guardian*, 24 August 2016

Team GB's historic success at the Rio Olympics has led to the mandatory swell of national pride. Britain is now a "sporting superpower", according to officials. As inevitable as the outpouring of national pride was the darker side of British imperial pomp being unearthed. Conservative MP Heather Wheeler captured this mood perfectly when she tweeted "Empire Goes for Gold", based on a colonial recount of the medal totals showing the "British Empire" ahead of the "Rest of World" and of course the "EU (Post Brexit)".

Unfortunately, it comes as no surprise that an elected member of parliament should be so offensive, not only to most of the world but to millions of descendants of the empire in Britain. The academic Paul Gilroy diagnosed such ideas as "postcolonial melancholia", the yearning for a time when Britain was great and a leader in the world. Britain's place on the world stage was built off the back of the empire, and when former colonies gained their freedom, it dented not only the power of the nation, but also its psyche. The loss of the empire heralded the decline of Britain's prowess and has left British nationalism looking for a symbolic pick-me-up ever since. Olympic success is proving quite the tonic.

And then add the backdrop of Brexit. A driving force behind the leave campaign was to "take the country back" and return to its former glories. With the insistence that we could make trade deals with the Commonwealth, this was an open call to return to the times when Britannia ruled the waves. Ethnic minorities saw through this and overwhelmingly voted remain. The wave of imperial nationalism stoked by the leave campaign certainly contributed to the spate of racial attacks post-referendum, and created the environment for an MP to send out such a vulgar tweet.

Colonial nostalgia is not just confined to the Brexiters though. It has become a common feature in TV, films and even restaurant chains. Gourmet Burger Kitchen sparked outrage with the launch of a burger called the Old Colonial, sanitising empire by superimposing palm trees in the advertisement. And while hosting a debate on reparations for slavery, the Oxford Union advertised a cocktail called the Colonial Comeback, alongside a less-than-subtle image of African hands in chains. [...]

Key features of "postcolonial melancholia" are the minimising of the brutal history of the British empire, and the celebration of what Winston Churchill called "its glories and all the services it rendered to mankind". It is this image of empire that is remembered by the majority of the British public, with a 2014 YouGov poll showing that 59% of respondents thought the British empire was "something to be proud of". Almost half of respondents also felt that the countries "were better off" for having been colonised, presumably because the native savages were grateful for the civilisation brought by the enlightened British. Such results are an indictment of the failure of the British school system to provide even a cursory history of the empire. The defence of the white supremacist and colonial pioneer Cecil Rhodes, mobilised in response to the Rhodes Must Fall campaign at Oxford University, demonstrates how deeply ingrained these attitudes are in British education.

Lest we forget: far from being a benevolent saviour, the British empire was based on the exploitation, murder and devastation of people across the globe. Some notable atrocities include, but are by no means limited to: transatlantic slavery, famines in the British Raj, and brutal settler colonial regimes in Zimbabwe and Kenya. Hundreds of millions of people died as a result of Britain's vicious regime. The empire collapsed after campaigns, rebellions and revolutions from the people who were oppressed by Britain. The natives did not happily accept colonial rule; they resisted at every turn because they understood the cost of the system to their nations.

Walter Rodney's classic book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, goes into forensic detail as to how colonialism set back the continent by creating political and economic systems that impoverished Africa, with the direct purpose of enriching Europe. Even after independence, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of liberated Ghana, explained in the 1960s that the economic policies of the country had an "Alice in Wonderland craziness about them", with Britain extracting all the wealth from the resources of the nation.

It is essential that the legacy of the British empire is understood because it still plays a key role in the world today. The devastation of nations by European colonialism goes a long way to explaining extreme poverty and conflict in many parts of the world, and is continued in manifestly unjust trade relations. Reminiscing about the days of empire and pining for Britain to be great again is a device to avoid any reckoning with Britain's terrible colonial legacy and debt.

Perhaps a recognition of the brutality, violence and horror at the dark heart of empire would shake the nation out of its postcolonial melancholia. To acknowledge the dark side of colonialism, however, would destroy the nostalgia that is such a strong part of British imperial identity. It is far easier to get lost in national pride from Olympic success than to reckon with Britain's history and real place in the world.

Girls who go to private schools are more likely to have problems with alcohol and drugs

The study compared girls and boys with a privileged education to the rest of society

By Telegraph Reporters, *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 JUNE 2017

Girls who go to private schools are three times more likely to suffer from alcohol and drug problems than other young women later in life, an American study has suggested.

"Privileged" students who live in comfortable houses and go to elite schools are at high risk of using cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy, the researchers found.

They were also more likely to abuse drink despite being popular among their peers, performing "exceedingly well" in school and being "highly regarded" by their teachers.

Boys who have grown up in affluent areas and go to "elite" schools are twice as likely as other young men to experience drink and drug addiction in early adulthood.

Study leader Professor Suniya Luthar, of Arizona State University, said: "We found alarmingly high rates of substance abuse among young adults who we initially studied as teenagers.

"Results showed that among both men and women and across annual assessments, these young adults had substantial elevations, relative to national norms, in frequency of several indicators - drinking to intoxication and of using marijuana, stimulants such as cocaine, and club drugs such as ecstasy."

The researchers studied two groups of students in affluent communities as part of the New England Study of Suburban Youth (NESSY).

They assessed the participants as high school seniors and then annually across four college years, and from the age of 23 to 27.

Prof Luthar said: "We found rates of addiction to drugs or alcohol among 19 to 24 per cent of women in the older cohort by the age of 26, and 23 to 40 per cent among men.

"These rates were three and two times as high respectively, as compared to national norms.

"Among the younger cohort by the age of 22 years, rates of addiction were between 11 and 16 per cent among women - close to national norms, but 19 to 27 per cent among men, or about twice as high as national norms."

Prof Luthar said a look into their lives provides some clues to the cause of these high rates of addictions and found they all attended the best schools.

Prof Luthar said, in general, teenagers at such schools experience enormous pressures to achieve, and many come to live by the dual credos of "I can, therefore I must" and "we work hard and we play hard."

She added: "Not all of these students were from wealthy families but most were; as parents typically had advanced educational degrees and median incomes much higher than national norms.

"And without question, most of the parents wanted their kids to head off to the best universities, as did the kids themselves."

She explained the rich kids had plenty of disposable income to get high-quality fake IDs, alcohol and both prescription and recreational drugs.

And parents can be lulled into a false sense of security, believing that as their kids continue to perform well in school there could not be any serious underlying issues. She warned the findings needed to be taken on board by both parents and children "that messing with drugs and alcohol really should not be trivialised as just something all kids do".

"The earlier children start to use and the more frequently they do, the more likely it is that they will develop addictions down the line," she said.

"And that it truly just takes one event of being arrested with cocaine, or hurting someone in a drunken car accident, to derail the high profile positions of leadership and influence toward which they are working so hard for the future."

She said it would also help to reduce the "enormous pressure" such youngsters are under trying to get into only the most selective universities.

Prof Luthar said: "As long as university admissions processes continue to be as they are - increasingly smaller number of admits per applications and requiring impossible resumes - these young people will continue to be frenetic in pursuing those coveted spots - and many will continue to self-medicate as a result."

She added: "We now need the same dedicated research on kids who grow up in pressure-cooker, high achieving schools.

"Paradoxical though it may seem, these ostensibly privileged youth, many of who start experimenting early and often with drinking and drugs, could well be among the groups at highest risk for alcoholism and addiction in adulthood."

The study was published in the journal *Development and Psychopathology*.

Building Brexit on the myth of empire ignores our brutal history

Kehinde Andrews, *The Guardian*, 7 March 2017

The United Kingdom is one of the few countries in the European Union that does not need to bury its 20th century history," tweeted Liam Fox last March. The historical amnesia that afflicts the secretary of state for international trade is now on display in Whitehall, with officials calling their post-Brexit scramble for African trade "empire 2.0". I guess we should welcome their crude honesty, after all the leave campaign was based on a yearning for the days when Britannia ruled the waves. The only problem is that this kind of talk is as offensive as it is indicative of the arrogant hubris that is steering Britain on to the rocks of a hard Brexit.

Fox could not have been more wrong with his tweet. The problem is that Britain has buried a large part of its 20th century history, along with the rest of the country's tradition of brutality and crimes against humanity in building its empire. A period in which the nation enriched itself through genocide, slavery and colonial rule is somehow fondly remembered by a majority of Brits.

If we just look at the 20th century, notable atrocities include the coordinated famine in Bengal that killed 3 million people; the persecution of the Mau Mau in Kenya; and mass killings in the concentration camps during the Boer War. While this history should bring a measure of shame, upset and humility, it astoundingly manages to elicit feelings of pride in Britain. The fact that officials would even informally use "empire 2.0" shows how inadequate and insidious society's understanding of Britain's not-too-distant past is.

Empire was hallmarked by the noxious arrogance of the British elite that continues to turn people off from the political class today. Britain saw its role as shouldering the "white man's burden" to spread civilization to the dark and savage parts of the world. I recently had a conversation with a man affiliated to Oxford University who was shocked that I was not appreciative for all the development work that the British had done in Rhodesia.

I was unaware people still use Rhodesia more than 30 years after Zimbabwe's independence. Nevertheless, I was assured that even given all the brutality and underdevelopment that Zimbabwe (and the rest of the former colonies) suffered, they were better off because of good old Blighty. It seems that the student-led Rhodes Must Fall campaign has had little impact on the wider institution. Yet more evidence of the tone deaf echo chamber that produces the political class.

A spotlight has recently been shone on the influence that Oxford's politics, philosophy and economics degree has on shaping the political class. This is part of a wider problem as the exclusionary access into politics often runs through institutions that breed British colonial arrogance. It is not just that the students are empowered to feel they were "born to rule", embedded into education is the assumption of British dominance, a natural place as a leader in the world.

In the 21st century this colonial arrogance is having negative effects on the prospects for the nation. We are no longer in the 19th century when Britain controlled the seas and was one of the most powerful empires in history. Britain is not a military superpower and has to tag along with America to go on expansionary adventures across the globe. The empire is gone, as is most of the manufacturing base.

Meanwhile, the country has just voted to leave one of the most powerful economic blocks in the world. In order to build a prosperous future Britain needs to understand its place in the world; a small island desperately reaching out to countries it formerly ruled in order to try to maintain its relevance. No doubt the former colonies will be willing to trade with Britain. But the idea that these relations will represent anything like those in empire is laughable hubris. Nations no longer ruled by force and fear will not supplicate themselves to Britain because of misty memories of empire.

Due to the inadequacies of the school system, Fox and the government may actually believe that Britain gained its wealth from standing on its own two feet. But the truth is that Britain achieved all it has from standing on the backs of the colonies, enriched from stolen resources and exploited labour. Unfortunately, the nation has never come to terms with the loss of empire and the truth that without that great crutch there is little holding it up.

Rather than accept reality the government has deluded itself into thinking that Britain can just install an update for empire and return to former glories on the world stage. But outside the EU and devoid of colonies, Britain will find that any nostalgic visions of empire are a mirage, providing nothing to sustain it.

Brexit has disfigured the tolerant Britain I've known

Eimear McBride, *The Guardian*, Opinion Pages, 19 October 2016

I am an Irish citizen. I am the child of Northern Irish parents. My husband is a British citizen and so is my daughter. I am 40 years old, and for 20 of those years I've lived in Britain. I was born here, raised and educated in Ireland; went to college here, spent my 20s here, then the first part of my 30s there. I'm here again, and I hope to stay. Ireland runs through my blood. It makes me the writer I am. English may be my first language but it was Ireland that taught me how to make it sing, and Northern Ireland that never lets me forget there are two sides to every tale.

But if Ireland made me, Britain showed me how I wanted to live. The Britain I've always known was one that constantly struggled against the fear of opening itself to "the other". It made room for the distances between people, between cultures, religions and traditions; it allowed for opposing positions; it strove to be true to its complex, jigsawed past.

Not that its opposite wasn't present in the shadows. Racism has always been a dangerous canker, kneejerk suspicion of foreigners a wearisome truth. I have occasionally despaired at the basic uninterest in the histories of nations who have been wholly altered by British imperialism and colonialism. I find the absence of any sense of fellowship with, or historical responsibility towards, the populations of these countries pretty infuriating. But I thought, and still want to think, that British society aimed for a higher standard – that in its heart it despised displays of littleness and penalised those who indulged in them, whoever they were. Yet here we are, all the same, utterly changed by whatever limped out into reality on 23 June and sure of nothing more than the rapidity with which that familiar Britain, along with its ideals, is being forced through the looking glass.

It is for this wholesale purge of inclusive values that I most object to Brexit. The European Union, whatever its faults, and burdensome bureaucracy, represents a new way for nations to function together. It was forged to overcome the rank, jingoist nationalism that wreaked such havoc across the continent and the world in the 20th century, subjecting its population to previously unimaginable sufferings. Its purpose was to lead us to a place where such horrors would become unimaginable once more.

Surely no small measure of its success is that war between Britain and Germany, or any other EU country, seems inconceivable to us now. In the light of this Brexit is all the more illogical.

Why has the British population, which shows such reverence for the memory of those who sacrificed their lives in the world wars, turned its back on a union founded to ensure that the peace those deaths paid for be guarded and strengthened for successive generations?

I come from a country where the ravages of historical division, and the sectarian violence that inevitably follows, are not such a distant memory. The paramilitary organisations of Northern Ireland are largely quiet now, but the structures that have allowed for this transformation are still febrile.

Irish, British and Northern Irish politicians have worked tirelessly for peace, for years, in order to provide Northern Ireland's wounded communities with a chance to move beyond the hurt of their divided histories. Those communities themselves have sacrificed much so their future generations may be free of the poisonous cycle of violence and terror. That this delicate, hard-won and harder-maintained web of hope has been so carelessly, thoughtlessly jeopardised by a handful of bloviating careerists unashamed to fan fear and division in British society in order to achieve their personal ambitions is a disgrace they will forever bear.

Pandora's box is open now, though, and how can the fragile peace withstand the demands from both right and left for unthinking adherence to uncompromisable principles when compromise is the very life blood of peace? And where is either side's concern for the people of Northern Ireland? Who is fighting for their right to live without the threat of violence? They are entitled to expect the British and Irish governments to do everything possible to support peace. Creating the toxic political environment that has allowed Brexit to become future fact is an almost unquantifiable failure to do so. There was also more than an echo of imperialisms past in the initial batting away of serious questions about what the re-introduction of border controls with Europe would mean for Northern Ireland. The more recent attempt to shift responsibility for finding a solution on to the Irish government and the EU smacks of nothing more than a desperate attempt at self-justification from those who rushed headlong into voting for Brexit without serious consideration of what the consequences would be for the non-English members of the UK.

But if history has taught British politicians nothing, they should at least remember that the people of Northern Ireland, on all sides, have no tradition of lying down and taking whatever scraps Westminster doles out. The Brexiteers' reliance on hazy, emotive grandstanding won't solve the problems facing Northern Ireland, and the gravity of what it may unleash means there can be little relish in pointing out that fact. [...]

After Manchester, our values will only prevail if we speak up for them

Nick Cohen, *The Observer*, 27 May 2017

Communities are "coming together, we will not allow them to divide us", said Sir Richard Lees, the leader of Manchester city council, as my home town began a struggle to come to terms with an atrocity designed to provoke retaliation. "We are strong," said Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester. "Our values, our country and our way of life will always prevail," said the prime minister.

[...] But talk to anti-Islamist Muslim writers and activists and they are worried. They don't see "diversity" and "community", those warmest of 21st century words, as synonyms but opposites. No one knows the level of Islamic State support in Britain, they say, but with MI5 monitoring 3,000 suspects it isn't negligible. Beyond the violent and potentially violent lie fractured and isolated ghettos, where large numbers are prey to religious demagogues.

Shiraz Maher, of King's College London, points me to a paradox. If you measure success in business, the professions and politics, Muslims do better in Britain than in any other European country. But those who get on have little influence. Those who are left behind listen to Islamists who tell them that the west is decadent. Rabbil Sikdar, a liberal Muslim friend and Labour activist, is equally bleak. Many Muslims just don't see Britain as their home, he wrote after the attack. "It's why they're more obsessed with Palestine than the NHS and why integration of Muslims is so poor. We culturally isolate ourselves because to integrate is to apparently lose your Muslim identity and become western."

Fiyaz Mughal runs the Tell Mama civil rights group. As it monitors attacks on Muslims you might have thought its enemies were all of the Katie Hopkins variety. But its activists are as likely to be denounced by Islamists at Muslim Engagement and Development (Mend) for being "phony" Muslims as they are to be denounced by the Telegraph. Their crime, their break with Muslim values, is allying with Jews and gays in the fight against prejudice. Mughal, too, tells me has no doubt that Mend and groups like it are winning the battle for Muslim minds.

They have certainly won the battle to control Labour policy. Labour either does not know that extremists want to stop anti-extremism policies or knows but does not care. It is promising to review the Prevent anti-extremism initiative. Burnham went further last year and demanded that it be scrapped. Think of that. The mayor of a city that was to be attacked by a suicide bomber damning as "toxic" a strategy that aims to stop Muslim teenagers being groomed online by Islamic State and white teenagers being groomed by neo-Nazis. It's as if he had condemned "toxic" social workers for trying to keep children from paedophiles.

On the other side of the coin, the comforting notion that anti-Muslim bigotry is confined to a handful of click-seeking media whores does not hold. Look at the Conservative press or read the output of Tory thinktanks and you can suspect that liberal conservatism barely exists today. I accept that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. But if you watch for the arguments that aren't made and the fights that aren't picked you will notice that mainstream conservatives greet anti-Muslim bigotry with silence.

There is no debate on the right about the dangers of toppling over into the sectarian politics of a Trump or Le Pen. On racial hatred as much as on Brexit you can wait forever for a liberal Tory dog that never barks. Beyond that, and as destructively, the Conservatives have no plans to slow the growth of faith-based schools, which segregate children by religion and, more often than not, race. The cause of secular education, like support for the single market and opposition to anti-Muslim bigotry, is an idea whose time appears to have gone on the right.

I don't wish to sound alarmist. There is no conveyor belt that picks up believers in reactionary religion and transports them to religious violence. You can spend your life believing women should be second-class citizens and homosexuality and apostasy are crimes that in an ideal Islamic state deserve the death sentence and never harm anyone apart from your wife and children. Equally, desegregating the school system is a modest reform, not a panacea. As for the silence of mainstream conservatives, I am sure that if Theresa May is re-elected she will not call for a Muslim travel ban.

But if you believe ideas have power, then you must believe in the power of bad ideas to harm when they are left uncontested. Liberal Muslims suffer from the widespread belief that to be "liberal is a contradiction of the faith", as Rabbil Sikdar put it. With honourable exceptions, white liberals prefer the safe life and hold that it is "Islamophobic" to help their cause and argue their case. Liberal conservatives say nothing because they fear their party leadership won't support them and know the rightwing press will denounce them. They too cede the field without striking a blow.

"Our values will prevail," says Theresa May. No they won't. Not if no one is prepared to say what they are, let alone prepared to fight for them.

Loving outside the racial box

By Jeff Jacoby

The Boston Globe (MA)

Wednesday, May 24, 2017 - 00:00 UTC -0400

MORE THAN half a century after Martin Luther King Jr. exhorted Americans to judge each other by the content of their character, obsessive racialists continue to insist that people must be judged by the color of their skin.

5 These days, the racialists aren't usually motivated by notions of group supremacy; they are more likely instead to march behind banners emblazoned "Diversity" or "Inclusion." Nonetheless, the race fetish — the regard for skin color or ethnicity as a supremely meaningful factor in human behavior — is as pernicious as ever. Few superstitions could be more illiberal. After all, the noblest teaching of 20th-century liberalism was that human beings must be treated by society without regard to the shade of their skin or the shape of their eye. A preoccupation with racial and ethnic categories is nearly

10 always irrational and primitive. And yet, from sea to shining sea, the pressure to discriminate on the basis of race never seems to let up. Some recent examples:

In Minnesota, every state agency has an affirmative-action plan for increasing the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities it employs; the state's official goal is for 1 of every 5 employees to be nonwhite.

15 In Washington, school districts are required by law to draft a blueprint for hiring more racial minorities; a government body, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, is in charge of determining the "ideal" number of minorities each district should have.

20 In Massachusetts, developers bidding to construct a hotel on state-owned land must meet a "diversity" threshold by including racial minorities among their investors and reserving significant chunks of the work for black- and Asian-owned subcontractors.

The leitmotif that links these stories, and so many like them, is that racial identity is more important than character, personality, or merit. They are premised on the belief that individuals matter less than the demographic group they belong to. They deny the great truth that beat at the heart of the Civil Rights movement — that "classifications and distinctions based on race or color," as Thurgood

25 Marshall expressed it in a 1948 brief for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, "have no moral or legal validity in our society."

All the more reason, then, to stand up and cheer the findings of a new Pew Research Center report on intermarriage in America.

30 Next month brings the 50th anniversary of *Loving v. Virginia*, the Supreme Court case that struck down laws in 16 states that prohibited interracial marriage. Half a century after that landmark ruling, the Pew report documents, it has become common for couples to marry across the color line. The overwhelming majority of Americans now regard interracial marriage as either a matter of no particular significance (52 percent) or a positive good (39 percent). Only 9 percent still think marriage between people of different races is bad for society.

35 As recently as 1990, 63 percent of nonblack Americans said they would oppose the marriage of a close family member to a black person. Now just 14 percent of adults feel that way — and the opposition is most prevalent among the elderly.

40 In matters of race, the transformation of American hearts and minds has been profound. In 1967, a mere 3 percent of newlyweds were of different races. A half-century later, 17 percent of all US newlyweds marry someone of another color. In contemporary American society, one of every six weddings unites couples from different racial backgrounds. That's a more than fivefold increase since *Loving* was decided. And the number keeps rising.

45 Today, more than 11 million Americans are married outside the racial box. Millions more have dated someone of another race or ethnicity. When it comes to family, the American people have internalized the conviction that racial categories are only skin deep. In our own homes, where it matters most, color-consciousness is archaic. We value others not for the color of their skin, not for the label they check on census forms, but for themselves. Why do we tolerate anything less when it comes to politics, construction, and government employment?

Jeff Jacoby can be reached at jacoby@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @jeff_jacoby.

'Free college' shows how big ideas always get sanded down

By James S. Murphy

The Boston Globe (MA)

Tuesday, June 13, 2017 - 16:13 UTC -0400

Free college is back from the dead. But, just like the living dead in the movies, it came back wrong. What began as Bernie Sanders' bold proposal to reduce inequality — to equip all Americans with knowledge they need in an unforgiving economy — has itself been reduced to a proxy for real action. Boston's new "free college" plan, Boston Bridge, will likely do much more for the reputation of Mayor Marty Walsh and Governor Charlie Baker than for the class of 2018.

Donald Trump's election seemed to kill the dream of free college. Then New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that his state would be making the SUNY and CUNY colleges free for all New York residents with a household income less than \$125,000. Tennessee made free community college universal. Rhode Island may do the same. According to researchers at Penn Ahead, which studies college promise programs, there are 219 states or municipalities that already have or have proposed some form of free two- or four-year college tuition.

Given the high sticker price of higher education, it's no wonder that voters are drawn to the simplicity and power of universal free college. Politicians trying to capitalize on that popularity, however, are running into the hard problem of cost. As a result, they're coming up with solutions so pared down that they make college free often in name only, for a relatively small number of students.

It's a striking example of an all-too-common phenomenon: A grand block of idea is sanded down and sanded down in an effort to please different constituencies. Eventually, all the corners are gone, it rolls away, and little remains but the name. And yet the name alone is often enough to claim the credit for the big idea, never delivered. Arne Duncan, former secretary of education, praised Boston Bridge in a recent tweet.

Like most promise plans, the Boston Bridge program eliminates only tuition and fees; it doesn't address the full cost of college, which also includes room, board, textbooks, and other expenses that can top \$10,000 per year. At University of Massachusetts Amherst, for instance, they add up to more than \$13,000 per year. Low-income students will still need to take out loans to cover these expenses, so it is inaccurate to call it free college.

It also isn't universal, at least not in the way public K-12 education is. Boston Bridge promises two years of free school at a public college or state university to all Boston public and parochial high school students who are also eligible for Pell grants, which typically go to students whose household income is less than \$50,000. They must also first attend a community college in the city and earn an associate's degree in two and a half years while maintaining a 3.0 GPA.

Boston Bridge sets expectations higher for its beneficiaries than for paying students, which makes it a merit scholarship, not free college. Requiring an associate's degree in two and a half years means a student will almost certainly take no remedial courses and attend school full-time, which is tricky when many students need to work while in school. Maintaining, rather than graduating with, a 3.0 means that a student lives under constant threat of losing his free tuition should he have a sub-par semester. Colleges do not remove students for having GPAs below a 3.0, nor do public high schools start charging students when their grades slip.

We should probably ask whether community college makes the best sense for the student who can meet the requirements of the Boston Bridge. Given the relatively low cost of Massachusetts state four-year schools, why not go straight to college and take advantage of the John and Abigail Adams scholarship, which already waives tuition for high-performing students? That might be precisely the intention. Last year, the city's Tuition Free Community College program covered only 50 students, although over 4,000 students were eligible. Granting that program was only in its first year, the number should be seen as discouraging, unless, that is, the city and the state want the credit for creating free college without actually paying for it.

The danger is that the voters will let them.

James S. Murphy is a Brookline-based freelance writer who has written frequently about college access and admissions.

Most community colleges won't ban guns in classrooms with minors

The Texas Tribune

Thursday, March 2, 2017

With thousands of minors taking classes at community colleges in Texas, some state lawmakers predicted that it would be tricky for the schools to implement a law that allows concealed handgun license holders to carry their guns on campus.

5 That helps explain why the Legislature gave the two-year colleges an extra year before the 2015 law went into effect.

But as the Aug. 1 date approaches for when guns will be legal at the dozens of community and junior colleges across the state, the decisions on rules at many campuses are turning out to be pretty simple. Guns will most likely be allowed in most classrooms, even the ones that have students under the age of 18.

10 Guns in classrooms is an issue that universities have already grappled with since the law went into effect for them in 2016. The law itself isn't specific on the issue; it simply says that schools have the power to create some gun-free zones on campus but that those zones can't have the effect of making it impossible for a student, teacher or visitor from carrying a gun at all. Over the protests of many professors, the four-year schools all agreed that banning guns in classrooms would violate the spirit of the campus carry law.

15 But the number of kids on community college campuses has grown in recent years as the state emphasizes dual-credit classes, which count toward both high school and college degrees. The state still bans guns in high schools, so would that mean that community colleges could ban guns in classes with high school students?

20 Schools seem to be concluding that the answer is no. They cite a legal opinion issued by Attorney General Ken Paxton that said schools couldn't ban guns in all their classes "merely because minors may attend or be present in all classrooms."

25 But Paxton's opinion said the schools are authorized to write reasonable rules that take into account the "nature of the student population." And bans might be permissible, he wrote, in classrooms "at times where there might be a congregation of minors" or places where childcare services are provided.

Many colleges have taken that to mean that they can ban guns in classes of only high schoolers but not in classes with a few high schoolers and mostly regular students.

30 "We think the attorney general was pretty clear that those need to be treated like regular classes," said Joyce Langenegger, director of professional development and member of the campus carry task force at Blinn College, which has campuses in Brenham, Bryan, Schulenburg and Sealy.

Paxton's opinion is nonbinding, and it doesn't spell out a specific percentage of high school students that a class must surpass before guns can be banned in it. A college could still opt to test the limits of the law. But so far, none have indicated that they plan to do so.

35 Supporters of the bill are closely watching.

Students for Concealed Carry, a national student group, has already criticized Central Texas College in Killeen and Lone Star College in Houston for considering allowing professors to ban guns in their offices. And it has derided Amarillo College for considering a ban at its on-campus art museum.

40 "Some of these schools act as if Texas doesn't have a 21-year history of safely allowing trained, vetted, licensed adults to carry concealed handguns for personal protection," said Brian Bensimon, the group's southwest regional director.

But the decision-making process has been mostly tame. Some schools have reported receiving thousands of public comments as they evaluate rules. But there haven't been the same widespread protests that occurred at universities.

45 "The process has gone pretty smoothly so far," said Heath Cariker, police chief at Kilgore College in East Texas.

50 That could be in part due to the fact that the impact of the law hasn't been as dramatic as some critics predicted. In more than half a year since it has been implemented, there has only been one real incident that can be directly pinned on campus carry - a student at Tarleton State accidentally fired his gun in his dorm room. No one was hurt.

More pot-growing licenses may be on the way

Fenit Nirappil

The Washington Post (DC) Wednesday, April 5, 2017 - 17:29 UTC -0400

Top Democrats in the Maryland legislature have agreed to expand the ranks of medical marijuana growers in the state as part of an overhaul of the burgeoning but beleaguered industry.

Lawmakers are still wrangling, however, over which businesses should have a shot at entry into the lucrative market.

5 Fifteen companies preapproved last year by regulators can open cultivation sites as early as summer if they pass final inspections and background checks.

Five more growing licenses would be granted under a bill that passed the House of Delegates on Tuesday and is aimed at favoring minority-owned companies.

10 That bill will probably be amended in the Senate Finance Committee as early as Thursday. House and Senate negotiators say they're on the brink of a compromise over how many new licenses to issue and whether to shrink the total number of growers if any company fails inspection.

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland, the largest caucus in the legislature, is insistent on expanding minority participation in the industry, after the Maryland Medical Marijuana Commission failed to license any African American-owned growers.

15 Lawmakers are also trying to address the concerns of two other companies who sued the state after regulators rejected their applications in favor of lower-ranked bids from geographic regions of Maryland where no growers had been approved.

But the 15 businesses already given cultivation licenses have banded together to oppose expanding the market, saying their business plans and pitches to investors were based on having an early and exclusive foothold in the industry.

20 "The way this whole entire thing was handled by this commission was really screwed up, so really the legislature is trying to resolve a messy situation," said Sen. Thomas Middleton, D-Calvert, who chairs the Finance Committee that is amending the medical marijuana bill.

As written, the legislation passed by the House calls for an expedited study of racial disparities that could be completed in time to justify a race-conscious selection of five new growers as early as fall.

25 The Black Caucus has dropped its demand that no medical marijuana businesses start operating until minority-controlled businesses got licenses.

"We don't want to delay the process," said Del. Cheryl Glenn, the Baltimore Democrat who chairs the caucus. "We do want the patients . . . to be able to get the medications."

30 Middleton says he is supportive of the House legislation, which has more licenses meant for minority-owned companies than the Senate version. But he and other powerful senators, including Senate President Thomas "Mike" Miller, D-Calvert, want to offer two additional olive branches to other industry players.

If any of the original 15 growers fail to pass inspections, they want to throw those licenses out of the pool rather than giving them to the next highest-ranked companies. This would effectively reduce the amount of competition among growers.

35 And they would also give licenses to Maryland Cultivation and Processing and Green Thumb Industries, the two companies denied in the name of geographic diversity.

Those companies have agreed to drop their lawsuits if a compromise is approved. If Middleton's proposal for as many as 22 grower licenses gets pushback, Glenn said, the Black Caucus will prioritize licenses for minority-owned companies over the applicants suing the state.

40 "They absolutely were wronged by the commission," Glenn said of Maryland Cultivation and Processing and Green Thumb Industries. "But I'm not willing to sacrifice any of the licenses that we have negotiated to be awarded to African Americans and other minorities."

A leader of the Maryland Wholesale Medical Cannabis Association, which represents preapproved growers and processors, said the association was opposed to "arbitrarily" increasing the number of licenses by nearly 50 percent to help applicants that fell short.

45 "Our members relied on commitments from the state when making their business decisions, and it is reasonable for them to expect that the state would honor those commitments," Jake Van Wingerden, president of Cecil County's SunMed Growers, said in a statement. "Many of our members are just months away from delivering medical cannabis to patients, and we are opposed to any changes that would cause additional delays to this important program."

50 The licensing changes are encountering some Republican resistance - although GOP lawmakers do not have a strong enough presence in the legislature to threaten passage.

"They want to do a lot of things in a very critical point for this industry, and I do not want to see that because I want to see the industry move forward," Del. Susan Krebs, R-Carroll. "I'm concerned about delays, and I'm also concerned about new lawsuits."

The legislation would restructure the marijuana commission as well.

55 It also contains a provision to bar lawmakers from working in the industry, in response to the ethics probe of Del. Dan Morhaim, D-Baltimore County, who was reprimanded by the House for trying to shape industry regulations without fully disclosing he was affiliated with a prospective dispensary.

As a teacher, I know that more of us will leave the profession if the Tories win this election

In schools like mine in London, children already come to school in uniforms that don't fit, carrying plastic bags instead of backpacks

Caroline Hill, *The Independent*, 31 May 2017

As a teacher, I despair at the state of education. I'm not the only one. Teachers are leaving the profession in staggeringly high numbers and very few are coming in. We stand on the edge of a crisis. Seven years of Tory cuts to school budgets has taken its toll on our education system. I welcome the fact that Jeremy Corbyn has put education at the heart of his manifesto and is addressing core concerns of teachers and parents, such as halting cuts, increasing funding, reducing class sizes, providing free school meals and restoring allowances for low-income students.

Tory cuts have hit most of British society, but their attacks on education will leave a particularly lasting scar. Despite promises to protect school funding, budgets have actually been frozen at 2010 levels. The newly proposed funding formula does not account for rising costs and increases in pupil numbers. In real terms, about half of schools face reductions in per-pupil spending of between 6 and 11 per cent in the next two years.

While young people bear the brunt of cuts, the Conservatives are pouring taxpayer's money into private sector academies— which end up lining the pockets of their cronies. Shortly after the government announced that schools would have to find savings of £3bn, which amounts to the average salary of around 100,000 teachers, the chancellor Phillip Hammond, unveiled plans to spend £320m on expanding the government's free school programme.

The strangling of our education system has provoked an outcry from parents and teachers. Schools faced with tighter budgets are being forced to make impossible choices that they know will have a detrimental impact on children's education— reducing teachers, teaching assistants, support staff, books, and IT resources. Teachers and parents have taken to the streets and launched campaigns warning of the crippling consequences of austerity. It is unsurprising that so many teachers are at the end of their tether. Teachers who came into the profession with a dream and a vocation are being strangled by huge workloads of over 60 hours a week, a pay freeze and classroom under resourcing that makes it near impossible to do their role to the ambitious standards they hold themselves to.

Head teachers are warning that this year will be the worst to hit schools in a generation, with some forced to write begging letters to parents to pay for basics like books and teacher's salaries. Many are dropping after school programmes, peripatetic teaching and PE teachers.

This comes during a time when cuts are driving deeper inequalities between schools and between children. According to an analysis carried out for the Labour party, the government's changes to spending will disproportionately impact more deprived areas.

In schools like mine in London, children already come to school in uniforms that don't fit, carrying plastic bags instead of backpacks. Some sleep on sofas and floors because of poor or unavailable housing. School should be a safe haven where children can grow and learn, where there are sufficient adults to support, not just their academic requirements, but their pastoral needs too.

The Conservatives' elimination of the Education Maintenance Allowance and student grants reinforced inequalities in our education system. Coupled with cuts to higher education and obscene tuition fees, here is one of the roots of the teacher shortage problem: there are now fewer students going into university teacher training courses to start with, year on year.

Teachers, like myself, go into the profession because we want to inspire creativity and learning. Instead, we find ourselves acting as shock-absorbers against the impact of Tory austerity. Classes are oversized and under-resourced, the curriculum is subject to constant political interference and students and teachers alike are under constant pressure from exams and league tables.

The colleagues of mine that began with the most enthusiasm for the job are the ones who are now most disillusioned by it. Talented and committed teachers are leaving education altogether precisely because they cannot work in the socially— and morally— repulsive conditions schools are being forced to impose. The Tory manifesto offers more of the same old misery.

In contrast, Labour's policy to provide free school meals to all primary school children will let teachers get on with the job they are meant to be doing— educating. Hungry tummies can't learn. Something as simple as this shouldn't even be an issue in Britain, which is one of the richest countries in the world.

Our education system is at a crossroads. If we do not address the impending funding and recruitment problems, the whole system could collapse. Jeremy Corbyn is proposing to put the principles of fairness and equality back at the heart of education, and to create a society that works for the many, not just the privileged few. As a teacher, I welcome that.

Op-Ed Contributor: Michelle Carter Didn't Kill With a Text

By ROBBY SOAVE

The New York Times (web site)

Friday, June 16, 2017 - 18:44 UTC -0400

Can malicious speech constitute violence? No. But Friday's shocking court decision — which found Michelle Carter guilty of sending lethal text messages — is bound to confuse the issue.

Judge Lawrence Moniz, of Bristol County Juvenile Court in southeastern Massachusetts, ruled that Ms. Carter, 17 at the time of her crime, had committed involuntary manslaughter by urging her depressed 18-year-old boyfriend, Conrad Roy III, to kill himself. Mr. Roy had flirted with the idea for weeks, and Ms. Carter — after initially telling him to seek counseling — seemed to warm to the idea, consistently egging him on via text: "The time is right and you're ready, you just need to do it! You can't keep living this way. You just need to do it like you did last time and not think about it and just do it babe."

On July 12, 2014, Mr. Conrad drove to a Kmart parking lot and connected his truck to a water pump that released carbon monoxide. At one point, sick from the fumes, he got out of the truck. Ms. Carter told him to "get back in." His body was found on July 13.

Ms. Carter also struggled with mental illness. Her lawyers claimed antidepressant drugs influenced her behavior; though the prosecution preferred to cast her as a callous narcissist who craved the sympathy of her peers and believed a suicidal boyfriend would earn her a popularity boost.

In either case, Ms. Carter's conduct was morally reprehensible. But — at least until today's ruling — it was clearly legal. While some states criminalize the act of convincing people to commit suicide, Massachusetts has no such law. Moreover, speech that is reckless, hateful and ill-willed nevertheless enjoys First Amendment protection. While the Supreme Court has carved out narrowly tailored exceptions for literal threats of violence and incitement to lawless action, telling someone they should kill themselves is not the same as holding a gun to their head and pulling the trigger. Nor is it akin to threatening to kill the president, which is specifically prohibited by law — and in any case, only considered a felony if done "knowingly and willfully." (Merely expressing hope that the president dies isn't enough.)

Judge Moniz's verdict is a stunning act of defiance against this general principle. By finding Ms. Carter guilty of involuntary manslaughter — rather than some lesser misdeed, such as bullying or harassment — the court has dealt a blow to the constitutionally enshrined idea that speech is not, itself, violence. That's cause for concern.

"Mr. Roy's death is a terrible tragedy, but it is not a reason to stretch the boundaries of our criminal laws or abandon the protections of our constitution," wrote Matthew Segel, legal director of the ACLU of Massachusetts, in a statement. "The implications of this conviction go far beyond the tragic circumstances of Mr. Roy's death. If allowed to stand, Ms. Carter's conviction could chill important and worthwhile end-of-life discussions between loved ones across the Commonwealth."

This one-off decision in juvenile court may not sway legal precedent. But it will undoubtedly draw the attention of school officials and police officers in the state of Massachusetts and negatively affect an area of the law already suffering from authoritarian governmental overreach: teen discipline.

For decades, efforts have been underway to criminalize every obnoxious or problematic social interaction between K-12 kids in American schools. Hardly a week passes without a national news story about teenagers who were arrested on child pornography charges — and face unfathomably long prison sentences — because they had inappropriate pictures of classmates (or even themselves) on their phones. In Iowa, in June 2016, authorities tried to brand a 14-year-old girl as a sex offender for Snapchatting while wearing a sports bra and boy shorts. The following month, Minnesota police officers busted a 17-year-old for swapping consensual sexts with his 16-year-old girlfriend. Such matters should be handled by parents and teachers, not the cops. The same is true for the various issues that plagued Ms. Carter and Mr. Roy.

By all means, let's empower teachers to confront harassment and refer troubled teenagers to mental health professionals. But we don't need to broadly criminalize teen cruelty to do that. Nor should we continue down the path of pretending that the First Amendment's ironclad protection of hateful expression is voided whenever someone says (or texts) something that makes us squirm.

What Ms. Carter said to Mr. Roy was outrageous. Sending her to prison on a possible 20-year sentence is both outrageous and unjust.

Follow *The New York Times* Opinion section on Facebook and Twitter (@NYTopinion), and sign up for the *Opinion Today* newsletter.

Robby Soave (@robbysoave) is an associate editor at Reason magazine. He is writing a book about millennial activism.

Texas House moves to require more abortion reporting data

The Texas Tribune

Thursday, May 11, 2017

Health facilities that perform abortions may soon have to release more detailed data on complications that arise during and after the procedure - another move by GOP lawmakers to crack down on abortions in Texas.

House lawmakers voted 94-52 to require hospitals, birthing centers, community health centers and freestanding emergency rooms that perform abortions - not just abortion clinics - to submit complication reports to the Department of State Health Services. It's a move abortion foes hope will give them a fuller scope of problems associated with the procedure.

Against their opponents' objections, GOP lawmakers also tacked on an amendment creating an online database for abortion complications, requiring doctors to report to the state within 72 hours of a complication, and seeking information as personal as the date of the woman's last menstrual cycle and her marital status.

"It's important to make sure complications that arise in abortions are disclosed and make sure we have the right data," said Rep. Giovanni Capriglione, R-Southlake and the bill's author.

Opponents argue House Bill 2962, which must get a final vote in the House before heading to the Senate for consideration, is completely medically unnecessary for a procedure with low complication rates and doesn't include more useful information like the name of the physician who performed the complicated abortion.

Reproductive rights groups have also raised concerns that the bill is so incomplete that it is only meant to help abortion opponents crack down on providers. It doesn't require reporting on complications in cases of self-induced abortions, for example - where the woman takes medication to induce abortion. They also fear it could lead to double-counting of complications, specifically pointing to the bill's requirement that providers report both "uterine perforation" and damage to the uterus.

During the more than two-hour debate on Thursday, several House Democrats took swipes at the bill. Rep. Mary Gonzalez, D-Clint, asked Capriglione why he wanted more reporting on abortions when complications are minimal compared to procedures like vasectomies and tonsillectomies.

"I think that there may be some people across the state of Texas that are concerned with complications of vasectomies," Gonzalez said.

"I'm not advised about that," Capriglione responded.

The bill is largely duplicative of existing state reporting requirements. Facilities must already provide details including the type of abortion that preceded the complication; the gestational age of the fetus at the time of the abortion; the date the complication was diagnosed or treated; and the number of abortions and children the patient previously had. Under Capriglione's bill, facilities found in violation of the reporting requirements would be fined \$500; if a facility got a third violation, the state could revoke or suspend the facility's license and permits.

An amendment by Rep. Matt Schaefer, R-Tyler, does more to change existing law; it would require doctors who perform the procedure or treat women with complications to report those complications to the state within 72 hours. The amendment would also require the Texas Department of State Health Services to develop an electronic system for providers reporting abortion complications, and report any doctors in violation of the reporting requirements to the Texas Medical Board. Schaefer's amendment requires the doctor making the report to collect information on the date of the woman's last menstrual cycle before the abortion complication occurred, as well as her birth year, race, marital status and which state and county she lives in. The amendment passed 91-50.

"If the agency sees that there's a problem at that particular facility with that physician, they can do something under their regulatory authority for women's health and women's safety," Schaefer said.

Rep. Carol Alvarado, D-Houston, was one of several Democrats to push back on Schaefer's amendment. Alvarado expressed concern that making the data electronic may put some doctors' information at risk if there's a cybersecurity breach. She also said she didn't understand why the same level of concern and data collection wasn't being applied to other health issues in the state.

"You're so obsessed with women's health, and I'm asking, why don't you apply that to men's health?" Alvarado asked.

"What about boys and girls in the womb? What about little pre-born women in the womb?" Schaefer shot back.

The Senate companion to HB 2962, Senate Bill 1602, passed that chamber last week on a vote of 23-8.

Throughout Thursday's House debate, Democrats decried the bill as an echo of 2013's House Bill 2, which forced Texas abortion facilities to have costly infrastructure like minimum room sizes and pipelines for anesthesia, and required their doctors to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the facility. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down the law last summer in a 5-3 decision.

Rep. Roland Gutierrez, D-San Antonio, said Republicans were working to "eviscerate" the high court's decision by adding more reporting requirements for facilities. Gutierrez proposed an amendment that would have allowed county commissioners' courts to exempt facilities under their jurisdictions from the reporting requirements. The amendment failed.

"The Supreme Court found nothing that legitimized HB 2 and you want to come back here and do these record statistics?" Gutierrez asked. "When do we stop?"

'TransCanada refiles Keystone XL application in Nebraska, the next anti-pipeline battleground

David Iaconangelo

The Christian Science Monitor (web site)

Energy/Environment, Saturday, February 18, 2017

Oil developer TransCanada has refiled its application to route the Keystone XL pipeline through Nebraska, the company said on Thursday, putting back on track a project rejected by then-President Barack Obama, that President Trump has promised to revive.

5 The application may open up a new front in efforts to block the massive pipelines that have become conspicuous symbols of fossil-fuel clout. So far, though, the first line of opposition seems likely to come through the courts, even as indigenous groups vow to mount the same sort of protests that won a temporary stoppage of the Dakota Access pipeline, a sister project.

10 Bold Nebraska, an opposition group, is planning a multi-pronged approach. It will launch a letter-writing campaign aimed at persuading the Nebraska Public Service Commission, an elected panel with four Republicans and one Democrat, to reject the pipeline.

Bold Nebraska says any oil spills could pollute the Ogallala Aquifer, a water source that is vital to several midwestern states, in addition to other environmental damage. But it will mount its legal challenge on eminent-domain grounds, headed by a group of some 82 landowners who refuse to let the pipeline run through their property.

15 "We're going to fight this through the courts, on property rights," said Jane Kleeb, who directs an umbrella group that includes Bold Nebraska, told Nebraska radio station KTIC in January.

"It's a very frightening prospect that a foreign corporation can use eminent domain against landowners for their private gain," Ms. Kleeb told the AP.

20 TransCanada said in a statement on Thursday that it expected the review to conclude this year, calling the NPSC process "the clearest path to achieving route certainty for the project in Nebraska." The Commission typically responds to applications within seven months, or they can choose to postpone a decision for up to a year.

But Bold is confident that its legal actions will slow down the state-level approval process - despite Mr. Trump's claims of having already "approved" the project.

25 "We still have very strong state rights in our country," Kleeb said. "There is still a long eminent domain hearing process as well as a pipeline routing process. So you are looking at at least two years before they even get a permit in Nebraska."

30 If approved and constructed, the Keystone XL would run from the Canadian province of Alberta through Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska, where it would connect with an existing pipeline to transport some 830,000 daily barrels of crude to Texas refineries. And a 2014 State Department review estimated that the project would create about 42,000 jobs nationwide and bring about \$2 billion in direct and indirect earnings for workers .

35 The Obama administration rejected the project in 2015, saying it would not make "a meaningful long-term contribution" to the economy, lower gas prices for consumers, or help the nation transfer toward clean energy.

But prior to that decision, as the New Republic explained earlier that year, landowners were at the forefront of Nebraskan opposition, and managed to slow the process considerably, setting up the federal action that sidelined it:

40 In 2012, the state legislature passed a law granting the governor authority to approve the route and bypassing Nebraska's Public Service Commission. A four-justice majority of the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled in January that the legislation violated the state constitution, but didn't get the supermajority (five judges) to strike down the law-thereby preserving TransCanada's plans. But landowners are still fighting TransCanada's use of eminent domain on constitutional grounds, and in February a county court issued a temporary injunction halting TransCanada from acquiring land.

45 In addition, Native groups voiced frustration over what they see as a lack of adequate consultation over a project that crosses their lands. And following Trump's January executive actions that revived both the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines, many Dakota protestors said that they would mobilize to stop construction of the Keystone XL.

50 "We will be setting up camps in very strategic locations along the KXL route," Dallas Goldtooth, campaign organizer with Indigenous Environmental Network, told InsideClimate News. "We will fight Trump tooth and nail to ensure that this pipeline is not built."

This report includes information from Reuters and the Associated Press.

The farmer straddling both sides of the Irish border: "People don't want a return to violence"

By Felipe Araujo, *New Statesman*, 6 March 2017

- 5 "Right, I will now take you around and show you a different country," says David Crockett as I jump in the backseat of his pickup for a tour of his farm in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland. "It won't take long." Less than 10 minutes later he parks the vehicle on the edge of a muddy field, points across, and says: "See that fence there? That's the Republic of Ireland. All you have to do is walk through the gate." That's how David has been running his 300-acre farm for the past 20 years — freely dipping in and out of Irish territory as he pleases. He has no choice, really. Two hundred acres of his land lies on the south. The other 100, which includes his family home, is on the north of the border. Since the Good Friday Agreement came into effect in 1999, the sinuous 300-mile Irish border between north and south has virtually evaporated. People like David have made the most of the newfound peace, significantly prospering in the process.
- 5 "Europe has been very good in terms of grants and subsidies," he says. "They brought the standards up, you are well paid for your stuff, and they won't allow anything from even America to come in." But that could soon change. As Britain braces for a messy divorce with the Europe Union, residents of Derry — who overwhelmingly voted to remain— believe the split will have devastating consequences. "It will be disastrous for everyone," one local told me.
- 0 For David and his farm, big changes loom large once Northern Ireland leaves the EU. For one, tilling the Irish Republic side of his land will become significantly more difficult, as different regulations and a bevy of tariffs apply. "Before we were part of the EU we would have to go to Dublin to get an export license... and then for an import license we would have to go down to London," he explains.
- 5 There is also the machinery. In a post-EU Northern Ireland, he expects he will no longer be able to drive his tractors from one side of the border to the other. The solution? "I have been told I will have to move my entire business out there and buy new machinery. I will eventually have to split the farm and hand over the Irish side to my son." David is a Protestant. The Troubles started when he was nine years old, and continued until he was in his 30s. For most of his childhood, division and conflict between the Catholic south and the Protestant north was all he knew. He still has vivid memories of a time when, as a young boy, he would have to lay low in the family's kitchen while fierce gun battles between the British army and IRA militias were going on outside. "We would go out to the fields the next morning, collect the empty bullet shells, and sell them at school," he remembers.
- 5 Now, at 57, when he talks about the possible return of a hard border between the two Irelands, it is his business more than the historical divide between Catholics and Protestants that most worries him. "People here don't want a return to the violence," he says. "They are crossing to shop. They are going down there for a pint of milk. As it is, I can go 100 yards down the road to get it. Otherwise [with a border] I would have to go a mile down the road, so convenience wise and everything else that's a total disaster."
-) But in this part of the world, politics seldom has only economic implications. Walk down to Derry's Bogside district, historically the home of the Catholic population, and the colours and symbols serve as vivid reminders of this city's violent past. For the past two decades, those loyal to the Republic of Ireland have grown accustomed to living in the Northern Irish side without fear of a return to a majority British rule. But Brexit, especially among border communities, has come to once again stoke those long-dormant tensions. Residents don't want to go back to a time when they had to pass through army checkpoints whenever they wanted to cross to either side of the Irish isle. But with both the UK and the EU failing to offer any concrete alternatives, the border issue is preying on their minds. "A hardening of the border completely solidifies the separation between the north and the south," says John Kelly, educational officer at The Free Derry Museum, whose brother was killed in the Bloody Sunday Massacre. "Whereas prior to this [Brexit] happening we have free movement, we can travel without any difficulty whatsoever, in the future that will be much more difficult. It brings back bad memories to everyone around here." The museum, which opened a little over a week ago, is a comprehensive explanation of 50 years of the Irish Troubles and the Catholic population's struggle for civil rights.
-) The project was partly funded by the EU Peace programme, which aims is to promote economic and social progress in Northern Ireland and the Border Region [...].

The Guardian, Monday, February 20, 2017: **The supermarket food gamble may be up**

By Felicity Lawrence

The UK's clock has been set to Permanent Global Summer Time once more after a temporary blip. Courgettes, spinach and iceberg lettuce are back on the shelves, and the panic over the lack of imported fruit and vegetables has been contained. "As you were, everyone," appears to be the message.

But why would supermarkets – which are said to have lost sales worth as much as £8m in January thanks to record-breaking, crop-wrecking snow and rainfall in the usually mild winter regions of Spain and Italy – be so keen to fly in substitutes from the US at exorbitant cost?

Why would they sell at a loss rather than let us go without, or put up prices to reflect the changing market? Why indeed would anyone air-freight watery lettuce across the whole of the American continent and the Atlantic when it takes 127 calories of fuel energy to fly just 1 food calorie of that lettuce to the UK from California?

The answer is that, in the past 40 years, a whole supermarket system has been built on the seductive illusion of this Permanent Global Summer Time. As a result, a cornucopia of perpetual harvest is one of the key selling points that big stores have over rival retailers. If the enticing fresh produce section placed near the front of each store to draw you in starts looking a bit empty, we might not bother to shop there at all.

[...]

Food writer Joanna Blythman coined the term Permanent Global Summer Time in an article for the *Guardian* in 2002. By then the astonishing shift in supply chains had come into sharp focus. Although the new supply system is miraculous in its scale, speed and efficiency, it has two fatal flaws.

First, it depends on the profligate use of finite resources – water, soil, and fossil fuels (with all their greenhouse gas emissions). Depending on whose figures you take, between a fifth and a third of UK emissions relate to food. More and more, we eat by exploiting the often fragile ecosystems of other countries. The UK is the sixth largest importer in the world of virtual water – the water needed to produce our food elsewhere.

Second, the system is built on the exploitation of cheap labour, mostly migrant, that has been socially disruptive and politically fraught. Migrant labour is not coincidental but structural to the just-in-time model, which needs the extreme flexibility of a class of desperate workers to function. Undocumented, underpaid migrants from Africa have provided the labour to harvest Italian and Spanish crops. Low-paid migrants, predominantly from eastern Europe, have become the backbone of the UK's centralised distribution centres, providing 35% of food manufacturing labour, and 70-80% of harvesting labour.

The brief disappearance of a few green and salad vegetables was hardly a great deprivation, but we should take it seriously as an early warning sign. Like the banking system, our food system seems too big, too sophisticated and too embedded in everyday life to fail. Yet privately, supermarket buyers have been talking for at least five years about "choice editing" – that is, editing out some of the fresh foods we have come to take for granted because importing them is unsustainable. Examples might include asparagus from Peru, 95% of which comes from the Ica valley where wells are running dry, and Moroccan tomatoes sourced from areas suffering severe water stress and aquifer depletion.

Supermarkets expected water shortages to bring the first jolts to the system. Brexit and climate change have brought other potential shocks to the fore.

The UK only produces a little over half of what its people consume; over a quarter of what we eat and drink comes from the EU. Reverting to more local ways of meeting our needs has become harder as the old infrastructure of regional wholesale markets has disappeared, and as farmers continue to exit the food business because they cannot make a living.

The government view, under the current Conservative administration and previous coalition and Labour ones, has been that the market will provide. In a new era of protectionism and with the UK heading out of the EU, that looks increasingly complacent. A decade ago, the Ministry of Defence predicted that changes to the climate, globalisation and global inequality would "touch the lives of everyone on the planet" within the next 20 years. "Food and water insecurity will drive mass migrations in the worst areas, but may also be possible in more affluent areas because of distribution problems, specialised agriculture and aggressive pricing ... a succession of poor harvests may cause major price spikes resulting in significant economic and political turbulence," a document warned.

Leaving the EU could be an opportunity for a radical rethink of the food system, but the government shows little sign of grasping it. So when I see glossy magazine pictures and Instagram snaps of summer dishes conjured up in the middle of winter of ingredients flown in from distant climes, I wonder if, a couple of decades from now, we will look to ourselves like the late Victorian colonials photographed proudly next to dead lions and other game in Africa. They could hardly have imagined they were consuming their world out of existence.

The Guardian, May 12, 2017 : **Brexit will spell the end of British art as we know it**
By Bob and Roberta Smith

Leaving the EU will have a devastating impact on our artists, museums and galleries. Brace yourselves for a Henry VIII-style cultural assault.

Before we vote in June's election we must consider what kind of culture we want to live in. I woke up recently to the voice of historian David Starkey telling radio listeners that there was no reason to fear Brexit because "we have been here before when Henry VIII split from Rome". What Starkey omitted from this Ladybird book version of British history is that that rupture with Rome led to the destruction of medieval British culture and the dissolution of the monasteries. Before voting for a Brexit-supporting candidate in June, voters should remember the ivy-clad ruins of our Cistercian monasteries. When we visit what's left of Rievaulx or Jervaulx Abbey in Yorkshire, near where I grew up, we are taught to feel romantic and rarely imagine the paintings, sculpture and tapestries that were destroyed and plundered there.

Post-Brexit, we face a dissolution of our museums and galleries comparable in its devastation to that visited on England in the 1530s, as philistine politicians slash budgets. Art schools and the arts in schools will be further diminished in a wave of manufactured disdain for so-called elitists. The only people in the arts set to benefit from Brexit are the auction houses, which are poised to sell off publicly owned collections to the world's super-rich at cut prices. Local authorities facing huge bills for social care are looking to their assets to fill funding gaps. Already, Croydon council has sold its holdings of ancient Chinese ceramics, Northampton museums sold an Egyptian sculpture of Sekhemka and Walsall council threatened to close its New Art Gallery. Our weak pound only makes our treasures more affordable to oligarchs.

Brexit will precipitate a stripping of regional museums much as Henry VIII plundered monasteries to fund his foreign wars. Local councils will momentarily be able to plug the black holes in their budgets, but when it comes to tourism, there will be a faded patch on the wall where once a Francis Bacon hung. Bury council in Manchester will always be mocked for having sold LS Lowry's *A River Bank*.

[...] If we leave Europe we leave a funding structure called Creative Europe. In 2014 Creative Europe was given €1.46bn to spend on the arts. There is as yet no mention of what will replace our share of that cake. Other unanswered questions include whether George Osborne's tax reliefs for the creative industries will be maintained post-2020. Leaving Europe means we leave the pan-European Erasmus university student exchange scheme, named after the Renaissance scholar. It is heartbreaking to imagine the options of future generations of students being so limited.

There are probably some Hogarthian grotesques out there who imagine British art should be made by "British artists", but most people working in the arts voted to remain in Europe. Contemporary artists frequently show across Europe, and are represented by European galleries. Artists are interested in freedom of expression and we are worried that a British bill of rights will weaken our voices advocating for artists and writers imprisoned by repressive regimes. Large numbers of artists, such as me, have partners from other nations. Art, like science, is an international language.

So it is with a degree of horror that artists see the normalisation of the concept that Britain is leaving Europe, with both Conservative and Labour parties committed to some form of Brexit. For most of my life I have voted Labour, but I was taught socialism was international. In the 2015 election I stood in Surrey Heath against Michael Gove to advocate the arts. This time around, Gina Miller's stance – advocating tactical voting in an effort to avert a hard Brexit – has inspired me. I have come to the conclusion that voters must consider which of their local candidates would be better for the arts.

Anyone looking at Brexit from a cultural perspective should be arguing for a second vote not just in parliament but also in the country. In our arts organisations, theatres, museums, galleries and universities there is deep sense of foreboding. If Brexit is delivered it will undoubtedly shift the nature of our culture in a way that is deeply worrying. Brexit will mean the end of a period of British culture born out of the ashes of the second world war that was open, intellectually curious and essentially generous. The arts currently suffer disdain and removal of patronage. Many who are vocal in defending the welfare state and NHS fail to recognise or do not take seriously that our museums and galleries are similarly threatened.

The Brexit referendum was fought on the idea that Britain was sick of elitists and tired of experts. When we leave Europe, British artists should prepare to be added to the list of undesirables.

Financial Times, March 24, 2017

The ties of affection that bind Scotland to the Union

By John Lloyd

A week ago, Nicola Sturgeon, first minister of Scotland's devolved government, stood before the Scottish National party's annual conference in Aberdeen and repositioned it for the age of austerity.

Even for a party largely dismissive of contrary views, the flood of economic analysis and forecasts that point to a hard entrance to independence cannot be forever ignored. Andrew Wilson, a former member of the Scottish parliament, will present a report from his Growth Commission in a few weeks: he has denied saying privately that it would take up to 10 years for the Scottish economy to recover from achieving independence, as widely reported. But both the rhetoric and policy are shifting.

Former SNP leader Alex Salmond has floated the idea of creating a new Scots currency, free floating or pegged to sterling - thus abandoning the present policy of retaining the pound. At the same time, the previously enthusiastic embrace of the EU (which remains party policy) is now diluted by discreet talk of other alternatives, such as membership of the European Economic Area. The EEA's members include Norway, much admired in the SNP; it offers free trade within the EU single market, providing the market's laws and regulations are adopted. EEA membership does not include membership of the common fisheries and agricultural policies, attractive to a Scotland whose fisheries have suffered in recent years.

None of these voices off surfaced in Ms Sturgeon's speech. The slogan is no longer "It's *our* oil!" but "It's *our* democracy!" The dismissal by Theresa May, UK prime minister, of Ms Sturgeon's proposal for a second referendum on independence in 2018 or 2019, around the time when the Brexit terms will be known but the negotiations not yet concluded, has given the first minister a call to arms. The decision on the timing of the referendum will be a Scottish, not a British, decision, she insists.

[...]Ms Sturgeon's speech, of a piece with others by her ministers, mixed characterisation of the UK government as full of hard-hearted Brexiters "nostalgic for empire" with vignettes of a Scotland as welcoming all migrants who cared to come. Scotland, the first minister said, "isn't full up!" Members from the LGBT community testified to the warmth with which they were welcomed into the party, as did an impressively high-spirited Kurdish refugee who was standing in council elections in Glasgow.

The composite vision was of a country with a heart bigger than Ben Nevis and the ability to welcome more migrants from the Middle East and Africa than Germany. It was an audacious reversal of the hoary old stereotype of Scottish meanness, an unashamed planting of the Saltire on leftish terrain largely vacated by "the shambles of a party Labour has become", as Ms Sturgeon put it.

But the shadow over the heart waits offstage. Oil, in its heyday, provided about 7 per cent of Scottish gross domestic product: it now provides 0.1 per cent. In 2015-16, the country spent nearly £15bn more than it raised, a 9.5 per cent share of GDP, producing a fiscal gap more than double the 4 per cent for the UK.

On present trends, an independent Scotland would face cuts and tax rises. The efforts of the SNP leadership to shift attention to the supposed devastation Brexit would wreak are understandable as a political ploy, but increasingly transparent as only that.

Scotland's exports are growing, but four times more go to the rest of the UK than to the EU. On 2015 figures reported in January, exports to the rest of the UK were £49.8bn, against £12.3bn to the other 27 member states of the EU. Were independence to mean a hard border between Scotland and the UK, the economy would seem to be at greater risk.

When, on Wednesday evening, Mrs May invoked the values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law epitomised by a parliament that had just been under terrorist attack, she was stating nothing new. Rather, she was placing the outrage in a context of shared values and shared threat, which might move the Scots as much as the English.

It has been widely accepted, as Linda Colley wrote in her book *Britons*, that the ties that bound Scotland to the UK in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries were now loosened, and that the Union was therefore in danger.

That union has been characterised as a "union of policy" rather than one of "affection" - by Daniel Defoe, briefly an English spy in Scotland. Much of the policy, on the Scots side, has historically been a recognition of the risks of independence, what nationalists today dismiss as the "politics of fear".

But maybe the author of *Robinson Crusoe* was overhasty in his judgment. After three centuries, the Union, expressed in multiple ties of family, work and friendship, is stronger than it was. Beneath the rhetoric there is a bed of acceptance. It is not obvious that Scotland is angry enough to go.

The New Statesman, December 15, 2016: **We don't live in a world in which post-truth politics is inevitable**
By Ngaire Woods

"Take back control" has been an intoxicating rallying call to voters, not just in Britain but in the United States and many other parts of the world. People are "making themselves heard" in elections and referendums. Their votes are signalling that they no longer trust or feel linked to establishment politicians and institutions. For politicians, the quick fixes of direct democracy and nativism are proving difficult to resist. Yet these will erode democracy. The necessary alternative is to renovate democratic politics, and fast.

On 23 January 2013, when David Cameron announced a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, he declared, "It is time for the British people to have their say." Likewise, across the world, other leaders who have to take difficult decisions are referring issues to the public. In Colombia, it was the peace deal that took four years to negotiate; in Hungary, it was immigration policy; in Italy, constitutional reform. In the United States, "ballot propositions" are continually put to the electorate. As a voter in California remarked, "Along with my vote for president, I had to answer 41 ballots."

When elected politicians hold referendums to give people a say, it is surely a sign that the foundations of democracy are weak. In Britain, as in many other democracies, people have their say in various ways. They form associations or join political parties or unions; they lobby; they write to newspapers; they take part in television discussions; they write to the Prime Minister; they vote in local, regional and national elections. They badger their local MP, church or school. If these no longer work, the solution is not to offer citizens the chance to answer a one-off question.

[...] When Britain's first referendum, on the European Economic Community, was held in 1975, Margaret Thatcher made a staunch argument against it. Without the protections and definition afforded by a written constitution, she argued, referendums sacrifice parliamentary sovereignty to political expediency. They might seem "democratically" to give people a voice but, in practice, they permit a difficult decision to be made without anyone being held to account.

Direct democracy is not a good solution to failures of representative politics. Representative democracy recognises that good decisions are not the result of simply aggregating individual preferences. Someone has to take responsibility for bringing together the interests, information and institutions required to decide. If politicians do the job badly, voters can throw them out of office.

Direct democracy is not the only corrosive force at work. The other is nativism, blaming foreigners - at home and abroad - for the things that people most fear: the loss of their job, their house, their security. It is astonishing how quickly nativism has crept into mainstream debate and media. In 2016, a presidential candidate in France suggested locking up (without judicial authorisation) Muslims suspected of extremist tendencies; the US president-elect implied that the foreign heritage of an American judge gave reason to question his impartiality; and the British Home Secretary has proposed publicly that UK firms be required to publish lists of the foreigners working for them.

When politicians stoke fear and resentment between groups in their society, the result can be a vicious circle of conflict and violence. People become more scared to go to the same school or to live in the same area as those deemed the other. Yet it is precisely this mixing that reduces fear and makes social cohesion possible. When the lives of different groups are separate, their fears grow. In societies as diverse as Britain, the US and France, this is dangerous stuff.

As well as the risks of nativist rhetoric by politicians, social media and online interactions are reinforcing separation, creating echo chambers in which like-minded people endorse each other's views. Democracy requires a citizenship that meets, deliberates and interacts without fear and hatred. It requires organisations that give people a "voice" and a feeling that they have a stake and some influence in the system, just as early steps in political enfranchisement and organisation helped the US and the UK to preserve democracy in the 1930s. It also needs public spaces and debates in which people interact and discover communalities and differences that they would otherwise ignore.

Renovating democracy can take place by innovating how communities engage with political challenges and decisions. We do not live in a world where "post-truth politics" is inevitable. My academic colleagues in the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford have demonstrated the positive effects of getting citizens to engage and deliberate on substantive issues, and how this shifts voting away from personality politics - in locations from West Africa to the Philippines.

Equally importantly, democracy needs online innovation. Technologists, media companies and entrepreneurs must rethink the online spaces and social media that they have created and start reshaping them to help diverse societies cohere. When Microsoft created Windows, it created the possibility of multiple lenses or views of any issue. Why not build on that? A renovation of democracy should permit people genuinely to take back control as a diverse community, and to participate in a society and political system that holds together, rather than cracking apart.

The Independent, November 24, 2016 **Is this the end of free speech? By Frank Furedi**

One London university has banned three tabloid newspapers and, as Frank Furedi explains, this highlights the tug of war on campus between freedom of speech and diversity

The news that students at City, University of London have voted to ban The Sun, Daily Mail and Daily Express newspapers from its campus - a ban which could be extended to other media organisations - is just the latest example of how free speech is under threat at universities across the globe. The university's student union voted to ban the newspapers in a motion "opposing fascism and social divisiveness in the UK media", saying that "freedom of speech should not be used as an excuse to attack the weakest and poorest members of society". The union also added that all titles publish stories that are inherently sexist, stating: "There is no place for The Sun, Daily Mail or Express (in their current form) on City, University of London campuses or properties."

But this is nothing new. Theresa May recently hit out at British universities for setting up "safe spaces" on campus, amid concerns self-censorship is curtailing freedom of speech. And in recent years, a climate of intolerance has enveloped campuses - to the point where the value of free speech itself is under scrutiny.

This has led to the entire higher education sector becoming estranged from taking tolerance and freedom seriously - with recent research showing that 80 per cent of British universities have actively censored freedom of speech on campus.

One of the problems is that on both sides of the Atlantic, there is the growing tendency to represent free speech and diversity as contradictory values. And a recent report from the US acknowledges that among younger faculty members and students, the value of free speech is trumped by the idea of diversity. It notes that "at times" campus controversies "have led some groups of students to question the value of free speech itself". The report warns: "As students graduate, their attitudes toward speech will permeate society at large, influencing how a new generation of teachers, scholars, courts and citizens view the balance between sometimes competing values."

But my research actually indicates what is at stake is not so much a generational divide, but a much more fundamental shift towards an outlook that values diversity over free speech. You can say what you want, but... Universities have recently come under great pressure to balance these apparently competing ideals. And a few university leaders have actually taken action to remind the academic community about the merits of free speech - particularly in the US. Lee C Bollinger, the president of Columbia University, in New York City, gave a recent no-nonsense address that upheld free speech - while the dean of students at the University of Chicago went so far as to inform new undergraduates that Chicago does not accept the practice of trigger warnings and safe spaces.

Other universities hesitated to follow Chicago's lead, but they too felt obliged to affirm their belief in free speech - albeit a weaker version.

Janet Napolitano, president of the University of California, took a slightly less hardline approach, saying that safe spaces and trigger warnings are good for fostering diversity. But she also presented free speech as something that has intrinsic value, saying: "Educating students from an informed 'more speech' approach as opposed to silencing an objectionable speaker should be one of academia's key roles."

[...] Michael Roth, head of Wesleyan University, Connecticut, wrote that in the past, campuses were "far less diverse places than they are today" and consequently "there were many voices that none of us got to hear".

The implication of Roth's statement is that the exercise of free speech in the past was in some sense responsible for silencing the voices of minority groups.

This idea, that freedom of speech and diversity are contradictory ideals has a significant influence on campus culture. And defenders of safe spaces say freedom needs to be "balanced" or "traded off" against diversity. "I definitely think it's a balancing act," observed Gale Baker, university counsel for California State University. She sees "open and frank discussion and free expression" as "competing" with the "value of wanting a diverse and inclusive community".

In the current climate, the pressure to "balance free speech and diversity" has invariably led to the notion that the former must give way to the latter. And the way free speech has been made less important than diversity can be clearly seen in the way universities frame their mission statements. Take the recent statement made by Ronnie Green, the chancellor of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, as he welcomed new students to campus. Though he mentioned free speech in passing, his remarks were primarily devoted to celebrating the value of diversity. As he put it: "Our beliefs on diversity and inclusion are not negotiable."

Similarly, the statement of core values of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, like that of many other colleges, includes diversity but not free speech. It gets a perfunctory mention, only to be followed by a clause stating "we do not tolerate words and actions of hate and disrespect" - which makes an implicit association between free expression and hatred. Clearly demonstrating how the rhetoric of "I believe in free speech, but..." is fast becoming the new normal in the academy.

The Economist, Saturday, February 25, 2017 **Higher education: Class warfare**
Competition between universities is hotting up. That is changing student life

University marketing, once restricted to the three months before applications are due, is now constant, says Rachel Killian of Penna, a marketing firm. That reflects a broad shift in higher education as a result of reforms introduced by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government. In 2012 it trebled the tuition fees universities could charge, up to a maximum of £9,000 (\$14,000). Then in 2014 it lifted a cap on student numbers which had controlled government spending by restricting how many places institutions could offer. Students once competed for a limited number of spaces; now universities do battle to enroll as many scholars as they can.

That is because they must attract students or cut costs. As most undergraduates pay for their studies with loans provided by the state, nearly half of universities' income comes from them, compared with a quarter in 2005-06. And, as restrictions on recruitment have been relaxed, numbers can now fluctuate wildly. This year the total accepting the offer of a place at Southampton Solent University fell by 18%. The government hoped competition would allow the undergraduate population to continue to grow, thus widening access to higher education, and would raise teaching standards, recalls David Willetts, the universities minister from 2010 to 2014.

To some extent, those hopes have been realised. Fees at public universities in Britain are the highest in the OECD, a group of mostly rich countries, but the number of poor students has continued to rise. In 2010, 14% of children from the most deprived areas went to university; in 2016, 20% did. In theory fees might be £9,000 a year, says Seamus, a student at the University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol. But "the money's not real. It doesn't exist until you're making enough to pay it back." Numbers of part-time and mature students, who receive less support, have slumped, however, prompting fears about the "homogenisation" of the route Britons take through higher education.

Disadvantaged students have so far poured into low-ranking universities. But they may soon gain access to the best ones. Since 2014, the numbers accepted by English members of the Russell Group of top universities have grown by about 6%. As Nick Hillman of the Higher Education Policy Institute, a think-tank, notes, this means that poor students no longer have to oust their middle-class peers to gain entry. All students are now more likely to win a place at their first-choice institutions, too.

The possibility of expansion has prompted a building boom. Much of the UWE campus is a building site. Growing universities erect glitzy libraries, housing blocks and research facilities to accommodate new students; shrinking ones do so in an effort to turn the tide. According to Barbour ABI, a consultancy, universities spent £2.4bn on construction in 2013, 43% more than in 2012, and have continued to spend at that level in the years since.

Better facilities are a boon for students. Some 87% say they are satisfied with their libraries, compared with 78% in 2010, according to the National Student Survey, an official poll. One private London dorm comes with a cinema room and concierge (rent: £399 a week). But Shelly Asquith of the National Union of Students cautions that poor students are sometimes priced out of expensive university halls and thus end up living in the cheapest private places available, which hinders student mixing.

Another lure is the promise of a path to a good job. At open days prospective students are still mainly interested in courses and living arrangements, but their parents increasingly care about employment. All universities now have in place strategies to boost graduate employment, notes Kathleen Henahan of the Resolution Foundation, a think-tank. About half of the courses at UWE have a vocational element, says Steven West, its vice-chancellor, which is not unusual for similar universities. On one of its business degrees students must start a firm as part of their studies (one has set up a record label, another a skiwear company).

Some fret that too many students are still exposed to lacklustre teaching. Crowded lecture halls and insufficient time with professors are common complaints. Jo Johnson, the universities minister, has some sympathy: he has said that too many students are exposed to "mediocre teaching". The government hopes its new "Teaching Excellence Framework" will prod universities to pay as much attention to the quality of instruction as to research.

Survival of the fittest

Others worry that the competition will prove too intense. A report last year by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, a grant-giving agency, warned of declining cash levels and an increase in borrowing by universities that could prove unsustainable. Few policy wonks are willing to predict what the government would do if a university went bankrupt. Many institutions that are struggling under the new regime are in the parts of the country that Theresa May, the prime minister, has promised to reinvigorate, notes Andy Westwood of Manchester University. They are more likely to be attended by poor, local students. Mrs May will have to decide if their decline is a price worth paying for more competitive universities.

The Dark Side of American Optimism

And the bright side of rising pessimism about the American Dream

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/01/the-dark-side-of-american-optimism/513680/>

Derek Thompson Jan 19, 2017 *The Atlantic*

- 5 One of the hallmarks of America's supposed exceptionalism is its citizens' extraordinary optimism. A 2014 study found that Americans were more likely to describe their day as "particularly good" than any rich European country. Nothing reflects this sunniness like the enduring parable of the American Dream, the idea that, only in America, even the poorest can transform their fortunes through hard work.
- 10 But there is a dark and deeply ironic element to American dreaminess. Americans are "too optimistic" about the odds of poor citizens getting richer "relative to actual mobility in the U.S.," according to a new paper by the economists Alberto Alesina, Stefanie Stantcheva, and Edoardo Teso. As a result, Americans are less likely to support large federal anti-poverty programs—programs that would actually help the American Dream become reality for more people—since they believe that they are already living among throngs of Horatio Algers.
- 15 In Europe, the opposite is true. Citizens of France, Italy, and Sweden are far more pessimistic about social mobility, the study found, and those pessimists are far more supportive of welfare policies. Even within these countries, the "pessimistic respondents tend to favor more generous [welfare]." So, while Americans see their economy as a meritocracy, in which both rich and poor deserve their fates, Europeans see their economies more like lotteries, in which the poor are unlucky through little fault of their own. Poverty isn't what they deserve, but rather what they were born into. Instead, what they deserve is help.
- 20 Here, then, is the ultimate irony. Social mobility is actually higher in Europe than in America. The biggest difference between the U.S. and similar European countries is the intergenerational mobility of the very poor. In America, they are locked in a quasi-permanent state of poverty, unable to move into the middle class. The U.S.'s quasi-religious faith in social mobility makes many Americans allergic to welfare, even though welfare is essential to making a society more socially mobile. The American Dream's true believers, blinded by their
- 25 own optimism, destroy the dream itself.
- This dynamic—generous pessimists vs. laissez-faire optimists—is on display often in the news. Senator Bernie Sanders championed universal health care and education along with more cash assistance for the poor. He defended these views by arguing that the economic system was rigged by the plutocratic few against the public.
- 30 On the other hand, one of the sunniest warriors on the right, Paul Ryan, is an advocate for smaller government, fewer regulations, less health care. He says welfare doesn't work and only smaller government will help the poor get ahead.
- And then there is Donald Trump, scrambler of all ideological orthodoxies. Trump has been a fount of gloomy proclamations about economics, trade, work, and America's future. These warnings aren't always comprised of facts. For example, he recently said that nearly 100 million Americans are out of work, a figure composed
- 35 mostly of retired people. The real figure is closer to 5 million.
- But as Alesina and other economists have shown, there may be a surprising and positive side-effect of the pessimism channeled by Trump. When people stop thinking that they live in a natural meritocracy, they tend to support more welfare spending—which, ironically, has the effect of improving social mobility for the very poor. If Trump can persuade conservatives that the economy is inherently unfair, he may help break the fever
- 40 dream of American optimism and the right-wing's faith that "getting government out of the way" is sufficient for helping the poorest.
- Attitudes toward social mobility aren't the only factor that determines welfare policy. Something else that clearly constrains support for anti-poverty spending in America is race. America's historical skepticism of welfare is inseparable from its legacy of states rights and racism. As *The Washington Post's* Jeff Guo writes, it's
- 45 possible that racial animosity drives attitudes toward both social mobility and welfare and "some may shelter in the idea of the 'American Dream' to justify their opposition to redistribution." Indeed, the Alesina paper found that, although liberals' support for welfare increased as they became more pessimistic about social mobility, right-wing respondents did not favor more welfare when they were told that social mobility was actually much lower than they expected. For some, "meritocracy" may be a cover for right-wingers who neither want to
- 50 acknowledge persistent poverty among non-white citizens nor do anything to fix it.
- The broader lesson is that social-mobility optimism is neither panacea nor poison but rather, like most medicine, something that requires a measured application. Ideally, Americans would maintain a culture of personal optimism—where each individual young person is motivated to work hard, believing that he or she can achieve their own definition of professional success—with a kind of public realism, which acknowledges
- 55 that pure meritocracy is a myth, social mobility is not a natural state, and there is no shame in using government programs to correct the hardships life brings. But Americans will have to part with their uplifting overconfidence in their own nation's perfect meritocracy. If Americans want to live the dream, they have to wake up first.

What Happens When Women Legislate

By BRITTANY BRONSON APRIL 18, 2017 *The Opinion Pages* *The New York Times*

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/18/opinion/what-happens-when-women-legislate.html?_r=0

LAS VEGAS — Cheaper tampons. Office breaks to pump breast milk. No co-pay on birth control.

5 These are not the talking points of a ladies' happy hour. They are among the State Senate and Assembly bills being considered in the Nevada Legislature. Not only were the bills designed solely with women in mind, they each were sponsored by a female lawmaker.

At 39.7 percent, Nevada now ranks near the top for women's representation in state politics, second only to Vermont. The bills women are bringing to the State Senate floor this session range from the annual ranking of companies by
10 how fairly they pay men and women to arguably the most historic — the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. The state legislature is a testimony to what many who study gender inequity in politics theorize to be true: Increased gender representation directly translates into better consideration of women in the drafting of law and policy.

Although the 2016 presidential election is mourned as a symbolic impasse for women's progress, it was momentous
15 for female politicians in Nevada, at both the state and the federal level. Many have called President Trump's election a wake-up call for American women, one that has inspired their increased grass-roots activism and political involvement.

But in Nevada, the ladies were already on the ballot before President Trump's victory. Now they are getting to work. What spring-boarded Nevada into a leader for gender equality in statehouses is not entirely clear. A study from the
20 Center for American Women and Politics highlights that the root of gender disparity in political representation does not lie in whether women win races (they do), but in the discrepancy in the amount of men and women who run.

A national organization called Emerge America, which recruits and trains Democratic women to run for office, is attempting to address this problem. Emerge Nevada had nine of their graduates on state ballots last November. Eight of them were elected.

Marla Turner, president of Emerge Nevada and secretary for the state Democratic Party, said many women assume
25 they are unqualified to run for office. "When women come to us and say, 'I don't know if I'm a good candidate. I don't have any skills for this,' we start breaking it down," she said. "They realize they can apply the skills from their work environments, from their involvement in their children's schools, to the political process."

Ms. Turner added that over the past three years, the level of interest from women who have applied to the Emerge
Nevada program has nearly tripled.

30 Emerge does not give its trainees direction on the type of legislation they should pursue — it's not focused on what are traditionally categorized as women's issues. It strives to produce well-rounded candidates, albeit Democratic ones.

The expertise of this new wave of women politicians in Nevada certainly extends far beyond the experience of being
35 female. But in celebration of Women's History Month in March, the women of the Nevada Legislature used the session to highlight issues like the gender wage gap, family-friendly work policies and the "pink tax," or the extra amount women are charged for items like feminine hygiene products — issues male politicians haven't historically prioritized.

That effort, however, reveals a contradiction in women's involvement in politics: Too much focus on gender can
40 decrease the breadth of female candidates' appeal and their electability, but gender equity has proved impossible to achieve without women's voices championing it.

It's why Hillary Clinton's remarks last month encouraging young women to run for office were so poignant. Many of the barriers that prevent women from running — finances, an unequal burden of family obligations — are the
products of the gender discrimination still inherent in our society and our laws, laws that are unlikely to change unless more women get involved.

45 We don't have to dig deep to see how often male politicians' rhetoric on the policies misses the mark of actually improving those policies. In a recent Missouri state legislative session, two male senators joked that women seeking abortions should go to the St. Louis Zoo.

Even in Nevada, tone-deaf misogyny still echoes in the chamber. After a nurse testified to the calls she received from
50 low-income women forced to choose between feminine hygiene products and food for their children, a male lawmaker asked if he could get his jockstrap tax free.

There's another confounding detail in the gender-representation gap: While Democrats are getting better, Republicans still lag far behind. Bringing more Republican women into the fold could play an enormous role in repairing some of the irreparable damage done by Donald Trump's candidacy when it comes to how the party talks about women.

Studies also show that although female politicians have a wide range of positions, they often are more compassionate,
55 better at working across the aisle and more willing to compromise, qualities intricately bound in successful policymaking.

An increased presence of women in elected offices will not only advance gender equity, it will subsequently help men, because women lawmakers are proving to be, across all the issues — women's or not — more productive lawmakers.

Federal judge throws out Arizona challenge to Indian Child Welfare Act

By Howard Fischer Capitol Media Services March 19, 2017 *Arizona Daily Star*

http://tucson.com/news/local/federal-judge-throws-out-arizona-challenge-to-indian-child-welfare/article_3d79011d-ee1f-5424-a407-69af312ba26c.html

- 5 PHOENIX — A judge has thrown out a challenge to a federal law that critics claim is racist because it places the desires and rights of Native American tribes over the constitutionally protected best interests of children. In an extensive ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Neil Wake said the Goldwater Institute had not proven that any children it claimed to represent were harmed because of the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act. And Wake said if there is a child who may be in danger, that claim can be handled by the state courts
- 10 that are hearing that adoption or foster-care proceeding. Goldwater Institute attorney Timothy Sandefur called that “disturbing,” saying it amounts to saying he has to wait until children are actually harmed.
- 15 “The whole point of federal civil rights law is that we can go to a federal judge and get an injunction that prevents racist discriminatory law from being applied to children,” he said. “We shouldn’t have to suffer the imposition of racist laws. We should be able to get a court to stop the government from imposing the separate and unequal standard on these children.”
- 20 The federal law at issue was adopted in 1978 amid concerns that state courts were severing parental rights and approving adoptions of Native American children who did not live on reservations. The Congressional Record shows that Congress was concerned these children were being increasingly adopted by non-Indian families.
- The Indian Child Welfare Act requires state courts, when placing for adoption Indian children who do not live on a reservation, to give preference to a member of the child’s extended family. That is followed by priority for other members of the child’s tribe and, ultimately, other Indian families.
- 25 There also are provisions that Sandefur says require active efforts to reunite a Native American child with a family, something he said “requires these children to be sent back to the parents that have abused them.” According to the Goldwater Institute, that overrules state laws requiring courts to give prime consideration to the “best interests of the child,” regardless of whether that means placement with a tribal member or someone else.
- 30 The lawsuit was filed in 2015 on behalf of two children with some Native American blood who currently are placed with non-Indian families where they have lived since they were infants. It claims the Indian Child Welfare Act gives tribes pretty much unfettered authority to decide placement of children with some native blood, “even those who have never set foot on a reservation.”
- The claim most immediately sought to protect these two children from being taken from their current homes. Other children were subsequently added to the claim.
- 35 But the lawsuit also asked Wake to certify the complaint as a class action on behalf of every Native American child not living on a reservation and currently placed with a non-Indian family, barring application of the Indian Child Welfare Act in any of their cases. In Arizona alone, the lawsuit said there were more than 1,300 Native American children in out-of-home care in 2014.
- The federal government and tribes sought to have the case thrown out. They were joined by Dawn Williams, an assistant state attorney general.
- 40 “The federal law was enacted to remediate generations of forced assimilation,” Williams wrote in her pleadings. She also said the lawsuit cites only “nebulous speculative harm” to the children at issue in this case. It was that argument that formed much of the basis for Wake’s ruling.
- 45 He said the lawsuit did not allege any facts showing that the foster-care placement of any child was delayed, or that any of the children were exposed to greater risk because of the federal law. Wake said the lawsuit sought a ruling on the law in advance of any injury.
- “Any true injury to any child or interested adult can be addressed in the state court proceeding itself, based on actual facts before the court, not on hypothetical concerns,” Wake wrote.
- 50 Because Wake threw the case out on the grounds there was no basis for a lawsuit, at least not yet, he never addressed the question of whether the federal law amounts to illegal racism. Attorneys for both the state and the Bureau of Indian Affairs never disputed that the law provides disparate treatment in state courts for children of Indian blood versus non-Indian children. But they argued that the preference in placing a child with a tribal family does not amount to illegal racial discrimination.
- 55 They said the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that classifications based on tribal membership — like those in this law — “are political, not racial classifications.” And they said such distinctions, particularly for sovereign entities like Native American tribes, are permitted.

Can a Champion of Black Lives Matter Become Mayor of St. Louis?

Tishaura Jones is running to “uproot racism” just a few miles from the streets where Michael Brown was murdered. Jimmy Tobias March 4, 2017 *The Nation*

<https://www.thenation.com/article/can-a-champion-of-black-lives-matter-become-mayor-of-st-louis/>

- 5 Most political candidates would do just about anything to win the endorsement of their largest hometown newspaper, but Tishaura O. Jones knows that the old rules are rigged—and ripe for revision. The 44-year-old city treasurer, Black Lives Matter advocate, and labor-backed progressive is running to be the next mayor of St. Louis. Last month, she declined to sit down for a standard candidate interview with the editorial board of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Instead, in a stroke of gutsy defiance, she wrote a scaring open
- 10 letter to the newspaper’s leadership in which she criticized its coverage of poverty and racism in the city and laid out her own bold political platform.
- “I had a Fannie Lou Hamer moment,” Jones says, referring to the iconic Southern civil-rights activist. “I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.”
- Specifically, as her letter lays out, she was sick and tired of the way the *Post-Dispatch* leadership seemed to
- 15 blame poor and struggling residents for St. Louis’s woes, attributing its problems to racially coded issues like “blight” and “graffiti.” She was sick and tired of the paper’s “thinly veiled racism and preference for the status quo past.” She wanted no part of it.
- “What is killing our city is poverty...,” she wrote. “What is killing our region is a systemic racism that pervades almost every public and private institution, including your newspaper, and makes it nearly impossible for either
- 20 North St. Louis or the parts of South St. Louis where African Americans live to get better or safer or healthier or better-educated.”
- Jones believes she can begin to change all that. And she detailed a plan to do so in her unsparing letter, which quickly went viral and helped infuse her candidacy with a last-minute boost of money and populist energy. As she enters the final days of her primary run, she hopes that energy will be enough to propel “the people’s
- 25 candidate,” as she calls herself, one crucial step closer to the city’s highest office.
- Jones’s campaign, set against the backdrop of the murder of Michael Brown in nearby Ferguson, is further evidence that the movements against mass incarceration, police brutality, and entrenched racism are holding the line at the local level. Should she win, her success would offer reassurance that the progressive flame can still burn hot in City Hall, despite the reactionary white-supremacist agenda ascendant at the White House.
- 30 Indeed, most grassroots progressive groups in St. Louis back Jones’s candidacy, says Kennard Williams, a community organizer with the nonprofit Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment, or MORE, which is currently leading a campaign against mass incarceration, called Decarcerate STL, in the city.
- Jones’s record, her ideas and her rhetoric, he says, have earned her endorsements from organizations like MORE, the SEIU Missouri State Council, the St. Louis Action Council, and the Coalition of Black Trade
- 35 Unionists, as well as dozens of Black Lives Matter, civil-rights, and community activists in the city. Mobilize Missouri, a statewide coalition of grassroots activists that emerged out of the Bernie Sanders campaign, endorsed her in mid-February.
- “People understand that she is the best option,” Williams adds. “She is the only candidate to come out and trash on our criminal-justice system, to acknowledge there is a problem with this system and that we can’t keep
- 40 operating it this way.”
- In her letter to the *Post-Dispatch*, for instance, Jones pledged to “look at every issue through a racial equity lens” and to advocate for people who have been “disenfranchised, red-lined and flat-out ignored for way too long.”
- One sees this approach in her past work. During her innovative tenure as city treasurer, a normally staid political office, she launched a program to open college savings accounts for every kindergartner in St. Louis and seed
- 45 each account with \$50 drawn from parking fees. She also created an Office of Financial Empowerment, which provides free financial education and credit-counseling services.
- As mayor, Jones says she would expand such programs. Her agenda, though, goes far beyond that.
- She intends, for instance, to close once and for all the city’s notorious Workhouse, a jail that some activists have likened to a debtors’ prison. In her open letter, Jones described the facility as a “rat hole.” If she succeeds in
- 50 shuttering it, she says she will funnel the budget savings to reentry programs, mental-health services, and substance-abuse centers.
- “We have advocated shutting down the Workhouse for a couple years now,” says Williams, who helps spearhead MORE’s campaign against mass incarceration. “Her plan falls perfectly in line with what we are trying to do.”
- Jones supports the placement of social workers in the city’s police department, the establishment of a \$15
- 55 minimum wage, and the creation of a Tenants Bill of Rights to help protect poor and working-class renters from predatory landlords. She plans to eliminate the St. Louis cash-bail system too.
- “Cash bail has a domino effect on low income families,” she says. “If someone is in jail because they can’t afford to pay a cash bail, then they may lose their jobs, and from there it becomes a downward spiral.” (...)

Donald Trump's Un-American Refugee Policy

By DAVID MILIBAND JAN. 27, 2017 Op-Ed Contributor *The New York Times*

President Trump's executive order suspending the entire resettlement program for 120 days and banning indefinitely the arrival of Syrian refugees is a repudiation of fundamental American values, an abandonment of the United States' role as a humanitarian leader and, far from protecting the country from extremism, a propaganda gift to those who would plot harm to America.

The order also cuts the number of refugees scheduled for resettlement in the United States in the fiscal year 2017 from a planned total of about 110,000 to just 50,000. Founded on the myth that there is no proper security screening for refugees, the order thus thrusts into limbo an estimated 60,000 vulnerable refugees, most of whom have already been vetted and cleared for resettlement here. The new policy urgently needs rethinking.

Refugees coming to the United States are fleeing the same violent extremism that this country and its allies are fighting in the Middle East and elsewhere. Based on recent data, a majority of those selected for resettlement in America are women and children. Since the start of the war, millions of Syrians have fled not just the military of President Bashar al-Assad but also the forces of Russia, Iranian militias and the Islamic State.

There are also thousands of Afghans and Iraqis whose lives are at risk because of assistance they offered American troops stationed in their countries. Of all the refugees that my organization, the International Rescue Committee, would be helping to resettle this year, this group, the Special Immigrant Visa population, makes up a fourth.

Giving haven for those persecuted for their politics is a core American value. The more than 62,000 Cubans resettled by the committee since 1960 would find this executive order's denial of refugee needs not just insulting, but bizarre.

The order also suggests that the resettlement program should make persecuted religious minorities a higher priority, implying that they have been neglected in the past. This is incorrect; existing law already places strong emphasis on religious persecution among the criteria for resettlement. For example, most of the refugees from Iran — a Muslim-majority country — who are resettled by my organization are not Muslim.

Compared with other types of immigrants, refugees are the most thoroughly vetted group to enter the United States. The resettlement process can take up to 36 months and involves screenings by the Department of Homeland Security, the F.B.I., the Department of Defense, the State Department and the National Counterterrorism Center and United States intelligence community. According to the Cato Institute, the chances that a citizen here will be killed by a refugee are one in 3.64 billion a year; an American is far more likely to be killed by lightning than by a terrorist attack carried out by a refugee.

The United States can be proud of its wide network of refugee champions, for good reason: Refugee resettlement is an American success story. And this is true not just on the coasts but across the country. In the 29 cities where the Rescue Committee has resettlement offices, elected officials like the mayor of Boise, Idaho, and the governor of Utah, along with police officers, school principals, faith leaders and small-business owners, actively welcome refugees. They do so out of a sense of a moral obligation, of course, but also because they have witnessed the myriad ways refugees have enriched their communities over the years.

To take one example, over the course of a decade, refugees created at least 38 new businesses in the Cleveland area alone. In turn, these businesses created an additional 175 jobs, and in 2012 provided a \$12 million stimulus to the local economy.

There is a further concern raised by the president's refugee ban. When the United States abjures its responsibility to the world's most vulnerable people, it forgoes its moral authority to call upon the countries of Europe, as well as poorer nations like Lebanon, Turkey, Kenya and Pakistan, which host over five million refugees among them, to provide such shelter.

Historically, the United States has welcomed the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free," and this has helped cement America's leadership of the international order. But why should others continue to bear their heavy burdens when the United States won't? Support for refugees is not charity; it is a contribution to the global stability on which all nations depend — and this is especially important at a time when the world faces a heightened threat of terrorism.

Terrorists are strategic in their work and their messaging. The civilized world must be equally strategic in its response. Where extremists seek to foster a clash of civilizations, democratic governments should not play into their hands.

That is what a ban on specific nationalities does. It is not right, it is not needed and it is not smart. (...)

The world looks to America for enlightened leadership. Its citizens seek the same from their government. Refugee policy is a telling test for every nation. The United States passed that test for so many years, so it is a tragedy for it now to fail when its commitment is needed more than ever.

David Miliband (@DMiliband), a former British foreign secretary, is the president and chief executive of the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian aid organization.

The United Kingdom
SLIDING TOWARDS SCOXIT

The decision to leave the EU appears to strengthen the case for Scottish independence. In fact, it weakens it. The Economist, leader, February 18th, 2017

1- LITTLE more than half a year after the vote to leave the European Union, there is talk of another referendum in Britain. This time the people who could be offered the chance to “take back control” are the Scots. They voted against independence by a clear margin less than three years ago. But Brexit, which they also opposed, has put the issue back on the table. Scotland’s nationalist government has drafted a bill for another independence vote. Polls suggest that it could have a shot at success.

No wonder: the nationalists’ argument that Scotland is a different country has never looked more convincing. Regarding Brexit, the defining issue of the times, 62% of Scots voted to Remain but will be dragged out anyway by the English. The dominant parties in Westminster, the Tories and Labour, have a grand total of two of Scotland’s 59 MPs. And many of the arguments made in favour of the union in 2014 have evaporated. Scots were told that staying with Britain was their only way to remain in the EU, since independence would require them to reapply and face opposition from Spain, which wants to discourage its own Catalan separatists. Instead, being part of Britain has proved a one-way ticket out of Europe. The strong British economy that they were urged to remain part of is forecast to slow. And rousing talk about the union—the “precious, precious bond” that Theresa May evoked in her maiden speech as prime minister—rings hollow, given the casualness with which Scottish concerns have been cast aside.

Yet if Brexit was a political earthquake, Scotland has suffered a less-noticed economic earthquake, too. At the time of the independence referendum, Scotland was growing at a similar rate to the rest of Britain. Since then it has been on a different track. In two of the past five quarters it has failed to grow at all. The main reason is its reliance on fossil fuels and finance, which are doing badly. In 2014 a barrel of Brent crude cost \$110, leading the nationalist government to forecast that an independent Scotland would enjoy tax revenues from energy of £8.3bn (\$12.5bn) in 2015-16. Oil’s subsequent crash (it is now \$55) meant the actual figure was 1% of that forecast. And the black gold is running out: the original Brent rig will be dismantled this summer. Finance, which along with oil and gas has generated exports equivalent to up to a third of Scotland’s GDP in recent years, is also suffering. Since September 2014 Scotland has lost a tenth of its financial jobs. (London gained some.)
15 - Last year average pay in the industry fell by 5%.

For a country of 5m people that depends on two sputtering industries, to go it alone would be a gamble. Yet Scots may conclude that remaining in the Brexit-bound union would be riskier still. They would be wrong. For although Mrs May’s willingness to leave the single market and customs union is likely to be bad for Britain, it also makes independence more complicated. If the EU were prepared to readmit it, Scotland would face a harder border with England. Nationalists say they could import whatever arrangement is made in Ireland, where a similar problem exists. But there may be no such neat solution. And rejoining the EU’s single market at the cost of leaving Britain’s would make no sense: Scotland exports four times as much to the rest of Britain as it does to the EU.

Scotland the brave

This uncomfortable truth may be lost in the heat of another independence campaign. The ruling Scottish National Party has a knack for combining power with protest, claiming credit for Scotland’s successes while pinning blame for its failures on Westminster. As economic conditions in Scotland decline, the blame will fall on Brexit and Tory austerity. And whereas independence was once a frightening unknown, it now looks like a chance to turn back the clock to the safe old days of EU membership. When English ministers warn about the risks of secession, their own Brexit lines will be thrown back at them: Scots will be urged to seize control from distant politicians they never elected; those pointing out the costs will be branded members of “project fear”; the trashing by Brexiters of institutions from the Treasury to the Bank of England will mean that impartial warnings can be dismissed as biased or incompetent.

Many of those Scots who voted to stay in the union in 2014 did so for clear economic reasons. Britain’s exit from the EU muddies that case. The alarming result is that Brexit has made Scottish independence more harmful—and more likely.

American Thinker, September 11, 2016

Soldiers Speak Out on 9/11: 'I Never Handed Out a Bouquet of Flowers during Combat'

By Elise Cooper

It has been fifteen years since this country was brutally attacked on 9/11, where 3,000 Americans lost their lives as planes flew into buildings. People rushed into service to protect and defend America. This horrific tragedy brought out the best in people, where they worked together to help others and to share in the proudness that the flag and National Anthem represent. American Thinker interviewed two Americans who decided to serve in the military following the attack on 9/11.

In Nicholas Irving's latest book, *Way of the Reaper*, he talks about coming from a military family. When asked his feelings about 9/11, he noted how he raced home from school, knowing then that he wanted to defend his country. "I remember wanting revenge to do harm against those who did harm to innocent people. I even asked my dad to drive up to New York so we could help search for people."

After joining the Ranger unit, Irving set a record for enemy kills on a single mission, killing 33 over a four-month period. Being the first black American to serve as a sniper in his Ranger battalion unit, he has something to say about the current issues. "With all the stuff going on in America today, it would be nice if everyone thought as those in my unit, being colorblind. We all called each other brothers and sisters and would die for each other, no matter the race, religion, ethnicity, and gender."

Irving compared the current period in America to the environment after 9/11. "I was so impressed with the camaraderie and unity we all had as Americans after September 11. I remember how my parents instilled in me respect for the flag. Everyone supported each other and the troops. But then, as the years passed, people forgot about how they felt as they saw the planes fly into the buildings and people dying. People also forgot about those in the military who sacrificed to keep everyone safe at home. I consider it extremely distasteful for [49ers player Colin] Kaepernick to sit during the National Anthem, especially since some of my fellow soldiers died so he could have that right." (...)

When asked if he thinks American attitudes have changed since September 11, 2001, Irving responded, "After Obama got elected, everything changed. Now we were told the enemy has to see us effectively before we engage. I had to go through a process before shooting a guy: shine a light on them, talk to them in their native tongue, and shine a red dot on them. This is not the way snipers operate. We should never announce our presence, like a thief in the night."

He went on to say, "We used to strike fear in the enemy. War is hell, and we should get over the political correctness. Even though it is way more effective and takes fewer bullets, now we cannot use hollow-point bullets to shoot someone. Dead is dead, whether someone is choked to death in hand-to-hand combat, shot from a drone, or killed with certain bullets. I never handed out a bouquet of flowers during combat."

Amber Smith also recounts in her book, *Danger Close*, how she grew up in a military family. She is fourth-generation military. She remembers being awoken by her college roommate after the first plane hit the World Trade Center. While on the phone with her mother, she watched the second plane hit, feeling disbelief and anger. She told American Thinker, "It woke everything up for me, including my interest in aviation and the need for a military obligation. September 11th had an effect on the future of my life and the path I chose. My patriotism was awakened." She became an Army Kiowa helicopter pilot who engaged in high-intensity warfare.

Interestingly, she feels that as the years have passed since 9/11, there has been a disconnect between those who have served and are currently in the military and American civilians. Look no farther than Colin Kaepernick's disrespect for his country as he sits while the National Anthem is played. Smith states in her book, "Most people I encountered seemed oblivious to what was happening elsewhere in the world. It seemed like no one knew there was a war going on – or worse, that they didn't care."

Those serving see themselves as the shields that protect Americans and are the ones who sought revenge. She wants people to understand: "Americans are safe here because there are those of us fighting overseas. People victimize the enemy and seem to forget about the atrocities committed by the terrorists. I have never felt remorse or anguish in killing the enemy. After 9/11, I saw it as an us or them. The bad guys were trying to kill us, and I do not feel bad about protecting my fellow citizens."

These are only two representatives of those who have chosen to put their lives on the line to protect Americans. It is unfortunate that today the words "we should never forget" have to be uttered about September 11. Both Irving and Smith and all those who have served or are serving are fighting for what America stands for.

VOTE EARLY, VOTE OFTEN

Why the voting age should be lowered to 16

The Economist, leader, February 4th, 2017

- 1 - How young is too young? Rich democracies give different answers, depending on the context: in New Jersey you can buy alcohol at 21 and cigarettes at 19, join the army at 17, have sex at 16 and be tried in court as an adult at 14. Such thresholds vary wildly from place to place. Belgian youngsters can get sozzled legally at 16. But on one thing most agree: only when you have turned 18 can you vote. When campaigners suggest lowering the voting age, the riposte is that 16- and 17-year-olds are too immature. This misses the real danger: that growing numbers of young people may not vote at all.

The trend across the West is disturbing. Turnout of American voters under 25 at presidential elections fell from 50% in 1972 to 38% in 2012; among over-65s it rose from 64% to 70% (data for the 2016 election are not yet available). For congressional races, the under-25 vote was a dire 17% in 2014. A similar pattern is repeated

- 10 - across the rich world.

Young people's disenchantment with the ballot box matters because voting is a habit: those who do not take to it young may never start. That could lead to ever-lower participation rates in decades to come, draining the legitimacy of governments in a vicious spiral in which poor turnout feeds scepticism towards democracy, and vice versa.

- 15 - The disillusionment has many causes. The young tend to see voting as a choice rather than a duty (or, indeed, a privilege). The politically active tend to campaign on single issues rather than for a particular party. Politicians increasingly woo older voters—not only because they are more likely to vote but also because they make up a growing share of the electorate. Many young people see elections stacked against them. It is no surprise, then, that many of them turn away from voting.

- 20 - Some countries make voting compulsory, which increases turnout rates. But that does not deal with the underlying disillusionment. Governments need to find ways to rekindle the passion, rather than continue to ignore its absence. A good step would be to lower the voting age to 16, ensuring that new voters get off to the best possible start.

This would be no arbitrary change. The usual threshold of 18 means that young people's first chance to vote

- 25 - often coincides with finishing compulsory education and leaving home. Away from their parents, they have no established voters to emulate and little connection to their new communities. As they move around, they may remain off the electoral roll. Sixteen-year-olds, by contrast, can easily be added to it and introduced to civic life at home and school. They can pick up the voting habit by accompanying their parents to polling stations. In Scotland, where 16- and 17-year-olds were eligible to vote in the independence referendum in 2014, an
- 30 - impressive three-quarters of those who registered turned out on the day, compared with 54% of 18- to 24-year-olds. In 2007 Austria became the only rich country where 16-year-olds could vote in all elections.

Encouragingly, turnout rates for under-18s are markedly higher than for 19- to 25-year-olds.

Merely lowering the voting age is not enough, however. Youth participation in Scotland might have been still higher if more schools had helped register pupils. Governments also need to work harder at keeping electoral

- 35 - rolls current. Some are experimenting with automatic updates whenever a citizen notifies a public body of a change of address. Civics lessons can be improved. Courses that promote open debate and give pupils a vote in aspects of their school lives are more likely to boost political commitment later in life than those that present dry facts about the mechanics of government.

Standing up to gerontocracy

- 40 - A lower voting age would strengthen the voice of the young and signal that their opinions matter. It is they, after all, who will bear the brunt of climate change and service the debt that paid for benefits, such as pensions and health care, of today's elderly. Voting at 16 would make it easier to initiate new citizens in civic life. Above all, it would help guarantee the supply of young voters needed to preserve the vitality of democracy. Catch them early, and they will grow into better citizens.

The Federalist, April 25, 2017

New Orleans Is Wrong to Remove Its Confederate Monuments, by John Daniel Davidson

Tearing Down Statues Is Always About Politics And Power

The push to remove Confederate statues and monuments has gained traction in the wake of the racially motivated Charleston church shooting in 2015 that left nine African Americans dead. South Carolina's legislature and then-Gov. Nikki Haley made the wise and prudent decision to remove the Confederate flag from the statehouse grounds in Columbia, where it had been flying on a Confederate war memorial since 2000. Before that, it had flown atop the capitol dome beginning in 1961, in defiance of the civil rights movement.

But it didn't end there. Almost immediately, colleges and municipal governments across the South began efforts to remove Confederate memorials, rename schools and public spaces bearing the names of Confederate leaders, and in some cases even exhume the remains of Confederate dead. Although this trend is relatively recent, the impulse to destroy monuments is very old. In ancient Rome, it was called *damnatio memoriae*, the "condemnation of memory," and its purpose was overtly political. The point was to dishonor traitors and deposed emperors by purging them from public memory. Rome would seize their property, remove their name from public monuments, and destroy or re-work their statues.

Today, the practice has been revived, albeit under the pretext of inclusion and tolerance. The University of Texas at Austin removed a statue of Jefferson Davis from the school's historic mall in August 2015. It now resides at UT's Briscoe Center for American History. Last fall, Texas State University in San Marcos quietly removed a statue of Jefferson Davis and sent it seven miles south of town, to private land donated to the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Similar efforts by cities have cropped up in Virginia, Kentucky, South Carolina, and elsewhere.

Not all of them have been successful. In August 2015, the Memphis City Council voted to remove a statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest, along with the remains of Forrest and his wife, from a park near downtown Memphis. But the Tennessee Historical Commission stepped in, citing a state law passed in 2013 that prevents cities and counties from relocating, removing, or renaming war memorials on public property. A handful of states have such laws on the books, and if the past few years are any indication, they're the only thing preventing the destruction or removal of Confederate memorials in dozens of southern cities.

This Is Not About Honoring Confederate Principles

Plenty of Americans would like nothing more than to see them go. They ask, why shouldn't we get rid of these monuments? After all, the Confederacy was a rebellion of slave states that cost the lives of some 620,000 Americans and left the country shattered. If it was right to remove the Confederate flag from the statehouse in South Carolina, why not the statues and obelisks?

There is good reason to leave the monuments where they stand, but let's be clear. The reason for keeping them has nothing to do with honoring the *cause* of the Confederacy or the *memory* of slavery. Even though many of them were erected for that purpose in the decades spanning the 1870s to the 1930s, that should not be our purpose for keeping them now.

The case for keeping our Confederate monuments has everything to do with preserving our history, the better to understand it. The history of the Civil War and the Confederacy is complicated and, even to this day, painful for some Americans. But a standing monument isn't the same as a flag flying in a place of honor. Monuments become part of our landscape down through the decades, and their physical presence testifies to the past in a way that museums cannot.

This is especially true of our Civil War monuments. Something as central to American history as the war between North and South should impose on us and demand our attention—not so that we can honor the principles of the Confederacy, but so we can understand and remember who we were and all we suffered to survive the Civil War and remain one nation. Progressives claim a special prerogative to purge our public spaces of disfavored symbols and monuments, whether of the Confederacy or other historical figures whose views are now offensive by contemporary standards. It's not enough, they say, to add plaques that give greater historical context or add Unionist monuments alongside Confederate ones. That should tell you something.

The drive to erase the Confederacy from our public squares isn't really about unity or tolerance. It's about power and politics. Censoring historical symbols is after all the cousin of censoring speech and inquiry. Hence the spectacle of Mayor Landrieu explaining how the Confederacy was "on the wrong side of history," even as he rips up historical monuments in the name of progress. At a time when the divisions in our country are deepening, and Americans are sorting themselves into increasingly hostile factions, we could do worse than to gaze on Confederate statues, contemplate their reasons for fighting, and consider what it took to put the country back together.

The Nation, December 9, 2016

Inspired by Standing Rock, West Texans Take Action to Fight Another Pipeline, by Sasha von Oldershausen

ALPINE, TEXAS—In a tiny and remote West Texas town, pipeline protesters are following in the footsteps of those at Standing Rock. Two residents of the 6,000-person city of Alpine were arrested early Tuesday morning on grounds of trespassing after they chained themselves to the entrance gates of a pipeline-construction site owned and operated by Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), the Dallas-based energy company responsible for the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Dozens more stood by, holding electric tea lights and signs denouncing the energy company. Inspired by the fight against the DAPL near the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, the group was protesting a different ETP pipeline project. The Trans-Pecos Pipeline will cut through the spare and pristine Big Bend region of Texas to the border of Mexico, transporting natural gas into Mexico's interior.

This was the latest in a more-than-two-year battle to halt the pipeline's construction, during which its opponents have fought vigilantly, albeit through more institutionalized avenues. Since news of the pipeline began to spread in the spring of 2015, residents concerned about the environmental impact of the pipeline and its infringement on private land have collected signatures and rallied the support of local governance. They sat through condemnation hearings, and even filed suit against the pipeline company. They filed more than 600 comments with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the agency responsible for regulating the small segment of pipeline that would stretch beneath the Rio Grande, and requested that the entire length of the pipeline be subject to environmental review. Their request was denied in May of this year, and ETP continued construction at full steam.

Many feel their voices have fallen on deaf ears. Now, tired and disillusioned after years of protesting, and with the pipeline very near completion, opponents of the Trans-Pecos Pipeline are trying direct action for the first time. "Our community has tried protesting in all the other acceptable ways," said Lori Glover, a representative of the Big Bend Defense Coalition who was one of the two arrested Tuesday. "This is the last resort."

This week's victory at Standing Rock, in which the Army Corps of Engineers announced it would not permit the pipeline to be drilled under the Missouri River, underscored the power of direct action. Indigenous organizers and, eventually, thousands of supporters camped on the banks of the Cannonball River to protect their ancestral lands and water source. Their united action, even in the face of police violence, proved that last resorts can work. "[Standing Rock] in North Dakota has really reinvigorated the whole movement," said Trans-Pecos Pipeline opponent David Keller, an archeologist who earlier this year watched as ETP pummeled through an ancient Native American site at Trap Spring, whose State Archeological Landmark status was pending at the time.

In fact, the events at Standing Rock have inspired the opposition to rethink their approach entirely. At a recent meeting, during which the opposition clandestinely discussed plans for Tuesday's action, they talked about shifting the verbiage of their protest to more closely resemble that of the protest in North Dakota. "It's not protesting—it's protecting," said pipeline opponent Virginia Brotherton. "That's what they are using and I agree that we need to use the same verbiage." The group also discussed making water the focus of their protest to echo the "water is life" motto of the Standing Rock movement. After all, they said, the Trans-Pecos Pipeline would cross beneath the Rio Grande, as well as a handful of regional watersheds.

But some among them worry that folding their fight into the movement at Standing Rock might undermine other significant issues highlighted by that fight—namely, the centuries-long mistreatment of indigenous tribal communities in the United States. "This is about indigenous people's issues, and their horrific treatment for centuries," said pipeline opponent Coyne Gibson. "I want to be respectful of their accomplishments." Others see it as a collective fight. "We're not piggybacking," Glover said. "This is one big fight that we have before us and it's scary but it's also a wonderful opportunity for us because this is not just about our little space here or their space up in North Dakota. This is about how our water is going to be protected all over America."

Indeed, theirs is just one regional pipeline fight among dozens like it that are taking place across the nation, with local residents embattled in near-identical fights. (...)

As protesters stood in the early morning darkness beneath a sky replete with stars—one of the biggest draws to the region are its dark skies, which opponents say could be affected by the pipeline infrastructure—they began to sing the popular Woody Guthrie song, "This Land Is Your Land," but they changed a few of its verses. "From North Dakota to the Big Bend region," they sang, as local law-enforcement officers took bolt cutters to the bike lock that chained Glover to the entrance gate. "From the Missouri River to the Rio Grande waters," they continued, as she was helped up and escorted into the sheriff's vehicle. "This land was made for you and me."

PARLIAMENT HAS DIMINISHED ITSELF AT THIS TURNING POINT IN OUR HISTORY

Cowed and fearful MPs have sanctioned a Brexit strategy which most of them think will end in calamity.

Andrew Rawnsley, *The Guardian*, 12 February 2017

4 - Sir David Attenborough, eat your heart out. You may travel to the most exotic biosystems on our planet, but you will be unlikely to glimpse such surreal couplings as we have just witnessed in the voting lobbies of the House of Commons. There was Jeremy Corbyn putting his name to the legislation of Theresa May. There was John McDonnell fusing with Boris Johnson. Most miraculous to behold, Diane Abbott, mercifully recovered from the
5 - headache that was so life-threatening that it prevented her from participating in earlier proceedings, marched in step with Michael Gove. Voting together and voting for a very hard form of Brexit. Which meant that it wasn't even close. The Brexit Bill smashed through the Commons unamended and by 494 votes to 122, a crushing government majority of 372.

This is remarkable at several levels. For all the chatter about obeying the will of the people, how MPs voted was
10 - wildly unrepresentative of what the country did last summer. Had the narrowness of the 52/48 referendum result been replicated in parliament, the government's majority would have been a much more modest 26. It was also dramatically out of sync with the actual beliefs of most MPs, since three quarters of them did not want to leave the EU. Not only did they sign off on Mrs May's plan to initiate divorce proceedings next month, they did so having been forewarned by the prime minister that she will pursue a very stark and high-risk version of
15 - Brexit.

Britain is departing the single market and most likely quitting the customs union as well. She had even told them in advance that she is prepared to crash out of the EU with no deal at all. That this could be in the range of potential outcomes would have horrified most MPs six months ago. It still does so. Yet they waved it through with the salute of a stonking majority. Finally, and very significantly, parliament didn't even claim for itself any
20 - meaningful input when Mrs May enters the negotiating chamber with the EU.

This self-emasculatation by MPs at such a momentous juncture in our history requires examination. We need to step back and ask how we got from June to here, how we travelled to the point where a thumping majority of parliamentarians, including so many Labour MPs, gave a mandate to the prime minister to pursue a negotiation strategy in which most of them don't believe and which the majority think will end with calamity for Britain. If
25 - it all goes horribly wrong, this is a question that is going to preoccupy historians and blight the reputations of all but the minority who tried to stand in the way of the juggernaut.

This was not an outcome written in the stars or fated by the gods. It was not even ordained by the 52% of voters who tipped the referendum result to Out. By narrowly voting to leave the EU, the country answered one question, but in doing so it raised a host of other questions about the precise shape that Brexit should take. This
30 - was up for grabs. The hard Brexiters understood that instantly. They didn't stop campaigning when the referendum result came in. They continued agitating and with a burning ferocity that was amplified by the Brexit press at its most megaphonic. They did so to ensure that they could impose their interpretation of what the referendum meant.

Softer versions of Brexit were framed as a "sell out" and a "betrayal". Any suggestion that parliament had a right
35 - to place conditions on how the government approached the negotiations were blackened as "wrecking tactics" to thwart "the will of the people". While the hard Brexiters were busy stretching the meaning of the referendum to fit their desired outcome, the stunned Remainers were still winded from their defeat. Slowly, those who wanted to preserve a close relationship with our neighbours began to get their act together. Campaign groups were organised. Learned papers were written. Alternatives to hard Brexit were mooted. But they lacked the
40 - organisation, the energy and the unity of their rivals. They were badly handicapped because there never was a coalescence around one agreed version of soft Brexit to compete with the hard-core model. [...]

Parliament will not be entirely voiceless over the next two years. MPs will retain their inalienable rights to comment and question, to carp and moan, to quibble and quarrel. But they have left themselves essentially powerless to influence the outcome of the most important negotiation in Britain's postwar history. MPs will be
45 - allowed to yap. As the juggernaut crashes on.

The Boston Globe, February 22, 2017

OPINION – Checks and balances can slow Trump, by Alan M. Dershowitz

When President Trump was in high school, he, like the rest of us, learned about our system of checks and balances. He learned that we have three coequal branches of government: the executive, which is the presidency; the legislative, which consists of the Senate and House of Representatives; and the judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, with the numerous federal appellate and trial judges. Under our theory of separation of powers, each branch, which is coequal in status, is supposed to check the other.

When Alexis de Tocqueville came to America early in our history, he was looking for where sovereignty lay in the new Republic. He was used to the European system under which the king or parliament was sovereign. Here in America, he could not find a single sovereign; instead he discovered the process of sovereignty, entailing our complex system of checks and balances, with the ultimate sovereignty residing in the voters (of which there were very few back then). That is what we learned in high school civics. But after only a month in office, Trump has learned an important lesson that does not get taught in school — or even in many colleges and universities: Our system of checks and balances extends well beyond the three formal branches of government. It is far more complex and nuanced than we were taught.

Let me catalogue some of the many institutions that now serve as checks and balances, especially on the president. Without a doubt our president is the single most important and powerful player in our government. There is no leader in the free world — no prime minister, no president, no chancellor, no king — who has anywhere close to the power that our president can wield through executive orders, vetoes, military actions, and more. But here are some of the institutions — both formal and informal — that serve as realistic checks on even this enormous power.

We saw in the lawsuits filed by the states of Washington and Minnesota against the president's executive order on immigration that the states can serve as a check on the power of the president. This would have made Thomas Jefferson happy and Alexander Hamilton sad, but it is a new reality.

We have also seen that, in our enormous bureaucracy, holdovers from the prior administration can serve as a check on the new administration, as evidenced by the decision of Acting Attorney General Sally Yates to refuse to defend the president's immigration order. Holdovers are almost certainly responsible for some of the damaging leaks that have plagued the new administration. They can slow down presidential actions, at least for a while. And speaking of leaks, both the FBI and the CIA, although formally part of the executive branch, can serve as important checks on the White House by selectively leaking damaging intelligence information. Whistle-blowers also serve to check by exposing secrets. Before he became president, Trump praised WikiLeaks for disclosing information that was damaging to Hillary Clinton. Now, as president, he damns these "illegal" leakers.

Intelligence agencies of foreign countries can also serve as checks on our president by threatening and/or disclosing damaging material. One of the reasons given for the firing of General Michael Flynn was the fear of blackmail by Russia. Then there are the conflicts within the White House itself — internecine palace warfare — that result in some members of the administration checking other members of the administration, both within the White House and by selective leaks to the media.

The media — both traditional and social — serve as important checks. Those who live by tweets can be checked by tweets. Churches and religious leaders, in our most religious of Western nations, can check the excesses of presidential power by invoking eternal values. The values can promote both liberal and conservative ideologies. The academy, through research, teaching, and advocacy, can serve primarily as a left-wing check on the right-wing tendencies of an administration. There are other institutions as well — ranging from family, to friends, to businesses — that can check and balance a president.

Trump is learning the hard lesson that in the world we now inhabit there are no perfect secrets. Everyone is listening to and recording everyone else, as General Flynn painfully learned. And he or she who has the recording holds the power to extort or coerce and check. The question is, is this a good or bad thing? It is both. It is good because it sends a powerful message to the most powerful person in the world that even he is subject to multiple checks and balances, that he cannot act with impunity, and that he will be held accountable for his actions, either in the court of public opinion or perhaps in the court of law. It is bad because some of these checking institutions are undemocratic and need to be checked themselves.

So welcome to the new world of multiple checks and balances. Like democracy itself, it is imperfect but better than its alternatives.

Alan M. Dershowitz is professor emeritus of law at Harvard University and author of "Taking the Stand: My Life in the Law" and "Electile Dysfunction: A Guide for Unaroused Voters."

EU BACKING FOR IRISH UNITY AFTER BREXIT IS A BIG DEAL – BUT IT’S NOT A SOLUTION

Europe doesn't mess with national borders, but Brexit is pushing the question of unity faster than we are prepared for, on either side of the border.

Fintan O'Toole, *The Guardian*, May 4th, 2017

- 1- Just before European Union leaders agreed their guidelines for the Brexit negotiations last week, the president of the EU council, Donald Tusk, said: "It is clear that progress on people, money and Ireland must come first." It was rather startling to find Irish concerns up there on the list of fundamental priorities, with the rights of EU citizens in Britain and with the settling up of the final bill. And when the guidelines were agreed, it was clear that this was
- 1- more than rhetoric. EU governments have essentially committed themselves to allowing Northern Ireland to rejoin the EU if Ireland is united.

This is a very big deal. It suggests at one level that Brexit really does mean Brexit – in the very literal sense that the entity that is exiting is Great Britain and not the United Kingdom. There has been a habit of using Britain and the UK as synonymous terms, but of course they are not. The very name of the state – the United Kingdom of Great

- o- Britain and Northern Ireland – acknowledges a distinction.

Now, suddenly, the difference is stark. The EU has just done what the Brexiteers steadfastly refused to do – acknowledge that Northern Ireland is not just another British region. The 27 remaining member states have signed up to treat Northern Ireland as a place of its own.

- 1- Britain's departure from the EU is (in principle) to be final; Northern Ireland's is now contingent. Britain is getting
- 1- a divorce; Northern Ireland is being offered a trial separation. For Britain, there is a one-way ticket; for Northern Ireland, there is an automatic right of return. The implicit offer is two unions for the price of one: unite Ireland and you reunite with Europe.

We should not downplay the significance of this. Even with the glaring exception of German unity, the EU is not inclined to mess with existing national borders. Spain, in particular, can't be comfortable with conceding that

- o- regions within existing states might be able to forge their own future relationships with the EU.

But in a diplomatic coup for the Irish government, these hesitations have been overcome.

- 1- The EU has just done something it has never done before: it has offered an incentive to part of an existing European state to join another state. The language may be quiet but the message is pretty loud. People in Northern Ireland have just been told that if Brexit is a disaster for them (which it may well be), they can vote to rejoin. They
- 1- will be let back in without conditions or negotiations. Nobody else in the UK has this offer of satisfaction with *Brexit or your EU passport back. Perhaps for the first time in its troubled history, being from Northern Ireland is a distinct advantage.*

We have to be careful about this, however. What's just happened is that Brexit has pushed the question of a united Ireland further and faster than the vast majority of Irish people, nationalist as well as unionist, really want to go.

- o- Ireland and Europe have been forced into a kind of time travel – we have to delve into a future for which no one is prepared.

- 1- Everyone – even Sinn Féin – knows that it is foolish to talk about a united Ireland without talking about a united Northern Ireland first. Forcing a million unionists into a new Irish state without their consent is in nobody's interest. And it can't be assumed that even a bad Brexit will suddenly make unionists change their minds about
- 1- wanting to stay in the UK: political and religious identity often trump economic self-interest.

As for nationalist Ireland, the thing to understand is that there is a vast difference between wanting something in principle and wanting it now. The rubric that should be attached to the aspiration to a united Ireland is St Augustine's prayer: "Lord, make me pure – but not yet." Polls have consistently shown support for a united Ireland – but not yet. When asked in November 2015, if they would like to see a united island in their lifetime, 66%

- o- of respondents in the republic answered yes. But, asked if they would like the island to be unified in the short to medium term, that figure was cut in half. And in the same RTE/BBC poll, just 27% of those surveyed from a Catholic background in Northern Ireland said they wanted a united Ireland in the short-to-medium term.

Striking as it is, therefore, the EU's implicit support for the possibility of Irish unity should not suck attention away from some much more important words in its negotiating guidelines: "in view of the unique circumstances on the

- 1- island of Ireland, flexible and imaginative solutions will be required".

Giving Northern Ireland the right to opt back into the EU through a united Ireland is a good thing. But long before we get to that possibility, there are the negotiations themselves. They can't be conducted on the vague assumption that a united Ireland will solve the horrendous political, economic and social dilemmas that Brexit creates for the island of Ireland. [...]

The National Review, February 4, 2017

Why Chicago's Crime Problem Is Growing, by John R. Lott Jr.

Bad police policies pushed by Democratic politicians, not a lack of gun-control laws, are the reason for Chicago's growing violence.

Last week, President Donald Trump again expressed concern that the violence in Chicago was "totally out of control." "We're going to have to do something about Chicago," the president said. While it's unclear what Trump has in mind, it is undoubtedly true that the Chicago police department is a mess, with the city suffering ever increasing murder rates.

Some analysts, such as Heather Mac Donald in the *Wall Street Journal*, focus on the damage created by President Obama trying to run local police departments via the U.S. Justice Department, but the problems facing Chicago go well beyond that and certainly aren't new. The quality of Chicago's policing has been deteriorating for decades.

Back in 1991, 67 percent of murderers were arrested. When Mayor Richard M. Daley finally left office 20 years later, in 2011, the arrest rate was down to 30 percent. This troubling drop only continued after Rahm Emanuel became mayor, hitting a new low of 20 percent in 2016. Unfortunately, the true figure is even worse, because Chicago has been intentionally misclassifying murders as non-murders. Nationally, in 2015, 61.5 percent of murders resulted in an arrest — almost two out of every three. And unlike Chicago's arrest rate, the national rate has been fairly constant over the decades.

Chicago's problems are a result of putting politics ahead of sensible policing for decades. For example, after becoming mayor, Emanuel did three unfortunate things to the Chicago police force: 1) Emanuel closed down detective bureaus in Chicago's highest-crime districts, relocating them to often distant locations. 2) The mayor disbanded many gang task forces. 3) In cooperation with the ACLU, Emanuel instituted new, voluminous forms that have to be filled out by police each time they stop someone to investigate a crime.

All this time wasted filling out forms is time that can't be spent policing neighborhoods. These policies have made it much more difficult to catch criminals, and when you don't catch criminals, the result is more crime. The detective-bureau relocations have been disastrous. Detectives who had worked for years in high-crime neighborhoods suddenly found themselves working other areas of the city, their hard-earned, neighborhood-specific knowledge of likely culprits and informants now rendered irrelevant. As one detective told *Chicago* magazine, "All the expertise you once had is useless when you're working on the other side of town. You might as well put me in a new city."

Moving detectives from crime hotspots also means longer travel times. These delays were not only a waste of time — they made detectives less effective at doing their jobs of tracking down witnesses and keeping track of evidence. The result was more unsolved crimes. If budget cuts necessitated closures, then detective bureaus in low-crime areas ought to have been considered first. But that would have met with tougher political resistance, because of the affluent and politically well-connected people who live there. So much for the Democrats' claims that they care about poor minorities.

Chicago's police superintendent, Eddie Johnson, blames gangs for the violence. Regarding all the murders over Christmas, Johnson was blunt about the source of the violence: "These were deliberate and planned shootings by one gang against another. . . . This was followed by several acts of retaliation." But Emanuel's decision early in his administration to gut gang task forces, a move that undid the hard work that had allowed the police to infiltrate many gangs, is not something that can easily be undone. The arrest rates are low for gang murders because witnesses are loath to get on a gang's bad side. But in Chicago the situation is especially bad because witnesses have very little hope that gang members will ever be put away. The agreement with the ACLU was a politically motivated result of Laquan McDonald's videotaped shooting by police. Emanuel caused a stronger backlash by delaying the release of the video until after his reelection.

As arrest rates have fallen and murder rates have risen, Daley and Emanuel have kept pushing responsibility on others. After all, they claim, it isn't their fault that state legislatures and the U.S. Congress haven't passed sufficiently strict gun-control laws. Back in 2010, Daley claimed that the increased crime rate was "all about guns, and that's why the crusade is on." Emanuel has made similar claims. The problem of unsolved crimes seems to have gone unnoticed.

Democrats have learned nothing from Chicago's failed experiment in banning guns, which began in late 1982. After the ban, the city's murder rates stopped falling and started soaring — not only in absolute terms, but also relative to adjacent counties and other large cities. Democrats need to learn that gun control primarily disarms law-abiding citizens. Police matter in crime prevention — and so do policing policies. Chicago's problems run much deeper than something that has occurred over the last couple years. The city's politicians need to stop trying to buck their responsibility for their failed policies.

John R. Lott Jr. is the president of the Crime Prevention Research Center and the author of The War on Guns.

Why the British addiction to period drama is driving away our best black and Asian actors

There is a diversity crisis in British TV and film as, increasingly, stars are decamping to America to make their career there.

By Andrew Dickson, *The Spectator*, 28 November 2016

1 - [...] Increasingly, black and Asian stars are decamping to America to make their career there. Among those who have joined the brain drain are Archie Panjabi and Cush Jumbo (*The Good Wife*), David Oyelowo (*Selma*) and Chiwetel Ejiofor (*12 Years a Slave*). Idris Elba, who brooded brilliantly in BBC1's crime procedural *Luther*, would likely never have been cast in a big British series if he hadn't already made a name in the United States

5 - with *The Wire*. Before she appeared in *Undercover*, Sophie Okonedo said in an interview that the scripts she was offered from the US far outnumbered those from the UK.

Visiting Los Angeles recently, I tracked down Parminder Nagra, who made her name in *Bend It Like Beckham* before being spotted by a producer for the long-running medical drama *ER*. In 2003 she was offered the role of the Anglo-American doctor Neela Rasgotra, which she played until the series ended in 2009. A big part in the

10 - NBC crime drama *The Blacklist* followed, along with other film and TV work.

She never intended to move, she says, laughing ruefully, when we meet at a café in a well-to-do suburb of LA populated by movie folk. She has worked occasionally elsewhere but, 13 years on, she is still on the west coast. "The jobs I've got, like most actors, haven't come about in a conventional way. It's generally because someone is open-minded enough to look at you."

15 - Although she is careful to make it clear that the US is far from a utopia in terms of how it portrays race, sexuality or gender on screen – she tells a gruesome tale of a white writer who sent her his attempt at an "Asian" character – Nagra senses that things are more open in the US. "It's a bigger pond here, because of the sheer size of the country," she says. "There are writers of colour in the UK, but what happens is that you've only got one or two people at the top who are making decisions about the taste of the country . . . Those people are

20 - white."

The landscape is certainly more open in the US. Leaving aside the allegations about Bill Cosby, NBC's *Cosby Show* (1984-92) was a force for good, with its focus on a middle-class African-American family and with the numerous ethnically diverse shows it made possible: *A Different World*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *In Living Color*, *Scandal* (the last was commissioned by the influential black writer-producer Shonda Rhimes). Back in the

25 - early 1980s, the gentle NBC sitcom *Gimme a Break!* – starring Nell Carter – explored issues of racism, too.

US cable and online subscription services are even more courageous. Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black* has an ethnically kaleidoscopic cast and plotlines that vault across almost every conceivable question of gender, sexuality, body image and politics. Where it has apparently taken the BBC until 2016 to realise that families can be both black and upper middle class, ABC in the US was years ahead: in 2014 it commissioned *Black-ish*, which

30 - offers a subtle portrait of an advertising executive who frets that he is losing touch with both his Obama-era kids and his inner-city origins.

Nagra nods. "There still are a lot of issues here, but if you're an actor of colour, there is more work. All those British period dramas are really well done, but there's a yearning there: 'Can I please just see somebody like me on TV?'"

35 - The reason all this matters is that TV, theatre and film have a duty to show us not merely who we are, but who we can become. In *Undercover*, Okonedo becomes Britain's first black, female director of public prosecutions: this may seem unlikely, given the state of the UK's judiciary, yet seeing it on TV helps to shift perceptions. No one would argue that Okonedo's co-star Dennis Haysbert got Barack Obama into the White House by playing a black president of the United States in *24*, but perhaps it made such a world marginally more imaginable.

40 - The time is overdue for British TV to abandon its fetish for bodices and show us what our nation actually looks like, in all its variety – and to be more imaginative about the kind of history it presents. Colour-blind casting is mainstream in theatre. Actors of various heritages appear in Pinter or Chekhov and no one raises an eyebrow.

Anthropologists argue that race and gender are forms of performance, sets of shared codes, rather than something intrinsic to who we are. Is it so difficult to imagine a Jane Austen production with performers of

45 - black or Asian heritage? Is that any harder to believe than the thousand impossibilities we witness every day in TV drama?

I ask Essiedu if he is optimistic. Yes, he says forcefully. "I have to be. Optimism is the only way we initiate change."

When I put the same question to Nagra, she pauses to think. "I remember being asked about this when I started

50 - *ER*, and I was a bit tired of the issue even then. Yet here we still are." Her expression is wry. "So ask me in ten years' time."

The Nation, April 26, 2017

Local Activists' Voices Drive New Effort to Invest in Girls and Women of Color

By Dani McClain

Black girls in Mississippi know that the world too often sees them as angry, man-hungry, uneducated baby mamas. Their perceived value can depend on how light their skin is, how thin their bodies are, and how loosely their hair curls. They sometimes withstand sexual assault and depression, and a culture of secrecy makes it difficult to talk about trauma.

5 Young women of color in New Mexico are often so busy taking care of family members in the context of intergenerational addiction that they lack the time or support to make their own plans or pursue their own dreams. They live in the shadow of a potential border wall and long for "a world where there is healthy masculinity."

10 These are some findings from a year-long, nationwide listening tour undertaken by the New York-based NoVo Foundation, which this month announced it will invest \$90 million in efforts to serve girls of color over the next seven years—the largest commitment to that demographic by a private foundation to date. Hosting listening sessions, which were attended and summarized by cultural anthropologist Aimee Cox, was a critical step in the foundation's process of determining how and where to distribute its funds.

15 For Autumn Billie, a 23-year-old indigenous feminist and activist who talked with the foundation last year about her sex-education work with Native American students in rural northern New Mexico, the experience was unique. "Wow, someone is coming in and actually valuing the authentic mission and the authentic programming and organizing that we actually want to do, instead of [asking us to] fit in a kind of cookie cutter," she said, reflecting on the conversation.

20 Giving girls of color and their advocates this sense of being in the driver's seat was precisely what NoVo intended with its approach to developing its grant-making strategy. "We listen deeply because we know foundations are not the experts," Jody Myrum, who directs the foundation's Initiative to Advance Adolescent Girls' Rights, told me. "Really, girls and movement leaders are the experts." Based on feedback from those experts, NoVo is taking a three-pronged approach:

- 25 • It will invest in local organizations around the country that work directly with teenage girls of color on issues such as "ending sexual violence, confronting anti-black racism, building solidarity across communities, intergenerational healing, or directly supporting girls' ideas," according to the foundation's application for community-based groups.
- 30 • It will begin by placing special priority on the South—where the foundation says 40 percent of the nation's girls of color live—and seek out a regional partner who can help strengthen efforts there. "There's not a lack of leadership or progressive infrastructure [in the South], but a lack of philanthropic investment," Myrum said.
- Finally, NoVo will continue its support of national groups that work to improve the lives of girls of color.

35 In recent years, organizers and scholars have pushed to make sure that the needs of girls and women of color—and the clear ways these needs are distinct from boys and men of color as well as from white girls and women—receive appropriate attention and resources. Their efforts have gained newfound support and recognition, including from officials during the Obama administration. The statistics that drive the focus on this demographic are stark: According to federal data, black female students are suspended at higher rates than girls of any other race or ethnicity and at higher rates than white boys. Black girls represent nearly a third of the girls who are detained in and committed to juvenile justice facilities. Native American girls are
40 only 1 percent of the population, but 3.5 percent of the girls in those facilities. A 2015 report titled "The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline" found that girls in the juvenile justice system are disproportionately victims of sexual violence, and end up criminalized because their trauma isn't often identified or treated.

45 The organizing, consciousness raising, and healing work that NoVo wants to fund already exists, though it may not currently have the benefit of big-foundation money. Tynesha McHarris, a fellow with the NoVo initiative, said the past year's listening tour allowed her to hear from girls of color and the women who are their allies. She said they're hard at work helping each other stay safe and combat violence at school, in their homes, and in their wider communities, but "they are doing things oftentimes on their own time and their own dime. The movement is vibrant but incredibly under-resourced."

50 It's not just that women of color don't apply for funding to keep their work afloat. It's that their work is seen as a risky investment, which creates a vicious cycle, Myrum explained. "You're not funded, so then you're not fundable. People don't want to take risks on women of color often." NoVo's strategy seeks to disrupt that cycle and partner with efforts that have been starved of philanthropic dollars in the past.

HOW TO FEEL ABOUT THE HOUSE OF LORDS IF YOU'RE LEFT-WING

Freedom fighters in mink clothing

Anoosh Chakelian *The New Statesman*, 3 March 2017

1- They've done it again. Those radical freedom fighters dressed all in mink have put us poor lefties in yet another dilemma. This week, the Lords voted down the government's Article 50 bill, urging ministers to guarantee EU nationals' right to stay in the UK after Brexit.

It's another of those moments, which have felt increasingly common lately, when anyone with a mildly progressive

5- outlook can't help but sigh: "Thank God for the Upper Chamber."

It was our reaction during the Housing Bill last year, when the House of Lords watered down a Tory policy prioritising earners who can buy "affordable" homes over those in need of social housing. And to the Dubs amendment to the Immigration Act that same year, which urged Britain to take in refugee children (which it has, but far fewer than hoped).

It also happened when the peers delayed the government on its proposal to cut tax credits in 2015, which led to former 10- Chancellor George Osborne dropping the policy. (This even led to the Strathclyde Review into curbing the House of Lords' powers, so infuriated were the Tories.)

Other recent legislation that the Lords have pushed back on includes a Tory crackdown on trade unions and a £30 a week cut to Employment and Support Allowance (although this eventually went through).

5- So if you're a person who thinks it's generally wrong to financially devastate working households for ideological purposes or condemn migrants to a precarious future as a political bargaining chip – but also feel kind of squeamish about unelected random old rich dudes, some who are simply there because they happened to be born, running the country – how are you supposed to feel about those pesky Lords?

Coinciding with the latest round of peer-fuelled mischief-making is the BBC documentary *Meet the Lords*, which, as our TV critic Rachel Cooke writes, makes for "enraging" viewing. One elderly member laughing at the irony that the only 0- elected peers are hereditary; another beaming that it's "like being back at school!" as he uses the same clothes peg his grandfather did; lunch mates chuckling in the dining room about eating "milk pudding" and who you could end up sitting next to.

We are told by one interviewee that the House of Lords is not just at the heart of Parliament, but key to the country's identity (cue camera panning over ancient white men in a decadent Gothic palace - the UK in a nutshell).

5- That such characters influence modern Britain is tough to swallow.

But can we overlook this when the Lords do something good? When their lack of a need to play politics – or capitulate to the electorate and the press – means they end up doing something compassionate?

The Upper Chamber's tough stance against the government appears to have given it a reprieve from the left in recent years. It's notable that *The Mirror* quietly stopped plugging its 2015 campaign to scrap the House of Lords after the tax 0- credits vote. Today the paper describes it as "an outdated, anarchic, unrepresentative institution we'd be lost without".

I'd argue that we can treat the Lords as a necessary evil for the moment. There's not much momentum to scrap it these days anyway. House of Lords reform, which takes up so much parliamentary time, is going to be off the table for at least as long as Brexit and its fallout takes. So there's not much of a fight to be had on that front.

5- Also, the desire among Tories to ennoble more of their own in order to beef up their influence in the Upper Chamber are generally idle threats coming from backbenchers rather than ministers. The government would have pursued the Strathclyde proposals – rather than letting them fall by the wayside – if it had really wanted to hobble the Lords ahead of Brexit. So we don't need to worry too much about the Tories using the Lords for influence.

It's important to remember that the Lords rarely push back repeatedly against the government. Defeating bills is its way of making the Commons think again, rather than outright refusing to accept law proposed by democratically elected 0- representatives.

The Institute for Government's Director of Research and parliamentary expert Dr Hannah White expects the Lords only to go in for "one round of ping-pong" on Brexit bill amendments, being aware of the limits of its legitimacy. Sending the bill back to the Commons is the Lords' way of asking "are you sure you meant this?" about parts of legislation that clearly caused the most disquiet in the Commons.

1- Being reluctantly pro-Lords is a more palatable stance for left-wingers currently because the Tories don't have a majority in the Lords – there are 252 Tory members to Labour's 202, the Lib Dems' 102, and 177 crossbenchers. So far in the 2016-17 parliamentary session, the Lords have defeated the government 21 times. In 2015-16, there were 60 defeats. Throughout the five years of coalition, there were only 100, so they do seem to be getting fightier.

5- Plus, with Labour being prepared to nod Conservative policies through – and too weak to stop the government when it's not – we need *someone* to oppose the government. Even if that someone is called Baroness Young of Old Scone as if it's completely normal.

Orange County Register, April 9, 2017

OPINION - The other California: A flyover state within a state, by Joel Kotkin

California may never secede, or divide into different states, but it has effectively split into entities that could not be more different. On one side is the much-celebrated, post-industrial, coastal California, beneficiary of both the Tech Boom 2.0 and a relentlessly inflating property market. The other California, located in the state's interior, is still tied to basic industries like homebuilding, manufacturing, energy and agriculture. It is populated largely by working- and middle-class people who, overall, earn roughly half that of those on the coast. Over the past decade or two, interior California has lost virtually all influence, as Silicon Valley and Bay Area progressives have come to dominate both state politics and state policy. "We don't have seats at the table," laments Richard Chapman, president and CEO of the Kern Economic Development Corporation. "We are a flyover state within a state."

Virtually all the policies now embraced by Sacramento — from water and energy regulations to the embrace of sanctuary status and a \$15-an-hour minimum wage — come right out of San Francisco central casting. Little consideration is given to the needs of the interior, and little respect is given to their economies. San Francisco, for example, recently decided to not pump oil from land owned by the city in Kern County, although one wonders what the new rich in that region use to fill the tanks of their BMWs. California's "enlightened" green policies help boost energy prices 50 percent above those of neighboring states, which makes a bigger difference in the less temperate interior, where many face longer commutes than workers in more compact coastal areas.

The new Bantustans

Fresno, Bakersfield, Ontario and San Bernardino are rapidly becoming the Bantustans — the impoverished areas designed for Africans under the racist South African regime — in California's geographic apartheid. Poverty rates in the Central Valley and Inland Empire reach over a third of the population, well above the share in the Bay Area. By some estimates, rural California counties suffer the highest unemployment rate in the country; six of the 10 metropolitan areas in the country with the highest percentage of jobless are located in the central and eastern parts of the state. The interior counties — from San Bernardino to Merced — also suffer the worst health conditions in the state. This disparity has worsened in recent years. Until the 2008 housing crash, the interior counties served, as the Kern EDC's Chapman puts it, as "an incubator for mobility." These areas were places that Californians of modest means, and companies no longer able to afford coastal prices, could get a second shot.

But state policies, notably those tied to Gov. Jerry Brown's climate jihad, suggests Inland Empire economist John Husing, have placed California "at war" with blue-collar industries like homebuilding, energy, agriculture and manufacturing. These kinds of jobs are critical for regions where almost half the workforce has a high school education or less.

Why the interior matters

In legislating against the interior, the state is trying to counter the national trend — evident in the most recent census numbers — that shows people seeking less dense, more affordable areas. Both millennial and immigrant populations are growing rapidly in these regions. Between 2000 and 2013, the Inland region experienced a 91 percent jump in its population with bachelor's degrees or higher, a far more rapid increase than either Orange or Los Angeles counties. By curtailing new housing supply, California is systematically shutting off this aspirational migration. Chapman University forecaster James Doti notes that, in large part due to regulation, Inland Empire housing prices have jumped 80 percent since 2009 — almost twice the rate for Orange County. Doti links this rapid rise to helping slow the area's once buoyant job growth in half over the past two years. Population growth has also slowed, particularly in comparison to a decade ago. (...)

Over time, however, constraining the interior will backfire on the coastal enclaves. In recent weeks, coastal technology and professional service providers have raised a growing alarm about attracting and retaining thirtysomething skilled workers. Some have even suggested that new transportation infrastructure — for example, a tunnel between Corona and south Orange County — could provide an alternative for family-aged workers who cannot afford a residence closer to the coast. Others, to keep key employees, are purposely setting up offices in places like San Antonio for workers entering their thirties.

If this crisis of the interior is not addressed, the prognosis for California will be ever-growing class and race bifurcation and an ever-rising demand for welfare and other subsidies for those unable to pay for housing. California needs, in reasonable and sustainable ways, to keep open its regions of opportunity, not to seek to close them off to future generations.

Joel Kotkin is the R.C. Hobbs Presidential Fellow in Urban Futures at Chapman University in Orange and executive director of the Houston-based Center for Opportunity Urbanism (www.opportunityurbanism.org).

The American Prospect, March 31, 2017

Trump's Crash Course in the African American Experience

by Gabrielle Gurley

The Congressional Black Caucus leadership team did not go to the White House to talk about urban carnage or April Ryan. Instead, over the course of more than a half-hour with the 45th president of the United States, they laid out the full spectrum of issues facing African Americans and what he could do about them—if he wanted to get past posturing.

5 To get Trump to focus like a laser, they reminded him of his time campaign trail speaking to adoring throngs of white people in small places with few black faces. He used to boast that Democratic candidates courted the black vote only to turn their backs on African Americans until the next election: Why not vote for him? "What do you have to lose?" he famously asked. So the CBC presented Trump with a new report, "We Have a Lot to Lose." (...)

10 Clearly, this president needed some schooling and the CBC obliged.

In their meeting with Trump, the group reeled off the major problems and a menu of solutions on issues ranging from voting rights, criminal-justice reform, and education, as well as lesser-known concerns like rural black poverty and how race plays into the siting of hazardous waste. On health care, the report pointed to the benefits of the Affordable Care Act for African Americans: The number of uninsured African
15 Americans has dropped eight percentage points. Their solutions such as preserving Medicaid as is and warning against "reckless disruption" in the health-care marketplace echoed many of the same cautions that their white colleagues raised.

No one around the president, black or white, appears to have a grasp on any of the issues, much less nuances of the African American experience. White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer scolds April Ryan
20 for her shaking her head, while Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson compares slavery to immigration. For the initial effort in remedial education for the Trump administration, the CBC provided four-and-a-half succinct pages on slavery, America's original sin; the Reconstruction; the Great Migration; the Depression; the New Deal; World War II; and the civil rights era. No black notables appear by name, although presumably Trump and his West Wing staff now know that abolitionist Frederick Douglass has
25 been laid to rest in Rochester, New York. Trump expressed interest in future meetings with the CBC but they won't be to discuss the finer points of American history, if they happen at all.

Getting issues and solutions in front of a president is an important step. But an "ask" is not a "get." As
obsessed as Trump is with inner city crime issues, supporting criminal-justice reforms does not appear to be high on his agenda. In high profile meetings with police officials, Attorney General Jeff Sessions talks
30 ominously about getting back to "tried and true, proven principles" of law enforcement. Administration officials rarely discuss police accountability, rehabilitation programs for ex-offenders, respecting state marijuana laws, or support for consent decrees such as the one Baltimore officials and the Justice Department recently signed to begin to repair the police-community relations by revolutionizing police tactics.

35 Any move by the CBC to align with Trump, even in areas where there are mutual interests, would pose problems heading into the 2018 election season. The progressive, anti-Trump group #WeWillReplaceYou that has vowed to run challengers against congressional Democrats willing to work with Trump issued an early challenge. Co-founder Jessica Pierce told *BuzzFeed*, "I don't know how there can be shared goals with a president who in two months has directly cut services and called for more financial cuts or the
40 complete elimination of programs that protect the black people in the most need in this country."

Trump is widely disliked among African Americans; his approval rating is a pitiful 13 percent. He has not come after African Americans in any sustained way yet, though his policy assaults will harm black citizens disproportionately. Based on Trump's moves against Muslims, a group that includes many African
45 Americans, and immigrants, black politicians know very well that some of their constituents could be the next targeted group.

The CBC may want to keep lines of communication open on issues like criminal justice, health care, and infrastructure; however, they get no bonus points for their diplomacy. Educating a president is no easy task, and some leaders are more challenging than others. Working with a difficult student like Trump is a risky political tactic for the Congressional Black Caucus. Like many classroom troublemakers, Trump
50 knows what he loses if he ignores the CBC's African American agenda: Exactly nothing.

THE NEWLY REFURBISHED NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM IS FULL OF INACCURACIES AND POST-COLONIAL GUILT

It leaves visitors ashamed of the Army's supposed legacy of imperialism and slavery, when that constituted only a tiny part of its story

Andrew Roberts, *The Spectator*, 3 June 2017

1 - I used to love the National Army Museum in Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, which was crammed with the memorabilia of four centuries of the British Army. I even visited it on the morning of my wedding. It taught you about the history of the British Army in a completely non-political way, allowing the objects — which were carefully factually annotated — to speak for themselves. It was housed in a hideous 1971 building, but the 5 - artefacts inside were superb.

Today's huge new £24 million refurbished National Army Museum looks imposing inside, but instead of chronologically taking you through the history of the Army it is now broken down thematically into spaces such as 'Society', which 'explores the Army as a cultural and military force that impacts on our customs, technologies and values', and 'Army', which 'explores the Army's major role in the political development of the country'.

10 - Instead of seeing artefacts in a historical context, as part of a chronological narrative, the visitor is forced to explore themes, and as ever this has provided an opening for guilt, apology and political correctness.

In the old museum they just showed vast collections of uniforms, weaponry, regimental silver, medals and vast paintings of the battle of Omdurman; in today's you are invited to press buttons to vote on whether 'The money spent on the Army should be spent elsewhere', and asked to decide 'What issue should the Army focus on in the

15 - coming decade?', giving you the choice of 'Fighting international terrorism', 'Training other countries' armed forces only', 'Cyber warfare' or 'Peacekeeping'. There is no choice available to vote for the job it has now done for four centuries, that is, 'Defending Britain by fighting other countries' armies'.

In its obsession with making us feel post-colonial guilt, it states in large letters on one wall that: 'Troops from the colonies didn't always have a say in fighting for the British Army and even slaves have been used to fight on

20 - our behalf.' It fails to state that the vast armies raised in India in both world wars were entirely volunteer — in the latter case the largest wholly volunteer army in the history of mankind — and that colonial armies were generally not press-ganged into fighting. The only slaves that were used were in the (mostly free black) West India Regiment from 1795 to 1807, and in the latter year, under the annual Mutiny Act, every slave in a red coat was declared a free man. The announcement on the wall, through the use of the weasel words 'didn't always'

25 - and 'have been used', therefore deliberately gives a completely misleading picture of the true situation, which was that the overwhelming majority of colonial troops were volunteers, that Britain was in the forefront of abolishing slavery, and that serving in the Army was a relatively quick way out of slavery. Political correctness in museums is one thing; historical inaccuracy in pursuance of it is quite another.

We are also lectured to that 'Some of the British Army's actions are contentious. It has also been used to expand

30 - the British empire, and has played a part in suppressing local populations.' The latter statement probably refers to Ulster Catholics, 306 of whom, we are told, were killed by the British Army, '56 per cent of them civilians'. That gives the impression that the other 44 per cent were a legitimate army that the British were fighting,

rather than a murderous sectarian gang calling itself a republican 'army'. All this is fine for a *Guardian* leader written by Seumas Milne, but not for prominent display on the walls of a museum that ought to be protective of

35 - the truer narrative of the essential decency and repeated heroism of the British Army.

Presumably because medals are thought of as old-fashioned and boring by the new right-on Museum, we are not told in very many cases what they are or even who they were awarded to. The wonderful pictures are still

there, but in the Art Room there is now a big sign saying 'Political Statement' in red letters, which tells us that 'Art became a means to legitimise territorial expansion', and 'Today, few artists are commissioned to celebrate

40 - military victories and triumphalism is seen as distasteful.' For the iconic picture of the relief of Ladysmith we aren't told the title or the name of the artist or what is happening in it, but just: 'This was known as the Bovril War picture.'

'The National Army Museum,' it boasts, 'challenges you to think again about what an army museum is.' Why should it? Why can't it just be a museum that houses the paraphernalia of the national Army? Why should it be

45 - somewhere that leaves visitors ashamed of the Army's supposed legacy of colonialism, imperialism and slavery, when that constituted only a tiny part of its story, and isn't accurately portrayed anyhow? On a greater issue, when will the long march of political correctness through our great national institutions be finally checked?

Andrew Roberts is the author of an admiring biography of Napoleon.

Baltimore Sun, May 24, 2017

EDITORIAL - Are Confederate monuments 'our story?'

In January of last year, a seven-member mayoral commission recommended the removal of two of four Confederate era monuments from Baltimore's public parks. Sixteen months later, the offending statues haven't budged. While some "interpretive" signage has been added, they remain where they are and what they are — symbols of racism, fond tributes to the "Lost Cause" cult.

5 Last week in a city about as deep in the Deep South as possible and where there is far greater affection for the Confederacy than in Baltimore, workers removed that last of four monuments deemed just as offensive — tributes to Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Pierre Gustave Toutant-Beauregard and the Battle of Liberty Place. Emotions ran so high in the Big Easy that the contractors who did the work pasted over their company logos to keep their involvement secret, the public wasn't given a timetable for exactly when the statues would be removed and security was out in force.

10 New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu didn't shirk his responsibility. He didn't drag his feet or choose to let the next administration deal with the controversy. He wasn't swayed by arguments that these monuments had some transcendent artistic or historic merit that made them off-limits. Instead, he gave a speech in which he clearly and convincingly explained why removing these monuments was not a denial of a benign history but an avowal of the terrorism and white supremacy they represented and that was no longer to be tolerated. "They were erected purposefully to send a strong message to all who walked in their shadows about who was still in charge in this city," he said.

15 The Confederacy was on the "wrong side of humanity," the mayor explained, fighting against the United States, not for it. The monuments offer only a sanitized vision of that history with noble leaders striking heroic poses. Such a "false narrative" — one that ignores the enslavement, death and terror that the Confederacy actually stood for — "weakens us." The city had to "make straight a wrong turn we made many years ago" so that we can "more closely connect with integrity to the founding principles of our nation and force a clearer and straighter path toward a better city and a more perfect union."

20 For many, decades-old statues are a trivial thing. We see them so often — like the rendering of Generals Lee and Stonewall Jackson on horseback in Baltimore's Wyman Park — that we probably don't give them much thought. But Baltimore's Civil War past is rather shameful, beginning with the 1861 riot on Pratt Street in which antiwar Copperheads and Confederate sympathizers clashed with northern militia producing what historians have described as the first Union casualties of the war. (The Sun wasn't on the right side of the war either, incidentally.) What is one to make a century and a half later of a tribute to Roger B. Taney, author of the Dred Scott Supreme Court decision that voided the Missouri Compromise and prohibited Congress from regulating slavery anywhere? How is the average African American parent to explain these loving tributes to slave ownership in a city with a paucity of Union adoration (a single statue in Wyman Park commemorates Union soldiers and sailors)?

25 Remembering our history is important, of course, but it ought to be seen clearly. Ennobling Justice Taney doesn't heal old wounds, it encourages people living in the 21st century to view the worst of times through rose-colored glasses. We do not celebrate slave ships, so why must we celebrate the men who defended that system? To inspire future generations to admire these individuals who thought it perfectly fine to treat people of a different skin color as property? Or perhaps to comfort the alt-right?

30 Mayor Landrieu understood that you can't run away from your past, but you can correct your mistakes. "We have not erased history; we are becoming part of the city's history by righting the wrong image these monuments represent and crafting a better, more complete future for all our children and for future generations," he said. Someone should send a copy of the speech to Mayor Catherine Pugh who ought to revisit a painful issue that her predecessor failed to properly lay to rest. In a city still healing from the Freddie Gray unrest, still looking for better schools and better job opportunities and, perhaps most of all, evidence that black lives matter as much as the lives of those who look like Taney, Jackson and Lee, it would be nice to put away ill-conceived statues that tear us apart and focus on a brighter, more unified future.

THE STORIES THAT WON'T MAKE HEADLINES IN GEORGE OSBORNE'S EVENING STANDARD

Homelessness, food banks, child poverty, knife crime ... How can the Standard report on the problems facing London when they are rooted in decisions taken by its new editor?

Amelia Gentleman, *The Guardian*, 1 May 2017

- 1 - Recently, MPs getting to work early have had to step around sleeping bodies in the underground tunnel that leads from Westminster tube station to the House of Commons staff entrance, forcing them to reflect on London's rocketing homelessness problem. At street level outside the station, there are often several people sleeping by the stall where copies of the Evening Standard are handed out. The former chancellor George
- 5 - Osborne can scarcely have failed to notice the phenomenon as he made his way in to work. Is it an issue that will make front page news on the Standard any time soon? Given that homelessness charities believe responsibility for the growing numbers of rough sleepers in the capital (where rough sleeping has more than doubled since 2010) lies squarely with spending decisions made by the Treasury, it may prove an uncomfortable cause for the newspaper to champion once Osborne starts his new job as editor on Tuesday.
- 10 - There are a whole range of issues that are set to cause awkwardness for reporters. How will the paper cover the fallout from cuts to local authority budgets in London, when those cuts were overseen by the new editor? Inner London councils have already lost about 40% in central government funding since 2010, and the thinktank London Councils predicts that core funding from central government will have fallen by 63% in real terms, equivalent to £3.9bn, over the decade to 2019-20. These cuts have led to closures of youth services,
- 15 - children centres, libraries and day centres - all traditional campaigning themes for local papers, but perhaps less likely to be splashed on the Standard's pages now. No one doubts that the ex-chancellor will bring energy, political clout and a healthy contacts book to the paper. Many former opponents are inclined to view his appointment positively, hopeful that he will transform the paper into an anti-Brexit platform. Osborne is clever and fun and will make the Standard an exciting place to
- 20 - work. But there is real concern that his editorship may impose an obstinately rosy filter on some of the grittier problems that London faces. How will the paper cover the rise in stabbings in the capital, when the Metropolitan police's assistant commissioner has sought to pin some of the blame for increases in gun and knife crime on cuts to police funding? It's tempting to imagine some hasty modifications to the paper's style guide so that the phrase
- 25 - "government cuts" gets automatically switched to "vital efficiency savings", the bedroom tax altered to "removal of the spare room subsidy" and stories about those impoverished by cuts to benefits rejigged by editors to become stories that highlight the restoration of fairness to Britain's hardworking families. Some of London's Labour MPs are despondent at the timing. Andy Slaughter, MP for Hammersmith, is not thrilled that his constituents will be reading a newspaper edited by the ex-chancellor throughout the election
- 30 - campaign. "The main issues that we are campaigning on are directly the consequences of policies created by George Osborne, particularly the funding of public services. He has a direct interest in not correctly reporting the outcome of his own mistaken decisions," he says. Claire Kober, Haringey council's Labour leader, says all the difficulties her council is facing - social care, housing, schools funding - have their roots in Treasury decisions. "For people on low incomes in the city, life
- 35 - has become considerably harder. We are only just beginning to see the cumulative impact of welfare changes of recent years," she says. The Standard may not show much enthusiasm for writing about the rise of London's food banks, widely understood to have been triggered by welfare cuts. Food bank use in London since 2010 is estimated by the Trussell Trust to have risen by 1,642%; last year the charity handed out 111,100 three-day emergency food
- 40 - parcels to Londoners. The painful fallout from cuts to disability benefits, which Osborne consistently argued were necessary, may also not elicit huge interest. How the paper covers the rollout of universal credit across London will be worth monitoring. Its launch elsewhere has seen food bank referral rates running at more than double the national average. Osborne's
- 45 - decision to introduce a steep £3bn reduction in the work allowances (the amount recipients can earn before their benefits start to be taken away) remains controversial within the government, but the actual impact on recipients is yet to be felt. The Institute for Fiscal Studies warned last week that a freeze in benefit rates and cuts to child tax credits, along with the less generous universal credit, could leave nearly 3 million working households with children on tax credits on average £2,500 a year worse off, adding to the pain for London's
- 50 - most vulnerable residents. [...]

American Thinker, September 14, 2016

NFL Idiots Dissing Our National Anthem Is Another Reason Why Trump Will Win! by Lloyd Marcus

My intention was to enjoy a leisurely Sunday afternoon on my sofa watching NFL football. Outrageously, players on both teams, Miami vs Seattle, protested our National Anthem. I became extremely angry. I could not stomach watching these highly paid, arrogant, ungrateful, spoiled-brat idiots play football. I yelled to Mary in another room, "*Honey, get dressed. I'm taking you to dinner!*"

5 For crying out loud, here we are on the anniversary of 9/11. These morons showed no respect for their country, nor the 3000 Americans murdered by Islamic terrorists on this day 15 years ago. Why are NFL coaches allowing players to run their teams? Coaches should say, "Express your political views off the field. Anyone who does not stand for the National Anthem will be benched for this game." Due to public schools teaching that America is the greatest source of evil in the world, high school athletes have joined pro athletes
10 in protesting our National Anthem. Ponder this, folks. The NFL punishes players with a penalty for celebrating/dancing too much after scoring a touchdown. And yet, when it comes to disrespecting our National Anthem the NFL feels it must respect player's freedom of expression. There is an old saying, "You get what you tolerate." What next? Will the NFL allow players to burn U.S. flags during games? The swiftly growing anti-National Anthem and anti-law enforcement movements are tied together, birthed out of Black Lives
15 Matter's evil lie that America oppresses blacks and police murder blacks.

BTW, Saturday, I launched my nationwide Blue Lives Matter Celebration tour honoring law enforcement. I chatted with Sheriff David Clarke who thanked me and expressed the importance of me continuing to push back against the false narrative. Sheriff Clarke said law enforcement is the only thing preventing chaos in our streets. Please support my tour by contributing.

20 I am an American who happens to be black. It is absurd and outrageous that wealthy black pro athletes and celebs are running around claiming that America is a hellhole of racism against them. Meanwhile, I caught an ad on TV for yet another major movie release featuring black actor Samuel L. Jackson. It is becoming increasingly challenging to name a blockbuster movie that has not featured Mr. Jackson. And yet, Mr. Jackson is extremely outspoken, spreading the narrative that Americans are racists. Blacks are only 12% of the U.S.
25 population. Therefore, white Americans have made Mr. Jackson and America-hating black pro athletes extremely wealthy.

Researchers which include Heather MacDonald clearly dispel the myth that cops murder blacks. The truth is the greatest threat to black lives is other blacks. Unfortunately, the truth does not matter in American politics and media today. The NFL allowing players to dis our National Anthem is part of the disintegration of
30 traditions, values and institutions that Americans hold dear. America's decline is the reason for the love affair between Donald Trump and Americans of all stripes.

I chatted with Florida Trump campaign coordinator Tony Ledbetter. Tony said 50,000 people showed up at a recent Florida Trump rally. I shared with Tony that when I attended a Trump rally in Daytona Beach Florida, I was struck by the extremely broad demographic of Trump supporters. I saw all types of Americans from
35 black biker types covered with piercings and tattoos to distinguished well-dressed elderly whites and everything in between standing in line in the extreme heat hoping to get into the packed to capacity convention center.

This latest crap of NFL players protesting our National Anthem is yet another undeserved slap to our country's face; another reason why Trump will win. Americans have just plain had enough; tired of our country being dragged down; tired of our country being dissed and tired of America getting the short end of the stick. (...)

Clearly, Americans want to see our country great again. For eight years, Obama has been giving away our resources, implementing his open borders policy and making decisions against America's best interest while casting all who complain as racist, selfish, and mean. Hillary, if elected, will surely intensify Obama's "keep America last" agenda. Hillary has already begun her efforts to silence Americans who oppose her continuing
45 Obama's anti-American agenda. Hillary outrageously attacked Trump supporters, saying half of them are a "basket of deplorables" made up of "racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic" people.

Thank God that finally we have a presidential candidate in Trump who stands up for America and Americans. Trump pushed back against Hillary's vile rebuke of Americans who simply love their country: "*Our support comes from every part of America, and every walk of life.*" Trump continued, "*She divides people into baskets as though they were objects, not human beings.*" "*Wow, Hillary Clinton was SO INSULTING to my supporters, millions of amazing, hardworking people. I think it will cost her at the Polls!*"
50

Folks, when was the last time you heard a Republican candidate defend traditional Americans; our convictions, principles and values? While the Left hates America, a majority of Americans still love their country. For this reason, Donald Trump will be our next president of the United States.

BRITONS ARE SENSIBLE AND SHUN EXTREMES. RIGHT? SO HOW TO EXPLAIN THE POPULARITY OF A MARXIST ZEALOT

Stephen Glover, *The Daily Mail*, June 8, 2017

Tomorrow we could wake up with a Marxist Prime Minister. And a Marxist Chancellor. I don't say it is likely, but it is certainly on the cards. That the possibility should even exist seems to me incredible.

For it is a commonplace that this country shuns extremes, and that general elections are usually fought around the political centre. There have been far-out politicians in the past, but none of them got a tenth as close to power as Jeremy Corbyn.

How this has happened is by far the most fascinating aspect of this election. Here is a man who gave succour to the IRA when it was at war with the British state, and associated with Middle Eastern terrorists whom he described as his 'friends'.

And while it is true that Corbyn has publicly disavowed these former allegiances — though one may reasonably doubt his sincerity — it remains the case that the Labour manifesto is an antediluvian document brimming over with wild and impractical measures.

It proposes (uncosted, of course) mass renationalisation, and higher taxes not just for the super-rich but those earning more than £80,000 a year. Millions of ordinary families would be clobbered by higher council tax and lower inheritance tax thresholds, which would entail a 40 per cent tax rate on the value of a deceased relative's home worth more than £425,000.

That's not all. Corbyn has spent his political life campaigning against Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, and has said that if he were prime minister he would never use Trident. In that case we might as well get rid of it. Whoever backs Labour today is voting for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

And yet many millions will do so, particularly among the young — even though Corbyn is regarded by most of the Parliamentary Labour Party as being unfit for office and, to put it bluntly, is not strikingly intelligent. Nor has he ever run so much as a whelk stall in his life.

Why have we got to the point of imagining the victory of this wholly unqualified and unsuitable man? [...]

Let me offer a few possible explanations for Corbyn's apparent acceptability. It's true that young people are traditionally more likely to vote Labour than older ones, but the tendency is markedly stronger this time. Polls suggest that nearly three-quarters of 18 to 24-year-olds intend to vote Labour. The main reason is surely that they have no memory of the socialist excesses which virtually brought Britain to her knees in the Seventies.

It's probable, too, that they have been educated in a more Left-wing environment than their parents and grandparents. A friend told me the other day that his teenage godson had shown him his homework about the Eighties. Thatcher was depicted in an unremittingly negative light.

Universities also have a far more Leftist complexion than 30 years ago. These days it would be impossible for a known Tory to be appointed head of an Oxbridge college. A poll by the Times Higher Education magazine before the 2015 election found that nearly half of university lecturers intended to vote Labour, and only 11 per cent Conservative.

This Left-wing preponderance doesn't only prevail in our educational establishments, I suggest, but throughout most of our public institutions — the NHS, the civil service, the judiciary and, of course, the BBC.

A natural bias towards Labour among five-and-a-half million public sector workers has almost certainly grown because of widespread resentment about persistent wage restraint. Such people don't often reflect that most of those in the private sector haven't had pay increases either. Nor do they enjoy guaranteed index-linked pensions.

As for the BBC, it has seemed more powerful than ever during this election, probably because of the relative decline of the printed Press. Scornful of Jeremy Corbyn during his two Labour leadership contests, Auntie has treated him indulgently as a mainstream left-of-centre politician rather than the dangerous revolutionary he really is.

One way and another, the political centre of gravity in British life has swung appreciably to the Left because of these and doubtless other changes. I don't dispute, by the way, that exhaustion with never-ending austerity has understandably made some people despair of the Tories.

Looking at the manifestly ill-equipped Labour leader, it sometimes occurs to me in my more irresponsible moments that the only way for his deluded admirers to discover the lunatic and misguided nature of his policies would be for them to experience a dose of him in No 10. Hard-core socialism would then be expunged from the national bloodstream for a generation.

But what a terrible price would have to be paid. I truly believe that five years of rule by Corbyn and his crew would be a catastrophe. Everyone would be poorer at end of it. The NHS — which even supposedly clever people on the Left wrongly believe the Tories wish to privatise — would be less well-funded.

So let's hope, despite the alarming trends I have described, that there are still enough sensible people in this country to resist the bogus allure of Corbyn. Let's pray he won't be prime minister. I still don't think he will be. But these are going to be anxious hours.

The American Spectator, December 15, 2016

Common Sense About Immigration, by Gilbert T. Sewall

Always virtue conscious, Bubble Americans glow over immigrants. Immigrants enrich the nation. Struggling immigrants embody virtues unknown to low-end white Americans, who are selfish and xenophobic. Newcomers come first. It is the duty of the U.S. to welcome them. That's what makes America great. That's who we are.

5 But a large portion of the electorate, it appears, does not agree. It thinks the U.S. immigration system is broken. It wants to reduce the number of low-skilled foreigners flowing into the country. Shaming White America mixed with opened borders and the prospect of amnesty was not a vote grabber this year.

10 Still, wholesale purges remain a fevered fantasy among *Times* editorialists and some Trumpists. "Nativist ideologues and white nationalists around Mr. Trump are itching for him to be merciless," shivered the *New York Times* editorial board last week, and to make good on a "pledge of mass deportation." Trump's bluster does not help. "What we are going to do is get the people that are criminal and have criminal records, gang members, drug dealers, where a lot of these people, probably two million, it could be even three million, we are getting them out of our country or we are going to incarcerate," Trump said on *60 Minutes* five days after the election. "But we're getting them out of our country, they're here illegally."

15 "In immigrant-rich communities across America," the *Times* editorial continues. That's the giveaway! Immigrant-rich! The *Times* grandees are thinking about that nice housekeeper, Maria, or Santiago, the great guy who takes care of the plumbing at the East Hampton place. Only a Bubble Person would say "immigrant-rich." Hop on the midday express train to the Bronx amid the jostling, bling, multiple body tattoos, and rap-bling smartphones. Who is paying for this pandemonium, an economic American might ask. Visit the seedy 7-Eleven in a bad part of town, maybe Reading, Pennsylvania. You'll see something different from Maria and Santiago. You might encounter a forlorn young day laborer and his common-law wife with an infant, out on a limb and looking to buy something to eat. Then there are elusive predators, slumlords like Chor Ng of the Oakland, California, Ghost Ship fire.

25 The great majority of immigrants are Hispanic, mostly Mexican. Of an estimated 35 million Mexican-Americans, perhaps half are here illegally. The numbers are loose. Estimates range from 11 million up to 20 million. Some come from worldly colonial cities; others are destitute, illiterate *indios* uprooted from the desert. It's not one big Latino family. Five million Puerto Ricans are clustered in the Northeast. Dominicans, Cubans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans — a million from each country — also reside in the U.S. Each of these groups is ethnically self-aware, deeply so. (It is even more laughable to think of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Filipinos as one "Asian" people. But we do.)

30 From Wal-Mart inventory to housekeeping in motels, working the nation's assembly lines, groves and fields, and construction, slaughtering chickens and building roads, immigrants — legal and illegal — do the work, the unglamorous work. While an increasing number of native-born Americans live off dividends or handouts, the U.S. has created an immigrant working class for whom near-poverty by prevailing U.S. standards is wonderland. Native-born Americans left in the labor market, meanwhile, face a relative lower standard of living.

35 *Immigrants only take jobs that Americans won't do* is a lie. Mexicans and other Latinos work hard, employers agree, and to retain cheap labor, they resist electronic verification and other means of discovering illegal immigrants. The "good immigrants" are friendly, considerate people, deferential to their bosses and customers. Yet as they work hard at less than desirable, low-paying jobs, they depress wages. Thoughtful Americans know there will be no mass deportations. In Trump's America, as in Obama's America before it, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will stop plenty of illegals at the border. It will remove vagrants, criminals, and parasites on a case-by-case basis. There will be no Berlin-like Wall from San Diego to Brownsville. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the administration will enforce immigration laws on the books, working with Congress to make overdue revisions in imprudent "family reunification" policies, visa lotteries, and other legal chicaneries. The DHS will signal "game over" to clunkers who milk American ambivalence, benevolence, and rule of law. Immigration lawyers, NGOs, sanctuary cities, and a self-righteous fifth column will impede these reforms at every step. (...)

45 Choosing immigrants wisely can make a big difference in the quality of life of current citizens. The overall goal, therefore, of a democracy's immigration policy would logically be to choose the quantity and quality of immigrants that maximizes the well-being of the current citizens, not of the foreigners who would like to immigrate.

50 Doesn't this all sound sensible? For *Times* editors and asset-rich progressives eager to "transform" America, protect their wealth, and prance proudly as diversity's new aristocracy, the answer is resoundingly, "no."

The New York Times, December 8, 2016

THE OPINION PAGES – Dismantling Climate Rules Isn't So Easy, by William W. Buzbee

Donald J. Trump has named Scott Pruitt, a leading opponent of President Obama's signature environmental initiatives, as his nominee to head the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Pruitt, Oklahoma's attorney general, is closely linked to fossil fuel industries and is a climate change skeptic. He was most likely chosen to reverse these environmental initiatives, a deeply disturbing turn in the nation's effort to slow climate change.

5 Fortunately, law and reality constrain presidents and agency heads. So do deeply ingrained federalism traditions that leave room for state leadership on the environment. Collectively, law, reality and regulatory choices by states would create a bulwark against abrupt changes by Mr. Pruitt and the president. Wholesale regulatory rollbacks by presidential fiat are difficult to accomplish: Radical change would probably require Congress to amend long-enduring environmental statutes.

10 Two of the most controversial Obama administration environmental regulations — the Clean Power Plan governing greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants, and the Waters of the United States rule defining federally protected waters — have been fiercely fought by Mr. Pruitt and his allies and opposed by Mr. Trump during the campaign. The president-elect's supporters have been crowing that his agency heads can use the president's executive power to dismantle Obama-era rules, much as critics claimed President
15 Obama did inappropriately to impose those regulations. In reality, a president's "executive power" is constrained by what the laws allow. Mr. Trump and Mr. Pruitt will have to "faithfully execute" those laws. As a state litigator, Mr. Pruitt could criticize federal policy and sue, but as the E.P.A. administrator, he may struggle to achieve his goals.

20 Regulatory reversals lacking a legal or factual basis would result in lawsuits by citizens, states and industries supporting the regulations. Challengers would argue that the rules are rooted in statutory language, court precedents and in careful documentation of environmental, technological and market facts. On the climate, for example, three Supreme Court decisions established that federal climate action is required by the Clean Air Act's broad language; and the E.P.A. then, via another rule upheld by the judiciary, documented substantial climate risks.

25 Moreover, the enormous administrative record compiled to buttress the rationale and architecture of the Clean Power Plan details how state and corporate leaders have transformed energy markets, engaged in energy and pollution trading and improved environmental performance. As partisan advocates, Mr. Pruitt and his allies could exaggerate regulatory costs, ignore clean energy employment trends and disregard the health risks of burning coal. The E.P.A. can't.

30 Market and environmental reality matter because the Clean Air Act requires regulation based on what is "best" and "adequately demonstrated." Similarly, the waters rule was based on a sweeping survey of all peer-reviewed science that will also constrain future rollback efforts. These empirical groundings for rules are not just made-up. Mr. Pruitt and the incoming Trump administration cannot simply rely on their preferences or on baseless claims about science and markets. Decades of law, much of it created by conservatives' judicial
35 heroes, requires presidents and agencies to abide by the rule of law and justify regulatory reversals. They have to take a hard look at science and other underlying facts. A ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upholding the Clean Power Plan would further constrain the new president and Mr. Pruitt.

40 What about a legislative attack? Past blunderbuss efforts to weaken environmental laws through congressional actions by Republicans have met with painful defeat, as former House Speaker Newt Gingrich can attest about his failed mid-1990s rollback efforts. Even narrow legislative bills proposing regulatory turnarounds face filibuster threats under current Senate rules. The Congressional Review Act allows Congress, on an expedited basis, to overturn rules approved in the final days of a presidency, but not rules issued many months or years ago.

45 On the climate front, many of the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and cleaner energy innovations have resulted from state initiatives, although some states — like Oklahoma, where Mr. Pruitt is from — resist. Federal law and constitutional norms make federal pre-emption of such state-level leadership illegal under most laws and highly unlikely under any future laws. Even when federal progress falters, states can do more. Climate denialists in charge of the executive branch cannot halt energy and technological transformations
50 already underway, especially when those are a result of state policies and are linked to private innovations.

An E.P.A. led by an anti-regulatory zealot will benefit from deference from the courts, especially when he slows new initiatives, adopts lax enforcement policies, engages in collusive settlements or proposes reconsideration of past actions. Foot-dragging is hard to remedy. However, science, data, statutory requirements, Supreme Court precedents, existing regulations, state progress and the huge clean energy
55 industrial sector will constrain regulatory rollbacks or the wholesale loss of progress to slow climate change. Under the Constitution and rule of law, change by presidential fiat is not an option.

The American Conservative, April 27, 2017

The Mob Vetoes Ann Coulter, by Peter Van Buren

Ann Coulter will not speak at Berkeley tonight because the threat of mob violence led campus authorities to claim they could not protect her, resulting in a back-and-forth in which the speech was canceled, un-canceled, and finally canceled for good when the group sponsoring the event backed out. Similar threats led New York University (NYU) to cancel Milo Yiannopoulos' appearance in February. These are shameful actions by two universities that purport to value free speech—one of them a public institution that is constitutionally obligated to.

Previous violence at Berkeley directed against Yiannopoulos, as well as the current threats, originated with a coalition of so-called antifas: anti-fascists, persons who believe that in Trump's America violence to silence speech they do not agree with is justified. They probably are unaware their tactics were once used to silence civil-rights marchers, anti-war protesters, abortion-rights advocates, and the women's movement. Because the law that now shames Berkeley and NYU comes from earlier efforts to protect those groups' right to speak.

(...) While public institutions do have an obligation to public safety, that obligation must be balanced against the public's greater right to engage with free speech. The answer is not to ban speech outright simply to maintain order. But don't believe me; it's the law.

A landmark case from 2015 involving a group called the Bible Believers, who used crude language ("Turn or Burn") at an LGBT event, provides the clearest guidance:

When a peaceful speaker, whose message is constitutionally protected, is confronted by a hostile crowd, the state may not silence the speaker as an expedient alternative to containing or snuffing out the lawless behavior of the rioting individuals. Nor can an officer sit idly on the sidelines—watching as the crowd imposes, through violence, a tyrannical majoritarian rule—only later to claim that the speaker's removal was necessary for his or her own protection. Uncontrolled official suppression of the privilege [of free speech] cannot be made a substitute for the duty to maintain order in connection with the exercise of that right.

The idea that the government can shut down speech requiring physical protection has failed court tests in cases involving speech as diverse as Occupy protests and a Christian group bringing a pig's head to an Islamic arts festival. Both sides in the abortion debate have slapped down the need-to-maintain-public-order argument outside clinics in defense of their right to speak. Any of those situations is at least as volatile as whatever Ann Coulter has been saying publicly since her first book came out in 1998, or Milo Yiannopoulos' junior-high-school-level homophobic slurs.

The courts have also long held that mobs should not be allowed to exercise the so-called Heckler's Veto—the practice of shouting down speakers, where whoever can literally "speak" the loudest gets to choose what is said. The natural end of such thinking is mob rule, where Speaker A gets a bigger gang together to shout down the gang Speaker B controls. Or, in Coulter and Yiannopoulos cases, simply threatens to do so.

Allowing a Heckler's Veto to keep unpopular speakers from expressing their views, as Berkeley and NYU have basically done, does damage far beyond two conservative speakers in 2017. Allowing the veto not only stifles a specific idea, but threatens to chill public discourse generally by discouraging others with controversial ideas from sharing them. Who wants to stand up only to be shouted down by a mob while the administration and law enforcement stand aside?

The Supreme Court has concluded that the government's responsibility in such circumstances is to control those who threaten or act out disruption, rather than sacrifice the speaker's free-speech rights. Berkeley and NYU chose a different route.

The problems of having Ann Coulter speak on a campus are outweighed by the larger obligation to protect free speech. Getting rid of the speaker may be expedient, but it is also unconstitutional. The ACLU knows that, because it took Coulter's side, as did Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. There are plenty of lawyers working for the universities who know it too, but figure on a liberal campus in front of a sympathetic media they can get away with ignoring it.

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis held that people must be able to discuss and criticize unpopular ideas, that free speech is not an abstract virtue but a key element at the heart of a democratic society. Even the fact that speech is likely to result in "violence or in destruction of property is not enough to justify its suppression." Brandeis concluded "the deterrents to be applied to prevent violence and disruption are education and punishment for violations of the law, not abridgment of free speech."

Free speech is not an ends, it is a means, in a democracy. Shame on two of America's prominent universities for treading on that mighty concept. Free speech is messy, and it is our essential defense against fascism, whether from the left or the right.

Project Syndicate, April 11, 2017

Trump the War President? by Ian Buruma

NEW YORK – Nothing seemed to be going right for Donald Trump during the first 11 weeks of his presidency. Federal courts blocked his attempts to ban citizens from six Muslim-majority countries from entering the US. He failed to repeal former President Barack Obama's signature health-care legislation ("Obamacare"), because so-called moderates in the Republican Party thought his proposed replacement was too harsh, and extremists thought it wasn't harsh enough.

Moreover, Trump's national security adviser, General Michael Flynn, had to step down because of dodgy dealings with the Russians, and members of his inner circle at the White House are fighting like cats and dogs. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have both called Trump a liar. His approval ratings were dipping to 35%, the lowest ever recorded for a new president.

Then, seemingly on the spur of the moment, Trump ordered an attack by 59 Tomahawk missiles on a Syrian air base. After years of horrendous bombings and torture by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces, after adamantly refusing to allow Syrians to escape the carnage by coming to the US as refugees, and after making clear only last week that the US would do nothing to topple Assad, Trump saw pictures of children foaming at the mouth after another chemical gas attack, and changed his mind.

Suddenly Obamacare, chaos in the White House, wild tweets and political incoherence, as well as a summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, for which Trump had appeared unprepared, were utterly forgotten. The same *New York Times* that had been in high dudgeon about the president from the moment he came to power now devoted almost every column inch to the steadfastness of the commander-in-chief, who had acted to teach the world (meaning China, Russia, and North Korea) a fine lesson.

And not just the *New York Times*. The *Wall Street Journal* hailed Trump's move, of course, but so did the *Washington Post's* David Ignatius, who claimed that "the moral dimensions of leadership" had now found its way into the Trump White House. Brian Williams, anchorman on MSNBC, was so excited by images of the missile attack that he could find only one word for them: "Beautiful!"

You would have to have a heart of stone not to enjoy seeing Assad get a bloody nose. Bombing your own civilians, or indeed anyone, with poison gas is a ghastly war crime. But striking an airfield is not a strategy and will do little to bring Syria's civil war to an end.

Those Tomahawk strikes have, however, distracted attention from Trump's political problems. And that, more than a heart that suddenly began bleeding, must be at least part of the explanation for his action.

Trump may not know much about the world, and his ignorance of foreign policy may be boundless, but he has been a master of one particular art: self-promotion through the manipulation of traditional and social media. He knows how to grab the news. His aim, as a reality TV star, a marketer of his brand, and a politician, has been consistent: recognition as the world's greatest, toughest, most powerful, and most beloved man.

One way of tapping into the fears and resentments of millions of Americans, who were disillusioned by endless wars, was to promise to put America first, by withdrawing it from foreign entanglements – in trade, multinational institutions, and especially military conflicts. As he put it very recently: "I'm not, and I don't want to be, the president of the world."

But now he has stumbled onto the best way to achieve his goal of being applauded as a tough guy: military action. His efforts to portray himself as a great president have faltered, but as commander-in-chief he appears to have scored a big victory where it really matters to him: the mass media.

People may have grown sick of the wars unleashed by George W. Bush, but the reaction to Trump's Tomahawks even in the august *New York Times* has made one thing clear: when the commander-in-chief confronts an enemy abroad, people will support him, as though it were their patriotic duty. And if bombing an air base is a mark of moral leadership, questioning it is not just unpatriotic, but also immoral, as though one does not wish to do something about those poor children subjected to Assad's poison gas.

Even if Trump's Tomahawks won't solve the conflicts in the Middle East, and even if they actually make matters worse, he has achieved an important victory at home. In the eyes of many critics, he now looks presidential. And he may have repaired, if only temporarily, a serious rift among the Republicans. (...)

Trump still has no strategy, not in the Middle East, and not in Asia, where North Korea's dictator, Kim Jong-un, is doing his best to grab the news and provoke Trump by testing nuclear devices and long-range missiles. But Trump now knows what to do to be admired as a great leader. A US aircraft carrier strike group is already on its way to the Korean Peninsula. An attack on North Korea, unlike a runway in Syria, could actually lead to nuclear war. But Trump's moral dimension has been restored. It will be beautiful.

THE PARALLELS BETWEEN SCOTTISH NATIONALISM AND RACISM ARE CLEAR

Claire Heuchan, *The Guardian*, 27 February 2017

1 - Sadiq Khan was not wrong to compare Scottish nationalism to racism or religious intolerance – at least, not entirely. Someone has to say it: the parallels are clear. There is an obvious overlap between nationalism and racism: both mentalities are defined by a politics of us and them. Equating racism with Scottish nationalism is a massive false equivalence, yet both perspectives are reliant on a clear distinction being made between those
 5 - who belong and those who are rejected on the basis of difference.

In the Daily Record, Khan claimed that nationalism is effectively the same as “trying to divide us on the basis of background, race or religion”. Predictably, SNP politicians and supporters alike were outraged. How dare anyone question their vision of a progressive Scotland? But in their rush to condemn a Londoner – the mayor of all Londoners, no less – for his, in Nicola Sturgeon’s words, “spectacularly ill-judged” comments, nationalists

10 - missed an opportunity to recognise a degree of truth in Khan’s comments.

The SNP is fond of talking about “a fairer Scotland”, playing on the popular notion that Scotland is by nature more egalitarian than England. But this raises one unavoidable question: fairer than what? England, of course.

In order to valorise Scotland, to present it as some sort of progressive utopia, nationalists must emphasise the difference between Scotland and our southern neighbour. The mythos of Scotland as a friendly, compassionate

15 - country is maintained with fervour – like any other fairytale, it needs heroes and villains. And Scottish exceptionalism – the idea of Scotland as a land of tolerance – is a fairytale. It is what allows Scotland to hold England accountable for all the wrongs of imperial expansion while denying this country’s own colonial legacy.

Before hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014, “people make Glasgow” was announced as the city’s new slogan – a celebration of Glasgow’s reputation for friendliness. Yet there is a rift between Glasgow’s public

20 - image and history that remains unaddressed: the people who made Glasgow were 18th-century merchants who grew rich on the back of the slave trade. The wealth that built Glasgow came from the enslavement of black people. These atrocities are buried so that the legend of “a fairer Scotland” can survive.

The 2014 independence referendum was a time of unprecedented political engagement, but also extreme social tension. Friendships cracked under the strain of differing opinions, and the inevitability of the referendum

25 - being brought up at family gatherings created a special sort of dread. Some remember this as a time of optimism. For me, in the lead-up to the vote, as discourse soured, it was a time of worry provoked by national discord. The relentlessness of nationalists’ need to distance Scotland from the rest of the UK on the grounds that we were not like them filled me with anything but hope. The message of difference, that it must lead to separation, forced me to question how people of colour and migrants fitted into their idea of Scottish society at

30 - a time when purism governed understanding of Scottish identity and belonging.

Scottish nationalism in its present state rests on a fundamental contradiction: seeking separation from the United Kingdom, and unity within the European Union. If the first minister is to call a second referendum, as Theresa May reportedly fears, she must address why Scotland aims to build new political ties while actively dismantling our longest and most stable relationship with another country. There is a hermetic streak to

35 - Scottish nationalism, small and inward-looking despite the SNP’s talk of a global Scotland, that persists beyond reason.

This showed this weekend: a disproportionate amount of nationalist outrage towards Khan came from white SNP supporters. There was a lot of “How dare you call us racist?” and very little reflection on the possibility that Scottish nationalism could actually contain racism. As is often the case, talking about racism became more

40 - controversial than racism in itself. Indeed, many nationalists are so deeply invested in the narrative of Scottish exceptionalism that they are unwilling to have a frank conversation about racism in Scottish society.

And Scottish exceptionalism is buoyed by white progressives even when they are not Scottish nationalists. Trade unionist Clare Hepworth tweeted that: “I have MANY SNP followers & friends. I have NEVER heard or read a racist comment from any of them!”

45 - Hepworth’s approach brings to mind the old “tree falling in a deserted forest” puzzle – if racism occurs and another white person isn’t around to hear it, has racism still happened? Comments such as Hepworth’s only make it harder for people of colour to come forward about the discrimination we face, increasing the risk of us being disbelieved when we do speak out. Making racism invisible does not help those of us who experience it. If you argue there is no racism at all, it shuts down the need to talk about it. But if we don’t talk about racism then

50 - the status quo – in which white graduates are more than twice as likely to be hired as black, Asian and minority ethnic graduates in Britain – goes unchallenged. [...]

THE 'BRITISH BILL OF RIGHTS' WILL NOT PROTECT OUR HUMAN RIGHTS

It's true that many high profile people – high profile for all the wrong reasons – have succeeded with court cases on human rights grounds. But that's the thing about human rights: they apply to everyone, no matter who you are.

Richard Burgon, *The Independent*, Saturday 10 December 2016

1 - What have human rights ever done for us?

We all know the scare stories: due to spurious sob stories, terrorists can't be deported; prisoners get huge pay outs because of unsatisfactory service in prisons that are like five star hotels; and British troops are in the firing line not only of our enemies abroad but of fat cat lawyers desperate to pursue vexatious claims. Unfortunately,

5 - many Conservative MPs, either wilfully or otherwise, misrepresent or distort the real effect of human rights laws.

The Tories talk constantly about scrapping the Human Rights Act and replacing it with a "British Bill of Rights" – not because it would be better or different to what we have now, but just as a way of attempting to butter up exactly the sort of backbenchers who cling to these distortions. And if a certain former Home Secretary

10 - consistently failed to achieve her net migration targets, you can see why she might like to shift the blame on to the human rights implications of cat ownership.

It's true that many high profile people – high profile for all the wrong reasons – have succeeded with court cases on human rights grounds. But that's the thing about human rights: they apply to everyone, no matter who you are. Whether you are popular or unpopular, rich or poor and whatever your nationality, sexual orientation

15 - or personal beliefs.

But the "worst" cases are not the yardstick by which we should measure the effect of human rights laws in the UK. For every Abu Hamza, there are many more Gary McKinnons – McKinnon is a UK citizen under threat of extradition to United States for computer hacking, and his extradition was rightly blocked by Theresa May on the grounds of mental illness.

20 - Ask the families of those who died in the Hillsborough disaster whether the Human Rights Act is the friend or enemy of ordinary British people. Theirs was a long campaign of demanding to be heard and when they were eventually listened to it was the Human Rights Act that helped them to get new inquests into the deaths of their loved ones. The Human Rights Act has also assisted people like the family of Corporal Anne-Marie Ellement – a British soldier who took her own life in a barracks in Germany after alleging she was raped by colleagues.

25 - Human rights laws helped her family achieve a fresh investigation into her death.

As Labour's Shadow Justice Secretary I'm proud that back in 1998 it was a Labour Government that introduced the Human Rights Act. Before the Act it was not possible for people in the UK to challenge decisions of public authorities in UK courts on the grounds that their human rights had been breached. Individuals had to instead take their cases to the European Court of Human Rights. This meant people in the UK with justified complaints

30 - and sound cases spending thousands of pounds going to the European Court. That may well have been fine for those with plenty of money, but what about the majority of people who do not have such wealth?

Labour is proud of the Human Rights Act and proud to mark Human Rights Day. The Act has improved the lives of many people in the UK. It has brought rights home – not just in the sense that people in the UK are protected by these rights, but in the sense that these rights, as set out in the European Convention, were written by

35 - British lawyers based on British history and British law.

Why would we want to go back to a golden age that never existed? We want no turning back to a time when only those with deep pockets could get justice. Labour will defend the Act to ensure the rights we all benefit from are guaranteed and protected. We cannot demand and expect other countries around the world to respect human rights if we are seen to be abandoning them here. We must think of Britain's standing in the world. Our

40 - hard won protections cannot and will not be diluted.

Richard Burgon MP is the Shadow Justice Secretary

JOHN BERCOW WAS RIGHT TO CRITICISE DONALD TRUMP Shashank Joshi, *The Spectator*, 7 February 2017

John Bercow has taken a lot of flak for his comments about Donald Trump. The Speaker has been accused of being an embarrassment to Parliament for saying Trump wouldn't be welcome to address MPs during a state visit. But amidst all the fury, Bercow's pre-emptive ban does touch on a deeper question about the muddled thinking in British foreign policy.

Several autocrats, many with poor human rights records, have addressed both Houses of Parliament: Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia in 1954, Nikolai Bulganin of the Soviet Union in 1956, and his successor Alexei Kosygn in 1967, have all done so. And during Bercow's time as Speaker, the Emir of Kuwait and President Xi Jinping of China, have also spoken in Parliament. It goes without saying that every one of these leaders has a considerably worse record on civil and political rights than Donald Trump, even if the early days of Trump's Presidency haven't been encouraging.

'Kuwait's government aggressively cracks down on free speech, using provisions in the constitution, the national security law, and other legislation to stifle political dissent,' says Human Rights Watch. Kuwait's law, said Amnesty International, gave 'women fewer rights than men in family matters, such as divorce, child custody and inheritance'. China is a one-party state, where even the country's top judicial official attacked the idea of an independent judiciary. While between July and September 2015 – one month before Xi's address to Parliament – China interrogated nearly 300 lawyers, as part of an effort to crack down on NGOs, activists, and the media.

This raises two key questions: firstly, is it more effective to bar an objectionable leader, or to skewer them with a smile? There is no evidence that Bercow sought to block the Kuwaiti and Chinese visits to Parliament. What's more, when he welcomed Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah five years ago, Bercow went as far as praising Kuwait as a 'nation of innovation' and a 'pioneer in the political representation of women'. But Bercow did insert some spiky language into his greeting:

'Equality before the law, irrespective of race, gender, disability or orientation, is fundamental to our society here in the UK and we expect to be held to that standard. Naturally, we hope that that principle of equality will be practised and championed across the world.'

During Xi's visit, Bercow was even more subversive. He praised the Indian prime minister as 'representative of a great democracy,' invoked democracy campaigner Aung San Suu Kyi and the 'innate human right of freedom' in his speech, and warned Xi that 'the world will be watching'. The speech was a triumph in passive-aggressive concision, while allowing the government to pursue its controversial engagement without serious upheaval. Would this have been a preferable approach in the case of Trump? A few pointed references to multiculturalism, diversity, and respect for judges would surely get the message across.

Secondly, is it right to judge established autocrats differently to apparently wayward democrats? Trump's presidency, scarcely two weeks old, is certainly going backwards. Trump has apparently insulted at least one of the country's closest allies, tweeted like Colonel Gaddafi, and launched an unprecedented attack on the judiciary, labelling the federal judge who blocked Trump's visa ban a 'so-called judge'. But for his faults, Trump is not locking up lawyers, censoring the internet, or jailing protesters and these are meaningful differences. Our legitimate concern about authoritarian tendencies must be distinguished from actual repression, and here there is simply no comparison. Is it right, then, to welcome Xi, but exclude Trump?

On the other hand, America *is* different. It holds itself to higher standards. 'We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone,' declared Trump in his inaugural speech. But he did ask that it 'shine as an example for everyone to follow'. Britain also has an interest in upholding the ideas of non-discrimination, religious tolerance, and the rule of law. When democracies flout these principles, the breach seems more shocking and concerning than when a Communist dictatorship does so. This is why there is then a need for greater effort to reassert the principles which are at stake. It may be argued that repeating principles makes no difference to Trump's behaviour. Perhaps. But for the cooler heads around Trump, such as Defence Secretary James Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and Vice-President Mike Pence, seeing the impact of the president's words and actions on international perceptions of the United States has an effect.

Yes, the Speaker is wrong to try and play a key role in foreign policy. But the Government has already taken a calculated risk in engaging the president more rapidly and enthusiastically than any other ally, even as he attacks his own judiciary, as well as allies like Australia. It's true that many with more sullied records have addressed Parliament in the past. Timing and context, though, are important. Trump is not a normal president, and his trip will not be a normal state visit. The Government should tread carefully when it comes to engaging with Trump.

CHEATING BRITAIN OUT OF EUROPE

Jacek Rostowski, *Project Syndicate*, May 4, 2017

LONDON – Several months ago, I predicted that British Prime Minister Theresa May's government would fall by next month, when the British people realized that the "soft Brexit" they had been promised was impossible. How wrong I was! May has now called an early election, which she is tipped to win easily.

As it turns out, May herself realized what would happen if people discussed and disputed her Brexit plans. So she crafted a political strategy that would keep the Brexit debate from opening up again. This meant never allowing a popular (or even parliamentary) vote on what kind of Brexit May's government should pursue, let alone a second vote on whether Brexit should happen at all.

But it was clearly stated that last June's referendum on Britain's European Union membership was merely consultative and not binding on parliament. Moreover, the various Brexit options were never discussed as alternatives – much less voted upon – during the referendum campaign.

If anything, the expectation among Brexit voters, created by Brexiteers like Boris Johnson, now May's foreign secretary, was that they could "have their cake and eat it." Britain, proclaimed Johnson and other prominent leaders of the "Leave" campaign, would retain easy access to the single market, while being able to block immigration from the EU.

Rather than revisit those issues and reveal just how mendacious the Brexiteers' promises were, May has pursued a "lockdown" of all discussion. And she has been breathtakingly successful.

The first step in May's strategy was to state unequivocally last summer that "there will be no early general election." This served to prevent any mobilization of the 48% of the voters who had voted "Remain" and who, contrary to the expectations of most professional politicians, remain strongly opposed to Brexit. Had May not taken that step, a political anti-Brexit project – led by, say, the Liberal Democrats or a new center-left party – could have emerged and challenged the Conservatives for power. The result of a "Brexit election," which took place once voters knew that Brexit really could happen, would have turned into a re-run of the referendum and could have been highly unpredictable.

But, until May's announcement, seasoned political players, such as former Prime Minister Tony Blair, thought Brexit would be over before the next general election, so none laid the groundwork for such a project. This puts them at a severe disadvantage.

The second step in May's strategy was to avoid any discussion of what kind of Brexit the UK should choose. Contrary to government claims, May's goal here was not to gain the upper hand in negotiations, by keeping the EU27 in the dark about Britain's objectives. (Britain's ideal outcome is no secret, after all.) Instead, May's government wanted to keep British voters from recognizing the extent to which they had been duped by the Leave campaign.

According to opinion polls, last year, most voters wanted both single-market membership and control over EU immigration. If forced to choose, they preferred single-market membership by large majorities. Yet May's government is probably going to secure the opposite outcome: control over immigration, but at the cost of what she calls a "clean break" with the single market.

May's government knew that, if the Leave campaign's deception had been revealed, her Conservative Party, now tethered to Brexit, would have faced a potentially disastrous backlash. This danger was highlighted last week by a YouGov poll, which for the first time showed a plurality regretting the result of the Brexit referendum. So she is attempting to "boil the frog slowly," ensuring that it doesn't realize it is being cooked until it is too late to jump out of the pot.

This strategy was nearly thwarted, when government efforts failed to prevent a parliamentary vote on triggering Article 50, officially launching Brexit negotiations. May's government had resisted the vote precisely because it feared that it would have to provide more details about its aims, either repeating disingenuously the Brexiteers' pledges, which the EU would quickly declare unacceptable, or owning up to the Brexiteers' (and its own) deception.

When the Supreme Court ruled that parliament would get a vote, May's government had to find a third way. It resorted to the same obfuscation that had served the Brexiteers so well during the referendum – and won the vote. The last critical step in May's plan to push forward a version of Brexit that British voters never wanted is to prevent a vote on the final deal. Were May to stick to the normal electoral schedule, negotiations would end just 18 months before the general election. That is not the moment when a government wants its deceit to be exposed, especially given that the agreement May reaches may well divide her own party.

By holding the election now, May is avoiding this risk. It is too late for the campaign to focus on whether to trigger Article 50. And it is early enough that voters – and even many businesses – remain unaware of what a hard Brexit will mean. In short, the British don't yet know that they've been conned.

In the name of democracy and sovereignty, British voters are being denied any chance to reconsider Brexit, even though many voted for it under false pretenses, or to express an informed opinion on what kind of Brexit their government should pursue. [...]

The Seattle Times, May 29, 2017

Jeff Sessions' sentencing policy is a giant step backward in public safety, by John McKay and Mike McKay

For those of us who care deeply about public safety and the fair application of our criminal laws, these are challenging times. President Donald Trump lurches from crisis to crisis and sucks us into the latest media frenzy along with him. Unfortunately, our attention can be diverted from important actions taken by Trump's lieutenants, in this case Attorney General Jeff Sessions who, on May 10, ordered federal prosecutors across the country to make an about face on federal sentencing — requiring them to “charge and pursue the most serious, readily provable offense,” even in low level nonviolent cases.

As former United States attorneys appointed by Republican presidents, we believe the attorney general's guidelines are a giant step backward. Recognizing an emerging bipartisan movement to examine and revise federal sentencing guidelines, former Attorney General Eric Holder had directed federal prosecutors to “carefully consider whether an exception may be justified.” This allowed prosecutors and judges the opportunity to avoid harsh sentences mandated by myriad factors that might result in unjust sentences.

Between the two of us, we have supervised the prosecution of federal cases for more than a decade. In our judgment, Sessions' directive to federal prosecutors is wrongheaded. It will take us back to old practices and patterns that have been seriously discredited. The order guarantees an expansion of our prison population and ignores the gains sought from the regulation and taxation of marijuana, the promise of treatment alternatives and the demonstrated successes of drug courts and other alternatives to the full weight of criminal prosecution and incarceration.

These considerations in part explain why President Barack Obama addressed the unfair application of harsh federal sentences by releasing hundreds of federal prison inmates, many them serving life sentences for nonviolent offenses. We fear that a strict application of the new guidelines returns the federal government to failed drug policies, including many marijuana prosecutions. Under the guidelines, federal prosecutors will be required to seek enhancements for possession of marijuana (legal under Washington state law), including sentencing enhancements on a third-time offense. If taken literally, federal prosecutors would have to consider seeking a life sentence for a third conviction for marijuana possession — an outrageous outcome particularly in light of changing attitudes on cannabis reflected in state legalization movements.

Attorney General Sessions seems unaware of the progress being made in seeking productive alternatives to long prison terms and clearly intends to reverse what most of us see as a promising trend toward treatment over incarceration for many offenders. And the attorney general's new plan will be expensive. It costs tens of thousands of dollars to house one person in a federal prison each year. As research has more recently shown mass incarceration does not result in a proportional reduction in crime, this new directive fails a basic cost-versus-benefit analysis.

As former U.S. attorneys, we are convinced these guidelines will make our communities less safe and attempt to revitalize our failed “War on Drugs” with its disparate impact on persons of color, especially African American males. Prosecutors across the country are joining with conservatives as diverse as Sen. Rand Paul, R- Kentucky, and Republican campaign financiers Charles and David Koch in condemning the new guidelines.

Local prosecutors, including King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg, share this view. Satterberg, like others who are critical of inflexible and harsh sentences, decries our country's excessive prison population and has made his office a national leader in seeking alternatives to the failed war on drugs. They know that our incarceration rate of African American males based on low-level drug crimes has contributed to mass imprisonment. As Michelle Alexander writes in her book, “The New Jim Crow,” “No other country in the world imprisons so many of its racial or ethnic minorities. The United States imprisons a larger percentage of its black population than South Africa did at the height of apartheid.”

Turning the clock back to the 1980s will not make our communities safer. Federal prosecutors and judges must have the flexibility to assess the facts of individual cases in order to avoid a mechanical application of harsh sentences — particularly in low-level nonviolent crime. It will require courage to take careful and appropriate exception to the Sessions' guidelines, and we urge our former colleagues to do just that. Our concept of justice is an evolving one, particularly in the fair treatment of all who are accused of committing crimes.

Let's not go back to discredited and unthinking policies that do little more than fill our prisons, increase our tax burden and impose intolerable societal costs.

John McKay is a partner at Davis Wright Tremaine and was the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington from 2001-2007. Mike McKay is the managing member of McKay Chadwell, PLLC and was the U.S. Attorney for the Western District from 1989-1993. On occasion, they will admit that they are brothers.