

**KATHA POLLITT ON LOVE AND ABORTION**

# THE Nation.

**CYNTHIA  
NIXON FOR  
GOVERNOR**

THE EDITORS

**IS SHE  
READY  
FOR THE  
SPOTLIGHT?**

JOAN WALSH

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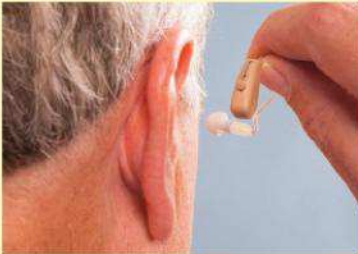
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## Cynthia Nixon for Governor

**E**ver since Cynthia Nixon announced her long-shot campaign to become New York's next governor, the current incumbent has been a changed man. Not only has Andrew Cuomo publicly reconsidered his longtime opposition to legalizing marijuana and issued an executive order restoring voting

rights to felons who have been released on parole, he also spoke out against the wave of federal immigration raids across the state. After first refusing to endorse a \$19 billion plan to overhaul New York City's crumbling subways, the governor now supports it. Somewhere under a sofa in Albany, he also found a spare \$250 million to begin to address New York City's ongoing public-housing emergency. Thanks to the "Cynthia effect," Cuomo has even managed to find the political muscle to broker an end to the Independent Democratic Conference, a breakaway faction of state senators who caucused with the Republicans, stymieing progressive legislation.

Just as he did in response to Zephyr Teachout's challenge four years ago, when he changed his mind on fracking and enacted a \$15 state minimum wage, New York's mercurial governor is once again running to his left. Cynthia Nixon deserves credit for that, and for finally making the shame of New York's public schools—and the scandalous failure to address the savage inequality in resources between some of the most lavishly funded districts in the country and many of the most deprived—into an urgent issue. She deserves credit for putting forward bold, progressive, commonsense positions on universal health care, public housing, education, renewable energy, rent protection, and mass transportation—not just in New York City but across the state, from Buffalo to Long Island. She also deserves credit for her courage in taking on one of the most powerful men in the country and a notorious holder of grudges.

But if you're a voter in New York State, does she deserve your support? The rap on Nixon, spread in part by the governor's sound machine, is that she's an unqualified lightweight, a politically correct, liberal TV star gaining attention simply because of her celebrity. It's true that Nixon is not a career politician.

She doesn't have a record of government service, and there's no question that her celebrity is central to her ability to challenge Cuomo. But we live in a world where money talks, and Cuomo's \$30 million war chest—hardly any of it from small donors—has frightened off most challengers. The celebrity that Nixon earned from her career as an actor is the capital that makes her run not only possible, but viable. That she has long chosen to use her fame to lift up the movements for public education, LGBTQ rights, renewable energy, and housing justice speaks to her character. She may not have as much executive experience as her opponent, but as someone who grew up in a one-bedroom, five-story walk-up as the daughter of a single mother, was educated in New York City's public schools, has worked continuously since the age of 12, and has paid dues to four different unions, Nixon has the life experience to be a governor of and for the people. If elected, she won't be beholden to the entrenched interests and political machines that dominate state government. We can surely count on her to shake up business as usual.

By contrast, Andrew Cuomo has consistently disappointed, often standing in the way of vital reforms. He's been a cheerleader for charter schools, a foe of campaign-finance reform, and the author of a series of austerity measures that balanced the state's budget on the backs of public servants and the poor rather than raising taxes on New York's burgeoning millionaire class. Far from confronting the culture of corruption that has long infected Albany, Cuomo has embraced it, most notably by deciding to abolish the Moreland Commission before it could finish its investigation. He let Republicans in the State Senate draw their own district lines and readily accepted contributions from the Koch brothers and other GOP mega-donors.

At the same time, Cuomo has waged war not



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Cover photo of Cynthia Nixon by AUGUST / Ryan Pfluger.

BY THE NUMBERS



17

Estimated number of workers killed during the construction of World Cup stadiums in Russia

-13°F

Temperature at which the laborers were still required to work at World Cup sites

110

Minimum number of North Korean slaves forced to help build Krestovsky Stadium in St. Petersburg, according to a Norwegian soccer magazine

42%

Percentage of the 12 World Cup stadiums that have seen worker protests over unpaid wages since 2016

\$11B

Estimated amount that Russia has spent so far on World Cup infrastructure

0

Number of workers interviewed by Human Rights Watch who had seen any labor inspections or monitoring

—Andrew Tan—Delli Cichi

only on New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, but also on many progressive movements in the state, most recently in his efforts to defund and destroy the Working Families Party. Sadly, his threats against unions, many of which have endorsed him, have been more effective. But while we can understand why New York's labor leaders might feel the need to bend before the governor's power, we hope rank-and-file members recognize that a politician who deprives them of security and slashes corporate taxes while leaving their children's schools begging for resources is not on their side.

Over a long career as an activist and advocate, Cynthia Nixon has proved that she's on the side of workers and citizens. She was arrested protesting inadequate school funding back in 2002, during the peak of her fame on *Sex and the City*. She's a proven fighter not just for education, but for marriage equality and women's rights. Right now, some of her proposals may lack the granular details that could help to persuade skeptical voters, but there is no doubting her tenacity, her good faith, and her probing intelligence.

"It's not a pipe dream," Nixon insisted when she spoke with *The Nation's* editors, pointing out how much "a real progressive governor, a real Democratic governor" could accomplish. "If we're going to enact single-payer health care, let's do it in New York," she added.

With Donald Trump in the White House and Republicans in control of Congress, the states must be the laboratories of progressive reforms that can put the economy back to work for the 99 percent. Previous generations of New Yorkers led the way on public health, public housing, old-age pensions, and worker protections—and with Cynthia Nixon at the helm, the state can do it again.

In the end, this election—like all elections—is a referendum on the future. Do we want four more years of pay-to-play, where developers and political insiders call the shots? Or do we want a state government devoted to improving the lives of working people, with mass-transit systems that function, fully funded schools, criminal-justice reform, and health care and decent housing for all? Because if we do, there is only one candidate on the ballot in September who will even try to deliver those things. Her name is Cynthia Nixon, and she deserves your vote.

*Nixon has proved that she's on the side of workers.*

## Cake-Case Concerns

*The Supreme Court's narrow ruling is still alarming.*

In June's Supreme Court decision in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, baker Jack Phillips won absolution from legal liability for refusing to sell a wedding cake to a gay couple. On the surface, the 7-2 ruling, written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, appears not to be the disaster that many LGBTQ advocates feared. The decision is limited to the specific facts of this case, in which the majority found that the statements of some of Colorado's civil-rights commissioners, along with the commission's treatment of discrimination claims brought by another person in an unrelated

case, were evidence of government "hostility" to Phillips's religion. Without those particular facts, a different case could lead to a different result.

But while the decision isn't a sweeping exemption from antidiscrimination laws, it's hardly a harmless bump on the road to equality. Less noticed, but no less crucial to Phillips and his allies, was how assiduously Justice Kennedy labored to find a government "hostility" to religion.

In the six years it took to wind its way through the legal system, *Masterpiece* has become the cornerstone of a Christian-right public-relations campaign to paint LGBTQ rights as antithetical to religious liberty. In 2012, David Mullins and Charlie Craig had visited Phillips's shop to inquire about a wedding cake; the baker refused to make one for them, claiming it violated his sincerely held religious convictions against same-sex marriage. Mullins and Craig sued under the state's public-accommodations law, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The Colorado Civil Rights Commission found in their favor, as did the State Court of Appeals. Phillips and his attorneys at the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a Christian-right legal organization, litigated the case to the Supreme Court, which found that the commission had violated Phillips's constitutional rights.

Three years ago, Kennedy inflamed Christian-right activists with his majority opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which made marriage equality the law of the land. But with *Masterpiece*, Kennedy may have redeemed himself in their eyes, by breathing new life into their claims that laws barring discrimination based on sexual orientation are at odds with religious liberty. His decision demonstrates that this Court has absorbed such arguments, as well as embraced a wide-ranging definition of government "hostility" to religion. If the Court can accept the tepid evidence of such an offer in *Masterpiece*, it will embolden others to refuse to serve LGBTQ customers—and to hope for a "slip-up" by public officials seeking to enforce the law.

In his opinion, Kennedy focused on one statement by a single member of the civil-rights commission, who had observed simply that religion has, throughout history, been used as an excuse "to hurt others." He also fixed on a decision by the commission in which it found no violation of the nondiscrimination law in the case of a man named William Jack. Three separate bakers had refused Jack's requests for cakes with biblical images and homophobic messages on the grounds that they found those messages derogatory. Jack claimed he was refused service because of his religious beliefs.

"The treatment of the conscience-based objections at issue in these three cases contrasts with the Commission's treatment of Phillips' objection," Kennedy wrote, concluding that "the Commission's consideration of Phillips' religious objection did not accord with its treatment of these other objections." In other words, Kennedy reasoned, the secular bakers were given more leeway to act according to their conscience than Phillips was—proof in his eyes of religious animus.

That difference in treatment, though, is based on how  
(continued on page 8)

## Asking for a Friend



Liza Featherstone

# Friend or Faux?

Dear Liza,

*I fell into an instant and deep connection with a man while on a work trip. I'm happily married, so there's no chance of a romantic future, but the friendship has been, and is, enlivening. We share many interests, but mostly we have an easy understanding—something slow and patient and unusual in this world. We occasionally talk on the phone about life, and we're looking forward to having lunch when our paths cross again next month.*

*However, in the gaps between conversations, I've come to realize that he might be a fan of Jordan Peterson. He hasn't mentioned his name, but there have been significant clues. More alarmingly, he has betrayed a thin-skinnedness around sensitive topics like #MeToo and transgender issues. He's said nothing that's outright offensive—maybe because I've made my politics clear. But if I ask directly, and he responds affirmatively that he is a fan of Peterson, what should I do?*

—Not a Fan of Social Darwinism

Dear Not a Fan,

Both of you are lucky. Not enough people make time for real conversation and friendship in adulthood. As well, too many people isolate themselves from anyone whose values or politics are at odds with their own, and when we do that, we get intellectually soft. Worse, we lose the empathy with our opponents that can be so crucial to persuasion.

That said, Not a Fan, I'm delighted you plan to keep your clothes on, not only because you're happily married, but also because it would be advice-columnist malpractice to condone sex with a Jordan Peterson fan.

For those readers who have been dwelling in happy ignorance, Jordan Peterson is a Canadian psychologist, best-selling author, and wildly popular YouTube star promulgating backward and deeply unoriginal biological determinism with certainty, zeal, and a lot of Jungian mumbo jumbo. Confronting Peterson's repellent ideas, if you can do so without getting defensive or insulting, might actually help your friend think through some of these issues. There are a few things you can recommend that he check out, if you want to gently counter the propaganda. One is any book by Cordelia Fine, a psychologist who has been ruthlessly dissecting the banal discourse over "essential" differences between the sexes for years. Another is a wonderful video called "Jordan Peterson:

ContraPoints," by the transfemme YouTube star Natalie Wynn, who does a fabulous job of acknowledging the value of Peterson's self-help advice—you wouldn't be reading this if no one needed advice!—while exposing his far-right political agenda.

What's more important than refuting Peterson empirically, says Harrison Fluss, a political theorist who has studied the alt-right extensively, is understanding that he's an "ideologue" and that you should therefore engage in "philosophical battle." Peterson, Fluss tells me, has a "disdain for mass society, which he thinks is making us weak, effeminate." Faced with the growing popularity of socialist and social-democratic ideas, Peterson constantly raises the specter of the gulag. Stalinist dictatorship, to him, is always just around the corner. "It's a really scary dog whistle," Fluss says. In that context, if you want to convince your friend not to be a Peterson fan, it's probably more important to persuade him of the merits of your own progressive ideology than of the specific wrongness of Peterson's many claims.

If your friend is indeed a Peterson admirer, I also wonder if he might be depressed and lonely. Even more than rage, transphobia, or misogyny, the affect most palpable in Peterson's public appearances is melancholy. He cries a lot, and the anger he expresses is of a brittle, depressive sort. I wonder to what extent his appeal lies in giving expression to (as well as providing narratives to explain) male sorrow. He also offers sad men empathy, a warm respite from the cold shoulder everyone gets from neoliberalism (and many men imagine they are getting from women and feminism). So you may, outside the context of a political discussion, want to suggest

(continued on page 8)

Questions?  
Ask Liza at  
TheNation  
.com/article/  
asking-for-a-  
friend.



# Katha Pollitt



## Abortion and Love

*The repeal campaign in Ireland has shown a different way to frame the issue.*

“**T**here must be a way to make abortion rights be about love,” the journalist Anthea McTeirnan said to me when we met in Dublin in 2015, just before Ireland’s referendum on marriage equality. Same-sex marriage was going to win big, she believed, because the campaign was all about love and compassion and inclusion, not just abstract legal rights. People could see that their friends and neighbors and relatives simply wanted to express their commitment to their partners the way straight people do. The campaign reflected that spirit, full of joy and humor; its guiding spirit was the sweet and popular drag queen and bar owner Panti Bliss. And, as it turned out, McTeirnan was right: That May, the referendum won by 62 to 38 percent, making Ireland the first country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage through a popular vote.

Can abortion rights be framed as a story about love? I’ve been thinking about McTeirnan’s words in the wake of the May 25 referendum on repealing the Irish Constitution’s Eighth Amendment, which equated the life of a pregnant woman with that of “the unborn” and banned abortion under almost every circumstance. Everyone I spoke with thought that the results of the referendum would be close. Thus, the magnitude of support for repealing the Eighth Amendment—66 to 34 percent—came as a huge surprise. It was almost an exact reversal of the results in the 1983 referendum that passed the Eighth Amendment in the first place.

It’s easy to talk about marriage equality in terms of love; abortion and love is a harder connection to make. The right to end a pregnancy is about many things: saving women’s lives and health and even their fertility, for example. US Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun’s decision in *Roe v. Wade* was very concerned with the rights of doctors to care for their patients and the ways that the United States’ strict abortion laws put sick women at risk. Most people—including seven elderly Supreme Court justices, five of them nominated by Republican presidents—could see that.

But, at bottom, abortion is about a woman’s individual freedom, her (cold word) autonomy—her right, you might say, to love herself. Autonomy may be the prime quality we value and reward in men—our archetypal heroes, whether cowboys or entrepreneurs, don’t let anyone get in their way—but in women, it looks to many people like selfishness. Women are supposed to sacrifice for others, especially for children, even children who do not, properly speaking, exist. Putting others first is what we tell women love is. What, you had an abortion so that you could go to school on a scholarship, accept a promotion, move away from your hometown, leave your boyfriend, wait until you “felt ready”? You had an abortion because you just don’t want children? Monster. Next you’ll be saying you had an abortion so that you could go on a fancy trip to Europe or fit into your prom dress.

Viewed through the lens of rights, abortion doesn’t appear a promising candidate for a love makeover. It’s more like freedom of speech, a bedrock individual right that says to the government: You can’t tell me what to do—my reasons are my reasons, and that’s enough. That understanding is why *Roe* connects abortion to the right to privacy, even though, as abortion opponents often remark, no such right is explicitly enumerated in the Constitution. We just feel, maybe more so in the United States than in some other places, that society can only push us around so much. The legalization of abortion marks a major extension of this privilege to women, and 45 years after *Roe*, it’s obvious that many people think that was a huge mistake.

The legal right to abortion may be grounded in individualism—and unless you think the state should be able to conscript women’s bodies for its population policies, as in China or Nicolae Ceausescu’s Romania, that’s a good thing. But is the decision to have an abortion itself such a solitary one? In Ireland, as in the United States, most women seeking abortions are not isolated individuals. Most are either married or in relationships; around 60 percent are already mothers. (This fact always blows people away, so deeply ingrained is the stereotype of women who choose abortion as either promiscuous teens or child-hating “career women.”) The decision to end a pregnancy involves thinking about what’s best for a range of people other than oneself: What will the

effect of a new baby be on the kids you already have, on your partner, on your own parents? It means thinking about what it means to be a good mother: Is it fair to bring a child into a chaotic household, a loveless relationship, to give it a bad father or no father, to have a child when you’re stretched to the limit by the children you already have?

For pro-choicers, abortion can thus be about love in the sense that we respect women and trust them to know themselves, their lives, their relationships, and their communities. If you love someone, you acknowledge their freedom, even if you think they are making a mistake. For abortion opponents, by contrast, women are not trustworthy or wise. No matter the circumstances, there’s only one right answer: If a woman wants to end a pregnancy, she’s either “confused” or murderous. In Ireland, those on the No side of the referendum adopted the slogan “Love Both”—but it’s hard to see the love in their picture of women. What they call love is a tactic, like the baby clothes and strollers on offer at crisis-pregnancy centers, intended to get them to produce that baby.




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*“Women in crisis pregnancy have been told: take the plane or take the boat. Today we tell them: take our hand.”*

Another way of connecting abortion with love is through solidarity with the pregnant woman. Over and over, campaigners on both sides of the referendum told me that the Irish are a caring and compassionate people. Yet here they were, virtually disowning their own pregnant women, offloading them onto the British, their former colonizers, so that they could preserve a false image of their own country as abortion-free. Many women I met who had “travelled”—that is, gone to the United Kingdom to get an abortion—spoke not just of the stress of having to come up with the money and make the arrangements, but also of the loneliness, fear, and pain they felt because their country had rejected them when they most needed its support. The Yes campaign asked: Could the Irish not take care of their own at home? “Women in crisis pregnancy have been told: take the plane or take the boat,” said Health Minister Simon Harris, a strong Yes supporter. “Today we tell them: take our hand.”

How is this relevant to the United States? Today, several states have only a single abortion clinic, and those providers are often hedged about by restrictions: long waiting periods requiring repeated visits, government-mandated scripts intended to frighten women with falsehoods that doctors must read to patients. States are competing to pass flagrantly unconstitutional laws decreasing the time window for a legal termination, in some cases to as little as 15 weeks. A judge just stayed Iowa’s new ban on abortion after a fetal heartbeat can be detected (about six weeks). Meanwhile, Arkansas has banned abortion by pill, although it’s not only safe but has been used, legally and illegally, by millions of women in the US and around the world. In most states, including New York, women who need a post-24-week termination for nonfatal medical conditions have to make their way to a handful of distant clinics.

In effect, many states abandon pregnant women just as Ireland did under the Eighth Amendment. For women in the Rio Grande Valley or the Upper Midwest or the Mountain States, getting to the nearest clinic may be a longer, harder, more expensive journey than the flight from Dublin to Liverpool. Can Mississippians and Texans and Arkansans be persuaded to see providing straightforward, honest abortion care in their states as a form of compassion? Right now, I have to admit, it doesn’t seem too likely—baby-killers ought to suffer, seems to be the thinking. But 10 years ago, one might have said the same about Ireland. Not so long ago, after

all, it was commonplace to portray traveling as a sensible “Irish solution.” No one says that now.

What changed? Hearts changed. The spark that lit the call for repeal was the agonizing death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012, after doctors at University Hospital Galway refused to complete her ongoing miscarriage as long as the unviable, doomed 17-week-old fetus had a heartbeat. Abortion opponents claimed that Savita died from a hospital snafu, but clearly this tragedy was the inevitable result of the Eighth Amendment’s equation of pregnant mother and fetus. During the referendum campaign, posters of Savita, healthy and beautiful and smiling in a brightly colored sari, were everywhere. The message was obvious to all but the most deluded: If not for the Eighth, she would be alive today.

Savita’s death did something else: Women began talking and writing about their abortions as never before. After all, since the passage of the Eighth Amendment, some 170,000 women had traveled to the UK for an abortion. In recent years, despite the risk of a 14-year prison sentence, thousands have taken abortion pills ordered over the Internet. But until a few years ago, no one talked about it. Now, women began telling their stories—to their friends and families, and in public too. Amy Walsh and Amy Callahan described having to end their desired pregnancies in the UK after a fatal fetal-anomaly diagnosis. Journalist Róisín

Ingle wrote about her abortion in *The Irish Times*. The brilliant comic Tara Flynn did a one-woman show called *Not a Funny Word* that began with her describing the most awkward date ever, moved through the weirdness of abortion travel, and ended with her waving an Irish flag while singing a raunchy song in praise of sex.

The effect of this personal storytelling was to humanize and complicate the image of women who had abortions and to make it clear that abortion (like sex) was already part of Irish life; only women’s silence had made it possible for abortion opponents to make it seem rare and deviant. Storytelling is also a big part of pro-choice activism in the United States, but there’s a difference, says law professor Joanna Erdman: “American women tend to say, ‘It’s my choice and none of your business,’ and tell their stories in a context of self-expression and freedom. Irish women tell their stories explicitly to ask for compassion and understanding.”

A third way that abortion is about love is through the provision of abortion itself. I remem-

(continued on page 8)



TRUMP’S LACKEYS

## Mutiny at the EPA

In a stinging rebuke to Environmental Protection Agency head Scott Pruitt, the EPA’s official Science Advisory Board voted almost unanimously on May 31 to review several of Pruitt’s most consequential actions to dismantle US climate policy.

The group’s meeting was the first since Pruitt instituted a rule last year barring scientists who receive EPA funding from serving on the board. Pruitt subsequently appointed 18 new members, several of whom came from industry groups or had long histories of opposing EPA regulations.

To the surprise of many environmental advocates (and likely Pruitt himself), over a third of those who requested the review were Pruitt’s own appointees. The Science Advisory Board—which includes public-health academics, environmental specialists, and a fossil-fuel executive—said it had received insufficient information regarding the science behind six key regulatory rollbacks over the past year and a half. These include Pruitt’s own so-called “secret science” proposal, which would prevent any research that uses nonpublic data from being considered in federal rulemaking.

Pruitt is not obligated to accept or implement the board’s recommendations, but any action he does or does not take would go on the record and could strengthen legal challenges against his agency. Additionally, Pruitt himself already faces at least 12 investigations regarding eight different types of official misconduct. —Emmalina Glinskis



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ber when, some years ago, pro-choicers started using the term “abortion care,” a small way of reminding the world that abortion is health care and that it is also about caring in the sense of concern: both “I take care of you” and “I care about you.” Because we have chosen to stigmatize abortion and everything connected with it, we don’t look closely at how anti-abortion laws affect the experience of being a provider or a patient. What happens when waiting periods push procedures from one week to the next? What is it like to deal with patients who are stressed and exhausted from driving all day and sleeping in their car? Ironically, while pointless regulations have forced many clinics to become less comfortable and pleasant—no plush chairs to recuperate in, only the hard plastic kind—some crisis-pregnancy centers, flush with government funding, are looking more and more like cozy old-time women’s centers. What is the effect on patients and staff when protesters accost women on their way into the clinic, when they scream and shout through bullhorns so that the people inside can’t help but hear them? In Dublin, the anti-repeal No campaigners held up enormous posters of bloody fetuses in front of maternity hospitals and schools. Radqueers for Yes blocked the sight with even bigger rainbow banners, and Angels for Yes—a group dressed, yes, as angels, complete with magnificent feathered wings—arrayed themselves in front. One side sought to frighten and shame, the other to protect. Which showed love?

With the Eighth Amendment out of the way, the Irish government is proposing to make abortion legal on request throughout the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. There is talk of covering it under the national health-care system as well. That not only places Ireland well within the normal range of European abortion laws; it puts the country well ahead of many American states, to say nothing of federal policies like the Hyde Amendment, which bans funding for women on Medicaid.

Yes campaigners have a name for the new draft legislation: Savita’s Law. ■

(continued from page 4)

nondiscrimination laws work. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg pointed out in her dissent, Jack’s claim “scarcely resembles Phillips’ refusal to serve Craig and Mullins: Phillips would not sell to Craig and Mullins, for no reason other than their sexual orientation, a cake of the kind he regularly sold to others.” In contrast, the secular bakers would have refused to bake the homophobic cakes for *any* customer. Jack, Ginsburg wrote, “suffered no service refusal on the basis of his religion or any other protected characteristic. He was treated as any other customer would have been treated.”

Kennedy cited *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah*, a 1993 case in which the Court found a free-exercise violation when a city council passed a resolution that appeared to be aimed at barring the animal-sacrifice ceremonies of a minority religious sect, and wrote that the Colorado Civil Rights Commission was therefore “obliged under the Free Exercise Clause to proceed in a manner neutral toward and tolerant of Phillips’ religious be-

liefs.” But in *Masterpiece*, there was no evidence that Colorado passed its civil-rights law with any hostility toward religion; instead, Kennedy is arguing that the commissioners’ conduct in enforcing the law can be examined for evidence of such hostility.

What will the evidence be of such supposed animus in the next case: a question from a judge at oral arguments? Deposition questions by government attorneys? This is the crucial question left open by the Court’s decision: not whether the next case will be more winnable for a gay couple without *Masterpiece*’s specific facts, but how hard opponents of LGBTQ rights will have to work to convince the courts that similar specific facts exist in that case, too. While the Court did not foreclose LGBTQ people from suing under antidiscrimination laws, it did open the door for ADF to continue to chip away at those protections. There is no telling how that will turn out.

SARAH POSNER

*Sarah Posner is a reporting fellow at the Investigative Fund.*

(continued from page 5)

that your friend seek treatment for depression, or at least spend less time on YouTube, which can be a cesspool of self-reinforcing masculine ailments and symptoms.

Dear Liza,

*I’m gaining visibility as an activist against ageism, and I’m also starting to get regular requests from marketing and advertising companies that seek my expertise. The latest is from a global advertising company conducting “an exploratory research project to understand modern retirement.” Clearly capitalism and ageism are deeply intertwined, and clearly they just want to sell things to baby boomers, which is why I’ve said no in the past. I do, however, have some smart stuff to say about “aging in place,” workplace discrimination, mindless techno-optimism, and the like. Might they actually benefit from hearing what I have to say, or would I just be helping them sell shit? They’re also offering a lot of money*

*for an hour of my time, which I could spend on massages for my tired activist shoulders or taking a bunch of starving lefties to dinner. But they should really go fuck themselves, right?*

—Sellout?

Dear Sellout?

I’m not convinced that they should have to go fuck themselves—they’re going to sell shit no matter what, so why shouldn’t you make a little money out of this? I also wouldn’t assume that they’re necessarily up to no good. There are some societal problems that marketing and advertising can help to address—though, of course, there are also some that these industries either can’t address or will inevitably make worse. I think the key here is to ask yourself: Are they in a position to make a positive difference? If so, go ahead and help them out.

Advertising, even though it exists for the purpose of selling us stuff, does sometimes make the world a better place, because images matter. For instance, ads that show

interracial or gay couples, or women in nontraditional jobs, have helped our culture evolve. Ads that depict older people looking glamorous and beautiful—or, better yet, doing things that young people don’t expect them to do, like making scientific discoveries, scaling rock faces, or taking lovers—could help our society progress in similar ways.

Beyond positive imagery, corporations can benefit the public by, as you suggest, creating workplaces more responsive to real people’s aging and life patterns. Your expertise could help them do that. Of course, Sellout, you should avoid contributing your insight to something that actually hurts your cause: Don’t help pharmaceutical companies that lobby against Medicare expansion or cosmetic companies that shame women into buying dumb anti-aging creams. Another consideration is whether the product they’re marketing is actually bad for society. You probably shouldn’t help sell fossil fuels, cigarettes, or SUVs, no matter how enlightened the marketing team might seem. ■



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## FREE SPEECH

## Cardinal Sins

**O**n May 31, *The Stanford Daily* published e-mails revealing that Niall Ferguson, the prominent historian and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, had encouraged a group of Republican students to conduct “opposition research” on a progressive classmate. In his typical pompous fashion, Ferguson proclaimed that “The price of liberty is eternal vigilance” and urged his young acolytes to unite against social-justice warriors.

Ferguson has since resigned his position with Stanford’s “Cardinal Conversations” series and acknowledged that he needs to “grow up.” But to write this off as a matter of one immature 54-year-old would be to understate the degree to which the conservative movement has embedded itself at Stanford.

According to one campus publication, the university recently cleared students to open a branch of Turning Point USA, which attempts to sway student elections and maintains a “professor watchlist” targeting liberal academics. Earlier this year, Stanford also failed to respond to an article in *The Stanford Review* that falsely accused a professor of being an antifa ringleader and therefore a member of a terrorist group. The error-filled op-ed prompted death threats against the instructor.

Above all, it remains baffling why the Hoover Institution, the on-campus conservative think tank, can, as historian Patrick Iber put it, “trade off its name while its fellows attack enrolled students.” Stanford should clarify how it supports Hoover and why. In a climate where researchers go after students, it’s the least the university could do. —Madeleine Han



# One Big, Unhappy Family

*Britain isn't the only “problem child” in the European Union.*

## Gary Younge



**B**ack in January, German Chancellor Angela Merkel entertained the press corps with tales of a bizarre non-negotiation she’d conducted with British Prime Minister Theresa May.

“Make me an offer,” May kept telling Merkel. To which Merkel would reply: “But you’re leaving—we don’t have to make you an offer. Come on, what do you want?” To which May would retort: “Make me an offer.”

Five months later, Britain’s negotiating position has, if anything, become weaker. As though chiding a toddler (Merkel is said to have referred to the UK as the European Union’s “problem child”), an EU official recently complained, “The precondition for fruitful discussions has to be that the UK accepts the consequences of its own choices.”

The British government’s buffoonish approach to Brexit has left two overarching impressions. The first is that Britain’s Euroskepticism emerges from an isolated and ultimately self-defeating political culture that has no rationale beyond nationalist idiocy. The second is that the EU is a secure and popular multinational organization that will resume its progress toward integration once this problem child is gone.

Recent events across the continent have illustrated why neither of those assumptions is true. Both nationalism and Euroskepticism are widespread in Europe, though they are not synonymous, even if there is considerable overlap between the two. Partly as a result of that overlap, the EU is in a far more fragile situation than it at first appears, and remains in a struggle to maintain its legitimacy.

The most recent example of how those two trends come together followed the March elections in Italy, in which the two biggest parties to emerge were the xenophobic Northern League and the maverick Five Star Movement. After some horse-trading, the two parties are now trying to form a far-right, Euroskeptic populist government.

In this, Italy is not so much bucking a trend as cementing one. Its pledge to deport asylum seekers, raise pensions, and slash taxes is, sadly, part of the all-too-familiar bigoted economic illiteracy of the moment. Hungary and Slovenia have since had elections that delivered significant gains to the hard right. The EU has announced that it will sue Hun-

gary, Poland, and the Czech Republic over their refusal to accept their quota of refugees; it has also threatened to withdraw EU voting rights from Poland for proposing reforms that would undermine the independence of its own judiciary.

Rarer is that the two Italian parties support abandoning the euro. Neither campaigned to actually do that. But when they came together to form a government and appointed Paolo Savona as finance minister, things started to kick off. Savona has branded the euro a “German cage” and argued that “we need to prepare a plan B to get out of the euro if necessary...the other alternative is to end

up like Greece.” In an unusual move, the Italian president vetoed Savona’s appointment, leaving the country still without a government. What some have described as a constitutional crisis should, at this point, be less dramatically termed an impasse. That Italy is heading into its fourth month without a government is not unheard of (Belgium went without one for more than 18 months a few years back).

In terms of the euro, Italy is an outlier: Among the eurozone countries, only Greece, in the midst of its crisis, openly questioned keeping the currency. But that doesn’t mean the question still isn’t out there. Polls show that most citizens in the EU want to stay in the union, even as they remain wary of its institutions. A 2014 poll shows that just a third of Europeans have a favorable view of the European Central Bank, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, and barely half like the EU as a whole. There is little support for leaving the EU—and, looking at the hash Britain has made of it, that’s unlikely to change soon—but the desire in many countries (including Spain, France, and Italy) for a referendum on membership suggests that many would like to have a debate about the current form of the union.

And while Britons are alone in wanting to leave, they are by no means alone in feeling alienated.



*There is an arrogance among the EU's true believers that goes all the way to the top and that could be its undoing.*

A month before the Brexit referendum, majorities in 18 EU countries felt that “their voice didn’t count in the EU.” In 11 countries, people felt more alienated than the British did.

To EU fundamentalists, this is little more than false consciousness. They accuse those who take issue with the EU’s lack of transparency, convoluted sense of accountability, and gaping democratic deficits of being heretics. They imagine that the source of discontent is ignorance—people just don’t understand how the EU works—when the reality is that, for some, it’s precisely because they *do* understand that they’re unhappy with the union.

There is an arrogance among the EU’s true believers that goes all the way to the top and that could be its undoing. It is an institution tolerated for what it can deliver rather than embraced with a sense of ownership.

That sense of preening self-regard has been on display

in response to the situation in Italy. Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission president, sniffed that the “Italians have to take care of the poor regions of Italy. That means more work; less corruption; seriousness.” European Budget Commissioner Günther Oettinger suggested the markets would correct the Italians’ embrace of populism: “My concern and expectation is that the [impact to] the markets, government bonds, and the economy of Italy will be so far-reaching that this will be a possible signal to voters not to vote for populists on the right or left.”

Unelected EU officials can afford to be this condescending to Britain, because it is already leaving and its own conduct has proved unworthy of respect. But such disdain toward the democratically elected government of a member state—however odious its politics—is of a different order. Britain is not the only “problem child” in the EU. This is a dysfunctional family. ■

*EU officials can afford to be this condescending to Britain, because it is already leaving and its own conduct has proved unworthy of respect.*

SNAPSHOT / YIBO WANG

## Bicycle Fields

An aerial view shows tens of thousands of rental bikes sitting unused in an area near Shanghai. Last year, bike-share companies flooded Chinese cities with millions of bikes; weak regulation failed to put the brakes on their growth.

Calvin Trillin  
Deadline Poet

### POLITICAL HORTICULTURE

Since one of his administration’s features  
Is quite a large supply of swamp-like creatures,  
Perhaps he thinks he’ll make this swamp a garden  
By offering each miscreant a pardon.  
Though costumed as some roses or some thyme,  
These swampy folks would still be dripping slime.



# Is Cynthia Nixon Ready for the Spotlight?



# The Nation.

*The actor and activist is running to win—not just to push Andrew Cuomo to the left. But can she convince voters she’s ready to govern?*

by JOAN WALSH

T

HE SYMBOLISM COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE STARK: ON THE OPENING MORNING OF THE NEW YORK State Democratic Party Convention at Hofstra University in May, the progressive caucus had been relegated to a curtained-off area that fit fewer than half the folks who showed up. There were no microphones, and speakers had to yell to be heard. Nearby, hired acts practiced their routines; for a while, a gospel choir soared. Across the way, the party’s powerful executive committee began its meeting in a much roomier space. They had multiple microphones, and their voices boomed over those addressing the progressive faithful. Against this backdrop, upstart gubernatorial candidate

Cynthia Nixon strained to make the case that she deserved to have her name put on the primary ballot to challenge two-term incumbent Andrew Cuomo. The governor, she said, has “slashed taxes on the rich, slashed services for everything else, and has run the New York subway into the ground.” Nixon promised to fight for single-payer health care and “real criminal-justice reform,” end the school-to-prison pipeline, legalize marijuana, and “make sure we are enacting all possible protections [for] immigrants.”

She finished to polite but less than rousing applause. Quickly, a delegate pressed her. “I never hear details behind the wish list,” he complained. Talking a bit louder, Nixon repeated some of what she’d said, adding a few more issues like fully funding New York’s public schools and strengthening tenant protections. “We have the wealth, if we would only use it,” she argued. But her answers lacked the policy details that this insider crowd craved. At any rate, her inquisitor appeared unimpressed.

Later that day, Nixon would win less than 5 percent of the delegate vote, far below the 25 percent threshold needed to get on the ballot. But the popular actor counted her visit to “the lion’s den” of the party establishment as a success nonetheless, telling reporters the next day that she always expected she’d have to collect the 15,000 signatures necessary to put her name on the ballot. She’ll far exceed that, promises Joe Dinkin, communications director of the Working Families Party, which has endorsed Nixon: “There’s no doubt she has the volunteer energy, because people know her as a bold and fearless activist, not an actress. She’s been in the trenches [on education, labor, LGBTQ, and civil-rights issues] for decades.”

In 2002, another upstart Democratic gubernatorial candidate likewise used a petition to get on the ballot. The young Andrew Cuomo eventually dropped his campaign against State Comptroller Carl McCall days before the primary, blaming his low standing in the polls on race. “The negative here,” he explained to *The New York Times*’ Bob Herbert, “is that I was running against the first African-American. It was his turn.... How could I go against Carl McCall? How could you do that? Don’t you like black people?”

Ah, there’s that trademark Cuomo charm! While the governor is widely feared by Democratic insiders, he is warmly backed by few. He has undoubtedly notched some progressive accomplishments, from marriage equality to

paid family leave. But his brash contempt for democratic norms, alongside a notable failure to lead on a range of progressive issues, from cleaning up Albany corruption to education funding and tax equity, has left him vulnerable to challenges from the left—first by law professor and activist Zephyr Teachout in 2014, and now by Nixon. “I don’t think people are excited about voting for Andrew Cuomo. I just don’t,” Nixon tells me later in the bright, homey kitchen of her Noho apartment. “We want to get people excited again about the Democratic Party.”

Teachout, who is supporting Nixon while running her own campaign for state attorney general against the Cuomo-backed candidate, New York City Public Advocate Letitia James, shocked the party by getting almost 34 percent of the vote. She thinks Nixon can surpass that—and even win. “She’s doing better than I was at this point in 2014... I wasn’t even running yet,” Teachout reminds me. She was attending the state convention as a delegate from Dutchess County, where she ran and lost a race in 2016 for an open seat in Congress. Teachout has urged the party to bring in the energy of anti-Trump resistance groups like Indivisible and to stop excluding insurgent candi-

**“I don’t think people are excited about voting for Andrew Cuomo. I just don’t.”**

—Cynthia Nixon

dates. “It’s very brave of Cynthia to be here, even just to talk to individual delegates,” she says. (Later that day, Teachout herself would get only 5 percent of the convention vote.)

For her part, Nixon dismissed the lopsided tally against her as the harrumph of party insiders loyal to Cuomo. “I’m looking forward to September 13, when the great majority of New Yorkers will vote, not just the establishment,” she said the next day. “Everybody loves an underdog.”

Nixon is indeed an underdog—the latest poll has Cuomo leading 50 to 28 percent—but she comes with powerful name recognition from her 40-plus years of acting, most famously as the pragmatic lawyer Miranda Hobbes in HBO’s iconic *Sex and the City*, but also as the Tony Award-winning star of *The Little Foxes* and *Rabbit Hole*. Nixon’s acting career goes back to her days at New York City’s Hunter College High School—and, in a way, so does her activism. Drawing from her experience as a public-school student and as a parent, she has long been a powerful voice for equity in public-education

funding. Her campaign so far has highlighted that record, while also using it as a springboard to talk about other progressive issues, such as housing, transit, mass incarceration, and health care.

That's got a lot of appeal. Nixon has already won the support of the Working Families Party, the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, Our Revolution, *Daily Kos*, and Democracy for America, plus upstart New York Democratic clubs like the Village Independent Democrats. But many New Yorkers are like the delegate looking for "details behind the wish list," and some say that Nixon has been slow to flesh out her inspiring but somewhat bare policy platform. "For the broader primary electorate, she still has time if she really bones up on the issues," says Pablo Zevallos, a Columbia Law student and activist with the progressive Community Free Democrats club on Manhattan's Upper West Side. But so far, Zevallos hasn't been convinced by what he's seen.

With three months to go before the primary, Nixon will have to persuade a lot more voters to take a chance on a first-time celebrity candidate who wants to start public service at the top. And then, of course, there are the inevitable comparisons to another television star from New York who decided to run for high office with no political experience. Donald Trump powers the progressive political resistance that helps make Nixon's run plausible. But he also powers a resistance to putting celebrities with no governing experience in big, important offices. It's not clear which resistance will prevail in this race.

**“**WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME MIRANDA was on this train?" one female Long Island Rail Road conductor asks another as Nixon, trailed by staffers and journalists, disembarks in Hempstead, New York, for the short ride to Hofstra. Wearing a jaunty, double-breasted blue-and-white tweedy suit with white patent-leather loafers—cheeky machine-pol costuming, if you ask me—a smiling Nixon embraces the pair for a selfie. Soon enough, a half-dozen twenty-something African-American passengers, mainly women, crowd the candidate for photos. Nixon's celebrity clearly remains a draw, and not merely for *Sex and the City* fans, the mostly white women, now in their mid-30s to 50s, who thrilled to the show every Sunday and debated whether they were a Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte, or Miranda.

Black millennial women, like those on the LIRR train, represent the constituency that Nixon hopes to make the backbone of her campaign. She's an evangelist for an approach to politics that centers black women as the Democratic Party's most reliable and important base, noting that 94 percent of them gave their support to Hillary Clinton, whose candidacy Nixon also strongly supported. (Clinton, however, recently endorsed Cuomo, while the Bernie Sanders-backed Our Revolution has endorsed Nixon.) "Black women are going to stop showing up for the Democratic Party unless the Democratic Party starts showing up for them—all year long, not merely at election time," she tells me. (Nixon has already used this line with *New York* magazine, which is a sign either of practice or conviction.)

"We have to talk about mass incarceration," she continues. "We have to talk about the school-to-prison pipeline. This is something parents and students keep saying to me in a graphic way. We're criminalizing the behavior of children of color at a very early age, as we're ushering white children into college! The level of suspensions is through the roof for children of color."

Nixon's political calling card is her long history of passionate advocacy for public education. She traces it

to growing up in modest circumstances with her single mother, Anne—also an actor and activist—in a five-story walk-up in 1970s Yorkville while attending the local public school. "The city was broke back then... a lot of crime and muggings," she recalls. "The subway was a disaster, loud and filled with graffiti—and so many empty trains! But there was a sense of community here that I felt growing up. Everybody I knew went to public school."

Nixon got into the prestigious Hunter High, but she'd already started an acting career as a way to pay for college. "My mother was very clear with me from about the age of 10: 'I can't pay for your college, so you're going to have to go to public college—or pay yourself.'... But the mantra in our house was: 'Child actors don't become adult actors. This is to save money for college, and when you go to college, you will find something to do once you age out of this profession.' It was very good advice, because very few of us do make it."

Nixon, of course, did make it, starting out in movies like *Little Darlings* and *The Manhattan Project*, while also landing coveted Broadway roles in *Angels in America*, *Indiscretions*, and other plays. Her life-changing turn in *Sex and the City* began in 1998, and by the time her young daughter (with her then-partner, Danny Mozes) was ready for school in the early 2000s, Nixon would have been easily able to afford to send her to a private school. Instead, she committed her family to public education. "One of the profoundly confusing things for me when I started to have children was that all of these nice families that I became friends with were not sending their kids to public schools. They were not even going to look at the public schools, because it just seemed like not an option!"

Nixon toured several public schools in 2001 and enrolled her daughter Sam in what seemed like a good one. "But when she started that September, it looked really different, because they'd had massive budget cuts over the summer," Nixon recalls. "They fired two-thirds of the paraprofessionals: the art teacher, the music teacher, the assistant principal." And so a fierce education activist was born. Nixon soon joined the Alliance for Quality Education, a grassroots organization founded in 2000 to advocate for quality public schools for all. Former ACORN head Bertha Lewis recalls first meeting Nixon at an AQE protest. "We were all chained together with this white woman; she didn't say, like, 'I'm a celebrity' or anything," Lewis told *New York* magazine. "She said, 'My name is Cynthia Nixon; I am a public-school parent.' Then we got hauled off to the precinct."

Wanda Salaman, head of Mothers on the Move, a long-time engine of community change in education, housing, and environmental justice in the Bronx, met Nixon when they were both fighting for "education justice in state funding." Salaman, who had earlier worked with Nixon's now-wife, Christine Marinoni, on education issues in the 1990s, tells me, "I found [Nixon's] education work really impressive. She obviously didn't have to do it."

I remind Nixon of this in our interview, that she could have afforded to send her children to top private schools. "No! I got a terrific education—why would I pay for something I don't need to pay for?" she answers, sounding very much like her frugal mother's daughter.

**"I found her education work really impressive. She obviously didn't have to do it."**

—Wanda Salaman,  
Mothers on the Move



**Sensi and the City:** Nixon speaks at a marijuana-legalization rally in Manhattan.

**A** DAY AFTER HER VISIT TO THE DEMOCRATIC Party convention, Nixon sits in a windowless room in the Bronx at a meeting convened by Salaman, listening to residents of the nation's poorest congressional district complain about how Cuomo has neglected them. Akeem Browder, the brother of Kalief Browder, a teenager who was held at Rikers Island without trial for three years—nearly half of them in solitary confinement—and who later killed himself after his release, is speaking to the group. Browder has been pushing to end the policy of cash bail and to establish the right to a speedy discovery process and trial. He reminds the audience that Cuomo once “brought us to Albany to promise it would be done this year. It never happened.” The reforms were blocked by Republicans in the State Senate, Nixon notes, who were joined by the Independent Democratic Conference, a breakaway group of state senators who often vote with the GOP and have been supported by Cuomo.

This roomful of activists, mostly women of color, speaks passionately about broken promises by generations of Democratic leaders, not just Cuomo. Most inveigh bitterly against the conditions at buildings run by the New York City Housing Authority—rat-infested apartments with no heat, leaks that lead to the scourge of mold and mildew, 35-year-long waits for a new boiler. “They’re trying to break it so they can replace it,” Nixon says of NYCHA, giving voice to community fears that New York developers would like a chance to privatize public housing.

But at this meeting, too, Nixon is challenged for specifics. Bronx dynamo Tanya Fields, head of the BLK Projek, which works on issues of food justice, environmental cleanup, and community health, talks spellbindingly about the neighborhood’s tragedies, including its high rates of maternal mortality and gun violence. “We are dying just to give birth; our kids are dying as they go to school,” Fields says. “I want to know: What is your actual plan?” On the spot, Nixon shoots back, to appreciative laughter, “You should run for office!”

“No, I got too many nudie pics, and I like my long fingernails,” Fields retorts. Nixon then launches into her

plans to fight charter schools, which she identifies as an agent of gentrification. She also outlines her vision of “rent justice”: expanding rent stabilization; ending the “vacancy bonuses” that can sharply increase the rent even on rent-regulated apartments once the previous tenant leaves; and closing the “loopholes that incentivize landlords to push people out.” She talks about the 57,000 human-service jobs that state budget cuts have eliminated: “Those are working-class jobs—plus we need those services in our community.” She tells the group that she’s running “to amplify your voices” and promises, if she wins, to govern according to “a road map we’ve developed together.”

“We just need to get her elected,” Salaman declares as she adjourns the meeting. The political veteran was happy with Nixon’s answers, she told me later. “But this wasn’t convened for her to talk; it was for her to listen and get information she can take back.” Yet even in the Bronx, among black and brown women, Nixon may have a tough sell, Salaman concedes. The Bronx Democratic Party is legendarily strong—and strongly united behind Cuomo. “This is not her turf,” Salaman says. “We are all Democrats here, but we want really different things.”

**B**Y SOME MEASURES, YOU MIGHT SAY NIXON has already won by pushing Cuomo to the left. In her press conference before the convention, she ticked off several issues on which Cuomo has moved. He now opposes a controversial Finger Lakes incinerator, after Nixon came out strongly against it and criticized Cuomo’s inaction. Though Cuomo blocked New York City’s effort to eliminate plastic bags, he’s now calling for a ban on them. He used to call marijuana “a gateway drug”; now, after Nixon made it a leading issue, he’s pivoted to saying that the situation with marijuana has “changed dramatically.”

Most notably, Nixon announced her candidacy pledging to go after the Independent Democratic Conference. A few weeks later, Cuomo announced a plan to bring IDC members back into the fold. He’s made such promises before, but this deal came with at least nominal commitments by the legislators themselves.

**“We are dying just to give birth; our kids are dying as they go to school. I want to know: What is your actual plan?”**

—Tanya Fields, BLK Projek

Indeed, Cuomo is running as an anti-Trump progressive this year. At the convention, he told reporters that he had “the greatest record of accomplishment of progressive values in the country.” Teachout, however, mocked Cuomo’s aspirations, calling his New York “a rolling scandal” and insisting that “if New York is going to take on Trump, we’ve got to clean up.”

In 2014, Teachout made an issue of Cuomo’s shutting down the Moreland Commission, which he had appointed to investigate government corruption in the state. When Preet Bharara, then US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, suggested that he might investigate the governor’s interference, Cuomo sounded more than a little bit like Trump: “It’s my commission,” he asserted. “My subpoena power, my Moreland Commission. I can appoint it, I can disband it... So, interference? It’s my commission. I can’t ‘interfere’ with it, because it is mine. It is controlled by me.”

Four years later, allegations of corruption continue to dog Cuomo—and to boost Nixon’s candidacy. When she pledged to reappoint the Moreland Commission, Bharara tweeted his support. “The rare sequel guaranteed to be better than the original,” he said. “The first Moreland Commission never should have been disbanded and every New Yorker should support a strong anti-corruption measure like this.”

Nixon talks regularly about Joe Percoco, the former top Cuomo aide—the governor once described him as “a brother”—who was convicted this year of taking \$300,000 from businesses seeking state contracts. Meanwhile, the US Attorney’s office in Manhattan is reportedly probing Crystal Run Healthcare, a fast-growing Hudson Valley firm that has received more than \$25 million in contracts from the state health department after employees and their spouses contributed more than \$400,000 to Cuomo’s campaign.

Still, even some supporters say Nixon needs to build out her progressive platform beyond its rough scaffolding. She is undeniably brilliant on education equity and funding issues. Beyond that, many of her proposals are aspirational, not quite ready for Albany—or even the Upper West Side. At a candidates’ forum there in May, Nixon left some progressives cold with the sketchy state of her answers, especially on subway reform, one of her signature issues.

“When someone really knows what they’re talking about, they mention agency names. They talk about key players. They talk processes,” says Zevallos of Community Free Democrats. Nixon “gave us a lot of generalities and vagueness, not step-by-step processes.” In the end, the progressive club endorsed Cuomo.

To pay for much-needed fixes to the New York subway

system, Nixon quickly announced that she supported a tax on millionaires and a controversial plan for congestion pricing—imposing fees on cars coming into and leaving the city—but she didn’t flesh out which vehicles would be included and at what price. When I asked her about it, and about how she would push the policy from Albany, where many legislators are hostile to it, Nixon punted: “Well, that’s the business of governing, making it a number-one priority and seeing what you trade for it.” After the Bronx forum, she promised that her subway plan would be coming soon, but with June approaching and the questions from reporters and voters accelerating, it seemed that it couldn’t come soon enough.

Then, on May 31, Nixon finally announced a fairly detailed plan, to be paid for not just by a millionaires’ tax and a tax on polluters, but also by imposing a steep \$5.76 fee on cars entering and leaving the most congested parts of Manhattan (though these are not identified in the plan). To counter claims that the fee will hurt poor and outer-borough commuters, Nixon pointed to a Community Service Society survey that found that only 2 percent of the city’s working poor would be hit with the fee, and that only 4 percent of outer-borough residents drive to jobs in Manhattan anyway. To make the plan more equitable, Nixon would use some of the funds to lower road tolls in regions not served by the subway. She also endorsed the subway-improvement plan announced by NYC Transit Authority president Andy Byford, though she said she would change how the improvements would be prioritized.

Before Nixon released her plan, the Working Families Party’s Joe Dinkin made a virtue of her cautious approach. “She has proven herself more than capable of rolling out detailed proposals, as she’s done on education,” he said.

Nixon will also benefit from the surge of progressive activism among women—as organizers, volunteers, donors, and candidates. Rebecca Katz, the campaign’s senior strategist, calls it the “Year of the Fired-Up Mom.” One of Nixon’s top aides, Brooklyn NAACP president L. Joy Williams, joined her at the state Democratic convention straight from the airport, flying in from the victory party of another progressive female candidate, Georgia Democratic gubernatorial nominee Stacey Abrams.

Yet thinking about Abrams, and all the other women who are fighting to turn their districts, cities, and states from red to blue, made me wonder: Does Nixon ever have second thoughts—for example, that perhaps she’s draining resources from more urgent campaigns, like Abrams’s, when we have a Democratic governor in New York who mostly does the right thing, even if reluctantly?

“I never have second thoughts,” Nixon replies, “because I don’t think he *mostly* does the right thing. I think he does the right thing every now and again. I think he does the right thing as little as he can get away with for a thin sheen of progressivism.”

Despite her loyalty to Abrams, Williams doesn’t feel conflict in the slightest, she says. “First of all, I don’t think we need to give ground to anybody who’s weak at raising the progressive banner, and [Cuomo] is weak. Plus, I’m not willing to accept that there’s not money for both [Nixon and Abrams]. I’ve learned that when progressive white folks want to do something, they find the money for it.” ■

**“I don’t think we need to give ground to anybody who’s weak at raising the progressive banner—and Cuomo is weak.”**

—L. Joy Williams,  
Brooklyn NAACP

**Yes she can?**  
Nixon at a campaign stop in March, after she announced her candidacy.







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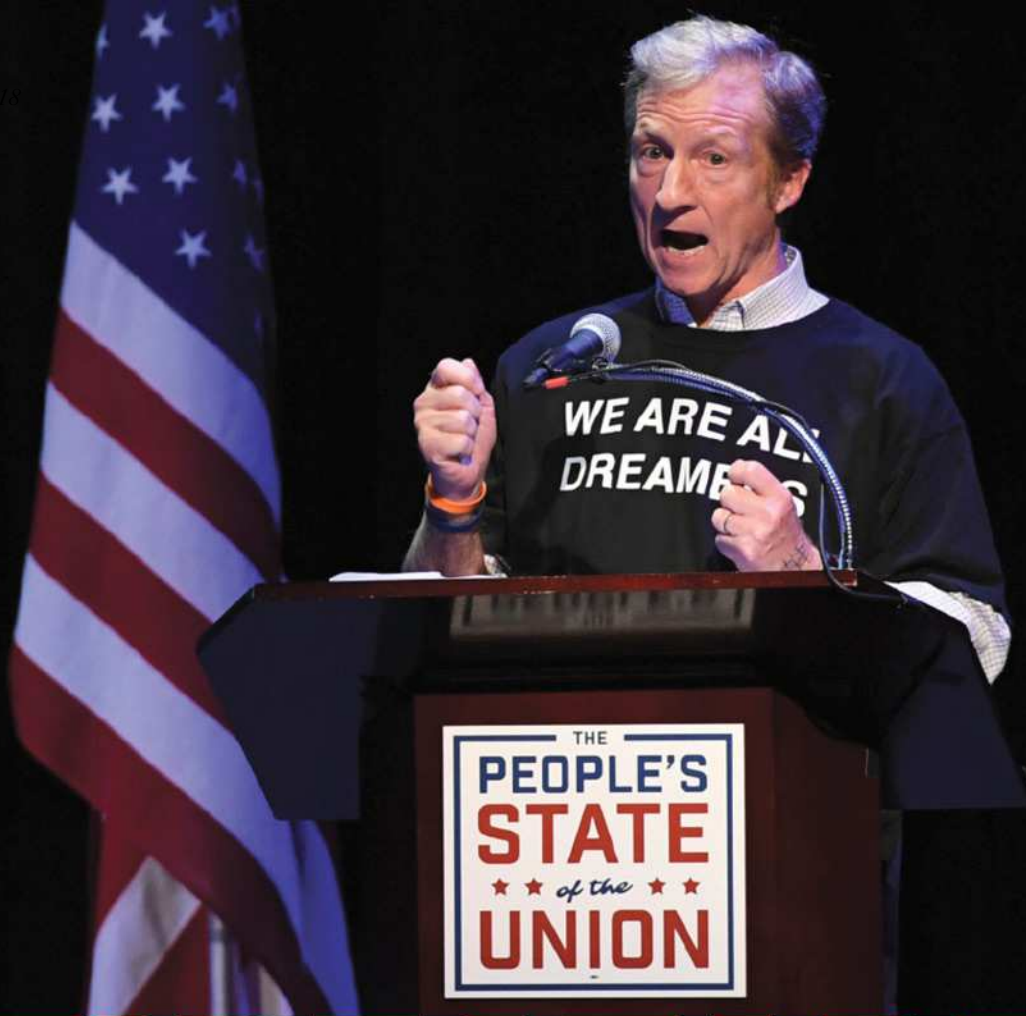
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**No hedging:** Tom Steyer, seen here at a People's State of the Union event in January, has denounced President Trump as "reckless, dangerous, and lawless."

# FIRESTARTER

## CAN ONE MAN AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS MAKE IMPEACHMENT A VOTING ISSUE?

by MARK HERTSGAARD

*Billionaire Tom Steyer wants to make removing President Trump a hot topic this November.*

**W**HEN TOM STEYER WAS MAKING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS A year running his hedge fund, Farallon Capital Management, the secret to success was simple: “You try to figure out what’s going to happen and how to be on the right side of it,” he explains. But “figuring out what’s going to happen” can amount to predicting the future, and that’s much easier said than done.

Steyer was about as good as it gets at mastering that trick. Long before he became the biggest spender in American electoral politics, a climate-change crusader, and the most prominent voice urging the impeachment of President Trump, Steyer spent 26 years at the highest levels of big-money investing. His personal fortune—\$1.61 billion as of 2018—is one measure of his success. So is the win/loss record behind that fortune: Until the 2008 financial collapse, Farallon averaged annual returns of almost 15 percent, according to *Bloomberg Businessweek*. Which means that Steyer was right about “what’s going to happen” a hell of a lot more often than he was wrong.

Failing to properly anticipate the future is what many on the left are getting wrong about impeachment, Steyer believes, especially the overcautious Democrats in Washington. It’s not simply that Trump *should* be impeached for his unlawful, corrupt, and dangerous behavior; it’s that, over time, more and more ordinary citizens will come to believe that he *needs* to be impeached. Steyer, who founded the Need to Impeach campaign last October, doesn’t come right out and say that Democrats like Nancy Pelosi and Charles Schumer—the House and Senate minority leaders, respectively—are missing the point. But when pressed a second time, he doesn’t deny it.

“Our thesis has been that the president’s behavior in office would continue to be reckless, dangerous, and lawless, and that is what has happened,” Steyer argues. Wearing a gray hoodie and running shoes in the San Francisco office of his nonprofit advocacy group, NextGen America, Steyer adds, “We anticipated that things would get worse, and that that would make more people agree this president must be impeached.”

Steyer is certainly the loudest of the people calling for Trump’s impeachment, but he was not the first. Free Speech for People, a good-government group based in Austin, Texas, has been pushing for impeachment since the day Trump took the oath of office. Trump “created a constitutional crisis at that moment [by] refusing to divest fully from his business interests and treating the Oval Office as a profit-making enterprise at the public expense,” John Bonifaz, the group’s co-founder and president, asserted on *Democracy Now!* “We now see the list of impeachable offenses growing by the day.... [T]his president acts like he is above the law.”

Impressive numbers back up the pro-impeachment argument. In January, 45 percent of US registered voters supported initiating impeachment proceedings against Trump, should Democrats regain control of the House in 2018, according to a Quinnipiac University poll. In late March, a survey by Public Policy Polling found 46 percent of voters supporting impeachment.

These are extraordinary data points, for a number of reasons. For nearly half the country’s population to want the president impeached is an unprecedented expression of no confidence, a much more widespread repudiation than preceded the moves to impeach Presidents Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton. Equally striking is that so many Americans held this view even though impeachment was

not being discussed much by the news media or advocated by the opposition party. Scholars of public opinion have documented that citizens’ views are powerfully influenced by such “elite cues,” with support for a given idea (such as climate change) rising when the news media and politicians are talking about it, and declining when they’re not. That some 45 percent of Americans favored Trump’s impeachment in the absence of such elite cues suggests that many more people might agree if the media and politicians talked about impeachment more.

And this 45-plus percent support was measured months ago, before the revelations about Trump’s reimbursement of his personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, for paying hush money to the porn actress Stormy Daniels; before Trump’s own order that the Justice Department investigate the investigation into his dealings with Russia; and before whatever fresh violation of laws or norms might occur before this article is published. Nor can this support be attributed solely to animus from the political left; the left simply isn’t that big in the United States. Only 76 percent of Democrats (compared with 7 percent of Republicans) supported impeachment in the Quinnipiac poll, so a sizable portion of that 45 percent total must be political independents. That’s bad news for Trump and the GOP as they approach the November congressional elections, which will determine whether Republicans retain control of the House and thus the ability to block formal impeachment proceedings.

The goal of Steyer’s Need to Impeach campaign is to kindle these sparks of pro-impeachment sentiment into a bonfire of public outrage. The more that impeachment is viewed as a responsible, constitutional response to Trump, Steyer believes, the more people will support the idea and press their elected representatives to act accordingly. Toward that end, Steyer has pledged \$40 million for Need to Impeach and an additional \$30 million for NextGen America’s youth voting program. His strategy prioritizes younger people, especially millennials, but also the high-school students who have spearheaded a remarkable surge of activism against gun violence after the mass shooting in Parkland, Florida, in February.

“The \$30 million is for the NextGen Rising program, which is organizing people under age 35 to register, engage, and participate in the political process,” Steyer explains. “In response to Parkland, we said that we’d spend an additional million dollars, which will be added to by [former congresswoman] Gabby Giffords’s group and Everytown for Gun Safety, to register high-school students. Let’s make sure those young people have the ability to participate in the polls in November.”

Need to Impeach’s online petition—which reads, in its entirety, “Donald Trump has brought us to the brink of nuclear war, obstructed justice, and taken money from foreign governments. We need to impeach this dangerous president,” followed only by a call for signatures—had been signed by almost 5.4 million people as of the end of May, according to the campaign. Free Speech for People, whose petition in coordination with RootsAction calls on Congress “to investigate whether sufficient grounds exist for...impeachment,” claims 1.39 million signatures. Yet how many of these people can actually be mobilized to take further action remains to be seen.

**It’s not simply that Trump should be impeached; it’s that over time more people will come to believe that he needs to be impeached.**

*Mark Hertsgaard, The Nation’s environment correspondent and investigative editor, is the author of seven books, including HOT: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth.*

**A** LIFELONG ATHLETE WHO CALLS HIMSELF “AN INCREDIBLY COMPETITIVE person,” Steyer, 60, clearly relishes the thrust and parry of political combat. Nor does he mind spending time in the limelight. Many of the 5.4 million signatures that Need to Impeach has collected thus far came from ads that the campaign has run on TV stations across the country—ads in which Steyer, casually dressed and speaking straight to camera, makes an earnest and, he believes, nonpartisan case for impeachment. He even bought time on Fox News, where Trump apparently saw the ad in October. (Not long after the president tweeted his displeasure, Fox pulled the ad.) Steyer has also been barnstorming across the country on a 30-city tour, holding town-hall meetings, attracting volunteers, and generating local and national news coverage that further amplifies his “Need to Impeach” message. Since December, articles on Steyer have appeared in many opinion-leader outlets, including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Politico*, *Time*, *The New Yorker*, and *Bloomberg Businessweek*.

Echoing the critique of Democratic power brokers, there has been a scolding, condescending tone to much of this coverage—although, as with some of the politicians, this critique is tempered by respect for Steyer’s wealth and influence. (He spent more on the 2014 and 2016 campaigns—\$75 million and \$91 million, respectively—than any other individual donor, including right-wing kingmakers Charles and David Koch.) Steyer’s impeachment push has been variously portrayed as naive, impractical, premature, and dangerous to Democrats’ chances in November.

What’s the point of pursuing impeachment, critics ask, when Republicans control Congress and have made it abundantly clear that they won’t hold Trump accountable? Although this objection has carried less weight as the odds have increased that Republicans will lose the House and perhaps even the Senate, it has been supplanted by two related complaints: first, that pushing impeachment actually plays into Trump’s and the GOP’s hands, energizing their right-wing base to get out and vote so that Democrats can’t remove their hero from the Oval Office. And second, that proceeding with impeachment without Republican support—and before special counsel Robert Mueller concludes his investigation—will make Democrats look recklessly partisan, further inflaming the ideological divide across the land and leading independents to punish Democrats at the polls in November.

The prospect of impeachment may excite die-hard liberals, these critics assert, but it leaves most of the country cold. They point out that most Democrats on Capitol Hill don’t support it; in separate votes in December and January, only 58 and 66 of the House’s 193 Democrats voted to impeach Trump. *The Washington Post*’s piece on Steyer smirked at the small crowd at one of the town halls the reporter happened to attend. A breathless headline writer at *The New Yorker* fretted that impeachment fervor could “Start a Democratic Civil War” and yield “disaster in the midterms.” Snarkier commentators attacked Steyer as a wealthy dilettante whose impeachment bid is really intended to gain name recognition for his own presumed presidential run in 2020. “Steyer impeachment ads seem to me more of a vanity project,” tweeted David Axelrod, the former senior adviser to President Barack Obama.

Ask Steyer if he might be vulnerable to “billionaire’s disease”—the assumption that being fabulously successful at making money means that you will be fabulously successful at a completely different activity, such as poli-

tics—and he doesn’t bristle or lose his cool. Neither does he retreat. Steyer was born to great privilege—his father was a partner at Sullivan and Cromwell, the New York law firm that represented many of the largest US corporations of the 20th century (Ford, US Steel, General Electric) and enjoyed cozy relations with the CIA—and he excelled at elite schools (Phillips Exeter Academy, Yale, Stanford) before running one of the most successful investment companies of his era, all of which imparts a self-confidence that is not easily shaken.

“I don’t think it’s billionaire’s disease,” Steyer replies; “I think it’s entrepreneur’s disease. I’m someone who started my own business, and who was told by everybody that what I was doing was insane and would blow up. It’s not unusual for people who start their own businesses to look at a system that they see is failing and to think, ‘Wow, there’s a way to do this better.’ I don’t think this has anything to do with money; I think this has to do with a start-up mentality, where you believe that if there’s something wrong, you can change it and make it better, and you have the confidence to try.”

Then, channeling the take-no-prisoners attitude that he inflicted on underperforming CEOs during his hedge-fund years, Steyer picks apart his critics’ points one by one. He can’t resist starting with the fact that none of them bother to dispute impeachment is the right and patriotic course to pursue. For the David Axelrods of the world, impeachment is all about political positioning and electoral advantage; for Steyer, it’s a matter of principle. “I think the most important truth in American politics—maybe world politics—is that we have a president who is dangerous, lawless, and unfit,” he says. “And everyone is standing on their heads to not say that, because they don’t think it’s politically smart to say it. This is not about partisanship: If Trump is impeached, Mike Pence will become president. I disagree with Mike Pence about almost everything. But that doesn’t change the fact that Donald Trump is a very dangerous person to have in the Oval Office, and the founders gave us impeachment as a remedy for such a situation. This is a question about leadership: Are you willing to tell the truth about the most important fact in our political life and then figure out what to do about it? If not, then what are you doing in political office?”

From this philosophical plane, Steyer segues to the next stage of his counterattack: that disavowing impeachment is not only morally vacant but politically foolish. Articulating a critique of the Democratic Party that resembles Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders’s during the 2016 campaign, Steyer argues that Democrats make a huge mistake when they don’t speak plain truths and rally their base. Impeachment isn’t the only example. Citing the financial collapse of 2008, Steyer blasts the Democrats’ timidity: “Millions of people lose their homes [and] there is double-digit unemployment because of a financial flimflam—and no one went to jail! They [the Obama administration] didn’t even try.”

Ducking big issues and offering mealy-mouthed platitudes for fear of alienating swing voters causes Democrats to fatally depress the turnout of their most likely supporters: the rising electorate of single women, youth, and people of color. “Look at voter turnout in 2016, 2014,

**“This has to do with a start-up mentality, where you believe that if there’s something wrong, you can change it and make it better.”**

—Tom Steyer



**The next generation:** Steyer has been motivated by young activists like Emma González, a survivor of the school shooting in Parkland, Florida.

and 2010,” Steyer says. “Every year for the last decade when someone named Barack Obama wasn’t at the head of the ticket, turnout was terrible.... The 2014 midterms had the worst turnout since 1942,” when millions of servicemen were overseas and didn’t vote. “So does the policy of not talking about the most important issues really work?”

“The largest group in American politics is the group who don’t vote at all,” Steyer continues. “We believe that telling the truth is the way to build trust. How are you going to deal with people unless you say up front, ‘These are the things we believe and are going to fight for’? Playing Republican-lite doesn’t work—if people want Republican-lite, that will be on the ballot.”

Why, then, has Bernie Sanders conspicuously failed to endorse the Need to Impeach campaign?

“I have no idea,” Steyer responds. “You’d have to ask him. I could hypothesize one thing: As a senator, if Trump gets impeached, [Sanders would be] on the jury. It’s possible he doesn’t want to say it for that reason.”

Sure enough, when *The Nation* asked Sanders why he hadn’t endorsed the efforts of Steyer and others to impeach Trump, the senator’s office offered his recent remark on *Meet the Press*: “You can’t jump the gun and determine that somebody should be impeached when you’re going to be voting on the impeachment issue. So I think you allow the Mueller investigation to do its course. You fight against anybody who wants to impede that investigation. But I think it is too early to talk about impeachment.”

What about the argument that Democrats will get more votes by talking about jobs, wages, health care, and other such bread-and-butter issues than by raising a ruckus about impeaching Trump?

“I think Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi did come out with something called ‘A Better Deal,’” Steyer says. “Well, how’s that working for you? I’ve asked about ‘A Better Deal’ at the town halls we’ve held across the country. Nobody has heard of it. I’m all in favor of talking about economics—I’ve been begging Democrats to do that for years. But I also think it’s insulting to the American people to say they can’t think and chew gum at the same time.”

Oddly, Steyer doesn’t mention the most obvious and piercing retort to the mainstream Democrats’ fear that pushing impeachment will enable the GOP to rally its own base in November. As John Nichols pointed out on *TheNation.com*: “only a fool would imagine that, if Democrats do not mention the ‘I’ word, then Trump will refrain from doing so. No matter what Democrats say, Trump and his ruthless political strategists will mount a fall campaign that claims a Democratic takeover of the House will initiate an impeachment inquiry.”

Even so, Steyer’s crusade has prompted suspicions



**Raising a ruckus:** Steyer has spent millions on ads calling for Trump's impeachment, like this billboard in New York's Times Square.

**“The founders gave us a process for this, but elected officials won’t do it unless the people push them.”**

—Tom Steyer

not only within mainstream Democratic circles, but also among some further to the left. Why hasn’t he joined forces with other organizations pressing for impeachment, such as Free Speech for People? Is Steyer really using impeachment as a stalking horse, boosting his visibility and local and state contacts in anticipation of a 2020 run? If he’s truly serious about saving democracy, why isn’t he doing the long-term local organizing that actually builds political

power, instead of the rinse-and-repeat of voter registration for one-off electoral bids?

Steyer refused to be drawn into discussing a future run for president in 2020. As for big-footing other impeachment groups, Steyer actually was a featured speaker at a press conference that Free Speech for People sponsored in December at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. And he lashes back at the suggestion that Need to Impeach and NextGen America have been parachuting into local communities for short-term advantage. He points to what his organization accomplished in California in the months preceding Election Day 2016. “We spent a ton of time putting together a registration drive that registered 807,000 people across the state,” he says. “It’s a truism that if you show up two weeks before Election Day and say, ‘I’m here to help, we need your vote,’ no one believes you. The whole point about grassroots organizing is how long you’re there: How much a part of the community are you? How trusted are you? One of the great things about grassroots organizing is that you not only get results in a given year, but you’re building your capacity to get results after that year, too.”

Steyer’s staff files into the conference room, signaling his next meeting, but Steyer—always a high-energy kind of guy—is amped to reemphasize his overarching point. “There’s something hugely important here: We have a dangerous, corrupt, unfit president. The founders gave us a process for this, but the American people alone can do it—their elected officials won’t do it unless the people push them.” Flipping the House in November is important, he acknowledges, but “spending too much time on the tactics [of impeachment] is a mistake.... The real question is: Do the American people come to the conclusion that this guy has to go? And if they do, Republicans will throw him out in no time flat.”

But Americans have come to the conclusions that climate change is real and gun control is necessary, and Republicans still haven’t moved. Conceding the point, Steyer responds by sharpening his own. “It’s a question of whether we can make [impeachment] a voting issue,” he insists, “because that is exactly what elected officials *do* respond to.” He and the other advocates of impeachment have between now and Election Day, November 6, to make that happen. ■

# DEMOCRATS NEED TO SAY

**W**ITH ITS BILLIONS OF DOLLARS LAVISHED ON HUNDREDS OF weapon systems, the US defense budget has itself become a weapon of mass destruction, decimating our social programs and infrastructure. Republicans have no problem with this arrangement. Democrats, however, are afraid to challenge these military expenditures for fear of being labeled “soft.”

They need not worry. Our latest research shows that not only can Democrats oppose excessive defense spending without fear, but they will benefit politically by doing so. The progressive position on America’s wars, military spending, and nuclear weapons outpolls the conservative position by as much as three to one. We, not the conservatives, have the winning message.

Right now, the United States spends an estimated \$1.2 trillion per year on defense. This includes the Pentagon budget, supplemental appropriations for hot wars, 17 intelligence agencies, the Department of Veterans Affairs, homeland security, the nuclear weapons buried in the Energy Department’s budget, and interest on the debt created by our modern habit of financing wars on credit.

Even if we just count direct US military spending, the figures are enormous. At \$610 billion in 2017, US military spending accounted for more than a third of the world’s total. This dwarfs the \$294 billion spent by our potential adversaries: Russia spent \$66 billion; China, \$228 billion. In addition, US allies spent an estimated \$600 billion last year on their militaries. So America and its allies outspent our possible opponents by more than four to one. Yet the House of Representatives just authorized raising the Pentagon budget to \$716 billion. Pentagon spending now consumes nearly 70 percent of the discretionary federal budget.

The results? We can’t pay for college education for our young people; we don’t have money to rebuild declining schools; we say we can’t afford health care for everyone; we can hardly conceive of spending to house the homeless. And now conservatives are preparing a major assault on our social programs to—wait for it—balance the budget.

This would be bad enough even if these expenditures were effective—but they’re not. Endless wars in the Middle East have only given birth to more virulent and dangerous forms of terrorism. A 2008 Rand Corporation study concluded that terrorism is rarely ended by military means: “Military force was effective in only 7 percent of the cases examined; in most instances, military force is too blunt an instrument to be successful against terrorist groups.”

Despite this fact, many Democrats in Congress continue to agree with Republicans in squandering trillions of dollars on unnecessary and often counterproductive spending just to seem “tough” on defense. Washington think tanks routinely hold conferences with breathless titles like “Strategic Competition: Maintaining the Edge,” as if we are on the verge of losing our military dominance.

But what if the terms of this debate are wrong? What if voters know the War on Terror has been ineffective and, instead, want to restore or even expand America’s social systems and infrastructure?

**What if voters know the War on Terror has been ineffective and want to restore or even expand America’s social systems instead?**

*Joe Cirincione is the president of Ploughshares Fund, a global-security foundation. Guy T. Saperstein is the former president of the Sierra Club Foundation and the founder of the New Ideas Fund, a national-security think tank.*

**I**N FEBRUARY, WE COMMISSIONED A NATIONAL SURVEY by Public Policy Polling to find out if positions based on progressive values were more popular with voters than the “red meat,” tough-on-terrorism positions of conservatives. We took a representative sample of 41 percent Clinton voters and 39 percent Trump voters (20 percent either didn’t vote or voted for another candidate). The poll surveyed 587 registered voters nationwide, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

The results surprised us: We found that by margins of two to one, three to one, and even four to one, progressives could reframe the debate and prevail with voters.

We gave voters a choice of the best summaries we could find for both positions. We tried not to tilt the scales in any way. For example, we asked voters which statement they agreed with:

§ Statement A: “Some people say we have to hunt and kill terrorists over there before they get to the United States and strike our homeland.”

§ Statement B: “Others say that America should stop trying to police the world and invest, instead, in rebuilding America, including its crumbling infrastructure and social services.”

By an astounding 44 to 14 percent, voters agreed with Statement B, the new progressive frame. About 38 percent responded “Some of both,” but even that works in our favor, since progressives are rarely as absolutist in their arguments as conservatives. We found that many Trump voters agreed with Statement B: 26 percent, versus 26 percent for the red-meat conservative frame of Statement A.

Then we tried asking the question a different way:

§ Statement A: “Some say that America should hunt and kill terrorists wherever we find them. If others won’t deal with terrorists in their own countries, we should police the world to keep America safe.”

§ Statement B: “Others say that more than 16 years of the War on Terror have been a near-complete failure. Instead of trying to bomb our way to peace, we should work to address the root causes of terrorism and limit the civilian deaths that have fueled anti-American sentiment in the Middle East and increased terrorism.”

By a margin of more than two to one, voters agreed with Statement B (43 percent) versus Statement A (19 percent). We also asked voters directly whether they thought the War on Terror had been successful: 40 percent said no, while only 10 percent said yes. Even among Trump voters, only 17 percent thought the War on Terror had been a success, compared with 29 percent who thought it hadn’t.

The Trump administration has recently announced plans to dramatically expand its arms sales abroad. We asked voters if they agreed that the United States should

*(continued on page 25)*

# A FAREWELL TO ARMS

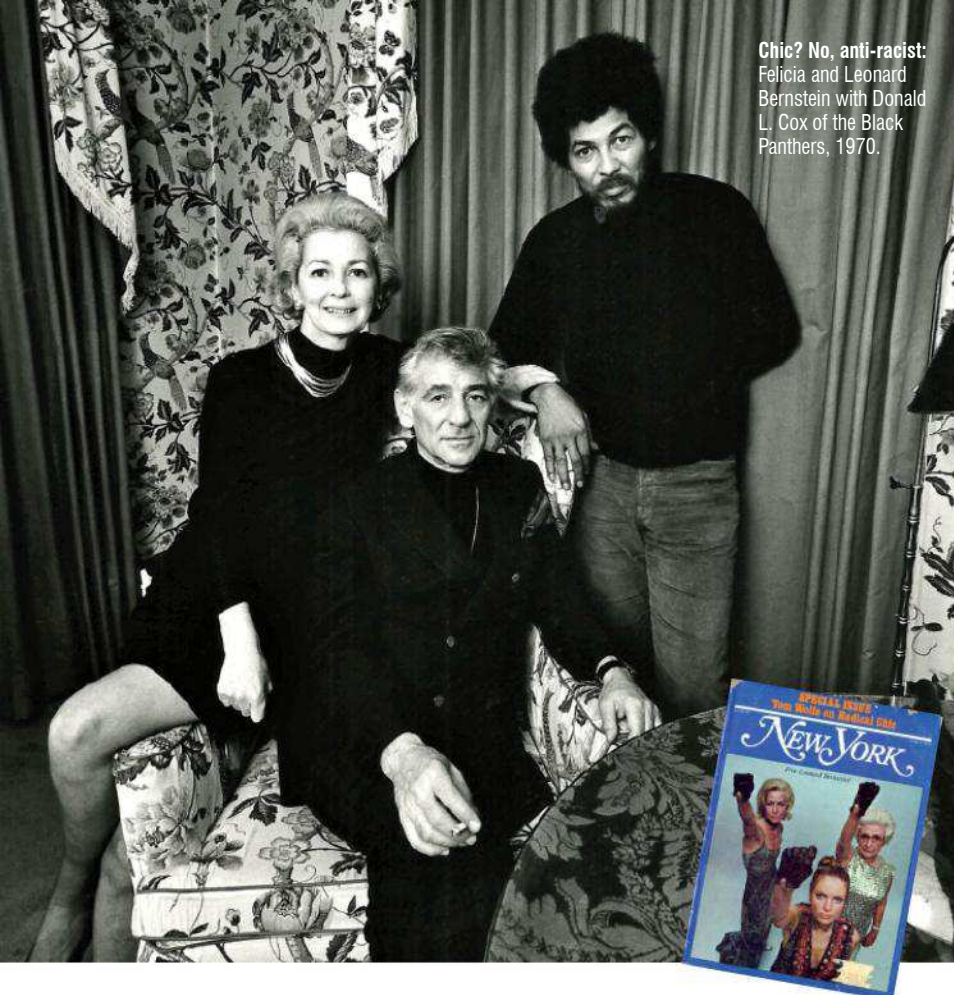


**Voters support cuts in defense spending—progressives should, too.**

by JOE CIRINCIONE AND GUY T. SAPERSTEIN

Chic? No, anti-racist:  
Felicia and Leonard  
Bernstein with Donald  
L. Cox of the Black  
Panthers, 1970.

July 2/9, 2018



## SECOND AND THIRD THOUGHTS ON Tom Wolfe

*He was blithely unaware of how his journalistic cutting edge sliced one family into ribbons—mine.*

by JAMIE BERNSTEIN

**S**UCH AN OUTPOURING OF ENCOMIUMS FOR TOM Wolfe upon his death—the long obits, the lavish photos of his sartorial snappiness... it has all made me a little queasy.

I confess that I've enjoyed much of Wolfe's writing over the years. I loved *The Right Stuff* and thought *The Bonfire of the Vanities* was a major achievement. But once again, as has happened so often over the past year when pondering gifted malefactors, I found myself struggling to square Wolfe's journalistic and literary achievements with his own brand of bad behavior—in this case, his blithe heedlessness about how his journalistic cutting edge once sliced a family into ribbons. That family happened to be mine.

Wolfe decided to satirize my parents over their well-meaning efforts to raise money and provide support for the families of a group that was receiving unfair—if not downright racist—judicial treatment. That group was the



**Wolfe helped set blacks against Jews, thereby disempowering both groups.**

Black Panthers, who scared white folks silly with their militant ways and infuriated many Jews with their anti-Zionist stance. In January of 1970, 15 Panthers were languishing in jail due to unfairly inflated bail amounts, awaiting trial on what turned out to be trumped-up charges involving absurd bomb plots around New York City. (When the trial finally did come around, the judge threw the whole case out for being unsubstantiated and patently ridiculous.)

The host of the fund-raising event was my mother, Felicia Montealegre Bernstein, who was married to the famed conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein. My father's multifaceted career and Park Avenue penthouse made him a ready target for Wolfe's social satire—even though the Maestro wasn't involved in the event beyond showing up midway through, after his rehearsal across town at Lincoln Center.

Wolfe had not been invited to the fund-raiser; he'd sneaked in, as had Charlotte Curtis, a society reporter for *The New York Times*. We all know about Wolfe's article for *New York* magazine, later republished in book form as part of a collection called *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers*. But what is less well remembered is that, after Curtis's sneering description of the proceedings on the society page, the *Times* felt moved to write an editorial—an editorial!—excoriating my parents for hosting a “soirée” on behalf of a group that it claimed was “an affront to the majority of black Americans.”

What I find perhaps even more galling than the sheer fact of Wolfe's snide article is that the author himself spent the rest of his life basking in the attention it generated and never once, it seemed, stopped to think about what effect his careless social skewering might have had on those he skewered.

My parents suffered public shame and harsh criticism from friends. (Two remarkable exceptions were Jacqueline Onassis, who wrote to them, “I think it is wonderful what you did for civil liberty”; and Gloria Steinem, who wrote, “Please, please don't be too upset by the idiocy of that *Times* editorial...getting the Panthers out of jail is all that matters here.”) My father could escape into his work, much of it in Europe at the time—but my mother bore the brunt of the scorn, stuck as she was in New York raising our family. She was plunged into a severe depression, became ill, and died a few years later, at the age of 56. Of course, not all of this was Tom Wolfe's fault. But he truly did not help.

Yet there is another, more consequential way in which Wolfe's article was an act of heedless aggression. In today's climate, when those of us who despair over our current administration are rooting for the FBI to get to the bottom of the corruption and deceit, it's easy to forget how dastardly J. Edgar Hoover's FBI was. As a result of the *Times* articles, and above all Tom Wolfe's piece, my father (who did not host the event) received reams



of hate mail, while members of the Jewish Defense League—an organization that was itself highly inflammatory—picketed our building’s entrance, giving voice to their outrage that a fellow Jew would advocate for an anti-Zionist group. In 1980, through the Freedom of Information Act, my father was able to review part of his own voluminous FBI file. In it, he discovered evidence that hate mail was generated by the FBI—which, because of its informants, knew all about the JDL’s plans to picket.

I will give Tom Wolfe the benefit of the doubt; perhaps he did not realize the

extent to which his breezy neo-journalism rendered him a veritable stooge for the FBI. By creating a rift between mainstream Jews and left-wing Jewish New York liberals, while simultaneously deriding the black activist movement, Wolfe was performing one of the bureau’s favorite tricks: setting blacks against Jews, thereby disempowering both groups in a single deft stroke. Whether consciously or not, Wolfe was complicit in a deep and ongoing process of damaging the nation’s social fabric.

Still, we get our smiles where we can. In a too-good-to-be-true footnote, the

*Times*’ May 15 online obituary of Wolfe featured this priceless erratum: “The earlier version also misstated the title of a novel he published in 2004. It is ‘I Am Charlotte Simmons,’ not ‘I Am Charlotte Curtis.’” Charlotte Curtis, of course, was the abovementioned *Times* society reporter who sneaked into my mother’s fund-raiser. Wolfe himself would likely have savored this felicitous blooper. ■

*Jamie Bernstein is a writer and concert narrator. Her book Famous Father Girl: A Memoir of Growing Up Bernstein was published in June.*

(continued from page 22)

continue to sell arms to the world. Again, by more than two to one, voters said no.

We also probed voters’ beliefs about nuclear weapons, on which the US government plans to spend some \$1.7 trillion over the next few decades. By more than a two-to-one margin, 47 to 23 percent, voters supported having fewer nuclear weapons. Even 32 percent of Trump voters wanted to reduce the amount of nuclear arms.

We then gave voters a specific choice on the nuclear-arms budget, arguing the best case we could for both sides:

§ Statement A: “Some people say we have to spend whatever it takes to make sure that the US nuclear arsenal is the best in the world. Nuclear weapons only take up a small percentage of the Pentagon budget. They are affordable and necessary.”

§ Statement B: “Others say that spending on nuclear weapons takes money away from the conventional military programs that we actually use, like ships, planes, tanks, and troops. Current plans call for us to spend \$1.7 trillion over the next 30 years on new nuclear weapons. We can’t afford this. We should scale back and buy only the weapons we truly need.”

Again, voters agreed with Statement B by more than two to one.

The margin of approval for the progressive position increased when we came to the fundamental issues of war and peace. Americans, it appears, are sick of war and want Congress to take a much more active role in such decisions. We asked whether Congress should vote to authorize any new wars, as required by the US Constitution. By 61 to 17 percent, voters said yes.

We concluded with questions about President Trump, his national-security policies, and the role of Congress. As it turns out, Americans are afraid of what Trump might do. A strong majority of voters—53 percent—“fear that, without control by Congress, President Trump could start a nuclear war in some place like North Korea or Iran.” Only 36 percent disagreed. Among Clinton voters, the fear was palpable, with 81 percent—the highest results for any question—saying they believed Trump might start a nuclear war. Even 17 percent of Trump voters felt that way.

So you will not be surprised that in our final question, voters said by two to one that they would be more likely to support a candidate who promised to place re-



**\$610B**

Estimated US military spending in 2017

**\$294B**

Estimated military spending of Russia and China combined in 2017

**33%**

Approximate percentage of global military spending accounted for by the United States

**70%**

Percentage of the discretionary federal budget allocated to the Pentagon

**75%**

Approximate percentage of voters who believe that the United States should stop trying to police the world

strictions on Trump’s ability to start a war without the consent of Congress. Among Clinton voters, 78 percent wanted their candidates to restrain Trump.

Interestingly, we also found that there wasn’t much of a gender difference: Men and women largely agreed, with just a couple of exceptions.

Those politicians who vote whichever way the wind blows should know that the wind is with us. Unfortunately, Congress has already mortgaged our future with the massive \$160 billion defense in-

crease for the next two years in the omnibus spending bill passed this March. But there will still be votes on authorization bills for the coming fiscal year where members can oppose particularly wasteful and dangerous weapons programs. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Ed Markey (D-MA), for example, are trying to kill a new “low-yield” nuclear weapon that President Trump wants to put on submarines, making it easier to use in a conflict.

Our polling indicates that voters are likely to support such efforts. They are also likely to oppose the new authorizations for the use of military force that some lawmakers are shopping around. Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Bob Corker (R-TN) have a bill that would retroactively authorize all of the US military deployments now under way across the globe. The Friends Committee on National Legislation calls it “a new blank check for war.” If our poll is any indication, the public would strongly oppose this dangerous expansion of the president’s war powers.

We visited with over a dozen progressive senators and representatives last month, and found that all of them are looking for a new “transformative” message, as one leader put it. They had great suggestions for how we could improve our questions, probe deeper into voter attitudes, and expand the polling. We have posted the polls on the Ploughshares Fund website ([ploughshares.org](http://ploughshares.org)), along with pie charts of the key questions.

Our bottom line: Progressives shouldn’t fear a debate on national security or move to Trump’s right to prove their virility. It is possible for Democrats to frame their positions as core American values. Bipartisanship does not have to mean agreeing to right-wing positions or budgets. Democrats can stand up for tough, realistic national-security policies that protect the United States while cutting excessive spending and excessive weapons. Doing so will win them votes. ■

# Letters

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## Mangled Meaning

Both D.D. Guttenplan ["Texas Showdown," June 4/11] and Robert L. Borosage ["Why Primary Fights Are Good for the Democratic Party," May 11, *The Nation.com*] mischaracterize my April 23 article in *The Daily Beast* urging Democrats to avoid ripping each other apart or wasting money on distractions (e.g., Cynthia Nixon's gubernatorial campaign) when protecting democracy demands a laser-like focus on winning back the House.

Contrary to Guttenplan's critique, I never supported nominating "Rahm clones," and I didn't mention, much less back, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's ham-handed (and unsuccessful) effort to drive Laura Moser from a House race in Texas. I did write about a potentially serious problem in certain California congressional districts, where too many Democratic primary candidates might split the vote and allow Republicans to finish first and second in the state's "top two" primary, squandering a chance to pick up seats there. Efforts to convince long-shot Democrats to drop out instead of being spoilers should be applauded.

Borosage writes that "energy and money in politics are a function of excitement and interest." That's true of energy—a critical ingredient in driving turnout and winning elections—but not necessarily of money. If progressive candidates can raise lots of small-donor money—as Beto O'Rourke is doing in Texas—that's fantastic. But if they can't, and a more moderate (but still

progressive) candidate can attract big donors and help flip 24 seats, they should get the support of even those Democrats who don't love everything about their politics. The sad reality is that, in House races, challengers must be financially competitive to beat incumbents. This year, when the Koch brothers' network is pouring \$400 million into state and local races, that requires large amounts of Democratic money.

"Money isn't everything," I wrote. Democrats need a strong progressive economic agenda to win. But this year, they don't have the luxury of imposing litmus tests on their candidates. The stakes are too high.

JONATHAN ALTER  
MONTCLAIR, N.J.

## Border Cruelty

I just recently noticed your magazine in my local library and borrowed three issues. One story in particular haunts me: "For Trump, Cruelty Is the Point," by Julianne Hing [April 9]. I am ashamed that my country's leaders would conceive of such a cruel idea: separating migrant children from their parents at the border. I cannot imagine the trauma these parents and kids endured at separation, and will continue to endure for as long as they remain separated.

We must continue to speak out and fight against this shameful policy until it is reversed! I ask you and your staff to commit to covering this story for as long as it takes. We cannot let this immigration policy go unchallenged. We have to commit to resistance.

NANCY THORSEN  
FAIRFIELD TOWNSHIP, OHIO

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# Books & the Arts.



## ARTIFICIAL PERSONS

The long road to *Citizens United*

by DAVID COLE

**F**ew decisions in the Supreme Court's history have been more unpopular than its 2010 ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which declared unconstitutional any restrictions imposed on how much corporations can spend on speech related to elections. One poll found that 85 percent of Democrats, 81 percent of independents, and 76 percent of Republi-

cans think the case was wrongly decided. Nineteen states have passed resolutions calling for a constitutional amendment to overturn the Court's decision, which is routinely blamed for the influx of vast amounts of money into political campaigns, although the lion's share still comes from individuals, not corporations.

But what precisely did the Court get wrong in *Citizens United*? The two most common criticisms are that the decision erroneously extended constitutional rights to corporations, and that it improperly treated a restriction on money as a restraint on speech. A resolution

### We the Corporations

*How American Businesses Won Their Civil Rights*

By Adam Winkler

Liveright. 496 pp. \$28.95

adopted in 2011 by the New York General Assembly of Occupy Wall Street, for example, called for a constitutional amendment "to firmly establish that money is not speech, that human beings, not corporations, are persons entitled to constitutional rights, and that the rights of human beings will never again be granted to fictitious entities or

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*David Cole, legal-affairs correspondent for The Nation, is the national legal director of the ACLU. The views expressed here are his own, not those of the ACLU.*

ILLUSTRATION BY CURT MERLO

property.” These criticisms are so often repeated that they have become virtual gospel to many on the left.

Yet neither of these familiar critiques holds up. *Citizens United* was hardly the first Supreme Court decision to recognize a corporation’s constitutional rights; corporations have received constitutional protection almost since America’s founding. Indeed, from 1868 to 1912, the Supreme Court heard more than 10 times as many 14th Amendment cases involving corporations as it did cases concerning African Americans. Nor did the decision break new ground in treating restrictions on the amount of money that can be spent on political campaigns as limits on speech itself, and therefore subject to searching scrutiny. The Supreme Court had established that principle more than three decades earlier, in *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), which struck down limits on how much individuals could spend on their own independent speech concerning electoral campaigns, while upholding the limits on how much they could contribute directly to candidates.

Corporations have long been granted constitutional rights, including the rights of property and contract, the right to sue in federal court, protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, the right to equal protection and due process of law, the rights of association and speech, and virtually all of the rights exercised by criminal defendants (with the exception of the privilege against self-incrimination). Moreover, there are sound reasons for extending these rights to corporations. Individuals often create corporations to own and sell property or to engage in contractual relations, so to deny these entities property and contract protections would defeat their central purpose. Likewise, if corporations can be criminally prosecuted—and they can—shouldn’t they have the same protections we generally accord to all criminal defendants? And should courts deny the right of association, speech, or a free press to the NAACP, the ACLU, or *The New York Times* because these institutions are incorporated? It’s simply not evident on its face why the corporate form or the profit motive should be disqualifying with respect to many constitutional rights.

Nor is it wrong to treat a restriction on how much money can be spent on political-campaign speech as akin to a

restriction on speech. A law that limited how much a person could spend each year on political magazines, newspapers, or books, for example, would plainly restrict speech rights, even though in form it regulated only money. Campaign-finance laws raise First Amendment concerns because they single out spending on speech of a particular kind—namely, concerning political campaigns. Indeed, given the inherent advantages of incumbency in electoral contests, there is nearly always a danger that restrictions on campaign spending will serve legislators’ self-interest.

This doesn’t mean that *Citizens United* was correctly decided. But it does mean that in order to persuasively critique the Court’s reasoning, one must move beyond the most common sound bites. *We the Corporations: How American Businesses Won Their Civil Rights*, an engaging and accessible new historical account by Adam Winkler of the very long road to *Citizens United*, should help inform the debate. Just as he did for the Second Amendment in his previous book, *Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America*, Winkler offers a balanced guide to a controversial constitutional issue, and succeeds in showing that the issue is far more nuanced than advocates on either side care to admit.

**T**here is little evidence that, when the framers sat down to write the Constitution, they considered whether corporations should be protected by the Bill of Rights. This is likely because there were so few corporations around at the time. In all of the United States, there were two incorporated banks, two insurance companies, six canal companies, two bridge-toll companies, and a handful of nonprofit corporations, including Yale and Harvard. This changed at the turn of the 19th century: With industrialization, corporations began to proliferate and quickly found themselves in legal disputes and asserting constitutional protections. The Supreme Court first granted a constitutional right to corporations in 1809. That case, *Bank of the United States v. Deveaux*, involved the technical but important question of whether the Bank of the United States, a federally chartered corporation, could sue in federal court to challenge a tax that the state of Georgia had imposed on it. The Court ruled that it could, even though,

under the literal terms of the Constitution, that right applied only to “citizens.”

The result in *Deveaux* made sense because, as Winkler explains, “the very reason the corporation was invented was to enable the establishment of a durable, legal entity that could exercise at least some legal rights.” Similarly, concerns about out-of-state litigants getting a fair shake when suing an in-state defendant apply equally to out-of-state individuals and corporations. Corporations are evidently not “citizens”; they cannot vote or serve on juries, for example. But since corporations are made up of citizens, the Court reasoned, they should have the same right to sue as their members.

That reasoning would prove to be a predicate for many of the rights subsequently afforded corporations. In 1819, the Court recognized that Dartmouth College, a charitable corporation, had rights under the Constitution’s contract clause that precluded New Hampshire from unilaterally rewriting its charter in what amounted to a hostile takeover. As in *Deveaux*, the Court reasoned that a corporation was an association of citizens and should have roughly the same rights, as a collective, as its members did as individuals.

Later, in a 1906 decision that arose from an investigation into price-fixing by tobacco companies, the Court recognized that corporations have Fourth Amendment rights against unreasonable searches and seizures; but it also held that the privilege against self-incrimination, which seeks to protect individual conscience, does not extend to corporations. In 1936, the Court extended free-press protections to the American Press Company, a corporation subjected to discriminatory state taxes in Louisiana by Governor Huey Long because its papers criticized Long. So while the Court has not unthinkingly equated corporations and persons, it has often found that many of the rights of the collective are linked to those rights held by the individuals who compose it.

Winkler is critical of the proposition that corporations should receive constitutional protections because they are associations of individuals who enjoy the same. In his view, if a corporation is a distinct legal entity—one separate from its owners for purposes of limited liability—then the courts should not extend to it rights based on the rights its members have, but rather should consider whether the entity itself deserves rights. He is less clear, however, on what basis he thinks the courts should de-

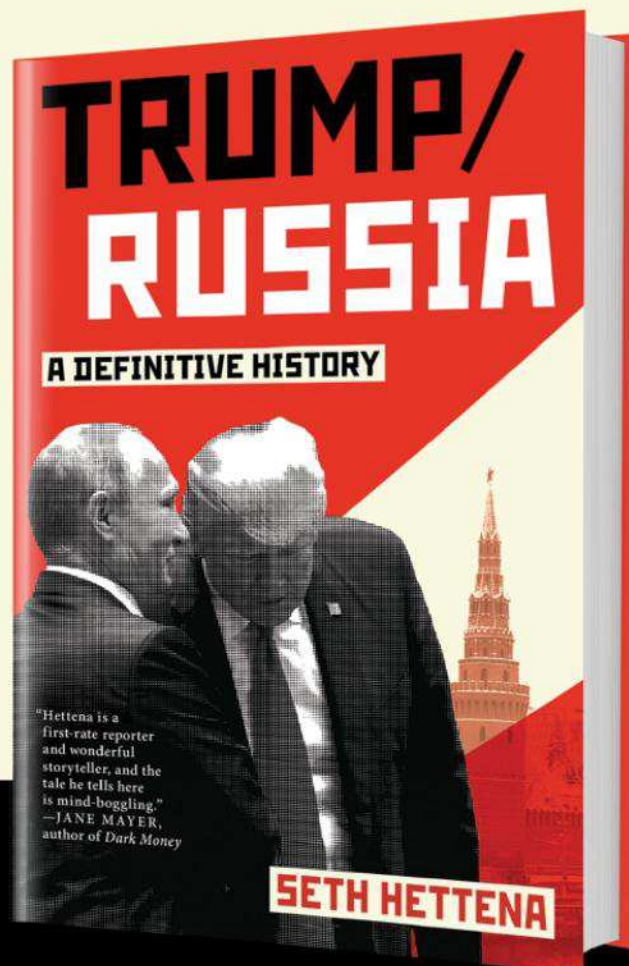


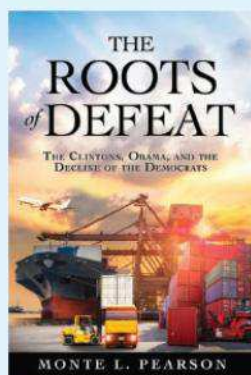
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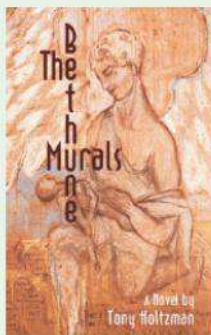
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cide the latter question. The courts, however, have generally granted associations the collective rights of their members, and it is not evident why associations that assume a corporate form should forfeit these rights. Thus, the Court was right to rule, in its 1958 decision in *NAACP v. Alabama ex rel. Patterson*, that the state of Alabama could not demand that the NAACP disclose the identity of its members despite its corporate form. Allowing Alabama to impose this obligation would violate the right of association of the NAACP's members—and of the NAACP itself.

**W**inkler is fond of anomalies and contradictions, and these certainly abound in the history of corporate constitutional law. For example, two of the Supreme Court's foremost proponents for limits on corporate rights were Roger Taney, author of the *Dred Scott* decision, and the notorious conservative William Rehnquist. Another example: The use of political-action committees, or PACs, to engage in campaign spending was first developed by labor unions, but it soon became a tool of corporations—by 2002, there were over 1,670 corporate PACs and only about 325 union PACs.

Sometimes, however, Winkler strains too hard to find a contradiction. For example, he traces the notion that speech should be protected because of its value to listeners, irrespective of the identity of the speaker—an argument used to protect corporate speech—to Ralph Nader's consumer-advocacy group Public Citizen. In 1975, Public Citizen successfully advanced that argument to extend constitutional protection to price advertising about pharmaceutical drugs. Winkler notes that, three years later, the same argument was used to support the extension of speech rights to corporations in a campaign-spending case when the Supreme Court ruled, in *First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*, that the public's interest in hearing what a corporation had to say regarding a ballot referendum justified extending First Amendment protection to that speech, without regard to whether the corporation itself had a right to speak. But, in fact, this argument had already been accepted a little over a decade earlier, in *Lamont v. Postmaster General*, when the Court struck down a limit on the receipt within the United States of communist literature mailed from abroad. The argument used in *Bellotti*, therefore, was available long before Public Citizen's efforts to protect consumer access to drug-pricing information.

Perhaps the most important lesson of Winkler's book is that we should have seen *Citizens United* coming. It did not spring, fully formed, from the head of Justice Anthony Kennedy, much less Zeus; it has deep roots in our nation's constitutional and economic history. And its premises are not self-evidently wrong—unless you think the NAACP and *The New York Times* should not be entitled to First Amendment protection, or that restrictions on how much money people can spend on political books and newspapers do not affect their speech rights.

The real problem with *Citizens United* lies not in the Court's recognition that limiting corporate spending on political speech raises First Amendment concerns, but rather in its overly narrow conception of the permissible justifications for such limits. To say that speech is protected does not mean that it can't be regulated, but only that the government must have very important reasons for doing so. In 1990, the Supreme Court upheld the same law that it would eventually strike down in *Citizens United*. That decision, *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*, recognized that a restriction on campaign spending raised First Amendment concerns, but held that the restriction was justified by the state's interest in combating the distorting effects of corporate wealth on the electoral process. In *Citizens United*, the Court rejected this justification, overruled *Austin*, and held that the only acceptable rationale for limiting campaign spending is to counter bribery and its appearance. And because the Court had long held that “independent expenditures”—money spent to advocate a candidate's election, but not in coordination with the candidate—were unlikely to lead to bribes, it struck down the limits on such expenditures by corporations.

To understand more precisely what is wrong with *Citizens United* is critical to any effort to reverse or modify the decision. Reflexive opposition to all constitutional protections for corporations fails to grapple with the many settings in which these rights are warranted. And government restrictions on how much one can spend on political speech do, in fact, limit one's speech. The problem with *Citizens United* is more nuanced: Its failure is not in its protection of corporate rights or its view of money as speech, but in its inability to recognize a broader set of justifications for limiting the distorting effects of concentrated wealth. Winkler's careful history will help us do a better job of getting it right about what *Citizens United* got wrong. ■



# EQUIPMENT FOR LIVING

Losing and recovering oneself in drugs and sobriety

by REBECCA TUHUS-DUBROW

In December of 1934, an unemployed stockbroker named Bill Wilson checked himself into Towns Hospital in Manhattan. He had a habit of consuming more than two quarts of whiskey per day, and his wife had implored him to get help. The doctor gave Wilson an extract of belladonna, a plant with hallucinogenic properties, which at the time was an experimental treatment for alcoholism. That afternoon, the “room blazed with an indescribably white light,” Wilson later wrote. A vision of a mountain came to him. “I stood upon

*Rebecca Tubus-Dubrow is the author of Personal Stereo, a cultural history of the Walkman.*

its summit where a great wind blew.... Then came the blazing thought, ‘you are a free man.’”

Bill Wilson never drank again. He went on to found Alcoholics Anonymous, the grassroots organization that has helped millions of people achieve and sustain sobriety. The story of Wilson’s spiritual awakening figures prominently in AA mythology. The part about the preceding drug dose does not.

Wilson’s dabbling in psychedelics—including later experiments with LSD—comes up in two new books: Leslie Jamison’s *The Recovering*, a memoir of drinking and quitting intertwined with literary and cul-

## The Recovering

*Intoxication and Its Aftermath*

By Leslie Jamison

Little, Brown & Company. 544 pp. \$30

## How to Change Your Mind

*What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*

By Michael Pollan

Penguin Press. 480 pp. \$28

tural criticism, and Michael Pollan’s *How to Change Your Mind*, an exploration of the awesome powers of psychedelics to enrich human consciousness. Many other authors

have covered similar ground, but Pollan and Jamison bring to bear singular gifts. They are, in some ways, very different writers: Pollan is at heart a journalist oriented toward the world; Jamison, trained as a fiction writer, is drawn to her own psyche for material. But both deftly synthesize research and their own experiences into finely crafted narratives that give new life to these familiar themes.

These authors approach mind-altering substances from apparently opposite perspectives. Jamison shows how they can destroy lives and how to escape their thrall; Pollan focuses on their potential to transform lives for the better. As the story of Bill Wilson suggests, however, unexpected connections arise between the two books. Taking drugs and recovering are not always as incompatible as they seem.

Leslie Jamison came to widespread attention in 2014 with the publication of her essay collection *The Empathy Exams*. The essays mined episodes from Jamison's life—her abortion, her heart surgery, the time she was punched in the nose by a guy on the street in Nicaragua—for insights into suffering and what it means to try to feel the pain of others. The collection also included journalistic pieces; for one, she spent time with sufferers of a disease called Morgellons, which causes its victims to believe they have mysterious fibers emerging from their skin. Jamison sought not simply to extol empathy but to grapple with its limits and vanities. As one representative sentence put it, “empathy is always perched precariously between gift and invasion.”

Jamison, who had previously published a novel, *The Gin Closet*, was hailed as an heir to Susan Sontag and Joan Didion, and *The Empathy Exams* is undeniably impressive. Nearly every page is dense with insight, expressed in tautly constructed sentences. Sometimes reading it feels like sitting in on a therapy session with a hyper-introspective, hyper-articulate patient—an appraisal some might interpret, but I don't intend, as pejorative. But it has shortcomings common to many essay collections. While the volume is ostensibly knit together by the themes of pain and empathy, some pieces, such as a brief account of a trip to a writers' conference, feel like filler. The book can also come across as overly performative. It is easier to admire than to enjoy.

*The Recovering* covers some of the same autobiographical territory as *The Empathy*

*Exams*. We hear again about Jamison's abortion, her heart surgery, the time she was punched in the face by a guy on the street in Nicaragua. We're back on the couch with the consummate analyst. (“I wanted to be loved because I deserved it. Except I was scared to be loved like this, because what if I *stopped* deserving it? Unconditional love was insulting, but conditional love was terrifying.”) Yet this time, the vignettes and self-scrutiny are presented in a more straightforward memoir, fleshed out with context and with the narrative propulsion that chronology bestows. Her prose, meanwhile, has become looser, freer, and funnier.

The humor often comes at her own expense. While working a post-college job at a bed-and-breakfast, she sneaks wine intended for the guests. “I never thought of this as *drinking on the job*, although strictly speaking—or really any way of speaking—it was,” she writes. Elsewhere, she recounts anticipating reactions the first time she told her story at an AA meeting. “People would compliment my story or the way I'd told it, and I'd demur, *Well, I'm a writer*, shrugging, trying not to make too big a deal out of it.” Instead, midway through her earnest account, a half-senile old-timer interrupts, “This is boring!”

Perhaps part of the reason he found her story boring is that there was no obvious trauma or other hardship that led her to the balm of booze. Her alcoholism was almost tautological: She needed to drink because she needed to drink. Starting at the University of Iowa, where she enrolled in the MFA program; then in New Haven, where she moved for a PhD program in English at Yale; and then back in Iowa, with some travel to Central America along the way, “Intoxication had become the feeling I was most interested in having.”

Nor were there any catastrophic consequences for Jamison. She maintained loving relationships with her family. She published a novel and continued to amass fancy credentials. During this time, she had a long-term relationship with a fellow grad student, and while her drinking caused tension, their relationship was relatively stable for years before they amicably separated. A recent profile of her in *New York* magazine was titled “Where's the Train Wreck?”

Why, then, did Jamison need to quit? It

was, she suggests, a matter of sovereignty over herself. “My shame about drinking wasn't mainly about embarrassment at what I did when I was drunk,” she writes; “it was about how much I wanted to get drunk in the first place.” She drank because she needed to drink; she quit for the same reason.

Into the story of her addiction and recovery, Jamison weaves those of others, especially writers like Charles Jackson, John Berryman, Denis Johnson, and Jean Rhys. She also pays attention to noncelebrities: women convicted on drug charges in Arizona and forced to work on a chain gang in the extreme heat; alcoholics who spent time in a ragtag recovery center called Seneca House. The idea, she explains, is that all of these stories will collectively bear some resemblance to an AA meeting.

Through these stories, Jamison explores how addiction gets refracted through race and gender. White male alcoholic writers have often been lauded as tortured geniuses. White women are typically denied that status, but their substance use does

often get them cast as wounded and interesting. People of color with substance-use issues, by contrast, are more likely to be depicted as criminals than as victims. These general observations are not new, but Jamison's critique adds depth and nuance: “The crack mother was the negative image of the addict genius: She wasn't someone whose dependence fueled her creative powers. She was someone whose dependence meant she'd failed to create the way she was supposed to.”

While this taxonomy shows how our culture divides addicts, AA meetings, in Jamison's account, work a reverse alchemy: They bring together people of different demographics and classes. As a graduate student at Yale, Jamison finds herself at meetings with homeless men and sorority girls. In AA, social background seems to lose some salience, as does individuality. In the stories that make up the heart of the meetings, the parallels stand out to fellow AA members much more than the differences.

As a writer who had always been taught to prize originality, Jamison initially chafes against this emphasis on sameness. She wants her contribution to shine. She also cringes at the frequently invoked catch-





phrases: “Feelings aren’t facts” or “Sometimes the solution has nothing to do with the problem.” Ultimately, however, she comes to see the value of both of these aspects of AA. Clichés, she realizes, can serve the same purpose as mantras or prayers; their familiarity is a source of solace. They point to another way in which the individual can recede. “You weren’t responsible for what got said, because you were all parts of a machine bigger than any one of you.... Clichés were the dialect of that machine, its ancient tongue.” As for the repetitiveness of the testimony, Jamison begins to cherish the resemblances between her story and those of others who shared the same struggles and overcame them. “Our stories were valuable because of this redundancy, not despite it.”

In writing *The Recovering*, Jamison reveals, she wrestled with these challenges: not only how to tell a story that has been told many times before, but how to reconcile her literary impulse for originality with her newfound appreciation for the virtues of clichés and redundancy. Part of her answer is to incorporate this conundrum into her inquiry. She salutes the value of unoriginality but does not embody it. Her analytical sharpness and assiduous attention to words are the very reverse of reaching for the nearest truism.

**A** running theme throughout *The Recovering* is the relationship of alcohol to truth. “*In vino veritas* was one of the most appealing promises of drinking: that it wasn’t degradation but illumination, that it wasn’t obscuring truth but unveiling it,” Jamison writes. For her, at least, that promise proved illusory. But as Pollan’s book argues, psychedelics really can deliver illumination. While they have acquired associations with visual hallucinations, users overwhelmingly report that they don’t distort reality so much as reveal it for the first time. The other, related hallmark of the psychedelic experience is the dissolution of the ego, the melting of boundaries between the self and the world. These two features make psychedelic trips revelatory, sometimes mystical experiences that can affect their beneficiaries for years.

Pollan’s oeuvre is usually associated with food, but his subject, really, is broader: the intersection of humanity and nature. His second book, *A Place of My Own* (1997), took on building and architecture: how people convert the planet’s materials into shelter. And now his latest book explores how certain earthly substances can change our

consciousness in astonishing ways. (LSD, which we think of as the most “synthetic,” originates in a fungus known as ergot, Pollan reports.)

Pollan always researches his subjects exhaustively and doesn’t shy away from getting his hands dirty, often literally. For his book on architecture, he built a hut in his backyard; for *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, he shot a pig. For this book, it was probably inevitable that he would seek to acquire firsthand knowledge of the wonders of psychedelics, although doing so pushed him outside his comfort zone. “I generally prefer to leave my psychic depths undisturbed, assuming they exist,” he writes. Still, he overcame his trepidation to embark on several psychedelic “journeys.”

Pollan has also long demonstrated an enchanting facility with the English language and a knack for conjuring the offbeat characters he encounters in his research and reporting, from Johnny Appleseed to the entrepreneurs of organic farming. As opposed to Jamison’s quotable one-liners, his gifts manifest in a playfulness whose magic accretes over paragraphs. This virtuosity and charisma are less evident in *How to Change Your Mind* (starting with the title, which is no *Omnivore’s Dilemma*). Perhaps ironically, given the topic, the writing is more, well, sober. But it is always lucid, and there are parts—such as his portrayal of an eccentric mycologist who considers mushrooms to be a virtual panacea for the world’s ills—where his old mischievous charm reappears.

Pollan starts by reviewing what he calls a “renaissance” in the study of psychedelics. A rich body of research was conducted by scientists in the mid-20th century. But after Timothy Leary famously urged an entire generation to drop acid in the 1960s, and the drug escaped the bounds of the lab, panic ensued. Before long, federal funding dried up for research on these substances, which were now seen as unacceptably subversive.

Starting in the early years of this century, however, the US government began to quietly sanction new research into these drugs. The new studies have corroborated the findings of past work and extended them, revealing the power of psychedelics to ease the fear of dying, to break addictions, to overcome depression, and to occa-

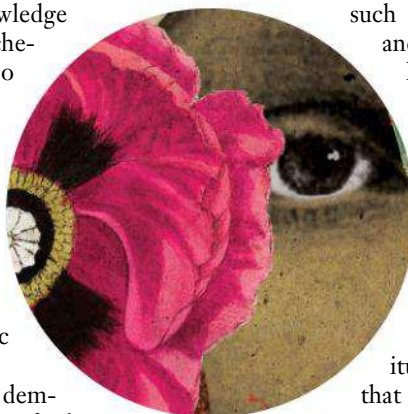
sion spiritual experiences in that part of the population known as “healthy normals.” Crucially, the subjects in these experiments take the drugs under controlled conditions intended to maximize the likelihood of a “good trip.” They do so in comfortable rooms, with vaguely New Age interior design, often lying on couches, wearing eyeshades, and listening to music. Most important, their trips are overseen by trained guides who gently give instructions such as “Trust the trajectory” and “TLO—Trust, Let Go, Be Open.”

Pollan interviews a number of subjects and researchers, and they unanimously rhapsodize about their drug-induced odysseys. A researcher named Bill Richards tells Pollan: “‘Awe,’ ‘glory,’ and ‘gratitude’ were the only words that remained relevant.” Like

Jamison, Pollan sometimes winces at the clichés he encounters, though he recognizes that the problem lies partly in the inadequacy of language to capture these ineffable experiences. Sometimes the people providing the reports are themselves self-conscious about this. One researcher wrote: “I have at times been almost embarrassed by them, as if they give voice to a cosmic vision of the triumph of love that one associates derisively with the platitudes of Hallmark cards.... Love conquers all.”

**P**ollan came of age in the 1970s, in the midst of the LSD backlash, and his exposure to psychedelics was limited to a couple of mild trips on mushrooms. Now approaching 60, he takes a series of trips, all but one under the supervision of underground guides. (He had hoped to participate in a study, but a suspension of research in “healthy normals” eliminated that option.) While apprehensive, he is reassured by his research: Psychedelics are actually very safe; there is no known fatal dose, nor are they addictive.

As we might expect from a writer of Pollan’s caliber, his accounts of his trips largely avoid the generalities and platitudes that characterize the typical descriptions. He tries valiantly to chronicle his experiences with fidelity and specificity. “The word and sense of ‘poignance’ flooded over me during the walk through the garden,” he writes of a mushroom trip. “[O]ne’s usual sense of oneself as a subject observing objects in



space—objects that have been thrown into relief and rendered discrete by the appar-ent void that surrounds them—gave way to a sense of being deep inside and fully implicated in this scene, one more being in relation to the myriad other beings and to the whole.”

Pollan goes on to have more intense experiences at higher doses. He is flooded with love for his family, compassion for various people from his past (his beleaguered fourth-grade music teacher makes an appearance), and gratitude not just for his life but “for the very fact of being, that there is anything whatsoever. Rather than being necessarily the case, this now seemed quite the miracle, and something I resolved never again to take for granted.”

Other than the insights commonly delivered by psychedelics, Pollan arrives at several additional conclusions. He learns that one unusual aspect of the effects of these drugs is their durability. It’s not the chemical reaction that matters; it’s the resulting experience, which, afterward, remarkably, continues to seem legitimate. Users consistently believe, after the chemical has worn off, that they’ve been granted access to great truths, and often the revelations stay with them and change their lives in profound ways. To increase the odds of such outcomes, Pollan comes to believe in the critical importance of a set of rituals, guidelines, and authorities to direct the powerful experiences unleashed by these molecules. Indeed, other societies that sanction the use of psychedelics have typically put such protocols into place. The imperative to do so, he realizes, might have been the key lesson of the 1960s.

Pollan also revises his understanding of the word “spiritual.” He had always associated it with a belief in the supernatural, which he didn’t, and still doesn’t, possess. But his psychedelic excursions showed him the possibility of transcendence that required no faith; it was a matter of seeing and feeling more deeply and of loosening the grip of the ego. “The usual antonym for the word ‘spiritual’ is ‘material,’” he writes. “Now I’m inclined to think a much better and certainly more useful antonym for ‘spiritual’ might be ‘egotistical.’”

Finally, another peculiarity of psychedelics, Pollan shows, is that they often lead their enthusiasts to become evangelical about their potential usefulness for all of humanity. This impulse makes sense, and not just from an altruistic perspective. After all, people convinced of the unity of all beings and the supreme importance of love

don’t typically become terrorists or Twitter trolls. “I believe this could revolutionize mental health care,” one researcher tells Pollan, an opinion prevalent among psychedelic researchers.

**F**or many who are familiar with psychedelics, it is intuitive that they could help ease anxiety about dying and lift depression. Less intuitive is the notion that a drug might hold the key to surmounting addiction. And yet psychedelics seem to hold great promise in that regard as well. The mechanism appears to be a kind of “reboot of the system—a biological control-alt-delete,” one researcher says. A potent experience can shake addicts out of ingrained mental patterns and grant them new flexibility, while putting the cravings of the self into a larger perspective.

Pollan speaks to several participants in a smoking-cessation study, which offered cognitive-behavior therapy followed by the administration of psilocybin (the active ingredient in “magic mushrooms”). It was a small study, but the results were striking. Six months after their trips, 80 percent of the participants had not resumed the habit. (A year later, this figure had dropped to 67 percent—still better than the results obtained by established methods.) One participant told Pollan: “It put smoking in a whole new context. Smoking seemed very unimportant; it seemed kind of stupid, to be honest.” As for alcoholism, the evidence is similarly intriguing, although more research is needed. In the 1950s through the ’70s, thousands of alcoholics received psychedelic treatment, but many of the studies had flawed designs. A 2012 meta-analysis of the best studies, however, did find a “significant beneficial effect on alcohol misuse” from one dose of LSD, lasting up to six months.

Here we return to the parallels between psychedelics and AA, some of which Pollan notes. Both involve a recognition of a power beyond the self (not necessarily supernatural); both encourage a diminution of the ego and an embrace of connection with others. An integral part of AA is helping others to achieve sobriety, just as the evangelists for psychedelics seek to promote the benefits of these extraordinary molecules.

But, of course, psychedelic trips and the work of a 12-step program are also very

different. A trip on mushrooms or LSD is passive: You feel that “the doors of perception,” as Aldous Huxley famously put it (borrowing a line from William Blake), are opening for you. And this state of mind is not sustainable; even if the insights can stay with us, it would not be practical to cry with joy all day as we floss our teeth and drive to work and help our kids with math homework. AA, by contrast, is mundane and involves effort—sometimes very painful effort. It’s about showing up even when you don’t want to. It’s about drinking bad coffee in unpleasantly lit church basements. It’s about going through the motions on the days when you’d really rather knock back

a martini or six. It’s about realizing that external actions are sometimes more important than your internal mindset—and that the former can change the latter. As Jamison beautifully puts it, “Action could coax belief rather than testifying to it.”

A distinction is frequently drawn between religion and spirituality, two different but overlapping spheres. In this context, it seems to me that psychedelics embody a certain form of spirituality—direct access to revelation, a realm where words are both inadequate and unnecessary—while AA typifies religion, meaning a set of rules and rituals performed in the context of a supportive community. In a religion, words are essential: the text of the sacred scriptures (AA’s Big Book, the 12 steps, the sayings) as well as the primary means of communicating with co-religionists (recovery stories).

Perhaps that’s the lesson we can derive from both of these books: We need the epiphanies and the rites, the inward reflection and the community, and perhaps part of the problem with modern life is that these are so often missing. The paths of these two authors may differ, but both offer us some equipment for living in a fuller and more authentic fashion. Psychedelics are not the only route to mystical experience, but they provide an unusually reliable introduction to that state of mind. AA tells its members to acknowledge the limits of their autonomy, to commit to unsparing honesty with themselves, to dedicate their lives to helping others. We could all do worse than to live by these principles—even those of us who can enjoy a single glass of Pinot Grigio and call it a night. ■





# SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

Black and white intellectuals and the politics of multiculturalism

by ROBERT GREENE

Many Americans think of the South only in terms of two events: the Civil War and the civil-rights movement. This has also been buttressed, since the 1960s, by an interest in the “Southern strategy” that the Republican Party began to pursue with Barry Goldwater’s vote against the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and that reached an apex with Richard Nixon’s mastery of racial code words (“states’ rights,” “law and order”) in the 1968 presidential campaign. A new history by Anders Walker, *The Burning House: Jim Crow and the Making of Modern America*, touches on many of these events and their lingering legacies, but

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Walker directs our attention elsewhere: to those intellectuals who, in the second half of the 20th century, sought to save some of the unique qualities of Southern culture.

The South, Walker argues, did more than offer heroic moments of black auto-emancipation and shameful moments of white supremacy; it also served as the arena for an ongoing debate over multiculturalism. This might seem like a strange assertion at first, as the politics of multiculturalism are usually framed in the context of the late 20th century, when conflicts over how to define a country’s cultural identity exploded in Europe. But Walker’s provocative thesis is this: Beginning in the 1940s, black and white writers—from Zora Neale Hurston to Robert Penn Warren—began to worry about what might happen to the South’s culture in the wake of integration. These writers were

## The Burning House

*Jim Crow and the Making of Modern America*

By Anders Walker

Yale. 304 pp. \$30

not defenders of segregation; in fact, most were active in helping tear it down. But they feared that the region might also lose some of its cultural heterogeneity: In particular, they worried that it might lose its distinct white and black cultures and become flattened into the more homogeneous culture found in the rest of America.

One might argue with this thesis on a variety of accounts. Thinking of the South as having two distinct cultures, one white, one black, as opposed to one culture that was a mixture of the two, is already highly questionable. For that matter, it is unclear if

the rest of the nation was truly as monocultural as some of the intellectuals in Walker's book seem to believe. The work of historians like Jon Lauck, for instance, reminds us that the Midwest has its own rich literary and cultural heritage—to say nothing of the significant racial and ethnic cultures that permeated other regions of the United States outside the South.

Even so, Walker has opened up a fresh way of thinking about the intellectual history of the South during the civil-rights movement, and he also asks some tough questions about how we should remember its legacy. A professor of law at Saint Louis University, Walker focused his first book, *The Ghost of Jim Crow*, on the white Southern moderates who, under the guise of promoting gradual progress and “respect” for African-American culture, tried to slow the implementation of the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in the late 1950s. In *The Burning House*, we get a different set of ghost stories about the afterlife of Jim Crow, but it's a book that follows the same line of reasoning, showing how the multicultural arguments made by intellectuals who wanted to sustain the South's cultural heterogeneity had their own unintended consequences, ending up being used by Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell in his effort to undermine affirmative action's constitutional standing.

**T**o tell this story, Walker gives us a wide-ranging intellectual and literary history, beginning with the rise of the Southern Agrarians in the early 1930s. Hurston and Warren, as well as James Baldwin, William Faulkner, Harper Lee, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and Stokely Carmichael, all make appearances. Not all of these people were from the South—Baldwin and Carmichael grew up in New York, for instance—but nearly all of them spent much of their lives fighting against or writing about the region's segregation. For these writers, culture and politics were never far apart. This was particularly true for Warren, who saw the cultural strength of the South as proof that the region needed nothing more than to reform its Jim Crow system—as opposed to a wholesale revolu-

tion overturning it. Other writers discussed in the book, such as Faulkner, promoted a similar ideology of the South being culturally superior to the rest of the nation due to the biracial and bicultural system arising from Jim Crow.

Walker doesn't pull any punches when it comes to these white intellectuals. Their arguments for a biracial culture ultimately served to empower white Southerners, not black ones, and Walker's story is very much about the untenable nature of their position. White Southern liberals had to choose between civil and human rights, on the one hand, and white-supremacist regimes, on the other; there was no middle ground. Seeking to preserve the South's biracial character, in a context in which black Americans and their culture were not treated equally, figures like Warren ended up only helping to reinforce African Americans' unequal status in the South. And so it is not surprising that many of these arguments were later invoked by people like Powell.

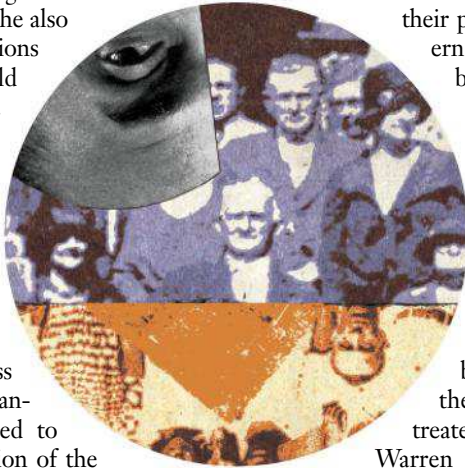
Walker's argument becomes trickier when it involves those black writers who also expressed trepidation about the future of the South's black culture and wanted to find a way to preserve it. In particular, many of these black intellectuals and activists worried about what would happen if, as Baldwin put it, black culture was integrated into the “burning house” of the United States. For Walker, this is what makes this generation of black writers so historically intriguing. They found the moderate position taken by white Southern liberals like Warren baneful, and they frequently challenged it. Yet they also questioned the bleak, materialist ethos of modern American culture and hoped that black culture might be able to preserve some of its unique characteristics—especially black culture as it existed in the South.

In one of the more eye-opening sections of *The Burning House*, Walker explores Warren's interview with Carmichael just as the latter was beginning to enter his more radical phase in the mid-1960s. Warren initially expected Carmichael and other young black activists to support the integrationist drive not only in civil society and legal institutions, but also on questions relating to culture. So he was surprised to find Carmichael

embracing a view of African-American cultural separation. When the two met in 1964, Carmichael had not yet made his complete turn to Black Power. But the ideas that formed the basis of the movement—self-reliance and a pride in African-American culture—were already there for Carmichael to adopt. In the interview, Warren asks Carmichael why nonviolence mattered. Carmichael explains: “I never took the approach we've got to teach them to love us.... I thought that was nonsense from the start. But I was impressed by the way [the demonstrators] conducted themselves, the way they sat there and took the punishment.” For Carmichael, the compelling feature of the civil-rights movement's nonviolence wasn't its ethical appeal, but that it represented an act of black resolve, a symbol of independence and black Americans' power on their own.

For Warren, Walker notes, this “incipient iteration of Black Power proved a coup...enabling him to demonstrate that pluralism reigned even among young black activists, who demonstrated little interest in joining white society or culture.” But it's hard to ignore the cynicism operating here. Warren and other white Southerners who wanted to see Southern white culture preserved had found few allies within the civil-rights movement; with figures like Baldwin and Carmichael, Warren wanted to show black Americans were making a similar argument. Baldwin and Carmichael, on the other hand, felt they had little in common with someone like Warren. Between them was a large gulf: Warren was in pursuit of a cultural pluralism for the sake of a once-dominant culture; Baldwin and Carmichael wanted a pluralism that might help emancipate and protect a culture that for centuries had been violently suppressed.

**W**alker picks up some of these ambiguities in the second thread of his book, which chronicles the story of Lewis F. Powell Jr. A Virginia-born lawyer who served as a Supreme Court justice from 1972 to 1987, Powell is infamous among progressives for the so-called “Powell Memo,” which he wrote in 1971 to the US Chamber of Commerce, arguing that American business should become more involved in politics. What is less known—but for Walker is of immense importance—is the role that Powell played in defining a conservative idea of “diversity” in several Supreme Court decisions in the 1970s concerning school segregation and affirmative action in college admissions.



In *Keyes v. School District No. 1* (1973), Powell wrote a concurring opinion insisting that local community control of schools—and therefore de facto segregation—was constitutional. If, for example, various government programs had pushed African Americans into lower-income areas with fewer sources of funding for their schools, then so be it: The federal government, in Powell's view, had no power to change such conditions, because to do so risked damaging the cultural autonomy of local communities. "As Powell saw it, *Brown* demanded an end to overtly segregationist law, nothing more," Walker writes. Integration was a laudable goal, Powell claimed, but it could not be administered by the federal government, only by local school districts. More importantly, however, this opinion was an example of Powell arguing publicly that the South was, in Walker's words, "no more guilty of racial injustice than anyplace else."

One can begin to hear how Warren's multicultural argument intersects with Powell's defense of segregation in the *Keyes* concurrence. But Powell's biggest contribution to the modern history of race and law came in the Court's decision in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), when he argued that diversity could be taken into account as a factor in college admissions, but not to respond to historical injustice against African Americans. Instead, Powell thought that the only reason diversity could be taken into account was when it was designed to promote "academic freedom." As Walker notes, this kind of argument, like the Southern moderates' position examined in his first book, purportedly seeks to protect the "diversity" of cultural institutions but is, in fact, "hostile to aggressive government efforts aimed at achieving equality." Like Warren, Powell made a case for multicultural pluralism that ultimately weakened the idea of social, as well as cultural, integration.

It is no coincidence that Powell's rise to the Supreme Court in the early 1970s came just as the nation was attempting to reckon with the meaning of "Southernness." Scholars like John Egerton, who wrote *The Americanization of Dixie*, and politicians like Jimmy Carter had started to ask serious questions about what it meant to be a white Southerner after the successes of the civil-rights movement. As a result, Walker argues, it was not only Powell and his fellow conservatives who found in cultural pluralism a means to enliven Southern identity; it was also liberals like Carter, who argued during his 1976 presidential campaign that "people

have a tendency—and it is an unshakable tendency—to want to share common social clubs, common churches, common restaurants," an argument that runs very closely to the one being made by those in the North and the South who sought to resegregate schools and neighborhoods.

Had *The Burning House's* sections on the 1970s included Albert Murray, Walker would have found a fascinating foil for the arguments made by the likes of Warren and Powell. While offering glowing portraits of black culture in the South, Murray also argued in his 1970 *The Omni-Americans* that it was through these different cultures that a national American culture would emerge. "Ethnic differences," Murray wrote, "are the very essence of cultural diversity and national creativity." One could have a cultural pluralism while also not giving way to Warren's vision of a dual Southern culture, or Powell's use of "diversity" to defend de facto segregation and racial inequality. That Murray's argument never gained a larger audience in his time was a symbol of the dominance of an American culture that, in the 1970s, wanted to move beyond concern about the antiblack racism associated with images of marches in the South. Threading the needle on race, culture, and diversity would be a bit easier if more intellectuals had wrestled with Murray's example.

Scholars and historians of the South have, in recent years, started to reflect on the diversity of thought in the region. Zandria Robinson's *This Ain't Chicago* makes a compelling argument for the differences between African Americans in the North and the South. Jason Sokol's *There Goes My Everything* attempts to unveil the reactions of white Southerners to the revolution taking place around them. *The Burning House* fits well within the growing literature about the modern South, a literature that does not assume "Southern exceptionalism"—the view that the South's history and culture are radically different from the rest of the nation—but, instead, attempts to understand the region from a variety of different viewpoints.

Even so, one weakness of *The Burning House* is that it's not entirely clear that Powell was directly influenced by the Southern writers profiled in the first two-thirds of the book. It would be easy to assume that he came from the same ideological tradition as most of the white writers in Walker's book, an ideology that criticized the worst excesses of Jim Crow while also remaining uncomfortable with integration. But there's never

a "smoking gun" to indicate that Powell gave credit to Warren for his Supreme Court rulings. Likewise, as Baldwin and Carmichael would have noted, there's a world of difference between the cultural pluralism of black writers seeking an independent African-American culture and white ones seeking some continuation of the "Southern way of life." After all, the Southern way of life for much of America's history meant a world of slavery and racial hierarchy. That was hardly the kind of Southern culture that black intellectuals were calling for.

Nonetheless, *The Burning House* is a worthwhile book for anyone interested in the continuing importance of the South to the nation's culture and politics. The recent off-year election in Virginia and the Senate special election in Alabama have proved that the road to a progressive future for the United States goes through the South. *The Burning House* reminds us that this road will be marked by twists, turns, and hazardous pitfalls. "Ethnic differences are the very essence of cultural diversity and national creativity," Murray wrote in the introduction to *The Omni-Americans*. Understanding the fraught relationship between diversity and power—whether economic, political, or social—is something that still eludes most Americans. ■



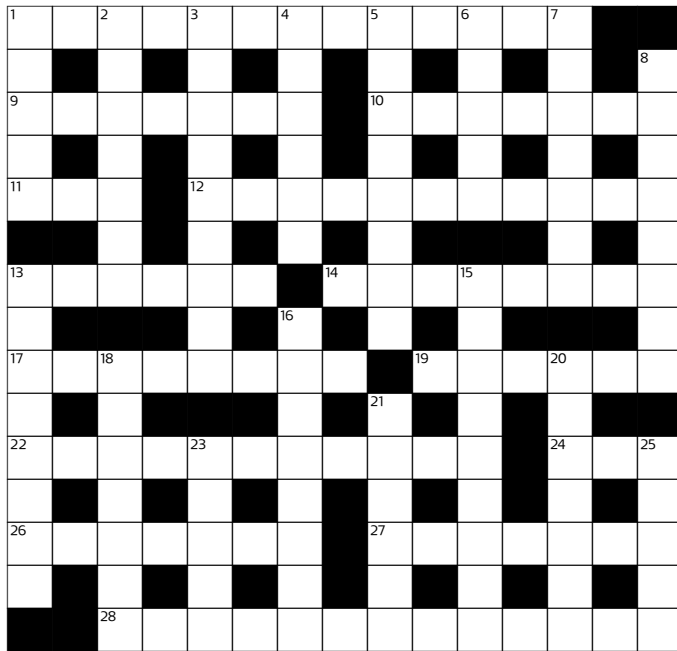
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# Puzzle No. 3469

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



**ACROSS**

- 1 Nonetheless, bring back Congressman Hoyer to worry about large devices for capturing flashes of color? (9,4)
- 9 Exhaust our team before a defeat (4,3)
- 10 An urge for every moan (7)
- 11 and 24 Compensated agent with help (6)
- 12 Healthy beauties in Paradise, head to toe in brief romance (11)
- 13 Summons editor inside to dress up (6)
- 14 Sell James a blood feud (8)
- 17 Fashionable dice for parts of a joint support group? (3,5)
- 19 Living symbol seen in mother's bed (6)
- 22 Sweet song associated with Frank Sinatra, except involving class (5,3,3)
- 24 See 11
- 26 Island smuggled in giant iguana (7)
- 27 After transport of uranium to the front, one kind of power is incomprehensible (7)
- 28 Ha—clues became cryptic, which is what you get by stirring together elements from three Across entries (8,5)

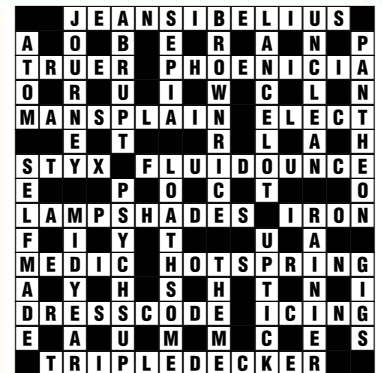
**DOWN**

- 1 White South African protects woman in arbor (5)
- 2 At first, Tupac MC'd in a corner (7)
- 3 What comes across heroic, if Fox Entertainment backs away by virtue of one's position (2,7)
- 4 Understand corpulent Spanish man halfway (6)
- 5 Some evergreen growth definitely has to be in France, bearing weight (3,5)
- 6 Discharges, second time around (5)
- 7 Colleagues ultimately choose to accept the man's a specious reasoner (7)
- 8 Loud newspaper tirade that comes out smelling like a rose (8)
- 13 Eastern European snake eats half-slice of nectarine (8)
- 15 Doctor Oakland squad, maintaining elegance in driving contests (4,5)
- 16 What the NSA collects from you and me (fanfare imitation): thanks (8)
- 18 In bar, order tall part of a beer can (4,3)
- 20 Mansion caretaker's beginning to despise gold (7)
- 21 Thick hose doesn't begin to hold a bit of heat (6)
- 23 Meditative soldier in playful upset (5)
- 25 For example, do away with uplifting and sad musical work (5)

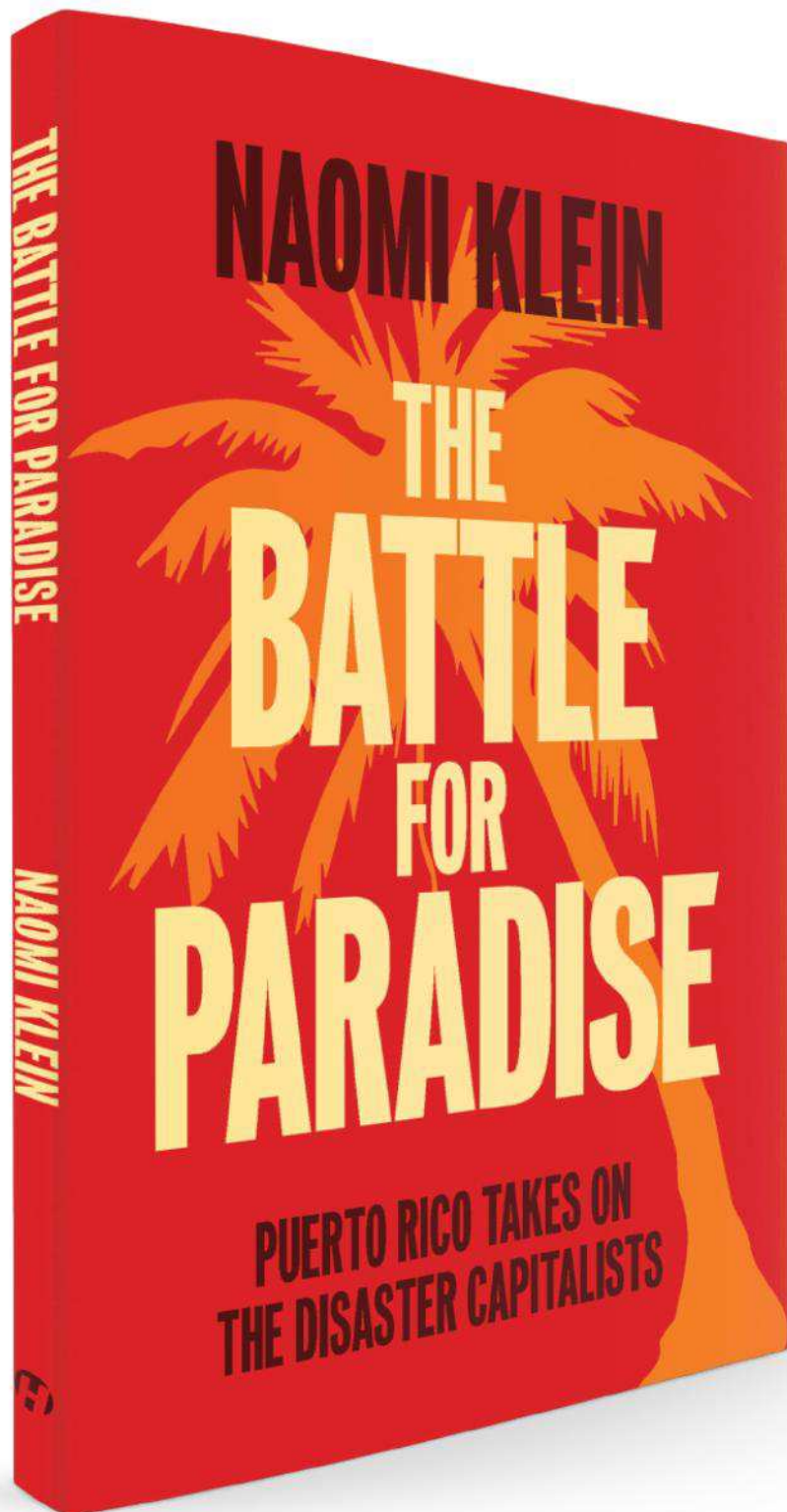
**SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3468**

ACROSS 1 JEANS + I + BELIUS (anag.)  
 9 T + RUER 10 PHOENI (anag.) + CIA  
 11 MAN'S + PLAIN 12 hidden 13 "sticks"  
 14 FL(U + ID)OUNCE 17 L + AMPS + HADES 19 IRO (anag.) + N 22 hidden  
 23 HOT + SPRING 26 anag.  
 27 [d]ICING 28 TRI(PLED + E)CKER

DOWN 1 JO(URN)EY 2 A(BRUP)T (burp anag.) 3 SE(P)A 4 pun  
 5 L + AN + [o]CELOT 6 UNCLE + A + N  
 7 anag. 8 P(ANT)HEON (phone anag.)  
 13 [h]SELF + MADE (rev.)  
 15 L(OATHS)OME (mole anag.)  
 16 PSY (anag.) + C + HSUP (rev.)  
 18 anag. 20 2 defs. 21 U(P(T)IC)K  
 24 THE + ME 25 2 defs.



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–**Kirkus Reviews**

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