

The Public Eye

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Scott Olson/Getty Images

The New York headquarters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hung an outraged flag outside of its New York headquarters in 1968. The photo was part of the touring "Without Sanctuary" exhibit displaying America's history of lynching, here at the Chicago Historical Society in 2005.

Male Victims of Abortion

New Theme of Right to Life Committee

By Eleanor J. Bader

They pledged to "Bring life to the heart of America and bring the heart of America to Life."

In 72 workshops, five plenaries, and three worship services, more than 500 members of the National Right to Life Committee gathered in Kansas City, Missouri in June to discuss strategies, celebrate victories, and plot tactics to winnow away at *Roe* and reduce the number of abortions both in the United States and throughout the world.

The mood was upbeat. Barely two months after the Supreme Court handed anti-abortionists a victory by outlawing dilation and extraction procedures (*aka* partial birth abortions), Right to Life activists seemed giddy. Executive Committee member Wanda Franz mirrored her members' feelings, opening the three-day gathering by gleefully celebrating "the

Male Victims continues on page 11

Legacies of Lynching

An interview with

On the Courthouse Lawn author Sherrilyn Ifill

Sherrilyn Ifill is a civil rights lawyer who came to see linkages between the discrimination cases she was trying and the history and memories of lynchings fifty or more years in the past. Public Eye editorial board member Tarso Luis Ramos interviewed Ifill, a Professor of Law at the University of Maryland Law School, about her new book on the subject, *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the 21st Century* (New York: Beacon Press, 2007).

ing rights, what led you to write a book about lynching?

I found while working on many cases in Texas, Louisiana, Nebraska, Arkansas, and here in Maryland, that when I asked my clients about the history of discrimination in their communities, I would very often hear a story about a lynching or another story of racial terrorism, sometimes decades in the past. I was struck by the accuracy and the detail with which the events were described—usually events they didn't see or they weren't even alive at the time.

Legacies of Lynching continues on page 14

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As a civil rights lawyer active on such issues as environmental justice and vot-

— EDITORIAL —

The same First Amendment that guarantees separation of church and state guarantees the rights of Christian conservatives to defend their views in the public square, and to seek redress of grievances through a variety of political and social channels.

In recent months, however, there have been indications that some in the leadership of the Democratic Party, and some of its candidates for public office, are seeking the votes of Christian conservatives by suggesting there is room to compromise on reproductive rights and gay rights.

While public debates over social issues are a sign of a healthy democracy; it is not proper for politicians to negotiate away basic human rights for any group of people in the United States.

The problem is not “abortion” or “reducing the number of abortions.” The problem is unwanted pregnancies, how to prevent them, and how to support women who get pregnant in the decisions they deem appropriate. This includes access to legal and safe contraception and abortion; as well as access to health care and child care for women who choose to give birth and raise children—concepts seen as fundamental rights in other industrialized countries. Our rights, and the rights of our friends, relatives, and neighbors who are women, are not political commodities to be traded for votes.

The problem is not “gay rights” or “gay marriage.” The problem is building a society where the basic human rights of all people are respected and defended. Under the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, there is no such thing as “Special Rights.” When some Christian conservatives claim that gay people want “Special Rights,” it is a falsehood. Our rights, and the rights of our friends, relatives, and neighbors in LGBTQ communities, are not political commodities to be traded for votes.

Many of us intend to vote in the upcoming elections in 2008, and we intend to vote for candidates who make it crystal clear that they support basic human rights for all. At the same time, we will continue to build broad and diverse coalitions seeking fundamental progressive social change. As we rebuild our progressive social movement, we will pay special attention to politicians who have through words or actions objectively undermined basic human rights for women, the LGBTQ communities, or any other group in our society.

—Chip Berlet



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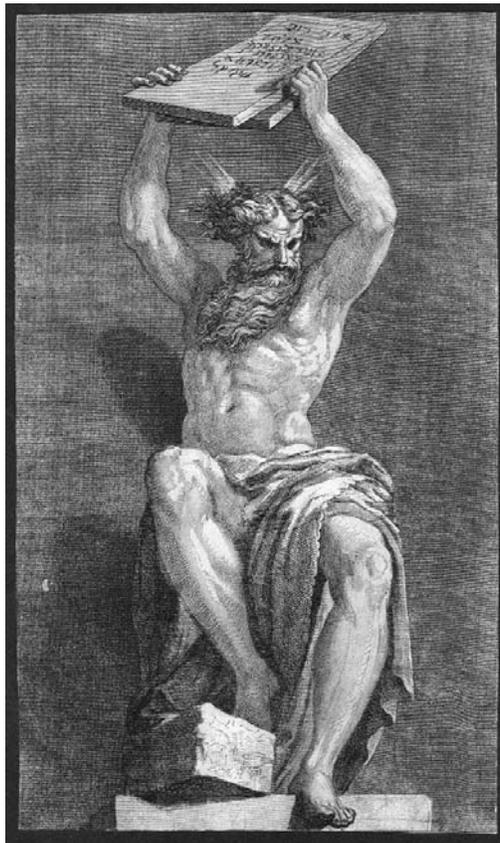
The Libertarian Theocrats

The Long, Strange History of R.J. Rushdoony and Christian Reconstructionism

By Michael J. McVicar

In their struggle to understand George W. Bush, some liberal intellectuals have looked to the writings of Rousas John Rushdoony, the Armenian-American minister whose championing of a theocratic America influenced some of the nooks and crannies of the Christian Right during its rise to prominence. For example Mark Crispin Miller, in his frontal assault on George W. Bush's response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks,¹ charges that Bush not only acted unconstitutionally, but in his religious imagery echoed the infiltration of Rushdoony's ideas into his Administration (and the Republican Party at large). Miller interprets Rushdoony's theology as a call for Christians to take "dominion" over all aspects of the federal government and replace it with a theocracy.² "With their eyes on the future, those [Rushdoony followers] at work on forging an all-Christian USA are overjoyed that Bush is president, for they correctly see the regime's imposition on the people as itself a signal victory for their movement."³

But a spokesman for the think tank Rushdoony founded told me Miller is wrong (Rushdoony himself died in 2001). Registering disgust, Chris Ortiz of the Chalcedon Institute in Vallecito, California, explained that Christian Reconstructionists, as they call themselves, think the war in Iraq is both immoral and ungodly. Not only are a good many stridently critical of the Bush administration, Ortiz said,



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

he agreed with Miller's indictment of Bush, which he heard during a recent radio interview. At best, some Reconstructionists might see Bush as a well-intentioned fool, Ortiz told me. Many see him as a manipulative politician who snowballed the American people into supporting his disastrous presidency.

Those casually familiar with Rushdoony and Christian Reconstruction may find Ortiz's comments befuddling since a recent spat of popular books like Miller's *Cruel and Unusual* have argued the exact opposite, identifying Rushdoony and his followers as allies of the Bush administration. Ortiz surely wants to distance himself from a failing president, but his remarks also reveal a Reconstructionist distaste for the

hard, government-centered politics that brought Christian conservatives into the corridors of Beltway power.

Since the movement's emergence in the mid-1960s, Christian Reconstruction has always been a little different from other factions of American conservatism. Not surprisingly, the movement wins attention for Rushdoony's call for the eventual end of democracy in favor of a Christian theocracy, and his insistence that a "godly order" would enforce the death penalty for homosexuals and those who worship false idols.⁴ But Christian Reconstructionists insist that they have always been uncomfortable with authoritarian institutions of political power because, unlike Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, Rushdoony wedded his rigid theological perspective with a libertarian perspective that looked outside the boundaries of popular conservatism for answers to the problems facing the United States.

"Christian Libertarians"

At first glance, the phrase "Christian libertarian" seems a contradiction, especially when one applies it to Dominionists—as the full range of those calling for a Christian nation are called—and Christian Reconstructionists. It is true that today a secular—and in some cases rabidly atheistic—tendency dominates libertarianism. But this has not always been the case.

During the 1930s, a wide variety of business, intellectual, and religious leaders banded together to attack Roosevelt's New Deal policies. Those who emphasized the sovereignty of the individual citizen, resistance to a centralized bureaucracy, and the benefits of unfettered free market capitalism eventually coalesced into the libertarian movement that we know today. For a brief period into the 1940s, these anti-New Deal forces formed an alliance with Protes-

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tant religious leaders determined to resist “socialistic” tendencies within the church.⁵ While this cooperation was short-lived, it had a profound impact on the contemporary Christian Right.

The chief target of these economically conservative evangelical clergymen was the Social Gospel, a wide-ranging theological and social movement rooted in the late 19th century whose champions sought to fight poverty and improve the conditions of America’s poorest using the government to regulate market forces. The Social Gospelers pulled together across denominational lines to advocate for a heightened awareness of labor conditions in the country. But the movement had a theological side; its clergy tended to emphasize the corporate, collective nature of salvation. Moreover, many were willing to embrace evolutionary theory as a means of explaining human origins. Such a naturalistic perspective led to a willingness to see human beings as the product of their material and social environment.

Like many in the Progressive Era, the reform-minded period before World War I, the Social Gospelers believed that legislation and government regulation could change Americans for the better by changing the social environment in which they lived. By focusing attention on the social context that drives individuals to sin, the social gospel seemed to downplay the individual, embodied experience of salvation that American evangelicals have traditionally sought.⁶ Not surprisingly, many prosperous American churchgoers found the emphasis on economic justice over the saving of souls to be yet another expression of the “socialistic” threat to the American way of life.

While the social gospel lost much of its impulse during the economic boom following the war, popular interest in the movement reignited during the Great Depression of the 1930s. To resist this renewed influence—and defend capitalism—the alliance between business and religious leaders sought to reemphasize individual spiritual regeneration and to downplay the effects of social constraints

on individual choices.

In 1935, Rev. James Fifield of Chicago formed Mobilization for Spiritual Ideals to address these concerns. Popularly known as Spiritual Mobilization, Fifield’s operation earned the fiscal support of such right-wing philanthropists as J. Howard Pew of Sun Oil, Jasper Crane of DuPont, and B. E. Hutchinson of Chrysler. Facing the daunting task of resisting nearly five decades of entrenched liberal Protestant teaching and the harsh reality of the Depression, Fifield recruited preachers and laymen eager to resist the massive redistribution of wealth envisioned by President Roosevelt. His appeal was simplistic but effective. American clergymen needed to start preaching the Eighth Commandment:

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“Thou shalt not steal.” In this, the shortest commandment, Fifield and his followers believed they had found the biblical basis for private property and a limit to the government’s ability to redistribute wealth, tax, and otherwise impede commerce.⁷

In order to undermine government-sponsored economic redistribution, the ministers and laymen Fifield hired focused on the spiritual causes of poverty rather than the social concerns of the Social Gospelers. The New Deal and the conflicts with the Nazis and Soviets were manifestations of humankind’s rejection of God’s divinity for that of a centralized bureaucracy. An all-powerful bureaucracy, they warned, usurped the “Christian principle of love”

with the “collectivist principle of compulsion.”⁸ Beginning in 1949, the Christ-centered free market ideals of Spiritual Mobilization reached nearly fifty thousand pastors and ministers via the organization’s publication, *Faith and Freedom*.⁹ With the rhetorical flare of such libertarian luminaries as the Congregationalist minister Edmund A. Opitz, the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises, and the anarchist Murray Rothbard, *Faith and Freedom* moved many clergymen to embrace its anti-tax, non-interventionist, anti-statist economic model.

In his *Faith and Freedom* articles, Opitz formulated a systematic theology in support of capitalism, merging economic responsibility with individual salvation to form a “libertarian theology of freedom.”¹⁰ In assessing the threat of communism and fascism, Opitz argued that the solution was not collective political action. Instead, he noted that the “crisis is in man himself, in each individual regardless of his occupation, education, or nationality.”¹¹ Jesus’ Good News was that “the Kingdom of God is within you,” making every man’s salvation an internalized, personal matter. In Opitz’s reading, Jesus’ gospel becomes the basis for a radical individualism that “was the foundation upon which this [American] republic was established.”¹²

By the mid-1950s, prominent secular libertarian organizations like the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) and the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (ISI) began to supplant Spiritual Mobilization’s influence in libertarian circles. In fact, many of *Faith and Freedom*’s regular contributors like Opitz and Rothbard¹³ left Spiritual Mobilization and began writing for FEE’s publication, *The Freeman*. Further, Ayn Rand’s atheistic Objectivism pulled many libertarians away from the Christian ideals of Spiritual Mobilization.

While secular libertarianism triumphed, the remnants of its Christian heritage persisted among a small cadre of thinkers and activists who were reluctant to completely jettison Christ from the economy. Spiritual Mobilization helped a generation of theologically and economically conservative

clergy find an alternative to the Social Gospel, New Deal, and communism that resonated with their traditional values, pro-business sympathies, and Christian faith. *Faith and Freedom* encouraged clergymen to see government as a problem, not a solution. The solution wasn't to take over the government; it was to replace it with something radically different.

The Libertarian Theology of R. J. Rushdoony

Among the many ministers who read *Faith and Freedom* was a young Presbyterian pastor living in Santa Cruz, California, named R. J. Rushdoony. Rushdoony was attracted to *Faith and Freedom's* consistent warnings of the dangers of a centralized governmental bureaucracy. Born in New York City in 1916 to survivors of the Armenian Genocide, Rushdoony knew the dangers of centralized power all too well. Just a year before his birth in the States, Rushdoony's older brother Rousas George died during the Ottoman Siege of Van, becoming one of 1.5 million Armenians eventually killed by Turkish forces.¹⁴ Rush-

doony's father Y. K. Rushdoony secured his family's escape first to Russia and eventually to New York City.

Beyond the dangers of governmental violence, Rushdoony was also particularly attracted to *Faith and Freedom's* articles on public education.¹⁵ Like many conservative clergymen, Rushdoony saw public schools as hotbeds for collectivist indoctrination and anti-Christian pluralism. *Faith and Freedom* suggested that it was just to resist compulsory public education, but Rushdoony found the publication's writers to be inadequate theologians. Therefore, during the 1950s Rushdoony set about to provide a systematic theological justification for Christians to reject public education and embrace locally organized, independent Christian schools. Deploying a unique blend of libertarianism with the most rigorous Calvinistic theology he could muster, Rushdoony delivered a series of lectures on Christian education. When Rushdoony collected the lectures into a single volume, *Intellectual Schizophrenia*, Edmund Optiz wrote an enthusiastic foreword and helped to secure Rushdoony's

position as a rising star in the Christian libertarian movement.

It is important to understand Rushdoony's critique of public education, because it is a microcosm of his broader theological project. As a theologian Rushdoony saw human beings as primarily religious creatures bound to God, not as rational autonomous thinkers. While this may seem an esoteric theological point, it isn't. All of Rushdoony's influence on the Christian Right stems from this single, essential fact. Many critics of Christian Reconstructionism assume that Rushdoony's unique contribution to the Christian Right was his focus on theocracy. In fact, Rushdoony's primary innovation was his single-minded effort to popularize a pre-Enlightenment, medieval view of a God-centered world. By de-emphasizing humanity's ability to reason independently of God, Rushdoony attacked the assumptions most of us uncritically accept.

Following the lead of the Reformed theologians Herman Dooyeweerd and Cornelius Van Til,¹⁶ Rushdoony argued that all human knowledge is invalid if it is not



Jimmy Margulies/politicalcartoons.com

rooted in the Bible. In his first book, *By What Standard*, published in 1958, Rushdoony summarized the ideas of Van Til and Dooyeweerd. Van Til, a Reformed Presbyterian teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, offered a radical critique of all human knowledge, arguing that it emerges from one's theological presumptions (e.g. there is one God, many gods, or no god). For Christians, that means a three-in-one Christian God is the source of reliable human knowledge.

The implications of Van Til's thought are far reaching. As Rushdoony explains, mankind's first sin was an ethical fact with consequences for the nature of knowledge: when Eve succumbed to the Serpent's temptation to "be as gods, knowing good from evil," she asserted her own intellectual autonomy over that of God's.¹⁷ Mankind's "fall" into sin was precipitated by a desire to reason independently from God's authority.¹⁸ Rushdoony extended Van Til's ideas to their logical end to argue that all non-Christian knowledge is sinful, invalid nonsense. The only valid knowledge that non-Christians possess is "stolen" from "Christian-theistic" sources.¹⁹

In Rushdoony's thought, knowledge becomes a matter of disputed sovereignty. Every thought that does not begin with God and the Bible is rebellious: "Man seeks to think creatively rather than think God's thoughts after Him. Evil is the result of man's rebellion against God. . . . Man's fall was his attempt to become the original interpreter rather than the re-interpreter, to be the ultimate instead of the proximate source of knowledge."²⁰ Accordingly, humanity's pretence to independent knowledge becomes a matter of rebellion against God's Kingdom because "any attempt to know and control the future outside of God is to set up another god in contempt of the LORD."²¹ Rushdoony made thinking an explicitly religious activity, a shift in focus with political implications: thinking becomes a matter of kingship, power, rebellion, and, in the final analysis, warfare. Either human thought recognizes God's

sovereignty, or it doesn't. There is no middle ground, no compromise. It is a war between those who, like Rushdoony, think God's thoughts after Him and those who do not.

If thinking and education are a matter of God's disputed sovereignty, then Rushdoony believed that Christians who turned their children over to public schools were in open rebellion against God. In Rushdoony's view, court orders forcing public schools to cease prayer and bible readings actually removed the only possible foundation for viable knowledge. Following

Many popular attacks on Rushdoony overestimate his influence on Bush and the GOP and misread his ideas as a cloaked desire to take over the government by hook or crook.

such earlier Presbyterian luminaries as A. A. Hodge (1823-1886) and J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), Rushdoony's solution was to remove one's children from public schools and to educate them in an explicitly Christian environment. Such an action brings both child and parent into accord with the "fundamental task of Christian education," which, Rushdoony summarized, is to exercise dominion, "subduing the earth agriculturally, scientifically, culturally, artistically, in every way asserting the crown rights of King Jesus in every realm of life."²²

In many of the *Faith and Freedom* articles published during the 1940s and 1950s, Rushdoony saw a reservoir of popular discontent with compulsory public education and he hoped to develop it as an explicitly Christian resistance to the authority of centralized political structures. In this sense, Rushdoony was a shepherd in search

of a flock and the libertarians looked more promising than alternatives. When Edmund Opitz helped secure Rushdoony a position with a small but influential libertarian organization known as the Volker Fund in 1962, Rushdoony moved to exert his unique brand of Calvinist-inspired libertarianism on the organization. He began writing a host of position papers that attacked public education, reinterpreted American history in starkly Christian terms (see box), and advocated for the regeneration of America along explicitly Christian lines. After some internal wrangling, the Fund fired Rushdoony in 1963, but the separation was gentle, giving Rushdoony the necessary resources to write two more books.

Rushdoony's dismissal from the Fund reflected many of the secularizing changes in American libertarianism of that time. As libertarianism evolved into a more mainstream movement, it forced most of its religious defenders to the side. Rushdoony was but one casualty in this process. By the time he left the Fund, however, he had secured enough experience as a grant writer and public lecturer to set his own course. In 1965, he founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization that he used to popularize his call for a "Christian Reconstruction" of American society. In the process of forming Chalcedon, Rushdoony decided to mentor an ambitious college student who shared his passion for libertarian economics and Christianity. Their relationship would prove one of the most fascinating—and volatile—in the history of the Christian Right.

"Scary" Gary

Dominionist theology generally and Christian Reconstruction specifically would not be what they are today without Gary North. When he first met Rushdoony in 1962, the two grew so close that North eventually married Rushdoony's daughter, Sharon, in the early 1970s. As Rushdoony's son-in-law, North proved to be a prolific and able popularizer of Rushdoony's complex theological ideas. North

demonstrated a willingness to reach out across sectarian boundaries in order to engage folks who were not quite as Christian as Rushdoony might have preferred, and directly engaged politically active conservatives, something Rushdoony largely avoided unless he could maintain strict control over their theological allegiances. As a result of his popular appeal and tireless advocacy of the Reconstructionist worldview, one could argue that North did more than any other Reconstructionist short of Rushdoony to reconstruct the world for Christendom.

Beginning in 1963 Rushdoony helped North secure a series of jobs working for the Volker Fund and the Foundation for Economic Education. So by the time North went to work for Rushdoony's Chalcedon Foundation in 1973, he was a bona fide veteran of the American libertarian movement. He had worked for two of its most important organizations and maintained friendly relationships with men like Opitz, among many others. Rushdoony brought him to Chalcedon to research the relationship between biblical law and laissez-faire economics. North threw himself into a project that he has yet to finish. Since 1977 he has spent a minimum of ten hours a week, fifty weeks a year writing a commentary on biblical economics.²³

This nineteen volume (and counting) series documents North's assessment of the relationship between Rushdoony-style "theonomy" (or God-rooted law) and the prescriptions for economic behavior North believed he found in the Bible. A complex mix of Austrian economic theory, Van Til-inspired ethics, and acrid prose, North's study of biblical economics laid the foundation for a series of failed predictions regarding the imminent collapse of the federal government. Most notoriously, North predicted that the Y2K computer glitch would lead to the total collapse of the global economy, leaving Christians in the United States to pick up the pieces.²⁴ North's pessimism, unrelenting literary output, and hardboiled rhetoric eventually earned him the nickname "Scary Gary."

"Scary's" track record of failed predic-

tions belies a neglected aspect of his theology. North, unlike Rushdoony, believes that the eternal human social institution is the Christian church. In the event of the catastrophic collapse of such transient institutions as the federal government, churches will step into the void left by its implosion. While this view of the emergent, decentralized church is consistent with North's unique fusion of libertarianism and postmillenarian eschatology, it is sharply at odds with Rushdoony's view.

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Rushdoony envisioned the church and family as two separate, exclusive spheres. For Rushdoony the family is the primary social unit while the church represents a limited ecclesiastical organization of believers in Christ. Conversely, North believed men owed their allegiances to a church first and the family second.

Like all aspects of Reconstructionist theology, these two perspectives have real-world consequences. When translated into theology, North's focus on the future role of the church led him to embrace a more active political agenda. Long before North and Rushdoony publicly parted ways, North had already aggressively sought out political influence. In 1976 he worked in Washington, D.C. as a staffer for Texas Representative Ron Paul. After Paul's defeat, North wrote a testy screed warning Chris-

tians that Washington was a cesspool that can't be changed overnight.²⁵ He turned his back on national politics and began developing practical tactics for churches to deploy at the grassroots level.²⁶ Unlike Rushdoony who focused most of his attention on ideas, North explicitly worked to pull together disparate church groups, most notably reaching out to charismatic and Pentecostal congregations in the South in an effort to fuse Reconstructionism's grassroots activism with committed congregations. When American society collapses under the combined weight of massive foreign debt, military overstretch, and internal decadence, North hopes to have a network of churches ready to step into the breach. In preparation, he has written book after book aimed at educating Christians on how to live debt free, avoid electronic surveillance, and develop the skills necessary for surviving economic collapse.²⁷ In short, North's version of Reconstructionism blazed a path for the militia and Christian survivalist groups of the 1990s to follow.

For all their tension, North and Rushdoony did agree on one point: the Kingdom of God would emerge over time. They disagreed on the conditions of this emergence. Rushdoony's perspective was patient. He argued that over the course of thousands of years God's grace would regenerate enough people so that a Kingdom of reconstructed men would willingly submit to the strictures of God's law. North on the other hand constantly warned of impending disaster. At the moment of cataclysmic collapse, Godly men could suddenly step forward and rule. God's law was therefore a blueprint for reestablishing social order following the collapse of the current secular system. Both men agreed that the invisible hand of God's grace and not the top-down imposition of authority would guide the process. In theory, men will submit to God's law voluntarily, leaving no place for a ruling body of theocratic clerics.

Of course, in practice, things are much more complicated.

A Movement in Decline?

In 1981, North and Rushdoony had a very public falling out and the two never spoke again. This dispute led to a deep rift in the Reconstructionist camp. North initially founded his Institute for Christian Economics (ICE) as a complement to Rushdoony's Chalcedon Foundation, but following their split North moved his operations to Tyler, Texas, and used ICE to popularize a dissident brand of Reconstructionism and spread its ideas to an ever wider audience. Interestingly, the rift between Rushdoony and North was arguably good for the movement because it led to a vital upsurge in competing publications.

While the short term gains of the Rushdoony/North split temporarily reinvigorated the movement, a series of three critical setbacks in the 1990s weakened Christian Reconstruction. First, two of the movement's most promising young theologians, Greg Bahnsen and David Chilton, died suddenly in 1995 and 1997 respectively. Bahnsen in particular had been an important rising star in the movement. His major theological work, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*,²⁸ was widely read and reviewed. Further, Bahnsen was a capable teacher who brought a level of intellectual respectability to Rushdoony's ideas that few other Reconstructionists have managed. Second, as I noted above, Gary North managed to alienate himself from practically everyone inside and outside of the movement because of his overconfident tone and failed predications of looming societal collapse.

Third and most importantly, Rushdoony ceased to be the driving intellectual and fundraising force of the movement. Most mainstream accounts since the 1990s portray Rushdoony as a stern patriarch ruling over an influential theological fiefdom. The image painted by movement insiders and financial documents suggests this popular conception is partly an illusion. Nowhere is this more obvious than Rushdoony's inability to control the content published in his long running newsletter, *The Chalcedon Report*. In the

mid-1990s, *The Chalcedon Report* ran several articles by Unitarian authors leading some loyal Reconstructionists to wonder if the rock-ribbed Trinitarian crusader had become a mealy-mouthed Unitarian rejecting the mystery of god's three-in-one nature. He hadn't, of course, but he had lost enough control of the operation of Chalcedon that such rumors could circulate with some legitimacy. In 1994 North offered a harsh assessment of Rushdoony's failure to handle this theological meltdown. He shockingly revealed that Rushdoony "was not really in charge" of *The Chalcedon Report*, observing, "In recent years, as [Rushdoony] has grown older... and increasingly deaf, he has tended to hand over much of Chalcedon's operations to inexperienced people without any theological training."²⁹

This image of a declining movement is also supported by the deterioration of financial support for the Chalcedon Foundation. As a tax exempt 501(c) (3) religious charity, Chalcedon's tax returns are a matter of public record. A cursory survey suggests that gifts to the organization peaked just before Rushdoony's death in 2001 and haven't recovered since. Before 2001, the Foundation's assets never totaled much more than \$1 million and they remained largely stagnant during the 1990s. The departure of Howard Ahmanson, Jr., the Home Savings bank heir, from Chalcedon's board of directors in the mid-1990s, worsened the decline. He was a close friend of the Rushdoony family and had bankrolled Chalcedon (along with other conservative causes) during the 1980s and 1990s.

The 1990s marked a decade of change for Rushdoony's Chalcedon Foundation. Even as public awareness of Rushdoony and his ideas have grown, it is important to note that declining public support and contentious factional disputes plague the movement that so many contemporary exposés highlight as a threat to democracy. These exposés, however, are right about one thing: Reconstructionist ideas have never been more widely available.

Reconstruction Today

Where does Christian Reconstruction stand today? This is difficult to answer primarily because of the temptation to look in the wrong place for Rushdoony's influence. Many popular attacks on Rushdoony overestimate his influence on Bush and the GOP and misread his ideas as a cloaked desire to take over the government by hook or crook.³⁰ But the fitful electoral success of the Christian Right has exacerbated tensions in the movement by dividing those calling for a limited government based on Christian principles and those willing to forgo ideological purity for short-term political gain. With their anti-interventionist, libertarian ethos, those inspired by Christian Reconstructionism tend to fall into the principled camp and a good many see national electoral success as a sign of ideological weakness. Their rigid theological consistency also leaves them reluctant to compromise with Republicans and more moderate evangelicals. As a result, Reconstructionists are as likely to disengage from politics as they are to engage in it.

Rushdoony himself is the model for this antagonistic stance toward national politics. In the 1980s, he became increasingly disgusted with partisan politics and worked to disengage from cooperative political action. While it has been widely reported that Rushdoony served as an original member of the Board of Governors of the Council for National Policy (CNP), a secretive right-wing organization co-founded by the evangelical minister and co-author of the *Left Behind* novels Tim LaHaye,³¹ it is less widely known that Rushdoony severed his ties with the group in the late-1980s.³² Rushdoony stopped attending CNP meetings almost as soon as the organization started and ceased paying his membership fee in the late-1980s. He even went so far as to publicly dismiss the organization because of its emphasis on "socializing purposes" over ideologically sound political action.³³

Similarly, Rushdoony played an important role in the formation of the Coalition on Revival (COR), an ecumenical organization designed to bridge the gap between

Rushdoony's Reconstructionists and pre-millennial evangelicals like LaHaye and Francis Schaeffer. Rushdoony and other Reconstructionists famously signed a series of COR Christian World View documents that highlighted points of Christian consensus in their resistance to secular humanism. As with the CNP, Rushdoony stopped working with the group and publicly trashed COR as "an ineffectual group that doesn't change things."³⁴

Between Rushdoony's cool response to national politics and Gary North's abrasive engagement in doomsday theorizing, Christian Reconstructionism's direct influence on national trends has been severely limited. Rather than look for Christian Reconstruction's direct influence on this or that aspect of *national* policy, it is best to look for its indirect influence on a network of broader, *local* Christian concerns. At the local level, Rushdoony's ideas have helped to mobilize any number of movements. In particular, Reconstruction has spurred "reform" movements in church groups both large and small.

One of the most obvious local expressions of Reconstruction's "reform" impulse can be seen in the Exodus Mandate Project. Exodus Mandate is a ministry organized by Rev. E. Ray Moore, Jr., a former Army chaplain and pastor active in the Southern Baptist Conference (SBC). Exodus seeks to "encourage and assist Christian families to leave government schools for the Promised Land of Christian schools or home schooling."³⁵ In his writings, Rev. Moore explicitly acknowledges his debt to Rushdoony and other Reconstructionists.³⁶ Dr. Bruce N. Shortt, one of Moore's allies in his fight against public education, has been promoted by the Chalcedon Foundation and his book, *The Harsh Truth About Public Schools*,³⁷ was published by Chalcedon. Since 2004 Moore and Shortt have teamed up with others in the SBC to promote an "exit strategy" from the public schools. The resolution they proposed for the 2007 annual meeting calls for the formation of an alternative K-12 school system to be administered by Christian churches. Echoing Rushdoony's writings

American History, Rushdoony Style

It is hardly radical to assert the United States is a Christian nation; historians, social critics, and religious leaders have made this claim for centuries. But in response to the threat of communism and the social changes following World War II, the insistence that the United States is essentially Christian took on new urgency and Rushdoony joined the chorus offering his own interpretation of history.

First, he argued that the New England colonies were Protestant feudal states that resisted any and all attempts to unify governmental authority into a centralized bureaucracy. Second, the U.S. Constitution was designed to protect this feudal order and the American Revolution was actually counter-revolution against the European nation-state. Finally, he argued that a conspiracy of Unitarians and socialists united to unify America into a monolithic government. They realized their goal with the defeat of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Since the time of Lincoln, the forces of an elite urbanized bureaucracy have been slowly rolling back the rural, feudal Christian character that the Constitution was designed to protect.

Variations of Rushdoony's revisionist project have caught on with supporters as varied as Pat Robertson, Otto Scott, and numerous Christian home schoolers who seek a comprehensive theological framework for understanding American history.⁴¹

from nearly a half century ago the resolution states, "education is not theologically neutral, and for generations ... [children] have been disciplined primarily by an anti-Christian government school system."³⁸ If successful, this small grassroots movement could lead to the departure of millions of children from the public school system throughout the United States.

Conclusion

Even though the Chalcedon Foundation has fallen on hard times since Rushdoony died in February 2001, Reconstructionism is hardly dead. Through the careful, persistent promotion of his theology, Rushdoony managed to spread his ideas far and wide. Arguably, with his passing the intellectual impetus behind Reconstructionism specifically and Dominionism more broadly is on the wane. But the ideas Rushdoony developed laid the foundation for an incredibly vibrant and adaptable theological system that equally motivates conservatives from various religious and political backgrounds to take action in the name of Christ.

Nowhere is Rushdoony's intellectual influence more evident than in a May 2007 gathering of some 800 socially con-

servative Protestants for the second annual Worldview Super Conference outside Asheville, North Carolina.³⁹ The conference's program promised to help prepare this generation of Christians "to capture the future" for Christ. Slickly produced and organized by Gary DeMar, an avowed disciple of Rushdoony and founder of the American Vision ministry based in Georgia, the four-day event featured more than a dozen speakers, including Gary North.⁴⁰ Many of the speakers and participants shared Rushdoony's contempt for America's secular society and government. Unlike Rushdoony, however, the participants consistently exhibited their commitment to direct political engagement rather than abstract theological debate.

Today, the public activism advocated at DeMar's Worldview conference and local reform movements like Moore's Exodus Mandate all attest to the enduring reach of Rushdoony's theological mission. His ideas aren't going anywhere just yet. The Chalcedon Foundation, under the leadership of Rushdoony's son, Mark, continues to publish its founder's manuscripts. Meanwhile, Gary North continues to warn of the impending collapse of America's secular system. But most importantly, all three vol-

umes of Rushdoony's magnum opus, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, remain in print; Christian colleges and home schooling programs regularly assign Rushdoony's surveys of American history; bloggers write in his honor. In truly libertarian fashion, Rushdoony's ideas have spread far and wide across the Internet and via a diffuse network of right-wing interest groups to create a wide array of Reconstructionist-inspired groups. The decentralized, bottom-up model of social organization Rushdoony championed will all but assure his continued influence for decades to come. ■

End Notes

¹ Mark Crispin Miller, *Cruel and Unusual: Bush/Cheney's New World Order* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004).

² *Ibid.*, 258-259.

³ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁴ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law, Vol. I* (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), 425.

⁵ This, of course, is a matter of perspective. Many evangelicals embraced the Social Gospel because of its implication for individual salvation. In fact, as historian R. Lawrence Moore has argued, the Social Gospel was perfectly compatible with the individualistic nature of capitalistic consumption and acquisition and was hardly "socialistic" in any meaningful sense. Moore's measured historical perspective, however, is unlikely to change the minds of the more vociferous critics of Social Gospel. See Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 204-237.

⁶ It should be noted that the Social Gospel was far from dominant in American Protestantism. From the ideas of Dwight Moody to the public ministry of Billy Sunday, clergymen spent as much time defending the benefits of capitalism as they did critiquing its excesses.

⁷ For a concise summary of Fifield's appeal to the Eighth Commandment see Brian Doherty, *Radicals For Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007). For an in-depth discussion of Spiritual Mobilization see Eckard V. Toy, Jr., "Spiritual Mobilization: The Failure of an Ultraconservative Ideal in the 1950s," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 61 (April 1970): 77-86.

⁸ *The Christian's Political Responsibility* quoted in Doherty, *Radicals For Capitalism*, 271.

⁹ Eckard V. Toy, "Faith and Freedom, 1949-1960," in *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America*, Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton eds. (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1999), 161.

¹⁰ Opitz eventually summarized his ideas in a book by the same name: Edmund A. Opitz, *The Libertarian Theology of Freedom* (Tampa, FL: Hallberg Publishing Corporation, 1999).

¹¹ Edmund A. Opitz, "The Libertarian Theology of Freedom," in *The Libertarian Theology of Freedom* (Tampa, FL: Hallberg Publishing Corporation, 1999), 136.

¹² *Ibid.*, 138.

¹³ Rothbard contributed to *Faith and Freedom* under a pseudonym because he was already well known as a radical of questionable religious commitment. In 1956 he was actually fired by *Faith and Freedom's* editors after readers complained about his radicalism.

¹⁴ Mark Rousas Rushdoony, "A Biographical Sketch of my Father," in *A Comprehensive Faith: An International Festschrift for Rousas John Rushdoony*, Andrew Sandlin ed. (San Jose, Ca: Friends of Chalcedon, 1996), 21-22.

¹⁵ For Rushdoony's interest in the magazine, see Gary North, "Ed Opitz, R.I.P.," *LewRockwell.com* (22 February 2006 [cited 31 May 2007]); available from <http://www.lewrockwell.com/north/north439.html>.

¹⁶ It is often wrongly reported that Rushdoony was a "student" of Van Til. While it is certainly true that Rushdoony was the most prolific popularizer of Van Til's ideas, it is important to note that Rushdoony did not attend Westminster Theological Seminary where Van Til taught. In fact, Rushdoony never formally studied under Van Til, a fact that might explain their ultimate divergence on the concept of theonomy. Van Til publicly rejected much of Rushdoony's work and never adopted the Reconstructionist paradigm, even though their relationship remained friendly.

¹⁷ R. J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard? An Analysis of the Philosophy of Cornelius Van Ti* (Vallecito, Ca: Ross House Books, 1995), 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

²¹ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 30.

²² R. J. Rushdoony, *Intellectual Schizophrenia: Culture, Crisis, and Education* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1961), 100.

²³ Gary North, "It All Began With Fred Schwarz," *LewRockwell.com* (16 December 2002 [cited 1 June 2007]); available from <http://www.lewrockwell.com/north/north145.html>.

²⁴ Rob Boston, "Apocalypse Now," *Church & State* (March 1999), 8-12 and Declan McCullagh, "There's Something about Gary," *Wired* (7 January 1999 [cited 1 June 2007]); available from <http://www.wired.com/culture/lifestyle/news/1999/01/17193>.

²⁵ Gary North, "Confessions of a Washington Reject," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 5, no. 1 (Summer 1978): 73-86.

²⁶ Gary North ed., *Tactics of Christian Resistance: Christianity and Civilization* 3 (Summer 1993).

²⁷ For instance, see Gary North, *Government by Emergency* (Ft. Worth, Tx: American Bureau of Economic Research, 1983). In this book North predicts that a major national emergency will allow the federal government to expand its power through unconstitutional means. The Bush administration's response to the 9-11 terrorist attacks has provided North with several "see, I told you so" moments.

²⁸ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1977).

²⁹ Gary North, "Rumor #213: Rushdoony Has Gone Unitarian," undated Institute for Christian Economics Position Paper [cited 1 June 2007]; available from http://s155777461.onlinehome.us/docs/a_pdfs/newslet/position/9408.PDF.

³⁰ Most notably, Mark Crispin Miller told an interviewer, "What's most significant here, and yet gets almost zero coverage in our media, is the fact that Bush is very closely tied to the Christian Reconstructionist movement. The links between this White House and that movement are many and tight" ("Talking with Mark Crispin Miller,

Author of *Cruel and Unusual: Bush/Cheney's New World Order*," *Buzzflash.com* (23 July 2004 [cited 25 June 2007]); available from <http://www.buzzflash.com/interviews/04/07/int04037.html>. Miller fully develops this argument in *Cruel and Unusual: Bush/Cheney's New World Order* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004).

Stephenie Hendricks makes a similar point, arguing, "[Rushdoony-inspired Dominionists] believe George W. Bush is divinely leading us into [Armageddon]" ("Stephenie Hendricks Reminds the Fundamentalists: 'Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit,'" *Buzzflash.com* [11 April 2006 [cited 25 June 2007]); available from <http://www.buzzflash.com/interviews/06/04/int06011.html>; see also her *Divine Destruction: Wise use, Dominion Theology and the Making of American Environmental Policy* (Hoboken, N. J.: Melville House, 2005) for a fuller explication of her interpretation of Bush and the Reconstructionists.

³¹ Russ Bellant, *The Coors Connection: How Coors Family Philanthropy Undermines Democratic Pluralism*, 2nd ed. (Boston: South End Press, 1991), 36-37.

³² Rushdoony's name appears on CNP membership lists through the 1990s, but he adamantly insisted he stopped paying CNP's membership fees. He implied someone secretly paid it for him against his wishes.

³³ Marghe Covino, "Grace Under Pressure: The World According to Rev. R. J. Rushdoony," *Sacramento News and Review* 6, no. 28 (20 October 1994): 19.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ "Christian Children Need Christian Education," The Exodus Mandate Project (cited 1 June 2007); available from <http://www.exodusmandate.org>.

³⁶ The preface to E. Ray Moore, *Let My Children Go: Why Parents Must Remove Their Children From Public Schools NOW* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2002) is available from <http://www2.whidbey.net/jmboyes/LMCG-I.htm>.

³⁷ Bruce N. Shortt, *The Harsh Truth About Public Schools* (Vallecito, Ca: Chalcedon Foundation, 2004).

³⁸ Bob Unruh, "Christians Need Exodus from 'Pharaoh's System,'" *WorldNetDaily.com* (5 May 2007 [cited 1 June 2007]); available from http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=55556.

³⁹ Jeremy Leaming, "Fringe Festival: Christian Reconstructionists Hope To Move Out Of The Margins And Take Dominion In America - And They Have Some Powerful Friends," *Church & State* (July/August 2007 [cited 19 July 2007]); available from http://www.au.org/site/News2?abbr=cs_&page=NewsArticle&id=9212.

⁴⁰ A promotional trailer for the conference is available from <http://www.americanvision.org/WVSC/default.asp>.

⁴¹ Three recent articles have offered excellent explorations of Rushdoony's historical revisionism. For a careful analysis of Rushdoony's reassessment of Southern history see Edward H. Sebesta and Euan Haque, "The US Civil War as a Theological War: Confederate Christian Nationalism and the League of the South," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 32, no. 3 (2002): 254-283. For slightly less academic reviews of his historiography, see Jeff Sharlet, "Through a Glass, Darkly: How the Christian Right is Reimagining U.S. History," *Harper's Magazine* (December 2006), 33-43 and Frederick Clarkson, "Why the Christian Right Distorts History and Why it Matters," *The Public Eye* magazine (Spring 2007); available from <http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v21n2/history.html>.

MALE VICTIMS *continued from page 1*

end of court-imposed radical feminism.”

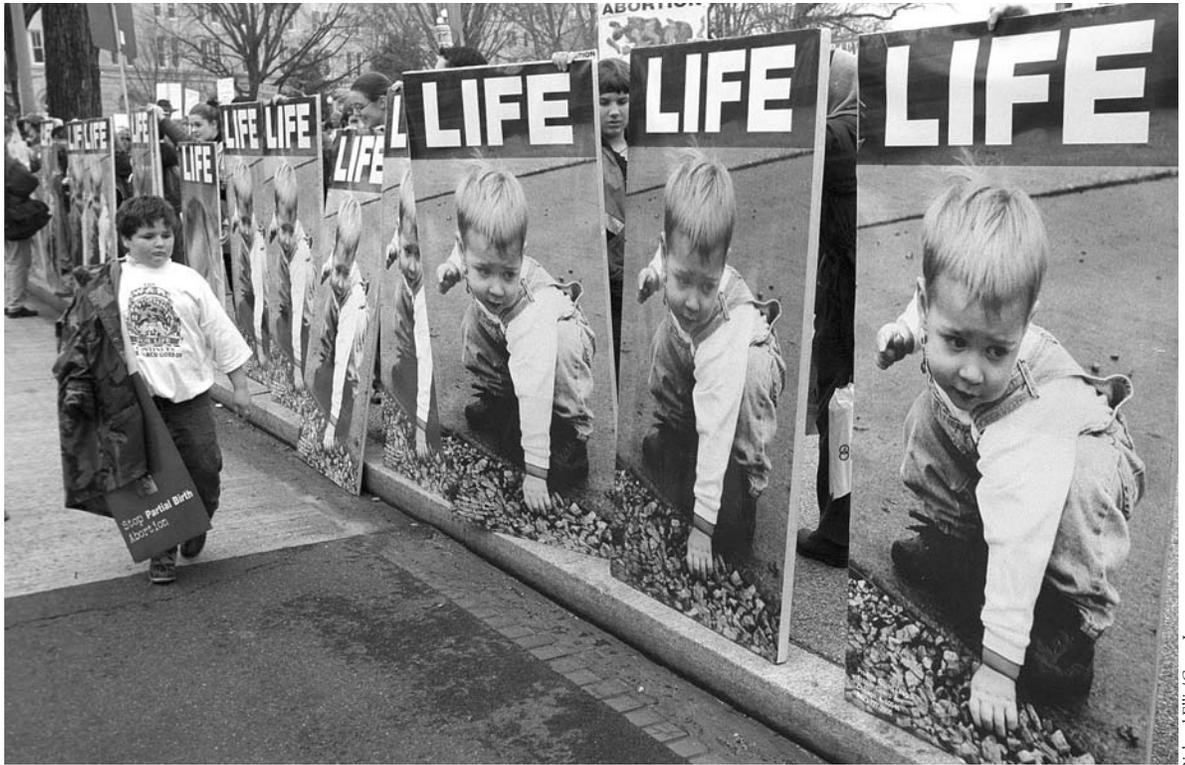
“Justice Blackmun must be spinning in his cold grave,” she laughed. “Why, it’s enough to give pro-abortionists the vapors.” Her words thrilled the crowd and many not only tittered but popped out of their seats to give her the day’s first standing ovation.

Spirits got an additional boost from a Republican Presidential forum in which three hopefuls spoke—crowd favorite Sam Brownback, the Kansas Senator; former governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts; and Texas Congressman Ron Paul. Each promised to propagate the Right to Life Committee’s agenda if elected.

Romney opened by admitting the error of his former ways and likened himself to George Bush, Sr. and Henry Hyde. “I took a prochoice position once and I was wrong,” he said. “The anti-life threat to our culture is real and I will fight to ban abortion, embryo farming, and cloning. I will fight to define life as beginning at conception. I support abstinence education. I oppose gay marriage. I do not favor bilingual education.”

Despite Romney’s warm reception, it was Brownback who captured the audience’s hearts. The chair of the Senate Values Action Team, this lifelong ultraconservative dubbed abortion “the great moral sin of the day” and confessed that he hopes to be “the President to appoint the Supreme Court judge who will overturn *Roe*.” Like Romney, he vowed to

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*Anti-abortion groups erected a wall of signs outside the Supreme Court in one of their many protests of the *Roe v. Wade* ruling recognizing women’s Constitutional right to privacy in having an abortion.*

Richard Ellis/Getty Images

“push for life to be sacred at all stages, from conception to natural death.”

But how to do this? Workshops taught the rudiments of community organiz-

Wemhoff’s words visibly impact his audience as, one after another, men rise and confess that they, too, once participated in an abortion.

ing—how to chair a meeting, fundraise, and use technology—and discussed substantive political issues.

Some workshop themes rang familiar: lambasting Planned Parenthood; restricting teen access to abortion by imposing parental consent and notification requirements; working at the United Nations on

international “pro-life” policy issues; publicizing “Post Abortion Syndrome”; pushing the abortion-breast cancer link (despite the National Cancer Institute’s warnings that there is no such link). Others were new: developing outreach programs for “male victims of abortion” and introducing legislation to require women considering abortion to view sonograms of the fetus before surgery.

Ancillary issues were also touched upon, from the need to oppose the newly reintroduced Equal Rights Amendment (which could render anti-abortion restrictions discriminatory to women), to opposing U.S. ratification of the United Nation’s Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW]. The agenda also included fighting cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and euthanasia—dubbed human efforts to “replace God.” What’s more, efforts to develop universal health coverage were slammed as “un-American” incursions into the free market.

Nonetheless, abortion received the lion’s share of the activists’ attention and while

NEW ANTI-ABORTION TACTICS

Death Certificate for Aborted Fetuses

State Representative Stacey Campfield of Tennessee introduced legislation in February that would require death certificates for aborted fetuses, thus furthering the anti-choice agenda of extending personhood to fetuses. While he said its purpose was to create a public record of the number of abortions performed, opponents responded that this figure is already available in public health records and would violate the privacy of the woman.

Expanding Informed Consent Laws

In May, the South Carolina legislature defeated a bill that would require women seeking abortions to view ultrasounds before the procedure. Seventeen states already have optional ultrasounds available to women as a tactic to persuade them to continue their pregnancies. Furthermore, some crisis pregnancy centers and anti-choice groups are traveling by RV offering free sonograms to inner-city women to urge them not to terminate their pregnancies.

Embryo Adoption

The Bush Administration is funding an initiative that promotes the idea that embryos are children and thus can be adopted. Nightlight Christian Adoption agency received \$1 million in federal money in 2003 for its Snowflakes program, which helps infertile couples “adopt” embryos unused by other women undergoing in vitro fertilization, thus “saving” them from being used in stem cell research. Yet some of the women are trying to become pregnant with “adopted” embryos that had originally been rejected because they were not the healthiest.

“Choose Life” License Plates

The “anti-choice” movement has a new tactic of spreading anti-abortion messages, via state issued license plates. The “Choose Life” license plates first appeared in Florida after a bill signed by Governor Jeb Bush in 1999. Currently, 17 states offer these license plates and many others are considering it. The cost runs from \$25 to \$70 and funds raised support anti-choice organizations and crisis pregnancy centers. Many pro-choice groups have challenged the move by saying it is unconstitutional for a state to endorse one side of a political debate. — Anna Mester

it was clear that everyone wished they could click their heels and undo *Roe*, most speakers emphasized realism. This meant sticking to the gradual approach of eroding abortion access. James Bopp, Jr., National Right to Life Committee’s General Counsel, a member of the Republican National Committee, and Mitt Romney’s Special Advisor on Life Issues, spoke at a workshop on Abortion Law Developments. “Is *Roe* going to fall?” he asked. “The answer is no, emphatically no.” Instead, Bopp called the 1992 Supreme Court decision in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* paramount. “*Casey* promised that there could be reasonable regulation of abortion as long as it did not impose an undue burden on women. In April, a five-member Court majority found that banning partial birth abortion did not impose an undue burden. This proves that the Court is serious and all reasonable regulations will be upheld.”

Yes, *reasonable*.

Bopp believes that the Supreme Court will support mandatory ultrasound exams for women seeking abortions. “Women contemplating abortion should see their unborn child,” he said. “They should hear the beating heart.”

Bopp further urged the conference goes to build on existing restrictions by introducing parental consent and/or notification requirements; waiting periods; mandatory counseling on pro-life options; and funding bans in states that don’t have them.

As for newer strategies, a workshop on Lost Fatherhood cast a spotlight on “male victims of abortion.” Speakers Gregory Hasek and Dave Wemhoff offered emotional testimony about getting their girlfriends pregnant and sanctioning their abortions only to be haunted by feelings of guilt and shame years later. Hearing them speak is unsettling because it is impossible to tell someone that their feelings are illegitimate.

Hasek was particularly eloquent. A licensed marriage and family therapist at a Christian counseling service in Oregon, he works with male sex-and-pornography

addicts. “These guys are in crisis,” he begins. “For men, unresolved pain comes out in symptoms. They don’t hold up signs saying, ‘Hi, I’m post abortion,’ but one of the pains in their lives is abortion. God created the need for men to get up and care for women and children. Women look to men for decisions. Women often equate sex with love and choose love from a man over having a child.”

His presentation is a savvy blend of Promise Keepers and New Age spiritualism, with a salting of psychological concepts tossed into the mix. “Men use anger as a way of processing grief,” he continues. “Abortion makes a lot of men angry and the men who are kept out of the decision are the angriest. They need to talk about what

“The anti-life threat
to our culture is real,”
Presidential hopeful
Mitt Romney told
the crowd.

it would have meant for them to have had the child.”

To hear him and Wemhoff tell it, the country is filled with men longing to be fathers, and it is as if deadbeat dads are rare birds. “We are our brother’s keepers,” Wemhoff says. “We need to make a bigger deal of how abortion affects us. There are men out there who are willing to raise their child, but this right is denied by abortion. That’s hurt a lot of guys. It’s our nature to protect and provide, to build a family, to care for women and children. This is the Natural Law, the will of God.”

Wemhoff’s words visibly impact his audience as, one after another, men rise and confess that they, too, once participated in an abortion. “It is important for men to acknowledge that what they did was a

sin,” Wemhoff counsels. “When we do that we can find healing from God.”

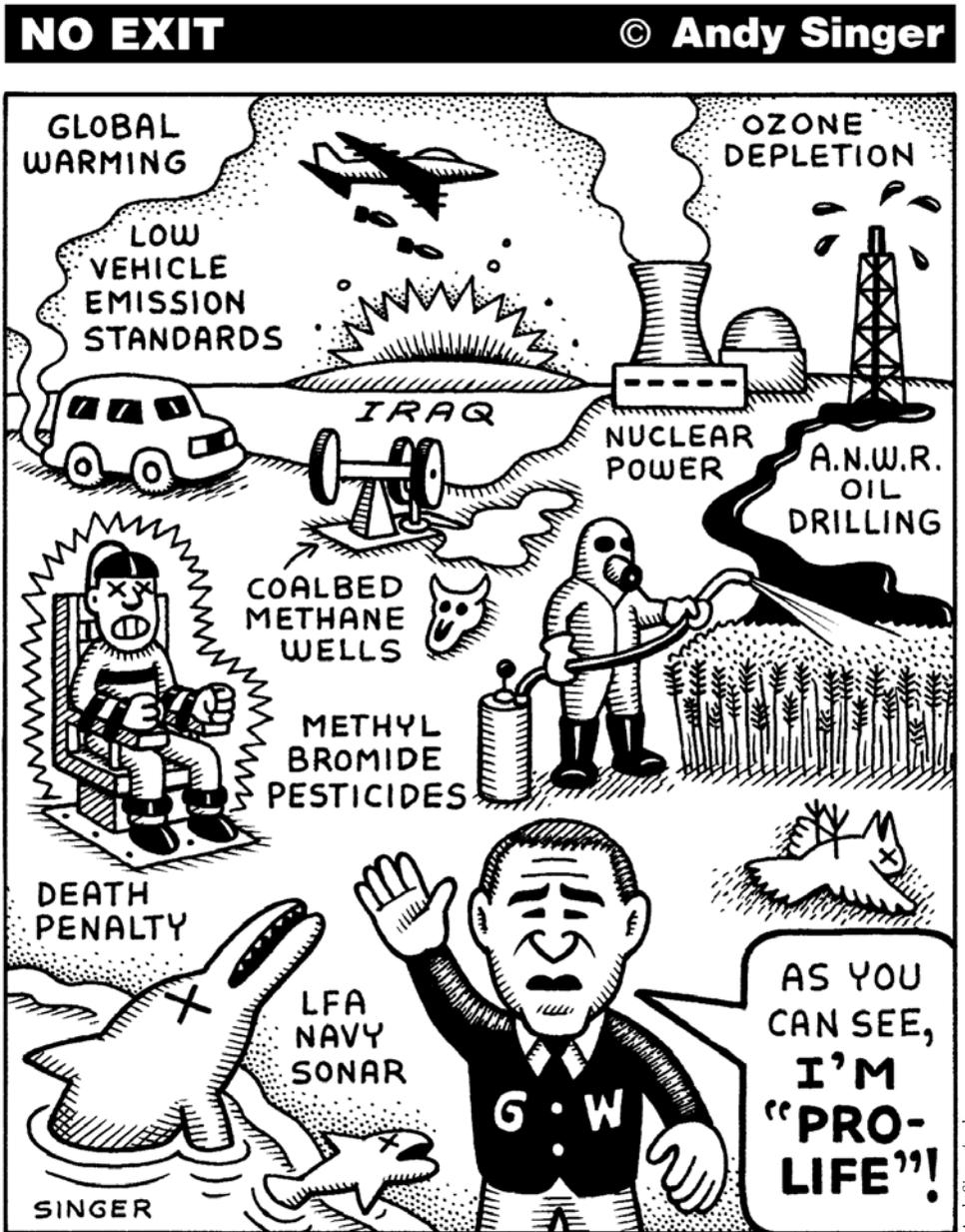
God’s mercy was also front and central in Anne Dierks’ workshop, *From Tears to Triumph: Abortion Aftermath*. The Director of an eleven-week post-abortion counseling program sponsored by the Archdiocese of Little Rock, Arkansas, Dierks sees women who she says are grieving and guilt-ridden.

While this is obviously a self-selecting demographic—who else chooses the Roman Catholic Church for post-abortion counseling?—Dierks cautioned conferees to withhold judgment. “Twenty five percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 will have abortions. This means 25 percent of the women sitting next to you at work, on an airplane, or in church. They’re there and we need to offer them the words of Jeremiah: ‘Rachel mourns for her children because her children are no more. But the Lord told her to dry her tears, that there is hope for her future.’”

This injunction notwithstanding, Dierks repeatedly referred to the women she counsels as “mothers of dead children.”

And therein lies the contradiction. For all the talk of love, compassion, and forgiveness, most speakers were unable to resist the lure of rhetorical overstatement. CNN was repeatedly referred to as the Clinton News Network and Hillary Clinton and Ruth Bader Ginsburg were caricatured as Joan of Arc-like Amazons. The Right-to-Life Committee’s Hispanic Outreach Coordinator, Raimundo Rojas, a frequent lobbyist at the U.N., couldn’t help but bemoan the representatives appointed by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. “The delegates used to dress in Prada and Gucci and were always elegant,” he said. “Then Chavez comes into power and we have hairy-legged feminists in burlap who won’t talk to us.”

Planned Parenthood was similarly smeared. Dr. Angela Franks, a young Boston College theologian, described one of the group’s websites, *Teen Wire*, as pornographic. It “promotes teen sex play, mutual masturbation, oral sex and cyber sex,” she said. As an antidote, Franks developed *www.pphurtsgirls.org*. The site



denounces Planned Parenthood as a purveyor of disease and immorality.

While Franks’ message was shrill, her delivery was not. She calmly urged listeners to tarnish Planned Parenthood’s image by publicizing Margaret Sanger’s ties to eugenicists. She also urged parents to organize boycotts of companies that donate to the organization and monitor teens who use their services. Taking a page from discredited former Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline, she hammered home a tired message: “Planned Parenthood covers up child abuse and statutory rape. We know

that 70 percent of underage girls who get pregnant have been with predatory adult males who impregnate them. Planned Parenthood should be a mandatory reporter. We need to publicize that they are protecting child abusers.”

Although Kline’s successor eventually threw out the charges against Planned Parenthood, saying staff had done nothing wrong, Franks seems to think that if you denounce Planned Parenthood often enough, the message will stick.

In addition to workshops and plenaries, conference goers had a chance to mingle

and shop. Bumper stickers and tee-shirts put forward clear messages: You can't be a Christian and a Democrat; A person is a person no matter how small; Former fetus opposed to abortion; I vote pro-life; Abortion hurts women.

While some disagreements were voiced—Gregory Hasek, for example, shocked his audience when he said that abstinence education cannot work because “the cry for relief from emotional pain, the cry for love, is always louder than the cry for God”—it is opposition to abortion that glues National Right to Life Committee members together.

This is important since the group is no longer as homogeneous as it once was. Although most members are white and middle-aged-to-elderly, the organization has moved beyond its original Roman Catholic base, with Protestants promi-

nently involved. At least one rabbi attended the 2007 confab.

As far as politics, the National Right to Life Committee is less radical than anti-abortion groups like Operation Save America, and most of its members favor a gradual approach to restricting abortion availability. They're content to lobby their representatives and work behind the scenes, rather than in front of clinic doors. Given their electoral successes and their Supreme Court majority, they see their star ascending and they couldn't be happier.

“Abortion has nothing to do with privacy,” Presidential candidate Ron Paul told them. “The issue is whether the fetus is human and deserves the protection of law.”

The thunderous ovation greeting his statement made words unnecessary. ■

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LEGACIES OF LYNCHING *continued from page 1*

When I talked with Whites about the very same incidents, they had vague recollections, particularly where lynchings were concerned. I thought this was alarming because Whites were for the most part the ones who saw lynchings, not Blacks. I'd often seen this in my civil rights work: Whites see their world one way and Blacks see their world a very different way. I thought this disconnect really lies at the heart of race in America.

What legal case brought you to Maryland's Eastern Shore?

The community client was the Jersey Heights Neighborhood Association and we were challenging the decision by the state to build a highway bypass directly next to the Black community in Salisbury. The plan constituted the third time in 60 years that the state had built a major highway through or next to the community. Standing on Route 13, you can see that it cuts right through the community—churches are cut off from where their congregations would be and so forth.

Why did you choose to focus the first part of your book on the stories of

Matthew Williams and George Armwood, men killed in separate lynchings in the early 1930s on Maryland's Eastern Shore?

These are the stories that my clients told me about and so I started to look into them. I became fascinated with these men because their stories in some ways were very different. Armwood was a fairly uneducated field laborer, a hard worker on all accounts, who had been loaned out to a family since the 5th grade. His family was very poor and lived in a modest shack in Somerset County. He was accused of assaulting an elderly White woman, apparently in a robbery attempt.

Williams had lost both of his parents and had gone to live with his aunt and uncle in Salisbury and appeared to be living what, at least for that time period, would probably have been a middle class Black life, surrounded by a large family. He is alleged to have killed his boss for reasons that we cannot discern from official accounts. Neither man warranted being hung from a tree on the courthouse lawn in the two different counties where they lived.

Hence the title of the book?

I chose *On the Courthouse Lawn* because that was the site of a vast majority of lynchings on the Eastern Shore, and I think it was a quite deliberate choice of venue. Lynchings were a message crime directed at the Black community. The White communities that participated in these lynchings and condoned them were making a statement about who was in control of law and order, of the justice system. It was about total and absolute control. The fact that these lynchings were witnessed by, in the case of Matthew Williams, between 500 and 1,000 people and, in the case of George Armwood, perhaps nearly 2,000, means Blacks were also aware that Whites—the people they worked for, the people that they saw in the street—would be complicit. Not everyone in the crowd was actively involved in the lynching but they were willing to watch and say nothing and they were willing later to go before the grand jury and say they didn't recognize anybody.

What was the post-lynching climate like in these communities?

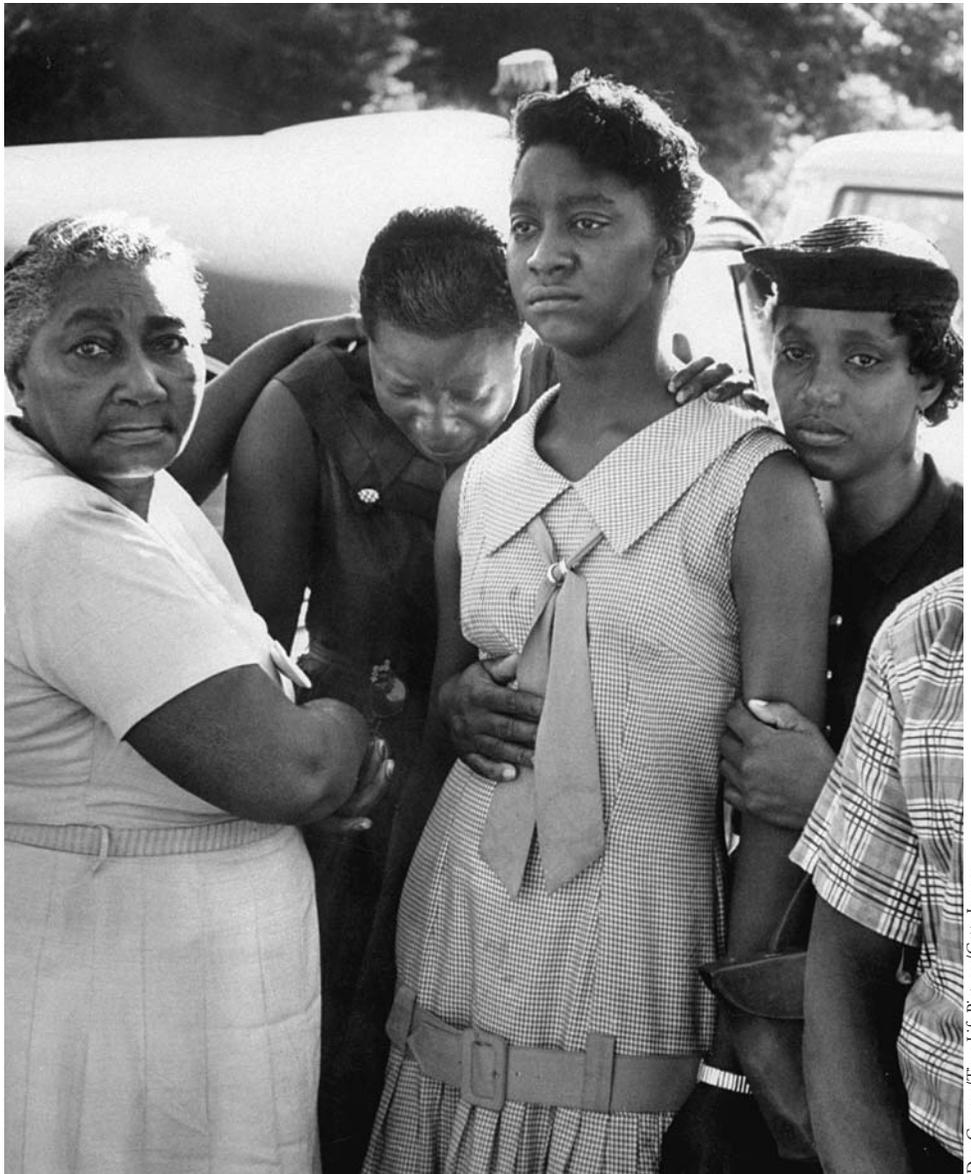
Blacks were faced with the fact that Whites would close ranks and protect each other to maintain White supremacy. The result was that Blacks, for the most part, tried to go along to get along. They went into survival mode, which meant not stepping out of line, not antagonizing Whites by clamoring for political rights, and essentially remaining to themselves.

The Eastern Shore was isolated in this time period. Getting there required a drive of up to six hours from Baltimore, and you had to take a ferry to get across the Chesapeake Bay. During the same period, Blacks on the Western Shore in Baltimore had begun the cases that eventually led to *Brown v. Board of Education*. Thurgood Marshall was there and, within several years after the lynchings, brought and won a case challenging segregation here at the University of Maryland Law School. That was the first desegregation case in higher education. Meanwhile, Blacks on the Eastern Shore were totally disconnected from this progressive activism.

What do you mean by Whites closing ranks?

It starts the next day. George Armwood had been taken to Baltimore city for safekeeping and then, on the order of the local judge and state attorney, was returned to Princess Anne the next day, even though there had been talk of a lynch mob forming. On October 18, 1933, he was taken from the Princess Anne jail by a mob and lynched that night. They came with a battering ram, knocked the doors down, and the sheriff was outside facing the mob. Armwood was mutilated and hung from a tree, and then his body was dragged to the courthouse, doused in gasoline, and set on fire.

The next day the sheriff reports, “I looked at every face in that mob and didn’t recognize a single one. I think they were foreigners from Virginia.” So it starts with the signaling to the community—“here’s the story.” When the grand jury is called, person after person, witness after witness testifies, “I didn’t recognize one person in that mob.” We know that’s not true because we have affidavits from state police,



Family and friends of Mack Charles Parker, a man taken from his jail cell and lynched in Michigan in 1959, mourn at his funeral.

never introduced to the grand jury, in which they identify many local people who were leaders of the lynch mob.

Did Blacks also close ranks?

There were dissident reactions and this is an important part of the history for us to reclaim. After the lynching of George Armwood, Whites in Salisbury apparently prevailed upon three Black leaders—an undertaker and two others—to write a kind of op-ed in the local paper, which they did, essentially saying that the lynching was the fault of these lawless, criminal Black men, and that the relationship between Blacks and Whites was great.

A week later, another group of nineteen Black men met in Salisbury, which was pretty brave in and of itself, given the climate, and sent a response op-ed in to the Black paper, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, in which they denounced these three leaders, saying, they don’t represent us; they are clearly stooges of the white power structure and the conditions were not harmonious and they should have been man enough to support the idea of anti-lynching legislation. This was very important because it showed a split; there was not a uniform response that “we’re going to simply acquiesce and go along to get along.”

Not everyone knuckled under.

Was anybody prosecuted in these or any other lynchings?

Never.

What was the overall impact of lynching?

We know what political disenfranchisement meant and how it continued to reach its tentacles into the 20th and 21st century with the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. We have no illusions about what legal and enforced segregation did in maintaining white supremacy and the psychology of white supremacy. Well, lynching was a tool also; it was essential because when other things failed, you had to know there was this violent retribution that could happen if you transgressed the social norm that had been set down by Whites.

When we think about it in this context, you can chart some of the ways in which lynching was employed to quell Black unrest or potential unrest. The '30s saw a great deal of lynching all over, not just in the Deep South. The Depression was raging and the more precarious the White man's economic position became, the more lynching loomed as a way of maintaining White supremacy. After the wars, in 1918 and in the 1940s, Black veterans who would not take off their uniforms were lynched. They had been out in the world, fought for their country, handled weapons, been accepted abroad in a way they never had at home, and had a different idea of their manhood than Jim Crow would have recognized. Lynching was used as a method to remind Blacks of who they still were.

One of the last mass lynchings, maybe *the last*, was in 1946 in Walton County, Georgia, when two Black men and their girlfriends were shot beneath the Moore's Ford Bridge. The case attracted the attention of the federal government because one of the Black men was a veteran. Truman ordered that the FBI come down and investigate. No one was ever convicted.

What is the impact of this silent denial of the history of lynching?

There is an unspoken sense of how to get along in the community that Blacks

have internalized. You, for the most part, stay in your place. These communities are decades behind on the basic idea of political representation of even the most marginal kind. This past year a Black county commissioner was elected for the first time in Somerset County, where George Armwood was lynched—even though the Eastern Shore is quite heavily populated by Blacks. The town of Princess Anne is 65 percent African American. The highway sitting case that I worked on was in the 1990s, when finally Black communities said, "That's enough and we're going to sue."

In the White community there was a

We have this history in which people could be killed publicly with thousands of people on the street watching and no one ever convicted.

code of silence that is still in place. Even among themselves, Whites who try to talk about these events in a direct way are subject to being ostracized.

What do these conspiracies of silence mean for dealing with persistent racial inequality today?

When I give talks, invariably someone will say, "Aren't we just talking about this stuff all the time? Do we have to rehash these events again?" And what's fascinating is that we've never talked about them. People are exhausted by a conversation that we've never had. People presume that, because we've talked about slavery somewhat, we must have spoken about lynching. You have a generation that is totally ill equipped for talking candidly about this history and that's what I'm trying to break through with the book.

Your book describes a climate of red menace that accompanied fears of Black insurrection.

Even as Whites terrorized the Black communities which lived in fear for their lives, Whites created this fantasy that it was actually Blacks who were the aggressors. What set it off is that Euel Lee, a Black man accused of killing a White farm family, came to be represented by a White communist lawyer named Bernard Ades, who worked for International Labor Defense, the same organization representing the Scottsboro Boys in the same time period. Lee had nearly been lynched and was taken to the Baltimore city jail for safekeeping. Ades vigorously defended Lee, got a change of venue for his trial, and managed to have Lee's first conviction thrown out. Euel Lee was tried again, convicted a second time, and ultimately executed, but the representation that Ades provided infuriated Whites on the Shore who felt that this was communist interference and that Lee was getting a free pass, having gotten this lawyer and having gotten his first conviction thrown out and the trial moved from the East Shore. The trial, in fact, had been moved because when Ades went out there to file notice that he was representing this client, his car was surrounded by an angry mob and he and his secretary were themselves nearly lynched. The three Black leaders whose op-ed blamed lawless Black men for the Eastern Shore lynchings also blamed Ades.

What are some other legacies of lynching and racial terrorism?

The stories that parents tell their children after a lynching, the survival story—i.e. don't get too educated; don't go to that side of town; don't look at that kind of woman; don't make too much money; don't show off in front of The Man; all that kind of stuff—are strikingly similar to the stories that I hear many of my friends and family members tell their sons about how to treat the police: it doesn't matter if they're right; keep your mouth shut; put both hands on the dashboard; don't tell him you know your constitutional rights; don't

argue with him. These survival conversations are almost entirely identical.

The dehumanizing imagery when we talk about criminal defendants is very, very similar. If we refer to a group of young Black boys as a “wolf pack,” as they were called in the case of the Central Park jogger—these boys who were later found to be innocent—it sets the public up to overlook discrepancies in the alleged confessions that they made. The same was true in the cases of lynching. As soon as Matthew Williams was arrested for killing his boss, the headlines in the paper described him as “negro slayer.” His name was often incorrect in the paper. It didn’t matter what his name was. He was “negro slayer,” and that enabled people after the lynching to say, “Yes but he killed his boss,” without asking why this man, who was very close to his boss and who his boss really liked, who was living a middle class life, suddenly one day shot his boss.

What do you make of the various racial reconciliation efforts currently underway in the U.S.?

They’ve first of all uncovered an aspect of U.S. history that has remained hidden, so they are producing that dialogue and are forcing it out into the public, which is critically important. I’ve been asked, “What if we find some people who are still alive who were active in the lynching?” Well, I think they should be prosecuted. In fact, I think criminal prosecution is a form of reparation. I would like to see all of these efforts become much more dynamic and multi-pronged.

I talk in the book about addressing questions of exonerating people who are innocent, naming public places to acknowledge these events, changing educational curricula, providing financial remuneration where appropriate to the family of lynching victims. These are all on the table and there have been a number of groups trying to help communities think through how dynamic this process could be. I have been working with STAR, Southern Truth and Reconciliation. They and other groups have come together to create a national con-



Sherrilyn Ifill

sortium called the Alliance for Truth and Reconciliation. We regard reparation as a key part of reconciliation and we broaden the term so that we’re not merely talking about money, which is such a limited and sometimes counterproductive way to think about reparations. It has to be locally driven and the appropriate means of reparation has to be responsive to the particular way in which these events harmed the local community. It remains to be seen and it will vary from place to place. I’m very hopeful. We’re only at the beginning of the process, but I’m glad we are at least at the beginning.

Is the focus on extreme acts of racial violence a bridge or a potential barrier to addressing more structural or everyday forms of racism?

Part of the problem with our conversations about race is that they’re too big. We try to talk about slavery, affirmative action, police brutality, the middle passage, lynching, racism in sports, and Condoleezza Rice in one conversation. It’s overwhelming. You have to get your hands around something real and concrete, a historical event, a fact, and use that as a way to pull the thread and it will lead you inevitably to all the structural problems that are really the most important for the 21st century.

Lynching has won more attention over the last few years, in part due to the “Without Sanctuary” exhibit of lynching photographs and postcards, which emphasized the festively public character of many of these crimes.

The exhibit had a tremendous effect. It had a lot to do with Senator Mary Landrieu’s [D-LA] efforts to push the Senate apology for the failure to pass anti-lynching legislation. In Atlanta the exhibit was shown at the King Center, which was the appropriate context for it. But I confess I had some concerns. I am extremely sensitive to the voyeuristic quality of lynching. In real time, a good part of participating in lynching was watching—watching and doing nothing. I was very concerned about the possibility of the exhibit replicating that, that people could come and watch the photographs and do nothing. It’s important that an action agenda be connected with the exhibit.

There were many things—the lynching of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas, of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming—that came together at the same time to get people stirred up and thinking about this. When I started writing my book, suddenly six books on lynching came out. I’m a religious person, and so I believe there was a divine hand in bringing this conversation to many people at the same time, to push many peo-

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***The Public Eye*, September 1993 and December 1993**

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ple to have the same idea: that now is the moment to force this history into the center and make people begin to look at it.

A measure to establish an unsolved crimes section in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department is currently before Congress. It's been dubbed the "Till Bill" in honor of Emmet Till, the Chicago teen brutality beaten and murdered in the Mississippi Delta in 1955 after allegedly whistling at a White woman.

There are a number of such cases during the Civil Rights Movement in which Black activists and others were murdered and no one was either prosecuted or—as in Till's case—convicted. An all-White jury acquitted two men who, soon after, admitted to murdering Till—knowing they could not be retried on the same charges.

People say, "Should we be prosecuting these old men, taking them out of their trailers? They're on oxygen, these old Klansmen." And I say, "Yes."

Those men have since died, and others implicated in the crime were never properly investigated. The reopening and solving of such cases is necessary, in part because

a critical aspect of the conversation on reconciliation is the current distrust that many African Americans feel towards the justice system—a distrust that derives directly from the knowledge that the police, prosecutors, and even judges, were often complicit in failing to properly investigate and prosecute Civil Rights-era violent crimes. The justice system has legitimacy because people believe in it, and many African Americans simply don't believe in the criminal justice system of our country.

That also relates to the legacy of lynching. We have this history in which people could be killed publicly with thousands of people on the street watching and no one ever convicted. There are nearly 5,000 lynchings in the history of the United States and from communities all over the country, from Price, Utah to Duluth, Minnesota to the Eastern Shore of Maryland to the Deep South, and yet we have no record of actual convictions for lynching itself. You have this complicity of the legal system in communities all over the U.S. to basically sanction the public murder of Blacks.

Without an acknowledgment and without some effort to repair that, it's very hard to ask for African Americans to trust and believe in an institution that has refused to confront this history. People say, "Should we be prosecuting these old men, taking them out of their trailers? They're on oxygen, these old Klansmen." And I say, "Yes." The only reason we are prosecuting old men, some of whom are now in ill-health, is because we failed to prosecute and convict them when they were young men. Despite their crimes, they were permitted to live the most productive years of their lives in freedom, instead of behind bars. Better justice delayed than no justice at all. Moreover, it's not only about them. The failure to prosecute these men when they were on their rampage of terror was a failure of the rule of law, and the victim was not just the one who was killed, but the entire Black community. They were essentially told that the rule of law would not be advanced on their behalf. That has to be corrected. ■

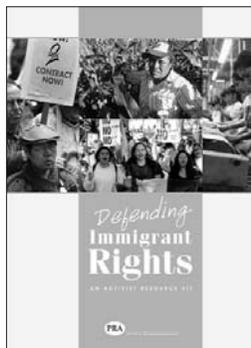
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Book Review

The Conservatism of Radicals

Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space

John R. Bowen

(Princeton, 2006)

Reviewed by Abby Scher

A few years ago, my friend Kumru told me the shocking story of her mother and grandmother running through the streets of Istanbul, threatening to tear the headscarves off of women in the name of Atatürk and the Turkish republic he founded. Even coming from a family of skeptics, I could not fathom why anyone would so passionately deplore a woman displaying her faith by covering her head.

John R. Bowen's new book about French republicanism illuminates the roots of the Turkish women's passion, and helps readers move beyond the simple minded question of whether or not the scarf oppresses women. And while delving only into a single divided country in Europe, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space* stimulates your curiosity about America's own, apparently odd, version of republicanism which did not develop as a counterforce to a single religious heavyweight, be it Pope or imams, and is not so intertwined with a loathing of religion.

As both a stranger to France, and as a parochial American, I found reading this book was a welcome plunge through the looking glass.

The United States and France are both republics, meaning their governments' legitimacy rest not on monarchs or the divine backing of rulers (be they kings or Caliphs) but on rule by "the people," however that is defined. As republics, our governments ideally serve some common good rather than the interests of a few. But French republicans strongly distrust pluralism, viewing it as a challenge to shared republican values. This distrust has huge consequences for the country's five million Muslims—half of them French citizens. Affirmative action on behalf of a group oppressed for its religion (or ethnic identity) falls to the side, for instance; the French Left was furious when Nicholas Sarkozy, while Interior Minister, announced he would appoint a Muslim prefect. The prefect's religion should be irrelevant, said the French republican idealists, and religious distinctions invisible in the public realm.

In the spirit of *laïcité*—a kind of French version of secularism—public servants are to be entirely neutral in their expression of religion. In the name of shared Frenchness, they are meant to keep their religious observance hidden as an individual act of choice in the private sphere. Those embracing *laïcité* assume that you can't be publicly a Muslim (or a Jew or a Catholic) and



also a good citizen, seeing these two identities as being mutually exclusive. This notion extends throughout government institutions, including schools. In the name of *laïcité*, French public schools aim to move young people beyond their regional or religious divisions so that they become citizens—a mission that emerged out of a century of struggle with the Roman Catholic Church, which had controlled both schools, and to a large extent public life, even after the Revolution. Blandine Kriegel, a philosopher and advisor to former President Jacques Chirac explained:

We hold strongly to the principle of *laïcité*. We have to place ourselves in the public space by abstracting from our individual characteristics,

from where we came from, our roots. This is the idea of the social contract ... We move from pluralism to unity through consent.

In public discourse, you will hear such high-minded statements as the French finding freedom *through* the state (in the tradition of Rousseau) as opposed to freedom *from* the state (following Locke). It is the state that unifies France, not its language, constitution, or culture. Liberty is only possible, in this view, because of the activities of the state.

You hear the echo of these philosophers among the activists. After 9/11, when 80 percent of Lyon teachers struck to demand banning headscarves in schools, a teacher explained why they were taking a more extreme position than the government at that time:

The school is a place where we share universal values of freedom, equality, and fraternity. The school's mission has a liberating ambition: to give citizens-in-the-making the means to free themselves from social, cultural, ethnic or gendered determinism. [p. 96]

To my American ear, this sounds like rank hypocrisy because the French government in fact meddles an awful lot in religious affairs—but it is in the name of *laïcité* and its goal historically of restraining the power of the Roman Catholic Church. *Laïcité* is not simply secularism, nor do its champions support a clear separation of church and state as would American liberals. France's Office of Organized Religion helps monitor and define the scope of religious activities in the name of avoiding the religious wars of the past. The former chief of the Organized Religion office explained to Bowen that religion is an individual's private relationship with God—making religious observances that jump into public displays, such as wearing headscarves or praying five times a day in the workplace, unintelligible and even a threat.

Far from keeping its fingers off of religion, the government reserves the right to ban ones it finds abhorrent—"Racist reli-

gions would not be able to practice because they would contravene the public order.” *Laïcité* even legitimizes outright discrimination: The French government turns down one third of applicants for naturalization, often based on how the person dresses or their religious observance; officials asked a Tunisian why he went to Mecca twice.

As an anthropologist, Bowen looks beyond the ideology to notice the cleavages and contradictions running through France’s expression of *laïcité*. He shows how it becomes a cover for ethnocentrism and a demand for assimilation. While a nun’s habit escapes notice, “Islam’s public ritual practices, which include sacrifice, scarf-wearing, and prostrations in exotic buildings, are felt by some to threaten the public order.” The government subsidizes Catholic and Jewish schools (in the name of controlling their curriculum?), but not yet Muslim ones, though Muslims are 8.5 percent of the population. No one had objected to Sikhs wearing turbans and Jews wearing yarmulkes in public until the headscarf controversy forced people to face the hypocrisy. And Catholicism retains a public role. This eclecticism dissolves any solid basis for challenging the growing visibility of Muslims in France, leading, Bowen says, to unease and even desperation among some of the non-Muslim French as they grasp for certainties.

Far from being an eternal problem stemming from its violation of *laïcité*, the September 2004 ban on “religious displays in public schools” — including headscarves — looked unlikely to pass only a few months before. Some identified the scarf as a symbol and even a cause of social problems suffered by Muslims — their high rate of unemployment, racism, etc. Many opponents argued it represents “communalism,” a group identity that interferes with a citizen’s direct relationship with the state and the state’s authority — and more specifically, with a girl’s emancipation that supposedly occurs when she immerses herself in the state’s values. French sociologist Alain Touraine warned that the rise of “communalism” leads to terrorism. The visibility of headscarves, in turn, supposedly heightens the power of Islamic organizations — and even reactionary Muslim organizations abroad.

But this opportunistic revival of Jacobin philosophy and the politicization of the headscarf might not have gained strength if the French government’s strategy of controlling Islam in other ways hadn’t encountered obstacles, inspiring politicians to show they were taking action, says Bowen.

The French government at first sought to control Islam based on how it controls other religions — and how it operated in the former colonies where most French Muslims have roots. It elevates “moderates” as official Muslim partners. It formed a Muslim council after consulting with consulates of predominantly Muslim countries; in April 2003, 995 out of 1316 mosques helped elect the new council’s members. Then, “their ambassa-

dors approved a government-supported ‘moderate’ as head of the council,” in a colonial manner of operating. But the council’s function is obscure, particularly in its role in representing the mostly secular Muslim population.

The French banned the veil in 2004 as part of their habit of turning to the law to “teach French moral lessons.” Only Islam is portrayed as unified and in a march to overturn secular French values. Here, Bowen’s description of France reminded me of the pre-World War II Poland described by Eva Hoffman in her masterwork *Shtetl*, when Jews were 13 percent of the population. The Jewish question raised fundamental quandaries about the nature of citizenship: “Were Jewish obligations only formal — taxes, obedience to the law, military service — or were they a matter of deeper affinities or common interests?” [p. 177]

Jews were becoming... an entity unto themselves, which was experienced as somehow foreign, and which could be mentally detached or expelled from the symbolic universe of a self-contained Polish state. [p. 169]

While we may have to wait for Joan Scott’s upcoming book on the headscarf debate for the definitive analysis of its gender dynamics, Bowen does explore splits among French feminists about headscarves, pointing out that some of the new (we would call them lipstick) feminists who embrace an outspoken display of feminine sexuality have a tough time with women who choose to cover their heads. They cry *vive la difference*, but champion only a sexualized kind of *difference*, not a modest one. Many support the banning of scarf-wearing girls from public schools, ending their chance of an education — a feminist publicly resigned from SOS Racisme after it defended the girls’ right to remain. Meanwhile, the media and government rarely allow the voices of scarf-wearing French girls to be heard, instead giving the platform to secularists and those

who, like a handful of left-wing recent immigrants from North Africa, wholeheartedly linked the scarf to a range of oppressions in their home countries.

Two girls who did manage to penetrate the media were the Levy sisters of Aubervilliers, Alma and Lila, who were thrown out of school for taking on the scarf. The daughters of a Jewish father (from a Tunisian immigrant family) and a nonpracticing mother, they chronicle their decision in the book *Girls Just Like Others*. Since they chose to wear headscarves independent of any pressure from their family, they should have been models, but the impasse remained. “Calls for newcomers to integrate are not accompanied by calls for long-term residents to broaden their notions of what is acceptably French.” Girls are thrown out of school. And initiatives that would broaden representation of those disenfranchised remain impossible in part because of a divided Left. Through the looking glass indeed.

**As both a stranger
to France, and as a
parochial American,
reading this book was a
welcome plunge through
the looking glass.**

.....Reports in Review.....

REPORT OF THE MONTH

Mapping Inequality

Communities of Opportunity: A Framework for a More Equitable and Sustainable Future for All

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, January 2007. http://kirwaninstitute.org/publications/ki_pub_docs/Comm_of_Opportunity_Jan_2007.pdf.

It is difficult to describe the structural, built-in ways that inequality is reproduced. The sociologist John A. Powell, Director of the Kirwan Institute at Ohio State, is promoting a useful phrase “community of opportunity” to encapsulate the idea that “most affordable housing in metropolitan areas is disconnected from opportunity.” Despite desegregation orders and NAACP lawsuits, some federally assisted housing continues to be built away from jobs, quality education, and health care resources and instead is found in central city or depleted inner suburban areas. Those key resources must be brought into these neighborhoods to fight the impoverishment of cities and their people — and people must be given the transportation and housing

opportunities to access those resources in wealthier areas, this report argues. Because “inequality has a geographic footprint,” “opportunity maps” can identify where jobs, good housing and doctors are clustered, and identify where to locate new or rehabbed government-supported housing to best contribute to the inhabitants’ lives. “Where you live is more important than what you live in,” according to the report, referring to longstanding research that poor students do better when attending schools in wealthier areas.

Many states already place affordable housing near day care, health services, and transportation to jobs. Wisconsin and Minnesota consider where jobs are being created, among other factors when locating housing. The Kirwan Institute pulls together these lessons, and has created comprehensive opportunity maps to help guide siting decisions in Baltimore, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, Battle Creek, and other areas. Implicit in the enterprise is the idea that structural racism can be challenged with carefully designed responses.

Other Reports in Review

Secrecy, an Ally of an Imperial Presidency

Government Secrecy: Decisions without Democracy

People for the American Way Foundation and OpenTheGovernment.org, Washington, D.C., July 2007.

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/thg/governmentsecrecy.pdf>.

The government has upped the ante on keeping secrets from the rest of us. This updated version of a report first issued in 1987 in response to the Reagan administration’s increase in secrecy is a reminder that while things have gotten worse, the impulse to hoard government secrets is not new. The Bush administration shares a penchant with Reagan for hiding information from the American public, and techniques for doing so have proliferated since 2001.

Without the public knowing what the government is doing, trust in government dissolves, corruption spreads, and accountability to ensure the government is acting on behalf of the people weakens. Without the free flow of information, scientific and intellectual

innovation is stifled. Yet the federal government’s rapid growth and increased use of electronic data storage diminish both trust and public access. Despite hard fought advances that can stifle the urge to secrecy, reading this well-documented and reasoned report is unnerving.

Some tidbits from the report: “For every tax dollar spent declassifying old secrets, the government spends \$134 creating and securing secrets, up to 40,000 documents a day.” “It is estimated that there are now more than 100 different designations for categories of sensitive information,” despite the fact that “the sources of [state secrets] privilege are nebulous.” “Sensitive is a code word for embarrassing to senior officials.”

“Gagging the insiders,” or placing restrictions on government whistleblowers, might have prevented the release of the Pentagon papers in the 1970s, but since the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1994, whistleblowers are supposedly protected. Yet the Bush Administration has met revelations about the National Security Agency’s warrantless wiretapping, CIA rendition and torture chambers, and no-bid defense contracts to Halliburton

and others with bids for new laws allowing it to punish the whistleblowers.

The claim of executive privilege has so far protected the President’s office from the Government Accountability Office requests, and similar attempts to create closed door sessions in the judicial branch, such as immigration hearings or other claims that the proceedings would weaken national security are emerging. This report encourages us to pay close attention to the watchdogs so we may defend them.

Are All the Right’s Silver Bullets Losing Speed?

Ballot Bulletin: The LGBT Turnaround June 27, 2007; Ballot Bulletin: Initiative Myths and Facts, February 1, 2007; Ballot Bulletin: A Short History of Ballot Measures Related to Reproductive Choice, March 15, 2007; Ballot Bulletin: Ward of the States, July 19, 2007

Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, Washington, D.C. <http://www.ballot.org>

According to recent emailed bulletins from our friends at the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, same sex marriage bans lost their political clout in 2006, even in states where

they passed. This may be a signal that voter opinion is changing even where the “gimmicky measures” reach the ballot. This year, good news comes from Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Florida where anti-gay advocates failed in their attempts to place initiatives on the 2008 ballot.

It's tricky trying to read the meaning of ballot measures, since they are as complex as any political campaign. For instance, coalitions of progressives and conservatives successfully challenged cities by voting in ballot measures limiting the government's power to take private land for private economic development, challenging the Supreme Court decision *Kelo v. New London*. Three quarters of the measures supporting a government's “regulatory taking” of land a real estate magnate covets failed. We are fortunate to have groups like BISC and their colleague researchers who can provide such useful information to activists.

The news about anti-affirmative action ballot measures isn't as promising. Ward Connerly, the African American supported by Rupert Murdoch and Coors to promote the rollback of affirmative action, shepherded a ban on the policy in Michigan in 2006 (in alliance with the Ku Klux Klan) under the deceptive name Michigan Civil Rights Initiative. The measure forced the University of Michigan law school to drastically reduce the number of African Americans it admitted from 157 last year to 26 this year. Connerly is now pursuing similar ballot measures in Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

Who's Talking Now?

Left Behind: The Skewed Representation of Religion in Major News Media

Media Matters for America, Washington, DC, May 29, 2007, http://mediamatters.org/leftbehind/online_version/

This study had the blogosphere in a tizzy but didn't get much attention from the mainstream press. Perhaps that is because it exposed the overwhelming bias of both print and television journalists toward interviewing conservative religious figures over progressive ones. Broadcast and print alike paint the divide as secular liberals versus “cultural conservatives who ground their political values in religious beliefs.” Yet only 10 percent of Americans describe themselves as secular in a recent Pew study and almost 70 percent are religious in a way that cannot be described as cultur-

ally conservative. Still the media overlooks religious figures coming from this diverse group.

Television newscasters interviewed or quoted conservative religious leaders 3.8 times more than progressive ones, according to this study. Major newspapers quoted them 2.7 times more often.

“If one were trying to assess the state of religion in America today by examining the major news media, one would be forgiven for believing that religious Americans are primarily concerned with a small subset of issues, chief among them ending legal abortion and opposing gay marriage. One might also believe that a handful of vocal religious figures advocating extremely conservative political views, many with close ties to the Republican Party, represent the face of religion in America today.”

Beyond Choice

Reproductive Justice in the United States: A Funders' Briefing, Summary Report

SisterSong, Atlanta, May 2007, <http://www.sistersong.org>

The word “prochoice” doesn't really communicate the range of women's reproductive rights beyond abortion, especially for those who do not have many choices. But women's rights advocates were stumped about an alternative until a caucus of African American women, some only recently returned from the 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, created the phrase “reproductive justice” to connect reproductive issues to the decisions women make elsewhere in their lives. Now the framework of reproductive justice has a life of its own, proliferating in meanings while also influencing both the 2004 National March for Women's Lives and the groundbreaking 2005 conference, Reproductive Justice for All.

In October 2005 seven funders and twenty women of color organizations gathered with the aim of crafting a commonly understood meaning of this important concept and to end the isolation of abortion and contraception from other social justice issues in their organizing. This report is the result.

Unlike the legal argument that women's choice rests on an individual's right to privacy or healthcare, the idea of reproductive justice reflects a broader human rights approach connecting reproductive freedom with other social justice movements. It welcomes in the

full range of women based on their own life experiences. It offers a counter frame to the misnomer “prolife,” and it has the potential for reinvigorating a movement that continues to be besieged by the Right.

This Just In From our Corporate Sponsors!

Fear & Favor 2006 – The Seventh Annual Report, Encroachment Without Apology

By Janine Jackson, EXTRA! New York, March/April 2007.

<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=3132>

While the majority of the stories in this year-end review of media bias concern major newspapers or TV stations trading coverage for cash or other financial benefits with advertisers – such as TV station KTLA accepting free deluxe guest rooms for its anchors at a Ritz Carlton in Pasadena in exchange for filming a morning news show from the hotel. But others deal with reporters who have been pressured to change their news content to appease corporate sponsors. Notable examples include a reporter fired from the *Evening Sun* of Hanover, Pennsylvania for criticizing Wal-Mart and a *Chicago Tribune* writer whose piece on CEO pay was pulled 36 hours before publication, leading him to resign in protest.

Only one story concerns pressure from a political source: footage of a reporter for Atlanta TV station WGCL confronting Governor Sonny Perdue over changes to the state Medicaid program was pulled after the governor's office hinted that it might withhold \$500,000 in campaign advertising if it went on air. The inclusion of this story hints at a slow erosion of the distinctions between government bodies and corporate agencies, and highlights their mutual dependence: political campaigns need TV ads, but TV stations need ad revenue just as badly.

Tucked in the sidebar is perhaps the most foreboding story of all: Google's “sensitivity filters,” which pull Google ads from websites with controversial content at the behest of sponsors. This is especially damaging, says Jackson, for online journalists, many of whom depend on Google's AdSense service as a significant source of revenue. The fact that one blogger reportedly found all of his AdSense ads removed when he made a post titled, “Have You Boycotted Sony Products Yet?” speaks volumes about this report's conclusion.

Eyes RIGHT

SINGLE-PAYER HEALTHCARE BREEDS TERRORISM!

Conservatives are moving beyond the usual “socialized medicine leads to socialism” attack on single-payer health reform to paint nationalized healthcare as a breeder of terrorism! When the British press announced that the Muslim doctors arrested in the failed airport bombing in Glasgow worked for the National Health Service, Fox News host Neil Cavuto spun it as, “National healthcare: Breeding ground for terror?” Cavuto and commentator Jerry Bowyer discussed how nationalized healthcare creates a shortage of doctors, forcing the United Kingdom to “import” physicians from the Muslim world, because “the Muslim world is good at creating physicians.” Bowyer and Cavuto warned that this trend makes countries like the UK hugely vulnerable. To his credit, Cavuto assured viewers he was not racist and xenophobic, saying, “It’s not a racial comment, it just is.”

Sources: Paul Krugman, “Health Care Terror,” New York Times, July 9, 2007.
http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/070907E.shtml;
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c-JEx-Kfvc>

THOSE NARCISSISTIC AND SNOBBY LEFTISTS!

The Left is best defined by its narcissism, we learned from the lesbian right-wing radio host Tammy Bruce. Speaking at the Young America’s Foundation recent conference “Deconstructing the Left,” held at the Reagan Ranch Center, she said, “A leftist is operating out of a very different framework socially, emotionally and structurally,” naming antiwar activist Cindy Sheehan and former CIA employee Valerie Plame as cases in point. And they aren’t just narcissists, but “malignant” ones.

Echoing her was Steven Hayward, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute who further pointed out that “snob-



Allison Silva

bery has become a formal value to the left.” “They have this ‘we’re better than you, and we don’t have to argue about it’ attitude.” It’s nice to have fans.

Sources: Jennifer Kabbany, “Anatomy of an attitude,” Washington Times, August 1, 2007.
<http://washingtontimes.com/article/20070801/CULTURE/108010064/1015>

Read the best analysis about the Christian Right on Talk2Action.org!

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