

ton despisers . . . and ultra-sophisticated 'realist' intellectuals who have divined that America has no interest in the Balkans." It was a more perilous moment than when it seemed that Pat Buchanan might grab the presidential nomination in 1996: most Republicans, after all, were not Buchananites. But in 1999, most Republicans were unenthusiastic about Clinton's bombing campaign. The editors pulled their hair out when congressional Republicans asked the President to consult Congress by invoking the War Powers Act. Kristol and Kagan argued that the congressional Republican party "hit bottom"—nothing can "cover up the shame of that vote . . . the Republicans defined themselves as the party of defeat."

During the spring of 1999, *Standard* readers got this message every week. A desperate hyper-Nietzscheanism ran through the magazine. "Win it." Use "All necessary force." We must overcome "self defeating preoccupation with casualties" which leads to "strategic paralysis." Unlike the *New Republic*, the *Standard* never took much interest in the actual politics or peoples of the Balkans. There was no fetishizing over the promise of "multicultural" Bosnia, little space given to local reporting from the region. The real struggle was over the hearts and minds of the American power elite. As the magazine put it:

The struggle in Kosovo today is about more than human suffering. It is about more even than European stability and Nato's credibility. At stake is the single overriding question of our time: will the United States and its allies have the will to shape the world in conformance with our interests and principles?

In this struggle, the enemy wasn't Milosevic or the paramilitarist ethnic cleanser Arkan, but Pat Buchanan, the Cato Institute, and the foreign-policy realists at the quarterly *National Interest*. The *Standard's* great fear wasn't that Milosevic would get away with suppressing the Kosovo Albanians, but that all those Sunbelt Republicans whose ranks filled the House majority would wake up and decide that sending troops and conducting massive airstrikes in a part of the world that no one could find on the map six months before was a little weird and that they wanted no part of an ideology which advocated such overreach.

Both journals got the victory they sought over the Serbs, without the need for the ground invasion both claimed was necessary. The bombing forced Milosevic to withdraw his forces from Kosovo, which is now patrolled by NATO troops and substantially controlled by the Kosovo Liberation Army. Eighteen months after the ceasefire, the Serb strongman Milosevic lost an election and is now awaiting trial at The Hague. The absurdity of the two journals' contention that Milosevic and Serb nationalism were the only real obstacles to peace in the Balkans is evidenced by daily press reports. By the two-year anniversary of NATO's attack, the news from Kosovo was grim: Albanian violence has driven most Serbs out of the province; the KLA has not disarmed and disbanded as Washington had pretended it would; and after first beginning guerrilla operations in a buffer zone of southern Serbia, the KLA is now fomenting a civil war in Macedonia. That war, many observers argue, has more potential to spread and destabilize southeastern Europe than did Milosevic's suppression of the insurgency in Kosovo, and it would not have been possible without NATO's actions.

As of this writing, the *Weekly Standard* has been silent about this facet of the *après-guerre*. "Present Dangers," a collection of foreign-policy essays recently published by Kristol and Kagan, contains surprisingly little about the Kosovo war, considering what a dramatic departure it had been for NATO to give up its 50-year-old status as a defensive alliance. The magazine has since returned to its regular beat of castigating the Palestinians and urging more aggressive policies against Iraq and China.

The *New Republic* hasn't entirely dropped the subject, but where there was once self-righteous passion—1936 and all that—now reigns a resigned weariness with all those messy Balkan nationalities. Writing about Serbian President Vojislav Kostunica's electoral victory over Milosevic and the resulting peaceful transfer of power, Leon Wieseltier described his feelings of "joylessness of justice" and found the jubilant Serb crowds "strangely unintoxicating." This, after a free election leading to the fall of a government the magazine had only months before described as the heir to the Third Reich. The *New Republic* at least acknowledged that NATO's famous victory had brought neither peace nor stability. Taking note of the Albanian campaign against Mace-

donia, the editors opined:

It is a harsh irony that the instigation of ethnic conflict in Macedonia has been the work of the Albanians. Weren't the Albanians the victims just yesterday? But this is today, and Macedonia is not Kosovo.

Here, "harsh irony" is a phrase of distancing, designed to veil the fact that the magazine had engaged in years of shrill advocacy and ugly demonization, urging American bombing, invasion, and occupation of a region about which its editors understood very little. Things didn't work out like they had hoped, and it is "ironic." What now? The editors urge the Bush administration to make clear to the insurgent Albanians that it supports "democratic principles." That should do the trick.

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EDUCATION

Who's Slave and Who's Massa?

by Robert Weissberg

Of all the strange bedfellows that politics attracts, one of the oddest is the enduring liaison between the black civil-rights establishment and white liberal academics. One partner—the academic auxiliary—is most dutiful. It is always there: demanding legislation, concocting dubious constitutional interpretations, justifying quotas, or consoling struggling minority students. Criticizing the civil-rights establishment's agenda invites the anger of a swarm of outraged white professors. By contrast, the civil-rights establishment takes academics for granted.

What explains this enduring bond, especially given its one-sided character? Imagine if white academics treated blacks as indifferently as they now treat labor unions. Racial-preference ideology would degenerate into simplistic demands for "a piece of the action." The entire elaborate legal edifice would al-

most vanish. Black political clout depends on thousands of vocal, energetic, quick-to-mobilize, university-entrenched allies.

Narrow financial self-interest cannot explain the bond. No personal gain comes to white academics who embrace the racial party line. Indeed, endorsement *subverts* selfish monetary advancement. Lucrative minority faculty appointments, separate “black studies” programs, and race-based channeling of research funds impose costs, not benefits, on white academics.

What about cultural affinity? Have white liberal faculty and blacks, like fundamentalist Christians and ultra-Orthodox Jews, built a brotherhood resting upon shared values? While such affinity might explain other odd political unions, the opposite is true here. How many white liberal academics voluntarily socialize with blacks? It is hard to imagine two more divergent cultures. When white liberal defenders put their sympathetic ideological spins on black underclass disorders, this does not flow from personal sympathy: Most white university types undoubtedly loathe the lifestyle of the underclass. Underclass blacks are defended in spite of their culture, not because of it.

What about noble, altruistic compassion? White liberal professors are keenly sympathetic to suffering groups, and who has endured more grief than American blacks? This explanation is only superficially true. The “compassion” dispensed by the academic-review committee is highly selective. Compare how blacks are regarded in contrast to lower-class “white trash.” Measured by educational attainment, employment, health-care access, housing, and similar indicators, lower-class white Americans resemble millions of destitute blacks. Furthermore, many poor folk are exploited economically and receive dismal treatment from banks, schools, the police, and the mass media. Nevertheless, poor whites are ineligible for compassion from the universities. Politically, they are regarded as incorrigible, eternal *enemies*, ready to rally to the next George Wallace, not as a disadvantaged group requiring professor-supplied enlightenment.

Equally important in unmasking this sham “compassion” is its doleful result. If these university friends truly cared, innumerable schemes that are still fashionable would have been junked long ago. A doctor administering expensive and

clearly injurious treatment is hardly “compassionate.” How can professors honestly argue that admitting semiliterate students to elite schools or granting degrees in ersatz fields assists blacks? How can any sensible person contend that race-based hiring, not merit, genuinely produces “excellence though diversity”? As George Orwell observed, some things are so preposterous that only an intellectual could believe them.

This odd attraction is really about advancing an agenda. At heart, the white liberal professor embraces the centralized, allegedly benign, techno-bureaucratic state, an energetic, social-engineering Big Sister. This doctrine is not, of course, the only element in the *Weltanschauung*, but it powerfully permeates innumerable particulars. This utopia is the evolutionary deepening of the bureaucratic Great Society. Governmental officials, in close concert with expert academics, will regulate an earthly paradise into existence. Congress might allocate billions to fight crime, but it is the technocratic specialist, in consultation with the university’s center for justice, who ultimately rules.

When stated plainly, it is a loathsome vision. Selling this grotesque fantasy is hopeless, at least if it is frankly acknowledged. Necessity requires chicanery: namely, promoting it as a well-intended intervention to solve a critical problem. And what better problem than overcoming centuries of ill treatment afforded black Americans? Deep down, it is a marriage of expediency, a confluence of interests. Black leaders fixated on academic-inspired “programism” to heal their wounds are but clueless totalitarian foot soldiers.

No inherent reason requires enrolling blacks to lead the charge; only convenience compels. Idealized proletarian “workers” once served Marxist purposes. Young children, the disabled, and confused immigrants are also suitable for justifying expanded bureaucratic intrusion. Environmentalists prefer to employ trifling critters.

Listen closely to the rhetoric of the self-appointed black leadership, and you will hear crude versions of lessons routinely espoused in campus classrooms. Theories of invidious cultural oppression, education as a tool for enhancing self-esteem, the ameliorative power of government, written history as hegemony—together with blank-check compensation for unique suffering—become re-

vealed wisdom. Social-science texts are the new Bible; the omnipotent state replaces God in redeeming the righteous and punishing the wicked.

Consider the obsession with political action as the favored method of collective advancement. Unemployment can be overcome by a mass demonstration commanding Washington to provide jobs, if not careers. If housing is run-down, march on city hall. If schoolchildren cannot read, picket the board of education. Can’t afford a house? Have Congress force banks to lend you money. The voter-registration drive mimics a cargo cult. The infatuation with political power, together with unquestioned confidence in governmental effectiveness, is Social Science 101.

The academy also teaches that one’s plight flows from impersonal, almost mechanical social conditions, not autonomous individual choices. Society is merely the playing out of abstract “forces.” Insisting on personal responsibility is but covert white racism. Why are so many blacks poor? The answer, as any good liberal professor will demonstrate, is that societal forces—institutional racism, shifting economic structures, biased legal doctrines and traditions, the historical legacy of slavery—condemn blacks to despair. Why do black students perform so poorly? Must be the unequal distribution of wealth coupled with inequitable school funding and Eurocentric testing. The students themselves and their parents are blameless.

The prospect of prosperity and happiness via perpetual governmental edict becomes an inalienable right, not an imposition. Liberalism—being free, independent of domination by officialdom—has been converted into the right to be dependent. Abolishing guaranteed welfare, predictably, is thus judged mean-spirited. Even to designate assistance “temporary” engenders outrage. And given the federal government’s record of success, the fear of losing eternal client status is probably groundless. Save as a result of funding cutbacks, it is hard to imagine a black-oriented agency folding up, mission accomplished.

The “womb-to-tomb” nature of this dependency is critical. Bureaucratic assistance exists for every stage of a person’s lifetime, regardless of his condition. Big Sister never retires; clients pass from one government agency to another. Even leaving welfare for private employment—the alleged big jump—does not

bring release. This step might require a federal “transition” program which, in turn, might obligate other bureaucrats to monitor employment progress with periodic evaluations. If the newly gained “independence” misfires, safety-net programs stand by for additional retraining and counseling.

Ignoring blacks politically is precarious; inner-city residents are not detached Appalachian whites or apathetic Asians. They can burn down cities. Imagine professors opting for Korean immigrants to achieve their agenda—who would mind the store if millions marched in Washington? Obviously, the centuries of genuine mistreatment of blacks bestow an uncontested legitimacy to clamors for assistance. Nevertheless, the threat of violence, especially of the mindless rambling variety, lends a powerful urgency to their pleas.

To see how this all adds up, consider the example of employment policy. Begin with a simple question: Why do blacks lag economically? The ready liberal professorial answer, authoritatively announced to whites and blacks alike (but far more keenly absorbed by the latter), is that whites discriminate against blacks, consciously hiring less-qualified whites over capable blacks. Indeed, the nature of the American economy, from banking to the tax code, intrinsically conspires against blameless blacks. Alternative explanations are brushed aside. Furthermore, since prejudice is so deeply ingrained in our racist culture, only mighty Washington can uproot this evil.

Having heard the revealed truth, blacks demand governmental action. National officials, ever willing to correct historical injustices, begin modestly, with enhanced vocational training or educational loans. Slow progress only fuels the demand for greater bureaucratic intervention. After all, if the problem lies not with the potential employees, it must lie elsewhere. The possibility of misdirected effort is unthinkable. Further professorial analysis discovers fresh remedial statist stratagems. Ever-attentive minority students are told that “market capitalism” or “white definitions of merit” are anti-black and must be replaced. Sympathetic Department of Labor *apparatchiki* concur. Hiring procedures, from aptitude-test content to obtaining criminal records, now become ensnared in detailed federal regulations. Ambitious academics are soon concocting even more interventionist projects.

The battle widens, and additional scholarly consultants are enlisted. But, as any well-schooled black leader knows, progress still lags—yet more programs need to be contrived. Energetic professors are exhausted from traveling to Washington, drafting hurried reports, and attending conferences. Promotion and discharge policies and nearly everything else now fall under governmental investigation. Scholars torture data to show that “merit” is merely a culturally laden arbitrary construct. Some professors abandon teaching altogether, too busy serving as expert witnesses, crunching employment statistics, and devising remedial schemes.

Ultimately, academics and their bureaucratic allies outrank elected officials or industry executives. The professoriate mutates into a modern priestly class of unaccountable interpreters and advisors mumbling in numbers and lowercase Greek letters. Power multiplies as obstacles become more perplexing and unfathomable statistical techniques define the issues. As kings once commanded private clerics, senior bureaucrats now possess personal scholarly counselors. Will increasing the minimum wage harm blacks? Does educational investment yield comparable returns for blacks and whites? How can society be saved? Such questions require that a professorial priest examine the entrails.

Our argument does more than clarify this marriage of convenience; it helps explain the peculiar blind spot liberal academics have for the debilitating, dumbed-down education received by blacks. The silence is deafening. If white academics were, as claimed, true friends of American blacks, we would hardly expect them to tolerate rock-bottom academic standards, shifting blacks into vocationally worthless fields, or the mindless stampede into Afrocentrism as “authentic” black education. Imagine if the professors’ children were awarded honorific diplomas after passing impossible-to-fail fantasy courses. Indeed, white liberals, despite their sighs of “concern,” are hardly alarmed by tales of incompetent black teachers launching their charges on a sea of misinformation. Eliminating systematic educational incompetence is simply not on the white liberal academic agenda.

Why are those ostensibly committed to learning not outraged by educational atrocities? Surely, professors can painlessly resist idiotic programs solely in-

tended to placate misguided blacks. Surely, professors are not compelled to participate in social passes to boost black graduation rates. But, unfortunately, this debilitating “education” virtually guarantees future dependency, to be remedied through expert bureaucratic intervention. Escaping the plantation is now nearly impossible. Genuinely helpful advice—for example, heightened diligence and stricter grading—offers few opportunities for intervention to the academic class. Rather, the would-be guardians of learning demand a rethinking of testing, altering social definitions of “knowledge,” and similar grand exercises by learned experts. More generally, when schools cultivate laziness or fail to teach basic literacy, it is “the system,” not the blameless victims, that must be reformed, and who better to direct this transformation?

Dumbed-down education fuels the fires of resentment, which, in turn, drive the relentless demands for government programism. The mechanics are elementary. First, under the guise of “providing opportunity,” black students are over-placed academically. When barely literate high schoolers show up at demanding colleges, their inevitable failure creates resentment and anger, not gratitude. If they cannot master calculus, it must be someone else’s fault. Some teachers themselves confirm this fantasy. Angry marginal students will soon denounce the white establishment as racist, deceitful, uncaring, and otherwise “insensitive” to the needs of those requiring continued massive government intervention. Such outrage, needless to say, will be interpreted by the chattering class to mean the need for even more government intervention. Politically useful rage would be far less likely if blacks students were placed in more suitable schools.

I am not insinuating that all white liberal academics consciously promote or applaud black educational failure. Some, at least abstractly, may genuinely deplore the silliness and horrible record. It is a question of toleration, standing idly by and tacitly cooperating, not directly insisting on lower standards or inane curricula. When given the chance to act, few white liberal academics offer “tough love.” At every stage of the process, from grading freshmen essays to certifying dissertations, decisions typically reward minimal performance. Many blacks get easy diplomas; bureaucrats, thanks to professorial tolerance, receive clients for

life. For many academics, this is an unacknowledged confluence of interests, not a diabolical plot.

In their endless support of the civil-rights movement, liberal academics seemingly have covered themselves in glory. At least initially, the assistance was sincere and did ameliorate many of America's worst faults. But, alas, the honeymoon is over. As in enduring marriages, relationships evolve. Yesterday's passionate affection has been replaced by a craven (though vehemently denied) utility: Blacks now are conscripted to expand a powerful state ever attentive to professorial advice. The outcome is often evil. Policies subverting our values, even if totalitarian in character, can be "sold" as commendable for black civil rights. Why else regulate such personal matters as housing and employment? Why else permit immense governmental intrusion into business and education?

Harshly put, academics are guilty of self-serving malpractice on a grand scale. They feed their patients a steady diet of debilitating nonsense that aggrandizes the state and empowers themselves. Endless talk of compassion is self-delusion. The relationship, deep down, is opportunistic. We can only hope blacks will eventually discover the fraud and discard their current overseers.

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SOCIETY

Hearing More, Feeling Less

by Janet Scott Barlow

On a Wednesday in June, it is reported that a woman in Houston, Texas, has methodically drowned her five children in the bathtub. The day after this horrific news, two things happen. First, the woman's husband—his wife now jailed, his children not yet buried—stands outside his home and, while displaying a framed portrait of his family, talks at length with the many reporters gathered at his house, as the many photographers also gathered take his picture.

Through it all, this man whose family has just been obliterated conducts himself, even in his grief, as if it were the most natural thing on earth to use this moment to be questioned and photographed by a throng of strangers. (Only belatedly do I arrive at the sickening realization that the father behaves as he does because such behavior now is the most natural thing on earth.)

The second thing that happens is an explosion of coverage of the event on talk television, most of it focused on a single question: "Where did the system fail?" The unexamined and unchallenged premise of these discussions is that a properly working "system" would have prevented a mother in Houston from drowning her children on a Wednesday morning in June.

The system under assault covers everything from the medical and mental-health establishments to the availability of family support. But the woman who drowned her children did not exist outside this system and had not been ignored, neglected, or victimized by it. In fact, she had received treatment for several years, with various drugs, for repeated episodes of depression. And she did have family support—a mother-in-law who came by daily to help with the children.

If, even under these conditions, the system could be said to have failed the woman, one question logically presents itself: What evidence would be required to prove that the system had *not* failed her? The answer in this case is both obvious and meaningless: living children. Under the terms of the televised discussion, the only way the system could be said to have worked on behalf of the Houston mother is if she had not chosen to kill her children. In other words, only by doing the most unexceptional thing in the world—keeping her children alive—could the mother's behavior be seen as proof of the system's efficacy. But how do you evaluate a catastrophe that does not exist? If you define the act of infanticide as a failure, does the absence of the act constitute a success?

If the questions come back on themselves, it's because the argument is rigged. No matter. The integrity of the argument is not the point. The point is the need for television programming—product, hours and hours of product. Ghastly occurrences no longer have real meaning in our society. They now exist merely to provide mutually beneficial opportunities for self-promotion to the triumvirate of talk

TV, experts for hire, and political advocates.

Show the grief. Find the culprit. Advise the agenda. This is the context in which the unspeakable now exists in our culture. There was a time when we could hear that a mother in America had drowned her children, and we could take that knowledge, unwelcome as it was, into ourselves and follow it wherever it led: to awe at the limits of our human understanding; to relief at the sunshine outside our window; to prayer for the souls of those dear children; to uncompromised sorrow.

But such events can no longer have their way with us, because they can no longer find their way to us. They are impeded by both the nature of television and by the obscenely doubt-free "insights" of psychologists, lawyers, feminists, and all the other media whores. Mock-solemn news accounts of which Houston child was drowned first are interspersed with energetic debates about the conditions under which that child and his siblings might still be alive. To all this, we listen mutely, stupidly, unaffected and unmoved, because the incident that generated the din surrounding us—on a Wednesday morning in June, a woman in Houston, Texas, methodically drowned her children in the bathtub—is being presented not as an act to be felt but one meant, as pornography is meant, to displace feeling. Emotionalism supplants emotion. Sensation suffocates truth. Thus, we respond, but we don't absorb. We react, but we don't feel.

And before we know it, we are isolated and self-forsaken, losing our humanity along with our humility, one irretrievable piece at a time. And losing, too, the connections that allow us to seek God in the things we least understand.

On a Wednesday morning in June, a woman in Houston, Texas, methodically drowned her children in the bathtub.

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