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*A New Generation of Conservative Thought*

# The mosque on sacred ground

Abortion abroad • Obama's mirage • Arizona's plight

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The conservative movement is in crisis. Modern conservatism was born in 1955 with the founding of *National Review*. Its editor, William F. Buckley Jr., said the publication's mission was to "stand athwart history, yelling stop!" But history has kept rolling along, smashing every traditional institution in its path. Family, faith, capitalism, our constitutional republic—they have all been shattered by modern liberalism. In the face of this ideological juggernaut, conservatives have offered sporadic and weak resistance. Their ideas have become stale. Too many prefer power to principles. The movement has become corrupt, lazy and ineffective. Having come to Washington to confront the political rot and moral decay, conservatives have become part of the establishment. In other words, they have become part of the problem.

The mission of *Reflections Magazine* is to launch a conservative moral and intellectual revival. We will bring together the finest minds and writers to defend the eternal principles of God, country and family. We seek to forge a reinvigorated conservative movement for the 21st century—one that champions a new nationalism, rooted in a culture of life, small government, a restoration of federalism and victory over Islamist terrorism. Capitol BuildingThe time has come for a one-nation conservatism that reaches out to minorities and women, the unborn and the poor, workers and students. The movement must go beyond its traditional base or else suffer a slow, agonizing death. Our goal is unabashedly counter-revolutionary: to roll back the forces of progressivism. Since the 1960s, a destructive liberal revolution has swept across our land. Characterized by radical secular humanism, sexual permissiveness and milk-toast socialism, it is transforming America into something our Founding Fathers would not only find unrecognizable but repugnant. We stand for the real America, the historic America, the eternal America—an America based on moral traditionalism, an America of limited government, self-reliance and entrepreneurship, an America that won its independence from imperial British rule, triumphed over Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, and has shed precious blood and treasure to liberate hundreds of millions of people around the world, and an America that champions human rights and freedom, in which every individual—regardless of race, color, gender or religion—possesses innate dignity and equal value in the eyes of our creator. We ask like-minded Americans to join us in this struggle for the heart and soul of America.

Edmund Burke, the great philosopher and godfather of Western conservatism, once said: "All that's necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing." We refuse to do nothing. We will fight for what is right, true and good. This is the rock upon which we take our stand.

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## Mission:

The Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal was founded in June, 2005 in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. We are a non-partisan, non-profit, education and outreach organization which aspires to engage and mobilize the millions of African Americans, Hispanics, women and other minorities in this country who share conservative values. We will inform conservative leaders about the needs and aspirations of minorities in order to make the latter feel welcome amongst us. Also, we want minorities to appreciate fully how conservatism is congruent with their values and goals. In short, we will build a steadfast alliance between conservative leaders and minority groups. We hope to preserve all those elements in the American republic that render us a strong and vibrant nation. Simultaneously, we are open to new ideas that will allow more citizens to enjoy the blessings of freedom, prosperity and moral renewal.



## How We Differ From Other Conservative Organizations:

1. We seek to update conservative thought. We want to find original ideas on how to bolster timeless principles.
2. We are attentive to the needs of women and minorities. These are not peripheral but are a primary focus of our institute. We want the conservative movement to make adjustments in order to accommodate the unique aspirations of previously marginalized groups. We also want minorities to learn how the conservative movement can benefit them.
3. We are devoted to cultural issues, not just politics. The main battle of our time is to seize the initiative in the cultural arena.
4. We hope to foster a broad alliance with those who adhere to traditional moral principles. We seek to build brigades with individuals of all faiths in order to combat assaults on human dignity.
5. We write policy initiatives, opinion articles and monographs as well as organize symposiums and conferences that appeal to our audience. Hence we do not just think and write: we take action!
6. We do not focus exclusively on one group or on one issue. There are excellent minority conservative organizations across the United States that are currently working in isolation from one another. Instead, we bring these groups together on a variety of issues in order to find common ground and, thus, to be effective in achieving political and cultural change.

## The mosque on sacred ground

By Herbert London

September 11, 2010 lives for downtown residents of New York. The World Trade Center site is a constant reminder of human malevolence. It also speaks to political incompetence, of politicians compromised by double dealing and arrogance.

While the site shows signs of rebirth and a tribute will be built to remind Americans of the 2800 innocent people who lost their lives one crystal clear morning in September—an insult deep and penetrating is being launched two blocks away on Park Place with the building of a mosque that will overlook the World Trade Center site.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the Downtown Community Board (by a vote of 29 to 1) approved of this religious center citing freedom of religion arguments. What they overlook, however, is far more persuasive than First Amendment defenses.

Freedom of religion like any freedom is not absolute; freedom is defined by limitations. Indians are not free to use peyote indiscriminately in religious services since drug use violates the law of the land. And religion that promotes hate or is an incitement to violence should be and can be curbed.

In the case of the downtown mosque several questions remain unanswered. If a mosque can be built anywhere, why is it being constructed near the former World Trade Center? Although denials abound, the title of the mosque, Cordoba House, reveals a great deal. In Cordoba, Muslims built a mosque on a Catholic church as a symbol of their triumph in Spain. That symbolism may be evident at the New York site as well.

It is also instructive that the provenance of the \$100 million for the project remains unknown. My guess—based on many global examples—is that Saudi petro dollars are behind the underwriting. If true, this



mosque is likely to promote Wahhabist beliefs—the most radical brand of Islam.

The promoters of the mosque contend they are Americans who love their country and eschew violence of any kind. Yet they refuse to condemn Hamas and refuse to recognize it as a terrorist organization.

What this episode demonstrates is a form of liberal myopia, an unwillingness to recognize the optics in this situation. For Muslims around the world who deplore the West, specifically the “Great U.S. Demon,” this mosque is the symbol of victory. It shows that America doesn’t have the intestinal fortitude to resist its enemies. It is as if a Shinto temple were to be constructed at the Arizona Memorial or a Nazi cultural center were built at Auschwitz. There are lines to be drawn on the matter of taste, patriotism and appropriateness that transcend reflexive adherence to the First Amendment.

As far as I know, no one is arguing against the construction of mosques albeit when a religion promotes hate against other faiths, believes apostates and other believers are less than human, argues against the separation of church and state, and is eager to undermine

the Constitution, an argument can be made that this religion engages in sedition and should be banned or, at least, censured.

At this point, the pols have spoken. The mosque most likely will be built. But for those of us who reside downtown that building will not be an expression of tolerance, but rather a wound on the city and the nation. It will represent despair; it will serve as a permanent insult to those New Yorkers who lost their lives a decade ago.

In the midst of sacred territory there will be a constant reminder that those who despise our way of life and everything this republic stands for can use our hard fought liberties to desecrate this land. No matter what Mr. Bloomberg says, this is what New Yorkers will be reminded of whenever they pass the mosque on Park Place. As significantly, this is also what radical Muslims will see whenever television cameras pan to this religious edifice. What a shame; alas, what a disgrace.

*-Herbert London is president of Hudson Institute and author of the book Decline and Revival in Higher Education.*

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## Should Arizona secede?

By Jeffrey T. Kuhner

Judicial activism is pushing America to the breaking point. This week, a federal judge blocked key provisions of Arizona's immigration law, thwarting the will of the people. The decision was ominous and will reverberate for years to come.

Judge Susan Bolton, appointed by former President Bill Clinton, is a liberal elitist who believes judicial imperialism trumps democracy. Her ruling states that local police cannot check the immigration status of people arrested or stopped for violations of the law. In her view, that would amount to an abuse of civil liberties and unduly burden the federal immigration system. She also stipulated that residents cannot be required to carry proof of legal status.

Her decision strikes at the very heart of the Arizona law, S.B. 1070. Supported by President Obama's Justice Department and the American Civil Liberties Union, the ruling sets the stage for a protracted legal battle. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer vows to appeal the ruling - all the way to the Supreme Court, if necessary. In the meantime, the people of Arizona - and America - will continue to endure the onslaught of illegal immigration.

Mr. Obama's decision to sue Arizona is a betrayal of his constitutional oath to secure our porous border. The administration's spin is that the "border has never been more secure." It points to an influx of Border Patrol agents and more resources devoted to enforcement technology. Yet the reality remains: Aliens continue to cross every day. Arizona is home to more than a half-million illegal immigrants. Phoenix has become the kidnapping capital of America. Mexican drug lords order contract killings on Arizona sheriffs. Violent crime is pervasive. Instead of helping the people in need of protection, Mr. Obama is in effect siding with the lawbreakers.

Mr. Obama is playing racial politics with the Ari-



zona law. He is deliberately inflaming ethnic tensions, falsely portraying the law as leading to a repressive police state for Hispanics. Yet the law deliberately bans racial profiling; a Hispanic could not be asked to show residency papers when having an ice cream with his kids, as the president falsely asserted. This is race-baiting and fear-mongering at its worst.

The administration and congressional Democrats are making a strategic calculation. They think the Arizona law may be popular in the short term, not just in the state but across the country, but they are convinced that in the long term, the law will backfire on Republicans - especially with the surging Hispanic voting bloc. Mr. Obama thinks he can aggressively court the Latino vote by demonizing Arizona. This is classic Saul Alinsky-style radicalism: the politics of divide and conquer, pitting races and classes against one another in the service of state power.

The ruling furthers Mr. Obama's radical agenda. Judge Bolton's decision essentially says America cannot protect its national sovereignty. This is tantamount to an open invitation for illegal immigrants to come at will and with impunity. America is thus no longer a real nation-state capable of defending its

geographical boundaries, cultural identity and national interests. Instead, it is being reduced to a colony of the new world order - one marked by economic globalization, transnational corporatism, supranational bodies and the erosion of meaningful borders. The liberal ruling class wants to eradicate the nation-state in order to achieve its globalist-socialist utopia. This is why it despises America's federal immigration laws and refuses to uphold them.

The ruling also prevents the state from defending itself; it is unilaterally disarming the people of Arizona in the face of a dangerous enemy. The federal government has shown repeatedly that it is unable and unwilling to secure the border. The Arizona law has the overwhelming support (70 percent) of Arizonans (as well as Americans). It is the collective expression of the people's will to defend their homes, property and lives from criminals. It is the democratic embodiment of securing their God-given rights to life, liberty and self-government.

Yet Judge Bolton and the Obama administration are making a neo-aristocratic argument: Leftist judges—elitist activists in black robes—override democratic legitimacy. This is a form of soft authoritarianism.

In response to a controversial 1832 ruling by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, President Andrew Jackson reputedly said: "John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it." Mrs. Brewer should take a page from Old Hickory's playbook: Judge Bolton has made her decision, now let her enforce it.

The Arizona governor should stand on the bedrock principles of states' rights and democratic self-government and insist that S.B. 1070 go into effect despite the federal ban. This would set up a constitutional showdown between Mrs. Brewer and Mr. Obama, Arizona and Washington. What would the Justice Department do: carry Mrs. Brewer off in handcuffs and throw her in prison? In other words, the people of Arizona should engage in peaceful civil disobedience.

For too long, liberals have successfully used the courts to impose radical social engineering upon a recalcitrant population. Abortion, homosexual marriage, pornography, racial quotas, affirmative action, a ban on public school prayer—all of these issues

have been imposed by an imperial judiciary against the wishes of the majority. The Arizona law is the reassertion of democratic self-rule against the federal leviathan.

Arizona is where the old republic will stand or fall. It is showdown at high noon. Either America returns to its constitutional system based on real federalism, states' rights, individual liberty and decentralized power, or it continues to slide toward the darkness of a socialist superstate. Washington—with its swollen bureaucracy, imperial arrogance, rampant corruption and dangerous detachment from ordinary citizens—is despised and distrusted by many Americans. A secession of the heart is taking place—a profound alienation from the liberal ruling class.

In the future, many states—including Arizona—may decide they have no other option but to break away from the union. The choice is becoming starkly apparent: devolution or dissolution.

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*-This article was first published on July 29, 2010 at The Washington Times: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jul/29/should-arizona-secede/>*

## The image president

By Joseph Beaudoin

The Shirley Sherrod affair showed how the Obama administration makes decisions—haphazardly—and, most worrisome, how easily it can be duped into acting in a foolish manner. The administration was so eager to protect President Barack Obama’s image from a claim of reverse racism that it responded to this situation with no knowledge of the facts. A litany of events suggests this is the administration’s mindset.

In Ms. Sherrod’s case, the administration fired her—a long-time federal employee at the Department of Agriculture—for comments made at a March NAACP event. A part of her speech was posted on Big Government by conservative blogger Andrew Breitbart, apparently revealing Ms. Sherrod’s anti-white bias; the comments were out of context and misconstrued as racist. She was not given the opportunity to explain. In lynch-mob fashion, the Obama administration summarily executed her character and career. Surprisingly, Ms. Sherrod was denied presumption of innocence by a president who once taught constitutional law. Once it was revealed that Ms. Sherrod’s statements were made out of context, the Obama administration publicly apologized and offered her another job.

A year earlier, Mr. Obama declared from the presidential podium, that the Cambridge police “acted stupidly” in the case of Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. Mr. Gates, one of the nation’s pre-eminent African-American scholars, was arrested at his home by Cambridge police investigating a possible break-in after he was seen trying to pry open the lock, which was already damaged, to his own home. Mr. Gates was already in his home when police arrived. He showed his driver’s license and Harvard identification card, but was handcuffed and taken into police custody for several hours. The incident raised concerns that Mr. Gates was a victim of racial



profiling. The president later realized that he spoke without knowledge of the facts and arranged a laughable “beer summit,” in which he had a 40-minute chat on the Rose Garden patio with Mr. Gates and Cambridge police Sgt. James Crowley, who had arrested him for disorderly conduct, to diffuse the embarrassing situation.

The administration does not make decisions based on facts; at times, it does not even look for them. This immature and unprofessional mindset seems pervasive.

Earlier this year, Attorney General Eric Holder, the most senior lawyer in the Obama administration, spoke against the Arizona immigration law which he

admitted to not having read. Mr. Holder “acted stupidly.” He was not alone. At about the same time, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano also expressed her opposition to the Arizona immigration law and then admitted she had not read it. Clearly, speaking or acting “stupidly” is not the prerogative of Vice President Joe Biden.

The administration acts on the premise that protecting the president’s image is paramount and trumps the facts. This mindset breeds incompetence. This mindset prevailed at the time of the stimulus debate, as the administration made false projections. Not coincidentally, the stimulus turned out pretty much the same way as Ms. Sherrod’s story did—in abject failure.

In early 2009, the administration emphatically assured Americans that the stimulus would keep unemployment at or below 8 percent. Currently, unemployment stands at 9.5 percent after exceeding 10 percent a few months ago. In addition, underemployment, a key measure of economic stagnation, stands at 16 percent.

As for the 3.5 million jobs the Obama administration said the stimulus would “save or create,” they are fictitious. The administration has an economic model that shows they were created but there are no hard numbers. And even if the jobs were created, the stimulus was still bad policy as each one of those phony jobs costs \$225,000. At that price per job, Mr. Obama ought to stop “saving or creating” jobs otherwise he will bankrupt the United States. The stimulus was a “banana republic” economic policy—akin to former leftist Argentinian President Juan Peron’s tactics—to make things look momentarily better for Mr. Obama.

The recently passed Wall Street financial reform bill will prove as phony as the stimulus jobs. It is a 2000-plus page bill that few have read and that nobody really understands. Its foundation is an anti-business assessment of the causes of the 2008 financial crisis. Mr. Obama blames the financial crisis on the “failed policies of the past.” That is code for the policies of President George W. Bush. In fact, those “failed policies of the past” have little to do with Mr. Bush, they are policies inspired by Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal.

Despite Mr. Obama’s barrage of insipid statements

about the toxic securities that deregulation enabled nefarious Wall Street firms to create, it is neither deregulation nor Wall Street firms that created the bad mortgages at the root of the problem. Wall Street did package mortgages into securities but Wall Street did not create the mortgages. The U.S. government did, directly and through its agencies.

It is lost on the Obama administration that the financial crisis resulted from bad mortgages made possible by federal laws—to subsidize low-income home-ownership – and by trillions of dollars in funding from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, two agencies of the U.S. government.

Mr. Obama talked of market failures to justify Wall Street reform. Yet again, he chose to ignore the facts. The U.S. home mortgage business has not been a free market for some time. It is essentially a socialist banking system. Fannie and Freddie Mae guarantee or own over 90 percent of mortgages originated since the financial crisis. Yet, there is nothing in the financial reform bill about Fannie and Freddie although it estimated that bailing them out may cost as much as \$1 trillion.

The Wall Street reform bill is a financial “Sherrod case”—it attacks the wrong party because in doing so it purportedly makes the president look good. The continued existence of Fannie and Freddie Mae also illustrates a liberal paradox. While liberals do not want the government in the nation’s bedrooms, they have no qualms about the government being involved in home financing.

The Sherrod affair reminds us that the Obama administration is concerned with image not substance. A particular policy is adopted and pushed through if, on the surface, it makes Mr. Obama look good, regardless of how little understanding the administration has of the facts. That is simplistic and dangerous. And it will leave America rudderless.

As Americans face substantive threats to their security and prosperity at home and abroad, Mr. Obama recklessly just wants to look good.

*-Joseph Beaudoin holds degrees in Economics and Finance, and worked in the banking and investment industries for 20 years. He is a contributor to Reflections.*

## Our radical leader

By Joseph Vigliotti

According to Aaron Klein and Brenda J. Elliot, co-authors of the new book, *The Manchurian President: Barack Obama's Ties to Communists, Socialists, and Other Anti-American Extremists* (WorldNet Daily, 2010), left-wing associations have been crucial not only in helping Barack Obama obtain the presidency, but in continuing to inform it as well.

In a systematic fashion, Mr. Klein, an investigative reporter for WorldNet-Daily.com and Ms. Elliott, a historian and blogger, seek to document the president's past and present associations with members of the left—from those left-of-center to the fringe. By now, Mr. Obama's associations with men like domestic terrorist Bill Ayers and the radical reverend Jeremiah Wright are common knowledge. But what is not commonly understood is that these members of the left are pivotal in having shaped Mr. Obama's socialist ideology and his current policy initiatives.

The fight for universal healthcare was a cornerstone of Mr. Obama's presidential campaign, and became the cause célèbre for the administration from the summer of 2009 through the winter of 2010. It had proved to be a much-sought after goal, especially since the failure to realize socialized medicine during the Clinton administration. What was needed was a plan.

Mr. Obama's chief strategist David Axelrod hailed just such a "blueprint for future victories." It came in the form of a book written by a man named Robert Creamer, husband of Democrat Illinois Senator Jan Schakowsky.

Mr. Creamer had written a political manifesto of sorts while imprisoned after pleading guilty "to bank fraud and withholding taxes." His 2006 work, *Listen to Your Mother: Stand up Straight! How Progressives Can Win* (Seven Locks Press, 2007)—which proposed that healthcare reform be carried out in



2009—was essentially a progressive playbook and contained a list of 10 points for the "Progressive Agenda for Structural Change." Among Mr. Creamer's 10 points were: "We must create a national consensus that health care is a right, not a commodity; and "that government must guarantee that right"; and "We need to convince political leaders that they owe their elections, at least in part, to the groundswell of support of universal health care, and that they face political peril if they fail to deliver on universal health care in 2009." Joe B. Pollak, Ms. Schakowski's Republican challenger for Senate in 2010, is quoted by the authors as claiming Mr. Obama and the Democrats "followed Creamer's plan to the letter." Mr. Obama had also previously selected Mr. Creamer to head his Get Out the Vote training program.

But the influence of others upon the Obama administration doesn't end with healthcare reform, as Mr. Klein and Ms. Elliot contend. Indeed, the authors document the influence of liberal groups like the Apollo Alliance, a part of billionaire financier George Soros's Tides Center, another left-wing institution. The Apollo Alliance aided in crafting the \$787 billion "stimulus bill" and designed Mr. Obama's "green jobs" program. In the hands of men like Van

Jones, a “green jobs” program’s intent was environmental justice through redistribution of wealth. And according to Mr. Obama, conversing with Joe the Plumber during election season 2008, it’s better to “spread the wealth around.”

The authors further document Mr. Obama’s connection to domestic terrorist Ayers who believes the day he bombed the Pentagon was “absolutely ideal.” The authors claim that Mr. Obama’s association with Ayers was much more than the living room advent of a political career. Mr. Obama seems to have first come into contact with Ayers through the Chicago Annenberg Challenge (CAC), with the stated mission of “revamping the public schools in the city.” Mr. Obama was “hired by Bill Ayers to chair the CAC”.

The authors also reveal how another book, *Barack and Michelle: Portrait of a Marriage* (Harper Collins Publishers, 2009) by Christopher Andersen shows how Ayers was trusted enough to have been brought in to help Mr. Obama finish his book, *Dreams from My Father* (Crown Publishers, 2007). Furthermore, Mr. Klein documents how “Barack and Michelle” reveals a neighbor in Hyde Park, the Chicago neighborhood in which both Mr. Obama and Ayers lived, who said, “Everyone knew [Mr. Obama and Mr. Ayers] were friends and that they worked on various projects together.”

However, Mr. Obama’s leftist tendencies went further back than the CAC. When writing about Mr. Obama’s college years, for example, Mr. Klein extracts the president’s own words from the president’s autobiography to demonstrate a leftist trend early on in his life. Mr. Obama, wishing to “avoid being mistaken for a sellout,” chose those whom he associated with carefully—everyone from the “more politically-active black students” to the “punk rock performance poets.”

Mr. Klein and Ms. Elliot also document Mr. Obama’s conversion to Christianity in 1988 “at Chicago’s Trinity United Church of Christ, his church for about 20 years,” which was “led by the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Jr.” It was Wright’s “inflammatory statements on race, America and Israel” which “stirred a major controversy for Obama during the presidential campaign.” The authors also document how Wright adhered to black liberation theology, which professes that the only “true Christianity” is

that which is “specific to the black liberation experience.”

Aside from one’s personal political views, the information presented in this book is worth assessing. It is serious knowledge that needs to inform those casting votes in November 2010. How Congress is modified in the mid-term elections depends on it.

*-Joe Vigliotti is a writer and essayist residing in Maryland.*

## Holding Cuba accountable

*By Anthony Rainone*

Several weeks ago, the Cuban government released a total of 52 political prisoners. The action was praised by the international community. Yet, the Cuban regime remains largely unchanged.

The release of prisoners was brokered by the Roman Catholic Church, the Spanish government and the government of Cuba . Recently, the communist government has come under increasing pressure from international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, the European Commission on Human Rights and the U.S. State Department for human rights abuses. The Cuban government acted logically and tactically in agreeing to this highly-publicized release. The European Union has criticized Cuba 's poor human rights record and the treatment of political prisoners which may have prompted the latest actions by Cuba, amounting to a shallow public relations stunt.

To date, there is no evidence that the Cuban government has moderated or implemented reforms to guarantee freedom and liberty to its long repressed people. Reforms of any kind are foreign to the Cuban regime because they pose a threat to the survival of the dynastic communist dictatorship. The current Cuban leader, 79-year-old Raul Castro, appears to be more repressive than his brother the founder of Cuban communism Fidel Castro. There is a reason for this hard-line approach by Raul Castro because he founded, built and has maintained all of Cuba 's security forces which are used as an instrument of repression against the people of Cuba.

The current administration in Washington continues the failed policy of engagement with the Cuban communist dictatorship and may soon lift the U.S. travel ban. Once travel restrictions are relaxed against Cuba , it is likely that the 48-year-old trade embargo also will soon be eliminated.



Washington believes that advocating for human rights will only anger authorities in Havana . This idea is dangerous and foolish because without demanding verifiable change in human rights and a path toward democratization, the authoritarian status quo will remain in Cuba . The United States must demand the release of all political prisoners, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech for all of those who wish to remain in Cuba . These points by America must be non-negotiable, and Cuba must be made to realize that no improvement in diplomatic relations can be made without a fundamental change in Cuban government policy.

Cuba now will use positive international opinion in order to receive badly-needed international aid. The Cuban government is attempting to revive a battered economy--one that is mired in a deep recession due to discredited communist economic policies. The release of political prisoners by the Cuban government in order to curry favor with the international community—especially Washington—is nothing new, as this scheme has been used effectively by Havana since the 1960s in order to relieve domestic and international pressure on this totalitarian regime. Cuba has skillfully exploited international media by pulling out all the stops, even using Fidel Castro, the aging communist dictator, to give an ex-

clusive interview on “Mesa Redondo”—or “Round Table”—a daily Cuban talk show on current events on July 12. The interview took place after a four-year hiatus from the Cuban populace due to significant health concerns. This was done for domestic public opinion in order to overshadow the Cuban government’s release of its political prisoners and to illustrate that the Castro brothers are firmly in control of daily life in Cuba. The Cuban people want to hear from Fidel Castro because he has not been seen in over four years and the Cuban population is anxious and curious to learn about Mr. Castro’s health. The vast majority of Cubans know only Fidel Castro as their leader, so his public appearance on television had great symbolic significance. The interview was done at this time to exploit Fidel Castro’s popularity in order to rally the people to support the Castro government and to give scant attention to the release of Cuba’s political prisoners which the Cuban government views as a subversive threat to the communist system of government.

Nonetheless, there are a few silver linings. Despite their recent release, Cuba’s political prisoners will continue to speak out against the repressive nature of the Cuban regime. Dissidents now in Spain have said they will continue to press the Cuban government on human rights. Also, according to a July 13 Associated Press news report, a prominent Cuban historian Esteban Morales was to be expelled from the Communist Party of Cuba by party hard-liners because he wrote and spoke out against massive government corruption. Mr. Morales now has the support of the rank and file who want him to remain in the party and concede that corruption is a concern in the nation. This admission is important because a key institution such as the Communist Party of Cuba admits there are concerns about government excesses and mismanagement. These events, though small, may be the genesis of change in Cuba for the long-term.

Yet, the prospects for significant reform in Cuba remain bleak in the short-term because Fidel and Raul Castro remain alive. Recently, the UN member states elected the Cuban regime as the vice president of the Human Rights Council, the main UN body to protect human rights. Indeed, this is the height of hypocrisy. Cuba skillfully swapped votes with others nations in order to receive this prestigious position. This is an international outrage. The United States should have led strong opposition to Cuba’s position

on the Human Rights Council but we did nothing. Now Cuba has a free hand on the council.

The current administration is making a grave error in failing to hold Cuba accountable for its dismal human rights record as a prerequisite for concessions and improved relations. As Obama fiddles and blunders, Cuban dissidents and the people of that nation continue to suffer.

*-Anthony Rainone is a retired Army intelligence officer.*

## Time to end race-talk in America

By Grace Vuoto

During the presidential campaign, then-candidate Barack Obama said he would be a post-racial leader, ushering a new age in American politics where racial barriers would be broken and greater harmony would prevail. Instead, under President Obama, the nation is deeply polarized. In addition, there has been more race-talk in the media during the last 20 months than there has been for several decades. This current dialogue, unlike during the Civil Rights era, no longer has any beneficial purpose.

It is, therefore, time for conservatives to declare a self-imposed 25-year moratorium on race-talk. At best, these discussions are now useless; at worst, they exacerbate national wounds and fuel the leftist mindset—even when that worldview is not grounded in reality.

The epithet of “racism” has now been bandied about so often by Mr. Obama’s leftist apologists—such as MSNBC journalists Chris Matthews, Keith Olbermann and Rachel Maddow; newspapers like *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*; Web sites such as *Daily Kos*, *The Huffington Post* and *Salon*—that the word has lost its meaning. Opposition to Obamacare is “racist,” the president’s declining approval ratings is due to “racism,” the Tea Party must be condemned for being inherently “racist,” the queries about Mr. Obama’s birth are “racist” and disapproval of Mr. Obama’s policies belie a hidden “racism.” In other words, the left no longer knows what the word means—but uses it like a club to beat opponents. As leftists are using the term, an alien would guess it means “something really, really bad that people think or feel regarding the current administration and sometimes regarding other black people in America, too.” This definition is now too vague to be relevant.

What is racism? Racism is the conviction that some individuals—**due to their race**—are biologically inferior. These beliefs were widespread in Europe and America for centuries, leading to the con-

viction that there were racial hierarchies—whites being at the top and blacks and native Indians at the very bottom. In the twentieth century, a racist political philosophy reached its pinnacle in Nazi Germany, based on the notion of Aryan racial supremacy (Jews and Slavs, despite being white, were at the bottom and targeted for extermination; Aryans would lead the way toward a new world order). Asian, African, Native Indian and Middle Eastern civilizations have been racist. In fact, racism in world history has been the norm not the exception.

Yet, we have made so much progress. In the twenty-first century there are now very few individuals in America—and in much of the Western world—who believe that some individuals are biologically inferior due to their race. In essence, that mindset is now passé. It is certainly passé in any manner that can affect public policy.

This does not mean that all cultures are regarded as equal. It is not racist to believe, for example, that French culture is superior to German culture or vice-versa. It is not racist to believe that American culture in the 1950s was superior to that of the present or vice-versa. It is not racist to assert that, as many on the right do, the U.S. Constitution is the finest political document in the world or that, as many on the left do, the European Union has produced the finest society. In other words, it is not racist to believe that some civilizations, at some point in time, were better than that of their contemporaries or than at other times in their own history. These are merely opinions that we all hold about cultures and civilizations.

Moreover, it is not racist to discuss elements of black or Hispanic or white culture in America or elsewhere around the world. In fact, these are discussions that we must and should have. The word “racism,” as used today, prevents us from addressing the real issues that have a social impact—such as cultural attitudes, perceptions and prejudices. It is not race that counts—it is culture that makes the dif-

ference, stupid.

Furthermore, policies are essentially race-neutral unless they specifically target a race. Obamacare, for example, discriminates more according to the state of health one is in than according to one's race. Mr. Obama's tax policies discriminate more according to income levels than race. Mr. Obama's foreign policy discriminates more according to the political demands of his leftist base than about any singular national or cultural preference abroad. In other words, in American politics today, policy trumps race.

Conservatives must, therefore, insist that they no longer discuss race when addressing our politics—in the same manner that we do not discuss hair or eye color or family lineage, either. We discuss policy and culture only. If a liberal accuses a conservative of “racism,” the best response is a short one: “I love all God's children equally; I discuss only specific aspects of culture or public policy.” Period. Full stop. Walk away. Hang up. Delete e-mail.

By stopping the race-talk, conservatives will not

fall into this time-consuming trap and will transcend their opponents. The more leftists are left to discuss race among themselves—a topic that is now irrelevant—the more irrelevant they will become in the national discourse. Thus, conservatives will marginalize the race-baiters. Race-talk is among the left's last gambits to remain viable. Why are conservatives giving them so much importance instead of letting them fall into obscurity?

If we want national harmony and real progress, we have to know when it is best to stop talking; this is akin to long-married couples who get into a bad argument until one of them has the good sense to be quiet for the sake of the greater good. As **conservatives** consistently place a spotlight on practical, tangible policies, we will win the national debates. And the American people will see that race-talk is really the last refuge of the scoundrel.

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## Playing the race card

*By Clint Condra*

Several stories pertaining to race relations have made national headlines in recent weeks. On July 13, for instance, “over 2,000 NAACP delegates...unanimously passed a resolution—as amended—called ‘The Tea Party Movement,’ asking for the repudiation of racist Tea Party leaders,” according to one NAACP press release. Another press release issued by this oldest, largest civil rights organization in the country explained that “the language” of said resolution “[had] been misconstrued” by conservative bloggers “to imply that the NAACP was condemning the entire Tea Party Movement itself as racist.” Insofar as their resolution of condemnation really was misconstrued, much of the blame belongs to the NAACP delegates themselves; by calling it “The Tea Party Movement Resolution,” which suggests unqualified condemnation, they invited such a misconstrual.



More troubling than this, though, is the story of the Justice Department's decision to dismiss the voter intimidation case against the New Black Panther Party, members of which armed themselves with machetes and showed up at a Philadelphia polling place on Election Day 2008 spewing anti-white vitriol. "The New Black Panther case was the simplest and most obvious violation of federal law I saw in my Justice Department career," said J. Christian Adams in *The Washington Times* on June 25. Mr. Adams resigned from his position as a Justice Department attorney on account of the decision to dismiss the case. "Citizens would be shocked," Mr. Adams went on, "to learn about the open and pervasive hostility within the Justice Department to bringing civil rights cases against nonwhite defendants on behalf of white victims. Equal enforcement of justice is not a priority of this administration."

How could this be happening under the administration of President Barack Obama, given all of Mr. Obama's lofty rhetoric about moving above and beyond the political exploitation of interracial animosities? As he proclaimed on March 18, 2008 in his widely-applauded campaign speech on race relations, "One of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of this campaign [was] to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous America."

Those who accept Mr. Adams' interpretation of the recent Justice Department decision are left to wonder how the president can honestly be said to be fulfilling this task. What might he have meant by the words "a more equal America," if not something like "an America in which there is more nearly perfect equality before the law?" From other pieces of Mr. Adams' eyewitness testimony we get an idea: "Some of my coworkers," Mr. Adams claimed, "argued that the law should not be used against black wrongdoers because of the long history of slavery and segregation. Less charitable individuals called it 'payback time.'" Perhaps, then, it is a two-wrongs-make-a-right sort of equality that the Justice Department of Obama's Attorney General Eric Holder intends to pursue—hardly the best means to the avowed end of interracial harmony.

Moreover, this spring we heard Mr. Obama assert that Hispanic Americans in Arizona who take

their children out for ice cream are "going to be harassed" thanks to that state's new immigration law—a law that has been in part struck down by a federal judge while Arizona Governor Jan Brewer files an appeal in defense of the law. In fact, any police officer who "harassed" Hispanics for the mere public eating of ice cream would be punishable under this very law. Here again, we notice quite a difference between campaign rhetoric and presidential performance. In his aforementioned campaign speech on race, Mr. Obama explained that the resentments felt by members of one race toward members of another "[are] exploited by politicians, to gin up votes along racial lines, or to make up for a politician's own failings." We are meant to understand by this, of course, that Mr. Obama, a statesman of such high principle, could not possibly engage in such up-ginning; unfortunately for the president, his silly and unfounded ice cream remark gave the lie to this idea.

So it would seem that things have not changed much, after all. We see today what we have seen for years: the levying of accusations of racism by liberals against those who oppose their agenda. Yet we have reason to hope for change here: running for Congress this fall we find an historic number of black Republican candidates—proof (as if the racial diversity among Tea Partiers were not proof enough) that, contrary to what liberals would have us all believe, conservative values appeal to ordinary, decent Americans of all races.

Of particular interest is the candidacy for South Carolina's First Congressional District of Tim Scott—a small business owner and 13-year member of the Charleston City Council. He attributes his successes to the "conservative, traditional, and religious values" instilled in him by his hardworking mother. Mr. Scott's election to the Charleston City Council marked the first election of a black Republican to county-wide office in the state of South Carolina since Reconstruction. His election to the U.S. Congress would mark, in turn, the first election of a black Republican to national office from that state since the same era of our history. Surely, though, Mr. Obama spoke for every black American when he said in his campaign speech that "even for those blacks who did" manage to overcome the obstacles of discrimination to build successful lives for themselves, "questions of race, and racism, continue to define their worldview in fundamental ways"—right? On

the contrary, Mr. Scott attributed his wide margin of victory in the primary election to the colorblindness of conservative voters: “They care about ideas and ideals. Period.” Similarly, in response to questions about the symbolic significance of his victory in that election over Paul Thurmond, son of the late Senator Strom Thurmond, Mr. Scott said simply that in his view “Paul was always more of a [Charleston City] Council colleague than a son of Strom Thurmond.”

Despite Mr. Obama’s false rhetoric, perhaps the upcoming mid-term elections will help achieve what his presidency has not—an end to the exploitation of interracial animosities for partisan political purposes.

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## Haley making history?

*By Clint Condra*

South Carolina Republican gubernatorial candidate Nikki Haley is poised to become both the first female and the first non-white governor of the Palmetto state. She has soared to popularity as a champion of taxpayer-friendly policies.

Ms. Haley has a 14-point lead over her Democratic opponent Vincent Sheheen, according to a recent Rasmussen poll. If successful, this would mark only the second election of an Indian American to the governorship of any state, the first having been Louisiana Republican Bobby Jindal in 2007. Mrs. Haley does not justify her candidacy on the grounds that her election would bring to pass such “historic firsts” as these. In her own words, as published in a recent June 12 *Newsweek* magazine article, Mrs. Haley hopes that her likely election would serve to encourage a state of political affairs in which “we no longer live by labels, but...by philosophies.”

Indeed, Mrs. Haley need not emphasize such incidental aspects of herself as her sex or her ethnic background, as she possesses substantial qualifications for the office to which she seeks election. Staunch commitments to smaller, more efficient government and lower taxes have so characterized her record representing South Carolina’s 87th district in the state legislature that last year, she was officially proclaimed a “Friend of the Taxpayer” by the South Carolina Taxpayers’ Association.

Mrs. Haley’s story is truly an all-American one. Born in the town of Bamberg, South Carolina, she began balancing the books of her immigrant parents’ small clothing business—and by “small” we should understand “based in the living room”—at the age of 13. After taking her degree in accounting from Clemson University, Mrs. Haley worked as the accounting supervisor for the Charlotte,



North Carolina-based recycling and waste management corporation FCR, Inc. She then returned to the family business and presided over its growth into a multi-million dollar enterprise.

Accordingly, Mrs. Haley likes to describe herself as “an accountant and...small-business person” whose experiences have taught her “how hard it was to make a dollar and how easy it was for government to take it.” This statement suggests the basis of the philosophy by which Mrs. Haley practices politics: on the one hand, she intends to prevent an individual’s making of a dollar from being any harder than it has to be; on the other hand, she intends to prevent government from taking any more of an individual’s hard-made dollars than is strictly necessary and justified in a free economy like ours.

In accordance with her philosophy (as well as with her fitting campaign slogan—“less talk, more jobs”), Mrs. Haley has proposed a series of bold measures to increase job opportunities in her state. In light of her accounting and small business background, it should come as no surprise that these measures pass the test of common sense. According to the outline of said measures posted on her campaign Web site, three of the 32 taxes administered by the South Carolina Department of Revenue generate over 90 percent of the state’s revenue. “The remaining taxes,” the outline explains, “add layers of bureaucracy, while garnering little revenue for the state.”

Moreover, “complex taxes with dozens of exemptions based on hundreds of rules do not benefit workers and small businesses—they do not have the time or resources to sift through them.” To say that such taxes “do not benefit” workers and small business owners may not go far enough; insofar as workers and small business owners find themselves penalized for inadvertent noncompliance with byzantine rules and regulations, such taxes harm both them and, consequently, South Carolina’s economy. Therefore, Mrs. Haley wants to simplify the tax structure and shrink the tax bureaucracy.

Accountants and small business persons like Mrs. Haley know that eliminating wasteful inefficiencies helps keep the books balanced. Bureaucracies tend by their very nature toward waste and inefficiency. Hence, the elimination or, at least, the streamlining of bureaucracies will help curb spending and reduce public debt. This is common sense to most of us, per-

haps, but evidently not so to members of the current Congress and to President Barack Obama, who in the midst of unprecedented debt and deficits, conspire to create whole new bureaucracies.

Mrs. Haley shares with most of us the view that bureaucratic agencies “need to operate from the premise that they exist to serve...people and businesses.” To this end, she advocates a “one-stop” agency charged with the issuing of small business permits. As things now stand, “an independent plumber or electrician with a 50-mile work radius may spend up to a week each year just working on permitting, often forced to travel in person to reapply at offices in county after county.” In other words, bureaucratic red tape hinders business.

Another important aspect of Mrs. Haley’s job-promoting agenda consists in controlling health-care costs by means of reforming tort law, particularly tort law pertaining to workers’ compensation and medical malpractice cases. There is in South Carolina a Workers’ Compensation Commission that was established to streamline claims. In recent years, the commission has failed to fulfill this mission, in no small part because more than half of the commission’s current members are lawyers. They sue employers and demand exorbitant punitive damages. Mrs. Haley suggests we cap these sums. The costs of health-care premiums would fall; employers would save money; finally, obstetricians, neurosurgeons, and other doctors of high-risk specialties would choose to practice in South Carolina, which would lead to greater access. All these things have happened in Texas since such caps have been put in place there.

In sum, Mrs. Haley bases her politics upon practical, common-sense principles—what works, what saves money, what is good for business. Her popularity attests to the fact that the people of South Carolina, like the American people at large, want to be represented by those who help alleviate the burden of taxes, red tape and high health-care costs. Mrs. Haley is about to make history in South Carolina by promoting the essential capitalist principles that have long been the bedrock of the freest, most prosperous nation on earth.

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## In pursuit of heroes, large and small

By Lawrence P. Grayson

In a display of judicial tyranny, U.S. District Chief Judge Vaughn Walker in San Francisco ruled on August 4 that Proposition 8, California's constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman, was unconstitutional, even though it was passed by 7 million voters. If allowed to stand, this will be an historic change in the way the judiciary wields its power, and to the concept of marriage that has been central to all stable societies throughout history. It will lead to direct assaults on religious organizations that adhere to their beliefs about marriage.

The founding Americans rejected the concept of the divine right of kings – and judges—rebelled against excessive governmental authority and affirmed the dignity and moral worth of the individual. Liberty and religious tolerance were fundamental to their view, which was rooted in Judeo-Christian tenets. Their perspective went well beyond the understandings of the past. Rights, they declared, were not granted to the individual by a benevolent state, but were unalienable and given by a Creator God. It was a free people, exercising those rights that established the government and determined its powers. The result was an unleashing of energy, imagination, invention and economic growth that no system of restraint could match.

With the passage of time, however, government began to provide greater economic security and benefits, which led to increased taxation and a greater governmental role in the economic system. People became less inclined to assume the risks or exercise the initiative that accompanied their freedom, and began to look to the state rather than their Creator for their welfare. As government expanded, both in size and political power, it became more paternalistic. Liberty was restricted and society became, if not atheistic, at least agnostic. Belief in God was viewed as a strictly private concern with no role in public life. The state assumed primacy over God in defining individual rights and who is and who is not entitled

to them.

Today, society is barely guided by the morality and virtues that religion provides. Hostility toward religion, especially Christianity, has become acceptable and commonplace. There are continual attacks on Christianity under the guise of freedom of expression, artistic license, non-discrimination and separation of church and state. Nativity scenes are banned from public grounds. Public school children are not permitted to sing traditional Christmas carols or coaches offer a general prayer with their teams. A crucifix placed in a jar of urine is extolled as art. Military chaplains are directed to offer only non-denominational prayers. Repeated attempts are made to remove “Under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance and “In God We Trust” from the nation's coinage. And the list goes on and on.

Christians are too submissive under these attacks. The alluring materialism of the age, coupled with weak formation in the faith, have made them apathetic toward religion and detached from their faith traditions. Their attitudes, values, tastes and behaviors have become highly secular. They no longer have the knowledge or conviction to stand up for their professed beliefs and challenge societal trends.

Large numbers of Christians lead dual lives. They may adhere to church teachings to fulfill their Sunday obligations, but for the rest of the week they adapt to the irreligious ways of the material world. They have no desire to defend their faith, and willingly accept, and in some cases even support, the practices of abortion, divorce, contraception, gay marriage and



co-habitation. God rarely enters their thoughts.

Christianity is not only a dogma to be believed, but a way of life in which we are called to stand before an unrelenting, religiously-hostile world and bear witness to the truth. We are called to be modern-day evangelists, bringing the teachings of the Gospel into the world through the way we live our lives. We are



called to confront the evils of the world, to involve ourselves in the public square, and to bring the tenets of our faith to bear on issues that impact on marriage, the family and the dignity of the human person.

Many people may agree that this is the way they should act, but hesitate to do so because they feel alone, without confidence, and have no idea of what they can achieve. In order to change the values and behaviors of the populace-at-large, to alter the culture of the nation, we need leaders, role models, people of exceptional accomplishment to show the way. We need the example of people who have set themselves apart through selfless action and extraordinary achievement in pursuit of an end that is valued by

all. Such individuals stimulate our imaginations and rouse our common, but dormant, convictions. They cause us to examine our values and goals and realize that through service to others, even at a sacrifice to ourselves, we can strive toward a higher purpose in life. In short, we need heroes.

A culture that is strong in religious values has less need for heroes than one that is weak. The general ethos of the people, their beliefs and behavior, provides a social framework for others, particularly the young, guiding how they should act, illustrating what is appropriate and what is not acceptable. But in a culture in which God is absent, when morals are relative, when virtually any behavior is tolerated, heroes are needed to serve as role models of what it means to be Christian in society.

Through the examples of heroes, we can all be inspired to be heroic at least in small ways. Catholic Archbishop of Denver Charles Chaput, in an article earlier this year in *First Things*, gives us a prescription for how we can prepare ourselves for this role: “By talking to God, humbly and honestly, in prayer. By getting to know Christ better through reading and praying over the gospels. By opening yourself up to the graces he gives us in the sacraments. It’s not about choosing what you want to do with your life. It’s about discovering how God wants you to use your life to spread the good news of his love and his kingdom.”

We can all be heroes by obeying God in small ways as well as large, keeping his commandments, sacrificing for our families, assuming responsibility for our actions, and making our way through life without complaint. We can be examples of what it means to be Christian by what we say, what we do, and what we do not do. We can show that God does indeed matter. May we be inspired to stand before our secular world and live our lives in the heroic manner of authentic and committed Christians.

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## Travesty at Arlington National Cemetery

By Gayle S. Fixler

The final resting place for approximately 330,000 Americans including military personnel and their spouses, two presidents, astronauts, prominent explorers, literary figures, 3,800 freed slaves and eight Supreme Court Justices has been desecrated. As many as 6,600 of those interred at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) are tantamount to being MIA.

There are increasing revelations of abandoned grave markers and mismarked, unmarked, empty, misplaced and too-shallow graves on the 664 acre site at ANC, our nation's most revered burial ground. There are also reports of mislabeled cemetery maps and at least four burial urns that were unearthed and dumped in a landfill—at least two of which were reportedly discovered years ago.

According to media reports, these and other insidious problems have been known to military officials for years. More disturbing is that ANC personnel, including the former budget officer, reported concerns to cemetery and Army superiors only to be ignored or reprimanded, while the situation continued to spiral out of control.

Recent, on-going government and military committee investigations have discovered that until this scandal became so public, the Army had not conducted audits of the cemetery in at least a decade. And more than 10 years ago and with minimal to nonexistent oversight, ANC officials awarded a reported \$5 million to \$20 million taxpayer dollars for contracts to digitize burial records and integrate a GPS-like satellite tracking system to accurately locate gravesites. This system is routinely used at cemeteries nationwide including those managed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Unfortunately, due to the widespread dysfunction at ANC, much of the costly investment cannot be accounted for, the system was not implemented and many burial records are still catalogued on 3 x



5 index cards. Such an antiquated system in an age of computerization and DNA testing should render identity mishaps obsolete.

Our military prides itself on loyalty and honor but this situation is the epitome of dishonor. And the excuses for the widespread dysfunction—staff reduction, budget cuts, outdated technology, an overwhelming burial schedule, mismanaged contracts and significant discord between the cemetery's supervisor and his deputy (both of whom were forced to retire last month)—are offensive, condescending and unacceptable. Rationalizations aside, the tragic result is a total disregard for a dignified burial. Too many failed in their responsibilities to protect and respect the deceased interred at Arlington.

Eventually, the monetary cost of this disaster will be determined but the emotional devastation it has taken and will continue to exact on the loved ones

of the deceased is incalculable and in many cases, probably irreparable. Cemetery burials and subsequent gravesite visitations—particularly on occasions that evoke memories—holidays, birthdays and anniversaries, provide a chance to absorb loss and process grief. Burial grounds are viewed as safe havens where the grief-stricken share and respect the

emotions of other mourners. This is particularly true in a military cemetery where the commonality of unexpected, sudden loss of young lives, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, have brought together ‘a community of broken hearts,’ as aptly named in a 2007 USA Today article.

Heart-wrenching stories from Arlington abound: a mother who spent winter afternoons wrapped in a sleeping bag, stretched across her son’s grave; another traveled from out of state every other month to place iPod ear buds on her 20-year-old son’s grave, play Eminem and The Temptations for him and to sit at his grave reading out loud from the book *Corduroy*, a childhood favorite. Mourners picnic at graves, exchange stories, emails and phone numbers and establish kinship with otherwise strangers who understand



and share their pain. While the current scandal will not alter the dynamics between the bereaved, it has exacerbated feelings of vulnerability, destabilized faith and served to undermine relationships with cemetery and military officials. How can the loved ones of the deceased accept death if any sense of closure is negated?

One of only two national cemeteries under the auspices of the Department of the Army, Arlington was established by Brigadier General Montgomery C. Meigs during the Civil War. Since then, it has been seeped in military ritual, so it is ironic that as a consequence of the current sacrilege, those time-honored traditions have been disrupted and tainted by the very people entrusted with their preservation and implementation. The updated Arlington National Cemetery Web site reference to the abysmal situation as ‘burial discrepancies’ is a bureaucratic euphemism. Even now, it appears that the U.S. Army is more concerned about saving face rather than restoring what many consider America’s most hallowed ground, to a place ‘where valor proudly sleeps.’

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## Obama lobbies for abortion in Kenya

By Kelly Kathryn Llobet

President Barack Obama celebrated his 49th birthday on August 4th. It was also the day which 70 percent of the people of Kenya voted to accept a new pro-abortion constitution for their nation, changing the historically pro-life laws of their country. Mr. Obama's official political actions over the years, both foreign and domestic, have demonstrated his support of abortion. The White House acted illegally in lobbying for the "Yes" vote on this constitution. Voting "Yes" opened the door to abortion in Kenya.

In both the Illinois Senate and the U.S. Senate, Mr. Obama voted in favor of abortion again and again. Soon after taking the oath of the presidency, through executive order, he overturned the Mexico City Policy which prohibits funding to international family planning groups that provide abortions. So it comes as no surprise that Mr. Obama was advancing his pro-abortion agenda in yet another foreign country. What was disturbing is that his latest method is unconstitutional.

Republican Representative Chris Smith of New Jersey, the Ranking Member of the Congressional Africa and Global Health Subcommittee; Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, the Ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Rep. Darrell Issa, the top Republican on the House Oversight Committee; and the Inspector General (IG) for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have been investigating grants the Obama administration supplied to Kenyan groups promoting the "Yes" vote campaign. On July 20, Mr. Smith revealed that the USAID found that \$23 million of U.S. taxpayer money was spent to fund these non-governmental organizations (NGO). This amount was far above the earlier estimates of \$2 million or \$11 million.



Funding of such NGO's that solicit, for or against abortion, violates a provision of federal law known as the Siljander Amendment. The amendment, included each year in the State, Foreign Operations Appropriations Act states, "None of the funds made available under this Act may be used to lobby for or against abortion and violations are subject to civil and criminal penalties under the Anti-deficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. § 1341."

But according to a chart released by the Office of the Inspector General of the USAID, numerous NGO's had accepted funding from the White House. The Central Organization of Trade Unions, Kenya (COTU) obtained \$91,106.66 to "marshal a coalition of pro-Constitution individuals, institutions, and organizations to drum up political support for the Proposed Constitution by organizing a public rally at the historic Kamukunji Grounds, Nairobi." The Provincial Commissioner North Eastern Province received \$99,220 for "one of a series of activities that aim to contribute to an 'overrepresentation' of the YES voters at the next referendum."

The Provincial Peace Forum, Rift Valley Province received \$94,193.33 to “build on previous activities in the North Rift as an entry point for a YES campaign on the constitution.”

Despite denials by the office of Vice President Joe Biden and the U.S. embassy in Kenya, “Directly supporting efforts to register ‘yes’ voters and ‘get out the yes vote’ means the U.S. government is running a political campaign in Kenya. U.S. taxpayer funds should not be used to support one side or the other. The only legitimate role of the United States and other governments is ensuring that the August 4th Constitutional referendum in Kenya is free, fair and without violence,” Mr. Smith said.

Previously, U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Michael Ranneberger encouraged President of Kenya Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga to muster support for the proposed constitution and congratulated the Kenyan parliament for passing it. In 2006 as senator, Mr. Obama campaigned for Mr. Odinga who shares fellow ancestral tribal connections. “We urge the leaders of the coalition government, civil society, and religious leaders

to maintain positive momentum as Kenya moves towards a national referendum on the draft Constitution. Unity in support of the draft will bring the Kenyan people together and establish a framework which will greatly improve prospects for democratic stability and shared prosperity for all Kenyans,” Mr. Ranneberger said in an April 7 statement from the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

Prior to the new constitution, abortion was only permitted in Kenya to save the life of the mother. Article 26 of the new constitution eases restrictions on abortion with the following provision: “Abortion is not permitted unless, in the opinion of a trained health professional, there is need for emergency treatment, or the life or health of the mother is in danger, or if permitted by any other law.” This clause leaves ambiguous the determination of the danger to a mother’s health, and does not take into account the denial of life that abortion renders upon the unborn baby.

In January, at a gathering in Nairobi, medical practitioners and female lawyers insisted that life only begins at birth and therefore abortion should not be criminalized. “As far as medical ethics are concerned, the life of the woman is paramount,” stated Professor Joseph Karanja, a Kenyan gynecologist. “Do we have the right to ... stop young girls from having the option,” asked Grace Maingi Kimani, Deputy Executive Director of The Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Kenya). “Not all conceptions lead to a human being,” said Luke Kodambo Chairman of National Nurses Association of Kenya (NNAK). In July, they endorsed the new constitution.

However, during the months preceding the ballot, religious leaders across Kenya campaigned for a “NO” vote. “The Catholic Church spearheaded the revolt against the clause and urged the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitution Review to clearly state that life begins at conception and ends with natural death,” according to Kenyan citizen Rose Wangui. In addition, Kenyan Muslims, though only 12 percent of the population, echoed that life is a gift from God.

On July 30, over 30 Kenyan Christian denominations issued an ecumenical statement enjoining a “NO” vote on August 4 by the citizens. “We the Christian shepherds in Kenya reiterate our advice to all Kenyans to reject this proposed constitution in its entirety. It is true that there are many positive improvements in the proposed draft, but the good has been mixed with evil sections that affect the moral life and rights of this country in irreversible and fundamental ways. The proposed constitution does not safeguard the sacredness of human life, the sound and moral education of our children and religious equality. We must all ask ourselves; if this document is really as good as its proponents say it is, then why is so much money being spent to popularize it in the name of civic education? If this document is really as good as we are made to believe, why are foreigners pressurizing the country to adopt it?”

The efforts of the Kenyan Christians were to no avail. The new Kenyan Constitution will take effect August 21, 2010. Thanks to the Obama administration, abortion is now legal in Kenya.

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