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*A New Generation of Conservative Thought*

# The gulags of liberalism



Christians attacked • Rising black Republicans • Obama's image



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.

## 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.

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## The gulags of liberalism

By Jeffrey T. Kuhner

America has death camps. This is the heinous reality liberal elites have been trying to conceal. A Philadelphia abortion doctor, Kermit Gosnell, was arrested recently along with his wife and eight other suspects. The 69-year-old abortionist is charged with causing the death of a woman during a botched abortion and also killing seven babies. Prosecutors say the infants were born alive following illegal late-term abortions and then were murdered by having their spinal cords ripped apart with scissors.

Dr. Gosnell's abortion clinic is a house of horrors—akin to those in Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia. Police authorities say that following a raid on his office, they found numerous bags and bottles containing aborted fetuses. They also allege that they found jars on a shelf containing the severed feet of babies.

Philadelphia's CBS News reports that "Gosnell is suspected of killing hundreds of living babies over the course of his 30-year practice." If true, Dr. Gosnell is not only a baby killer but a mass murderer—the Josef Mengele of our time.

Yet this is not an isolated incident. In fact, it is only the tip of the abortion iceberg. The media is deliberately downplaying the story for



one simple reason: There are hundreds of similar abortion clinics across the country. Exposing what takes place in facilities run by the likes of Dr. Gosnell would shock voters into taking decisive action to make abortion illegal. This is why the killing of innocent unborn children is done largely away from public view. It is a creeping, hidden genocide that can continue only if the fiction of abortion being a "medical procedure" is maintained.

It isn't. Abortion is the deliberate, systematic slaughter of babies in the womb. It is state-sanctioned infanticide. It encodes in law the pernicious principle that there is an entire category of people—the unborn—who are less than fully human. Their

lives are subject to the whims of their masters. Most societies in history have been based on the oppression of an entire class; the strong dominate the weak. The law of the jungle trumps moral decency.

For example, the Nazis asserted that entire categories of people—Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, the mentally and physically handicapped—were not entitled to basic rights. Slavery enforced this as well: Blacks were simply chattel. They were not viewed as distinct human beings, born in the eyes of God with a sacred dignity and unique individuality. Abortion ought to be viewed as the slavery of our age—the great social cause on behalf of an oppressed and brutalized minority.

Since *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion, nearly 50 million unborn American children have been slain. This is more than the number of victims butchered by Nazi leader Adolf Hitler or Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

The great myth of liberalism is that it represents progress. The opposite is true: It champions the degradation of the individual, forging what the late Pope John Paul II called the “culture of death.” Abortion, birth control and euthanasia—they are the holy trinity of the secular post-Christian left.

For much of the 20th century, socialists have sought to erect a utopian society. Karl Marx thought the proletariat would serve as the engine of revolutionary change. World War I, however, exposed the profound illusion at the core of the old Marxism. Nationalism, not class warfare, proved to be the dominant force in history. German and French workers sided with their fellow bourgeois countrymen rather than rise up in solidarity and overthrow their capitalist masters. Hence, the modern left realized that in order to overthrow capitalism, the very culture that sustains it—Christianity—must be destroyed. Economic struggle was to be replaced with cultural struggle.

Liberalism has long been at war with traditional America. During the 1960s, it launched a sweeping sexual revolution. It has created a new morality; the counterculture has become the dominant culture. Its

central principles are individual gratification and personal liberation. God, country, family - these are the values of a prior age, a Christian civilization that is no more. Prominent new-left theorists, such as Herbert Marcuse, championed Sigmund Freud’s “pleasure principle.” Marcuse argued—and campus radicals eagerly embraced—the notion that sex was the key to individual fulfillment. Marriage and the traditional family were to be subverted through sexual perversity and promiscuity. It was Marcuse who coined the phrase “Make love, not war.”

Where Marx failed, Marcuse has triumphed. The Soviet empire is dead—swept into the dustbin of history. Post-1960s liberal America, however, is on the march. For the past 50 years, every major institution has been captured by the radical secular left. The media, Hollywood, TV, universities, public schools, theater, the arts, literature—they relentlessly promote the false gods of sexual hedonism and radical individualism.

Conservatives have ceded the culture to the enemy. Tens of millions of unborn babies have been slaughtered; illegitimacy rates have soared; divorce has skyrocketed; pornography is rampant; drug use has exploded; sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS have killed millions; birth control is a way of life; sex outside of wedlock has become the norm; countless children have been permanently damaged—their innocence lost forever—because of the

proliferation of broken homes; and sodomy and homosexuality are celebrated openly. America has become the new Babylon.

Abortion clinics constitute the “gulag archipelago” of liberalism—a vast internal network where innocent lives are sacrificed in the service of a fanatical worldview. They are the forgotten victims of the cultural Marxism imposed by the 1960s intelligentsia. The liberal regime depends upon countless Dr. Gosnells to function. His crimes are liberalism’s crimes.

Conscientious Americans must work tirelessly to end this abortion abomination.

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*-This article was first published on January 20, 2011 at The Washington Times: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/jan/20/the-fetal-solution/>*

## Laughing at Obama

By Leigh Broadhurst

President Barack Obama is degrading the office of the presidency.

On October 27, 2010, he became the first sitting president to appear on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show." Mr. Obama's other recent eye-raising media appearances include *The Tonight Show*, *Myth Busters* and an abdication of a presidential press conference to former President Bill Clinton. He also consistently asks for the time and money of American citizens at [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com). After *The Daily Show* appearance, even the hard-core left media were dissatisfied with Mr. Obama's unprofessional, undignified and unpresidential behavior. The commander-in-chief should not willingly agree to be the butt of jokes, especially in order to sell advertising.

The president's behavior has hit a new low in the rapport between our leader and the television set. Harry S. Truman gave the first presidential address broadcast from the White House on October 5, 1947. It was a dignified and solemn event, as have been the majority of presidential addresses since. As TV broadcasting expanded, more presidential speeches were televised, but presidential *popular* media appearances never occurred until the age of Mr. Obama. Why would a president desire such exposure? Previous presidents such as Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton, were fully exposed by the media—not on their terms of course—but due to their disgraceful activities in office.

Television was never friendly to Nixon. A poor performance on televised debates is widely credited as causing his narrow loss to John F. Kennedy in 1960. From 1972-1974, daily media updates of Watergate break-in hearings and trials provided damning evidence that Nixon just wasn't the kind of person Americans wanted in charge of *anything*. Forced to resign rather than face certain impeachment, Nixon took the presidency to the lowest point in the 20th century: "I am not a crook!"

It took candidate Bill Clinton to fully realize the



potential of the media and make appearances on the *The Arsenio Hall Show* and *The Tonight Show*. His personality—not the medium of TV—allowed us to be awkwardly close to him, and ultimately to lose respect for both the man and the office. Keep in mind he began his presidential career with the famous, expensive "Cristophe hair cut" aboard Air Force One on the runway at Los Angeles International Airport. What eventually followed was a worldwide familiarity with intimate details of the president's adultery and sex practices—Gennifer Flowers, Paula Jones, Monica Lewinsky, cigars, bald faced lies and impeachment by the

House.

Had Mr. Clinton kept his proclivities to himself, Al Gore would likely have won the 2000 presidential election. Instead, it went down to the wire for George W. Bush. Like his predecessors, his father H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan, Mr. Bush made great moves as well as mistakes, but could not be seriously accused of demeaning the office of the president. Mr. Bush was the first president of the new Millennium—The Internet Age—yet he did not feel the need to post blogs or sit in chat rooms. By contrast, why does Mr. Obama believe that allowing citizens to download footage of him on *The Daily Show* web site at will improves his stature as a world leader?

Legendary Washington Redskins Coach George Allen provides insight into how to project authority and self-control. He coached his receivers who had just scored a touchdown never to spike the ball, jump around, dance, slap high-fives, etc. He said, “Just calmly hand the ball to the ref and walk to your bench. You want to look like you’ve been in the end zone before, you’re used to it, and it’s no big deal.” Mr. Obama ought to learn from this: He is akin to the rookie doing back flips in the end zone, kissing the goal post, and throwing the ball into the stands. He is big time now and wants everybody to know it. Although frowned upon by most coaches and veteran players, end zone antics continue because rabid fans are up in the

stands dancing, too and applaud them. And thus presidential popular media appearances—which to most seem ill-advised, embarrassing and degrading—nonetheless continue.

Consider how Dwight D. Eisenhower, elected to the Oval Office in 1952, projected authority. Prior to that role, his title was “Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Forces.” And prior to that as Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces, Eisenhower led Operation OVERLORD, the massive D-day landing in Normandy, France and push to liberate continental Europe. If General Eisenhower had not been successful leading the Allied Expeditionary Forces—*there may not have been any U.S. Presidency to be elected to*. As the saying goes, we would all be speaking German now. Hence, to stretch the metaphor, when you have this level of battlefield leadership, you’ve been in the end zone countless times and you’re absolutely used to it. Respect is not granted to you as Supreme Commanding Officer, it is fully earned. There’s no need to *make yourself into news with end zone antics*. When you’re confident in your performance in office, news flows from your actions naturally.

In summary, there is a big difference between *making news* and *making yourself into news*. If a politician makes news, then he controls the message. If instead the politician makes himself into news by outrageous, unconventional or disgraceful

words or actions, and the media takes the bait, then he may have hooked a fish large enough to pull himself off the boat. In this case, the president cannot control the message and may not even recognize it when he hears it broadcast.

Mr. Obama has to learn that we are not laughing with him when he demeans the office of the presidency with his cheap media appearances, but instead we are laughing at him and are simultaneously lamenting the decline of the once-magnificent, awe-inspiring executive branch of government.

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## The left controls the message

*By Joseph Tremblay*

America's Founding Father, Noah Webster, once said, "Information is fatal to despotism." No one knows this better than President Barak Obama and his entourage of progressive politicians.

The recent exploitation of the Tucson shootings is a fine illustration of how the left views the influx of unregulated information. Although the assailant, Jared Loughner, was an enthusiast of leftist's authors such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engel and Adolf Hitler, in a twist of political irony, the events of this tragedy were used in yet another attempt to silence talk radio, Fox News and other conservative venues. U.S. Republican Illinois Senator Richard J. Durbin, Sheriff Clarence Dupnik of Pima county Arizona and later Democratic Tennessee Congressman Steve Cohen showed themselves to be opportunistic when they associated the shootings of Tucson with the rhetoric used by the conservative media. This is only one exploit among many. Indeed, a campaign against too much information has already emerged.

In a speech given to Hampton University in May, 2010, Mr. Obama indicated that the influx of too much information can be a burden to the individual and a threat to the nation. He

said, "You're coming of age in a 24/7 media environment that bombards us with all kinds of content and exposes us to all kinds of arguments, some of which don't always rank all that high on the truth meter." "Information," he continued, "becomes a distraction, a diversion, a form of entertainment, rather than a tool of empowerment, rather than the means of emancipation." And as far as America is concerned, the bombardment of information is "putting new pressures on our country and on our democracy..." Evidently, the Obama administration would like to relieve us of this "pressure." Federal Communications Commission Commissioner, Michael Copps, in a speech to Columbia University on December 2, 2010 proposed that a "public values test" be administered as part of a license renewal process for radio and TV broadcasters. In the name of diversity and serving local interests, Fox News and conservative talk radio would be subject to new federal criteria.

An unprecedented challenge to the right of free speech by the federal government is looming. Understandably, the conservative media instinctively knows that this is a battle worth fighting. After all, it does have a direct bearing on its service to the public. However, if the right of

free speech—and free enterprise and religious liberty for that matter—is to be long secured, then conservatism must also take a serious look at public education where information is most effectively communicated to our youth. Indeed, the classroom is where the war for freedom will be won. Statists are well aware that the control of information, especially with regard to a nation's education, is but the necessary groundwork for the control of the nation itself. The Democratic Party has capitalized on this principle with great success in the latter part of the twentieth century. History tells us that the end to which state-run education is ordained is the state itself.

"Whoever wishes to know the future must consult the past; for human events ever resemble those of preceding times." Perhaps, this is why the English historian, Hilaire Belloc, accurately envisaged what a universal state-run education would portend for Western Civilization. As early as 1929, before a monopoly on education by the state had fully taken effect in England and in the United States, he wrote in his book, "Survivals and New Arrivals," "that if compulsory elementary universal instruction be captured and used to a certain end, it can completely transform the character of all society."



Belloc went on to say that compulsory universal instruction, or public education as we know it today, is but the strongest political instrument of the state. He warned that “the universal machine imposed upon all in the years when the character is formed, will imprint its own philosophy, both directly and still more by indirect influence.”

Belloc further elaborates on how this liberal enterprise would operate: “A universal and compulsory system of instruction has for its first and main effect uniformity.” He goes on to say that this uniformity will produce a rigid pattern of learning among students; this, at an age when their mind is being developed.

With the backing of the state, this system will create a universal character and will have the power to promote one set of ideas to the exclusion of others. As for teachers, they will be imbued with a corporate spirit. A body of national teachers will emerge from this only to be trained under the shadow of a vast bureaucracy. To be sure, they will march to the beat of the same drum; that is, to the drum of an army of government officials.

According to Mona Charen, author of “Do-Gooders: How Liberals Hurt Those They Claim to Help,” (Sentinel, 2004) the U.S. Department of Education had a budget of \$14 billion in 1979. Of course, like any government

program, the department went from big to bloated. It started off with 450 administrators and by 2001 its workforce increased to 4,800 with a budget of \$43 billion. She further adds that, “from 1960 to 1984, student enrollment increased by 9 percent while the number of teachers employed increased by 57 percent.” Moreover, this well-funded, universal machine grew considerably in the 1960s. The percentage of students attending public schools increased from 59 percent to 73 percent. Today, approximately 90 percent of America’s children are being educated in public schools. With this expansion of federal control over education, can there be any doubt that the authority of

parents and local communities over their children's education have diminished in proportion?

The threat state-run education poses for the American republic is not simply one of bureaucracy. What also must be considered is its power to shape minds and influence beliefs. It's not just the raw content of the national curriculum we should fear; but even more so the hierarchy of values, the sequence of topics and the emphasis given to certain ideas. "Truth lies in proportion," said Belloc. "It is proportion which differentiates a caress from a blow, a sneer from a smile. It is the sequence and the relative weight of doctrines, not the bald statement, which makes the contrast between what damns and what saves. Let a child experience through the working day and through most days of the year that this or that is emphasized in its teaching, and what is so emphasized becomes, for it, and for all its life, the essential." And the essential in public education today is not primarily academic development; nor is it inspiring a sense of patriotism or the training in virtue which is so necessary in a democracy. Rather, the essential thing has become the promotion of environmentalism, animal rights activism, gay rights and eating healthy—all of which invoke state regulation and political solutions. From this new "essential" a politicized world view is communicated to the child and the transformation of a society follows.

In the last 50 years, a low

priority in public education has been the instruction on the Founding principles of this nation. In "Render Unto Caesar," Archbishop Charles Chaput stated that, "In 2003, only three major colleges in the United States required students to take a course on the U.S. Constitution to graduate—the three armed service academies. Only 11 percent of U.S. high school seniors test as proficient in their own national history." Even fewer students understand the contribution Christianity has made to the cause of liberty and progress. Indeed, education has transitioned from an indifference towards the Christian religion to one of hostility. Step by step, from 1948 to the present day, the U.S. and state governments forbade religious instruction (1948), prayer (1962), reading from the Bible (1963), the posting of the Ten Commandments (1980), observing a moment of silence (1985), and even prayer at high school football games (1989). The Democrat Party has traditionally been the guarantor of this continued discrimination. In 1994, for instance, U.S. Massachusetts Senators John Kerry and the late Ted Kennedy both voted to keep prayer out of public schools. And it is fair to say that their votes are representative of the official position of the Democratic national platform.

The discarding of sound civic and religious instruction from the public schools has not only yielded poor academic results but higher crime rates. Over

100 years ago, Pope Leo XIII cautioned European governments who wished to dispense with religious principles by saying that, "Every form of intellectual culture will be injurious; for young people not accustomed to respect God, will be unable to bear the restraint of a virtuous life, and never having learned to deny themselves anything, they will easily be incited to disturb the public order." Without the respect for divine authority, respect for human authority falters. And when human authority—i.e. parents, teachers, and school administrators, loses its binding force—it is virtually impossible to maintain discipline and order. This, of course, makes for a poor learning environment. To understand this is to understand human nature.

Yet, if there is one thing liberals do not understand, it is human nature; so they concentrate on those variables that are within their control. For instance, the quantity of education is easier to manipulate than its quality. Instead of focusing on what would work in our schools they promote more of what is already being used, regardless of the results. Democratic politicians are notorious for this. Their approach to education can be summed up as follows: Proposing to invest more money, recruiting more teachers, reducing class size and to have children start school at an earlier age; as if getting more of the same will benefit our nation's children. Al Gore,

for instance, in his bid for the presidency in 2000, promised to invest \$176 billion dollars over 10 years in our nation's school system. With that investment he pledged to recruit 100,000 new teachers and reduce class size. Along similar lines Nancy Pelosi said, "Investing in our children is the best investment we can make. And Head Start is an extraordinarily effective instrument."

Restoring the greatness of the American republic requires that we return to those principles which brought it about. Historically, a nation's educational system is the instrument by which these principles are transmitted. Having carefully studied political history, the Founding Fathers knew that in order for democracy and liberty to endure, the education of America's

youth required that the provider come from local communities; not some bureaucratic agency hundreds of miles away from the school. With equal weight, the Founders stressed the importance of patriotism, virtue and religion. In his famous farewell address, George Washington said that we ought not "indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion." John Adams went even further by saying, "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." And finally, Samuel Adams gave this sobering reminder: "We may look to armies for our defense, but virtue is our best security. It is not possible that any State should long remain free, where virtue is not supremely honored."

These principles enumerated

by America's Founding Fathers have not only gone unheeded, but they have become an object of derision in many of our state-run schools. Easy access to information on the Internet and freedom of speech over the airwaves is unsustainable in the long-term *if the state monopoly on education does not come to an end soon*. If truth be told, America's public schools have been and continue to be the strongest political instrument of the left. One of the greatest contributions conservatives can make towards the renewal of America is to reclaim this instrument.

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[www.EBIReflections.com](http://www.EBIReflections.com)

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## Christians under siege in the Middle East

By Herbert London

The remorseless and sanguine Russian dictator Joseph Stalin once noted, “The murder of one is a tragedy; the murder of millions, a statistic.” Alas, if current events are any indication, there is truth in this perverse claim. Recently, there have been random attacks on Christians in Egypt and the Middle East.

On New Year’s Day, a bombing took place in Alexandria at a Coptic church that left 23 dead. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, which came after threats from an al-Qaeda-linked group in Iraq and a deadly attack on a Baghdad cathedral on October 31.

At the same time, Pope Benedict XVI has called on Egypt and other Muslim nations to protect their Christian minorities. But a new round of violence has emerged. An off-duty police officer in upper Egypt checked train passengers for the green cross tattooed on the wrist of Coptic Christians in Egypt. After identifying those who were Copts, he killed one and injured five others, firing his handgun at innocent civilians simply because they are Christians. According to eyewitnesses, the gunman sought out Christians on board the commuter line and shouted, “Allahu Akbar”—that is, “God is great,” as he opened fire.

What are we to make of this break with the code of civility? A police officer with the responsibility of protecting all citizens of the state including the Christian minority takes it upon himself to kill Christians wantonly, seemingly because they are Christian. Moreover, it would be one thing if this were the random act of a crazed, lunatic. However, the assailant is an officer of the law, there to provide stability.

Of course, this was an aberrational act from Egyptian authorities. But how random was it? It did not trigger a response from the Cairo paper and it did not generate a stir in the media. In fact, the only noticeable response came from the Coptic population in which 200 went to the hospital where the wounded were taken and were later dispersed by the local police.

When the pope’s emissary raised an issue about the safety of Egyptian Christians (numbering about 10 percent of the population), the Mubarak government reacted by recalling the ambassador to the Vatican. He noted, “We will not allow any non-Egyptian party to intervene in our internal affairs under any pretext.” Presumably, that includes the targeting of Christians for slaughter.

The brazen manner in which Christians are targeted throughout the Muslim world from Sudan to Iran and Egypt to Afghanistan should be a source of concern for the United Nations. However, the rights of minorities are only honored in the breach among Muslim states. When the reverse occurs, when a Muslim minority in a non-Muslim state is mistreated, it becomes an issue for the Muslim bloc nations and is immediately inserted into the Security Council agenda. Unfortunately, it appears the recent murder of Christians and the pope’s appeal will fall on deaf ears.

Clearly, it is time for Christians to assert themselves by speaking out against the continued abuse in Muslim nations. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak may have lost control in Egypt, but it is not too late to restore order in other Muslim nations. In some cases, the Copts are pawns to promote civil unrest with political realignment the ultimate goal. But whatever the motives, these murderous conditions should not be allowed to prevail.

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

## Hatred of Israel prevails

By Gayle S. Fidler

The December 2010 catastrophic wildfire in Israel was unprecedented in more ways than one: it claimed 43 lives, ravaged 12,500 acres of forestland and 5 million trees, precipitated thousands of evacuations and caused an estimated \$120 million in damages in northern Israel. Thankfully, the Israeli request for assistance in fighting the historic inferno was answered quickly by foreign governments—both allies and adversaries.

A country slightly smaller than the state of New Jersey and with a population of approximately 7.5 million, Israel is fiercely independent—a nation of immense national pride of its resourcefulness, advanced technology and self-sufficiency. So when its worldwide plea for aid—monetary and onsite assistance—resulted in support from unlikely governments like Bulgaria, Croatia, Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Egypt, Jordan and even the Palestinian Authority, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu noted that, “The international response to our call was exceptional. It demonstrates that there is affection for Israel and identification with it from all corners of the earth,” and that the international community’s response was “important and would have positive



repercussions for Israel.”

Also encouraged was West Bank resident Ibrahim Ayish, who led the 21-man Palestinian Authority firefighting team that fought in the multi-national effort. “I hope it could be a good opening for cooperation, more humanitarian assistance and peace,” he said optimistically. Two weeks later, when honoring those same firefighters, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas remarked that “Our neighbors (Israel) faced a tragedy and it was our duty to do our humanitarian work toward our neighbors to protect the environment and human life.”

And remarkably, just days after the fire was extinguished and in the absence of politics, media coverage and scrutiny, both Jews and Arabs offered

evacuees—regardless of ethnicity—much-needed shelter.

Sadly, the outpouring of goodwill and camaraderie amidst the “apocalypse”—as it was called in the Israeli press—may have ended just as suddenly as it began. It is difficult to avoid reading contradiction into reports that representatives of Muslim countries were not in attendance at the December 7 Israeli-hosted “farewell” luncheon in Jerusalem to thank the foreign teams who assisted in fighting the four-day blaze. More than 200 members from the United States, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Cyprus, Switzerland, Azerbaijan and Croatia attended. But according to All Headline News (AHN), no one from Egypt, Jordan, Turkey and the Palestinian Authority was

present.

Most disturbing in the disaster's aftermath was a deluge of blatant anti-Israel hostility that erupted online and in the Arab press calling for Israel's annihilation and attributing the fire to divine retribution for Palestinian grievances. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh called the blaze a "strike from Allah," and JihadWatch.org reported that "Many Arab media outlets have been taking advantage of Israel's fire disaster to disparage the Jewish state and rejoice over its misfortune."

Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority were condemned for their assistance in fighting the blaze and publications including *The Journal of Turkish Weekly* and *The Jerusalem Post* reported comments such as: "Thank God for this new Holocaust and shame on the Egyptian authorities who rushed to save the Zionists while continuing to lay siege against our brothers in the Gaza Strip;" "May Allah take revenge against them and displace them together with our corrupt (Arab) governments;" and "To Hezbollah, Hamas and all Arabs: This is a golden opportunity to get rid of Israel. The sea and fire are in front of the Jews and weapons are behind them."

Founded in 1948 as a homeland for the Jewish people, Israel has literally fought for its existence since that time. It is surrounded by unfriendly neighbors—22 Arab states

occupying 99.5 percent of the land in the Middle East—many routinely calling for its destruction.

Supporters of Israel argue that the Jewish State and its people are held to different standards than other nations. Even the United Nations has a longstanding, consistent history of Israel-bashing. As recently as November, the UN Human Rights Council adopted nine anti-Israel resolutions while the U.S. delegation opposed none of them, virtually condemning the Israeli people to diplomatic isolation.

But despite being a perpetual target for hatred, this is a nation of tenacious yet generous people. Although not trumpeted by Israel itself or the media, Israel is often forefront in offering indiscriminate disaster relief to populations in need. In addition to government relief, nonprofit organizations like Israeli Flying Aid (IFA) provide humanitarian support to international communities where governments prevent the entry of emergency response organizations like the UN and the Red Cross. Included in those target communities—regardless of race, nationality and religion—are countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel.

Even so, on occasion, Israeli assistance has been rejected as a result of the anti-Israel sentiments of various foreign governments—sacrificing people in need in the name of politics and religious beliefs. Following

Iran's 2003 6.5-magnitude earthquake that resulted in an estimated 30,000 deaths, Iranian officials accepted all international offers of aid except from Israel calling it a "Zionist regime" and illegitimate government.

We can agree with Pittsburgh's *Jewish Chronicle* that "much of what is reported by the Arab media is meant for public consumption while very different things are said and done away from the cameras." But *The Jerusalem Post's* Khaled Abu Toameh, an Arab Muslim journalist who writes on Palestinian affairs may have summed it up best, writing that "There is good reason to believe that the anti-Israel and anti-Jewish attitudes expressed in these comments reflect the views of many Arabs and Muslims. With attitudes like these, it is hard to see how real peace can be achieved in the Middle East in the near future. Unless this incitement stops, the prospects of moving forward with the 'peace process' between Israelis and Arabs are as bleak as ever."

*-Gayle S. Fixler has a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism from Arizona State University, is a Washington, DC freelance writer and a regular contributor to Reflections.*

## The new segregation: Coddling illegal aliens in the classroom

By Charles Sutherland

Depending upon the individual state, the variously estimated costs of educating a single student each year in public education can be anywhere from \$5,978 (Utah) to \$17,800 (New Jersey). This is also a cost unwittingly borne by most communities each year for illegal aliens. In addition to this basic burden, the financial pains are dramatically increased by English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs which provide special bi-lingual courses for Hispanics at an estimated cost per student of \$3,500 per year.

This combination of annual subsidized education and special courses for “illegals” not only costs the taxpayer; it also ‘costs’ American students. In order to provide money for ESOL programs to aid illegal aliens, various internal budgets in schools are reduced, thereby diminishing services to American students.

A case in point is Manassas, Virginia, where the overall school budget was reduced—except ESOL, where it was increased. So, in order to provide more aid to illegal aliens, American students are deprived of academic services, sports equipment and even books. For example, one school



course in Manassas has an excess of Spanish-language books, and not enough English ones. Furthermore, illegal aliens generally receive free lunches, and often receive free breakfasts and free after-school meals. These freebies to foreigners add even more burdens to the taxpayer. In essence, more money is spent per student on illegal aliens than on Americans.

Still more disconcerting, many school boards (including Manassas) do not even count how many “illegals” are enrolled in their education system. Some school boards hide behind the deceitful veil of political correctness, while others don their mantel of government arrogance and allude to some divine mystery by falsely claiming that an esoteric federal or state law prohibits them from counting the number of “illegals” who are being subsidized. When asked to provide the specific citation of any law, they cannot do so. At best, they refer to the Supreme Court decision of Plyler vs. Doe (1982) and “interpret” the decision to mean that one cannot ask even the most fundamental question concerning the students whom taxpayers are supposed to help.

A survey of schools reveals another insidious aspect of the ESOL program: it has created and is fostering a ‘separate but equal’ society within the school system. Parents know, and educators are compelled to admit, that Hispanic students in ESOL programs refuse to integrate into the general school

population. By having their own private ESOL courses—not merely for learning the English language, but also for standard curriculum courses taught with a Spanish interpreter or translator—they are officially segregated by the school. And, they remain that way, declining to even engage fellow students in English. Hence, the ESOL programs are officially creating a ‘separate but equal’ society in violation of federal law.

Ironically, the costs of ESOL programs are not merely financial. California, the state with the largest illegal alien population, adopted Proposition 242 to create an English immersion program. After several years the State concluded that students excel better in overall test scores if they are immersed in English language courses, rather than being coddled in a bi-lingual education program. Thus, maintaining an ESOL program is harmful to the participants. Therefore, keeping the Hispanics confined to ESOL programs not only burdens the taxpayers, it also impedes the vocational development of the students, diminishes their ability to network in English, and hinders their prospects for integrating in the overall English-speaking society in the United States.

In addition, it deprives young students of the psychology to expend an extra effort to succeed, even by something as basic as learning another language when one is a resident of the society. One

should note too that the ESOL courses are fundamentally for Hispanics. Other ethnic groups do not receive such ‘beneficial’ treatment. For example, Asians do not—and they are usually at the top of the class.

Given the above, are we to conclude that the ESOL programs are really for the benefit of the Hispanic students? Or are they kept in place to provide employment for more teachers and translators, at the expense of taxpayers and students, and to the detriment of the Hispanic students that are the recipients of this public dole? Or, should we conclude that school boards and local officials have a racist view and low estimate of the Hispanic work ethic and intelligence?

It is clear that local officials and school boards are following their own hidden agenda and perpetuating another ‘separate but equal’ society whom they can govern and exploit for their own political purposes.

*-Charles Sutherland is an international business consultant and author.*

## Restoring hope to black America

*By Ian Noel*

A new Congress has taken over this month. The Democrats have been routed and the Republicans have regained a total of 63 seats in the House of Representatives. Republicans, losing only one seat. Republican Rep. Joseph Cao was beaten by Democratic state Rep. Cedric Richmond in the 2nd District of Louisiana. Mr. Cao had originally beaten Democrat Rep. William Jefferson in 2008. Jefferson was convicted of bribery after he was caught with loads of cash in his freezer.

Yet not one black Democrat lost his seat in the general election. One member, Carolyn Kilpatrick of Detroit lost her primary amidst the scandal surrounding her son, Kwame Kilpatrick, who is in prison on numerous corruption charges. However, another liberal black Democrat, State Senator Hansen Clarke, took her place. Several resigned but each one was succeeded by another liberal black Democrat. As a matter of fact, black Democrats picked up one seat because they regained Jefferson's old seat from Cao.

Black Democrats have held some seats for decades. For example in Harlem, Adam Clayton Powel, Jr. represented Harlem for 26 years. His successor, Democrat Charles B. Rangel has been elected for 40 years. Yet Harlem, just as many of those districts with black



Democrats representatives is no better off economically for that constant representation. Instead, these congresspersons represent some of the most economically depressed areas of our country. Yet, they keep on being reelected with overwhelming percentages of the vote. Many are mired in scandals that would make a white candidate refrain from running for office. Rangel, Maxine Waters, Bobby Rush, Jesse Jackson, Jr., Eddie Johnson all won with very wide margins despite serious ethical violations and accusations.

Blacks are conservative on a whole range of issues from same-sex marriage, abortion to respect for the government. So what makes this conservative group of people consistently vote for liberal representatives? One would be tempted to say that it is because these representatives are the same skin color as they are. But that is only part of the picture because black Republicans could not presently win hedgehog catcher in most of these districts. So while ethnicity may have a role, it is not the entire story.

The first cause is gerrymandering. The Democratic Party takes great pains to craft black majority districts. They make sure that those districts remain heavily black even if they have to draw some very irregular patterns to ensure the black district. This gives some opinion leaders in the black community the idea that Democrats are on their side. So they communicate this sentiment

to their communities.

The second cause is organization. Democrats leave much of the running of the local Democrat chapters to blacks in their community. They elect black precinct leaders and other persons that run the party at the local level. Thus, blacks gain a sense of belonging to the Democratic Party and are invested in the well-being of an organization that gives them titles, positions and a stake in the game. Democrats fund these local chapters well and leave them to do the organizing in their own communities. These local party leaders and functionaries in turn influence and infect their neighbors, friends, customers and others with enthusiasm for the Democratic Party.

The third factor is what I like to call story. The Democrats own the political story in the black community. This persists despite much black frustration with not sharing a significant part of the American economic pie. While a growing minority may embrace the Republican story because of that frustration, the vast majority of blacks buy the Democratic story. Democrat narrative tells blacks they are the little guy and will always be the little guy. This country will always look to oppress them and so they need a Democrat protector to look out for them. It is not uncommon, that when a black constituent has a thorny issue that does not involve federal legislation, they will seek the assistance of their congressperson. Eviction, rent

and police brutality are issues that would make a black voter call his congressperson. Those congresspersons take pains to respond to such issues even if they cannot solve them. But they let the constituent know they are listening and maybe point them in some general direction. This furthers the story that the Democrats will come to their aid in times of need.

If Republicans want to make a dent into the black community, they must counter gerrymandering and financially support Republican organizations in the black community. Most of all they must change the story the community hears and supposedly wise old men repeat to the younger ones.

First, Republicans must run more black candidates in both white and black communities. In targeted black districts, they must find the places where blacks can successfully challenge, corrupt vulnerable black democrats. Emanuel Cleaver's is such one district—Missouri's 5th congressional district. He was the only Democrat to win with close to 50 percent of the vote. However, a white Republican ran against him with no financial support from the party. This assured that Cleaver would receive almost every black vote in that district and a Republican seat was left on the table.

The Republicans successfully ran two blacks in majority white districts this cycle. This has been the Republican playbook for the last three decades. But running

blacks in white districts only has had limited success. Until Florida Rep. Allen West and South Carolina Rep. Tim Scott, Connecticut Rep. Gary Franks and Oklahoma Rep. J.C. Watts were the only black Republican representatives in the last seven decades. Republicans need a comprehensive strategy that takes two approaches and not just one.

In order to field successful candidates in the black community, the Republicans need to build local party organs in the community. Almost no majority black district or neighborhood has a well-functioning Republican club.

Elections cannot be won without organization for a ground game. So far, the Republican Party has abandoned black citizens. They should immediately begin building those organizations that would get their message of economic advancement and independence to a needy black community.

From these building blocks, the Republicans can begin to tell their story of hope to the black community; the story that anyone can make it; the story of enterprise, industry and success. This way they can counter the Democrats message of doom and gloom and the need for a protector or babysitter. If

the Republicans want to take a conservative group from the clutches of the most liberal block in Congress, they must build organizations that foster candidates who spring from the black community, with solid financial backing. Only then can they hope to engender a message of a successful black class that could become loyal supporters. Then maybe we would see a lot fewer than 42 black Democrats returning to Congress next election cycle.

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## Dying to be thin

*Kelly Kathryn Llobett*

American women are dying to be thin. Popular culture wages warfare on the female self-image with endless photos of skinny fashion models and get-thin-quick diet solutions. Women and girls are left with unattainable ideals of how they should look. Too often this bombardment leads to dangerous eating disorders that make women crave to be thin. The society then seeks to cure the skewed self-image by inflating self-esteem. Both assault and cure are focused inward upon self, when selfless humble grace taught at an early age could be the best cure.

With 12 Critics Choice Award nominations and four Golden Globe nods, the 2010 psychological movie thriller “Black Swan” calls to mind the great, yet subversive and insidious, problem of distorted body image among women across the nation. The media bombards us with images of skinny chicks as the ideal model for feminine beauty. Through starvation, overeating and bingeing and purging, girls and women of all ages engage in radically dishonest forms of food consumption that are self-abusive and potentially deadly.

In June 2009, Dove Beauty Products, a division of Unilever, launched the Campaign for Real Beauty (CRB). The campaign was launched worldwide in 2004 and includes advertisements, videos and workshops aimed at subverting negative female body image. The campaign celebrates the natural physical variation embodied by all women of all nationalities, colors, shapes and sizes. It aspires for all women to be confident and comfortable in their own skin.



As a well-researched and well-intended marketing campaign, CRB is successful; but as an antidote for anorexia, bulimia or overeating, CRB does not teach one tried and true cure for underlying low self-esteem. This cure can only be found in 12-step programs and our much-abandoned Christian heritage. This cure is humility, and its societal rebirth may begin the healing.

In “Black Swan,” the protagonist, Nina Sayers, played

by Golden Globe winner for best actress Natalie Portman, is a ballerina who after fierce competition with rival dancer Lily (Mila Kunis) lands the main role in a New York City ballet company's production of *Swan Lake*. The demanding role is really two parts in one and physically requires an almost split personality in order to dance convincingly both the innocently pure White Swan and the dark, sensual Black Swan. The company's artistic director Thomas Leroy, portrayed by Vincent Cassel, claims Nina is perfectly cast as the White Swan, but must lose herself in the seductive Black Swan. In her obsessive drive to become the Black Swan, Nina engages in various self-destructive behaviors such as induced vomiting and psychotic hallucinations. The film reaches its frenzied culmination on opening night with Nina immersed in a crazed and vivid delusion. She embraces her own wicked incarnation so completely that she stabs herself with a shard from her own shattered dressing room mirror. Awash with evil she dances the final act as the Black Swan flawlessly. She then dies from the self-inflicted mirror impalement and murmurs, "I was perfect," as the audience continues to applaud.

"Black Swan" is a glimpse into the inner torment that women with eating disorders live. It is a mental and emotional roller coaster. Though rare, eating disorders are often symptomatic of other unseen psychological difficulties. "Lifetime prevalence

estimates of anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder are .9 percent, 1.5 percent and 3.5 percent among women. Eating disorders, although relatively uncommon, represent a public health concern because they are frequently associated with other psychopathology and role impairment, and are frequently under-treated," according to a 2007 National Institute of Health Survey. While infrequent, an eating disorder is a manifestation of a deeper struggle that needs attention.

According to the Food and Drug Administration, the normal recommended calorie intake for a woman is 1500-2000 calories per day. Persons with anorexia nervosa combat a distorted body image by refusing to gain weight. The anorexic continues to feel hunger but denies herself, on average, 600-800 calories daily. Persons with bulimia nervosa wage secretive, cyclical, self-targeted battles. Most commonly, bulimics severely restrain caloric intake, execute an enormous food binge that culminates with induced vomiting or laxative abuse. A binge or compulsive overeater is characterized by uncontrollable eating and consequent weight gain. Elevated noshing is used as a way to cope with stress, emotional conflicts and daily problems. With their deadly potential, all three afflictions violate the Sixth Biblical Commandment of "Thou shalt not kill"—that includes self-destruction.

So Dove did their homework.

In June 2008, they commissioned "Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem" conducted by StrategyOne, an applied research consulting firm. The firm worked in collaboration with Ann Kearney-Cooke, a psychologist and director of the Cincinnati Psychotherapy Institute which leads treatment of adolescents and adults with disorders emanating from body image dissatisfaction. The report found that seven in 10 girls believe they are not good enough or do not measure up; and 75 percent of girls with low self-esteem reported engaging in negative activities such as disordered eating, cutting, bullying, smoking or drinking when feeling badly about themselves. Only 25 percent of girls reported high self-esteem.

In response to the report, Dove rolled out CRB, which it touts as a "Movement for Self-Esteem." With its buoying emotional appeal, CRB sells a lot of Unilever products. After all, Unilever is a money-making corporation. As a cure for injurious nutrition, CRB is sadly a mere salve which is in the end an ineffectual placebo for the distorted body image epidemic. The Dove CRB Website only once mentions "faith/religious practices," but is brimming with articles, features, videos, blogs, experts, discussions, tips, quizzes and advice to boost self-esteem.

However, self-esteem is ultimately self-centered and can cloak self-loathing or worship. Therein lies the problem. Self-

worship or vanity (good or bad) breaks the First Commandment of worshiping only one God. When the focus is placed solely on the self, everything becomes heavily leveled on one's shoulders and the burden is not shared. Self-worship therefore, is not sturdy. A pyramid is built with a broad base and rises to a point on top; not vice versa. The polar opposite of egocentricity is humility.

Humility is derived from the Latin word *humus*, meaning soil. Soil, in this sense of the word, is ground or down to earth or well-rooted, not dirt. Humility does not imply self-neglect or allow for self-abuse. The humble one understands that the world does not revolve around oneself. Self

is not the only power. Effective twelve-step programs state, "(We) came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore sanity. (We) made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. (We) humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings."

These steps point toward God as the loving Creator of all healing. The greatest and most magnificent example of Christian humility is Mary, the mother of Jesus. "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word," she said, though afraid. Mary was not tormented by body image, but lived in humble service of The Lord. In accepting

her role simply, she made the greatest mark this world has known for peace.

It is time for women to refocus on gentility and kindness, rather than competitive thinness. They must turn their energies and passions to create an inner beauty which flows outward. This renaissance of humility through Christian grace is the answer. Without it, women everywhere will never be able to free themselves of this destructive self-perception that eats its own and bears no fruit.

*-Kelly Kathryn Llobet is a writer living in Baltimore, a veteran Navy spouse and a proud mother of five.*

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## In Memoriam: Ode to a great Christian lady

By Dr. Grace Vuoto

Eulogy for Filomena Vuoto (1933-2008)

Delivered January 15, 2008 in Montreal, Canada

Published in *Reflections* on the third anniversary of her death

The beauty all can see

Today we mourn a great loss. Yet we nonetheless give thanks for the enormous gift we have been given: to have known a remarkable and loving woman, a great Christian lady.

For much of her life, my mother deliberately walked a step behind. She was modest and often shy. She could easily be overlooked or forgotten in a crowd. But on this day, her spirit and example shines for us all, as she soars to the gates of heaven.

My mom, as many of you have told me, was exceptional: she was truly good. My family and I have heard this over and over again—not just from the streams of people who have come to share our grief, but all our lives as friends have spontaneously sung her praises. Even strangers whom we met in her presence told us the same. And during her illness, when her face and throat were ravaged by oral cancer, when she believed she did not look attractive, nonetheless nurses and doctors, shopkeepers and neighbors alike, said: “Your mother is so beautiful.”

The family is forged

Our lovely family story began due to the superb judgment of another exceptional individual, my father, the irrepressible Luigi Vuoto. He came to Canada in the late 1950s from a small southern Italian village, full of pluck and ambition, determined to pull his



family out of the poverty he had known since a young boy. He worked with iron will and determination in the cold, in the morning, in the night, on pitiless construction sites in a foreign land, to ensure that his mother and three sisters, who had remained in Italy, were well provided for. At last, at the age of 40, within a decade having gone from a worker to a developer and business owner, he decided it was time to start his own family. He returned to Italy in 1966 with one goal: he would find a woman who would be the mother of his children.

I always thought his way of recounting this story was very amusing and insightful. He was not looking simply for a wife, a trophy, a companion. He was not looking for himself. He was looking for the ideal woman who would be good to us—his children—before we were even born.

And what a woman he found. There in a small village in Calabria was Filomena. She had been a dutiful daughter and sister, in a bourgeois family of six. She had labored selflessly as a seamstress for her family, very much as he had done for his. She also had a reputation as a devout, wholesome woman. And, at age 32, she was still known to be chaste, pure.

This was a traditional encounter. He was brought to her home to meet her. She pretended not to notice him. She was ironing when he chatted with her family. As they exchanged glances, he was undoubtedly smitten by her beauty, grace and simplicity. He would later tell us that at last he had found, “The mother of his children.”

My father told me once that the most important component of the family is the mother. He cited an old Italian proverb: “A mother is three legs of one chair. A father is only one leg.” He would often tell me that a family without a good woman at its center cannot possibly remain united, nor rise very far: the mother is all. And indeed, my mom was the fulcrum, the guiding light, the wellspring of the home.

#### Between freedom and duty

Despite the fact that she held firmly to many traditional values, she was nonetheless a feminist of sorts. That is, she was an advocate for our rights. In key battles with my father over the direction of our lives and education, she stood her ground. On numerous occasions she declared loudly: “My daughters will do all that I did not do!” She fought for our rights against my father’s more patriarchal and restrictive vision of the future of his three daughters. Yet, she also helped us break free from the tyrannies of our degraded modern culture, teaching that a woman must be wife and mother first while still fulfilling her potential in the wider world.

The girls did indeed have lives filled with breathtaking opportunities. In fact, sometimes when we were despondent or would complain, she would gently say, “I did not have one-tenth of all you have. I did not do one-tenth of all that you are able to do.”

Her three daughters have already done so much

living, and yet, as the years go by, we realize that despite all our adventures and accomplishments, we have yet to do the things she did so elegantly. She still remains the gold standard for us. We measure our achievements to hers, and ours still pale in comparison to her example of constant and selfless love.

This was never more apparent than when she nursed my father throughout his seven-year battle with the illness which eventually claimed his life in 1991—all the while dealing with teenage daughters who were in all-out rebellion as they discovered boys and freedom. Somehow, he held fast to her—and remarkably, so did we.

#### The twin virtues

Many of you, especially young mothers in the room, have come to tell me that my mom is your model. When these women think about what it means to excel at motherhood, they turn to my mom for inspiration. What is it about Filomena that rendered her such an example?

Essentially, it was two-fold: The first is that she was a devoted mother. She was utterly and completely committed to us; she attended to every detail of our care. We were never a burden, never in the way. She never needed a “break” or “me time.” We were her vocation, her calling, her mission, her joy; we were her work and her rest. We were her hobby. We were the center of her life.

She surrounded us with beauty in the home, sparing little expense to ensure we were raised in elegance and refinement. This was not a matter of wealth or status for her: it was simply a symbol of her love. She also labored incessantly and selflessly for us, including displaying heroic feats of strength and endurance when we were ill. How many nights she would peer into my bedroom, in a white robe, smelling of luscious cream and fresh nightclothes, just to see if I was okay.

Every day, she provided fine meals, excelling at cooking and the details of presentation. Every day, she ensured the home was clean to teach us we were worthy of all that is best. Every day she told us we were privileged in the home and must give thanks to God. She loved us unconditionally and in abundance.

My mom looked with satisfaction on our achievements and encouraged us in our dreams. Her greatest pride was kindled by acts of kindness and generosity which we demonstrated either to her, to our family members or to those whom we encountered.

Her other most remarkable characteristic was that she had deep Christian faith. And from this all of her virtues flowed. My mom spent hours and hours in prayer. If she was not working for us, she was deep in prayer. She carried her little yellow book of prayers everywhere she went. It was essentially my mom's unbending Christianity which lifted the entire family to a higher ground.

Throughout her life, her faith was indeed tested many times. And each time, there was no contest. She never wavered. In moments of greatest difficulty, she turned ever more fervently to her faith, not away from it. In fact, I never once heard her express any doubt about her trust in God, Jesus, the Bible and the Catholic Church.

#### The final battle

The greatest test and her greatest triumph occurred during the last two years of her life. Throughout her physical trial in the grips of a heinous disease, she said many times, "I accept God's will. Let God's will be done." And though she fought hard and with every ounce of her being, she nonetheless demonstrated that she was willing to submit to God's plan without self-pity, anger or doubt. She bore her enormous suffering with dignity. She did not complain. She did not become bitter or curse at the heavens. Occasionally when she could not eat, she allowed a few tears to flow from her eyes and down her sullen cheeks as she stared hopelessly at a bowl of pureed vegetables, a little like a despondent child. And still, she continued to love us fervently, trying to spare us, mitigating the anguish of her impending departure.

When my mom was in the hospital, in the last week of her life, I stared over and over at her hands. They seemed to express her entire personality. They were cracked and brittle—the long, white fingers that had sewed and cooked and caressed; they were the vehicle by which she gave and gave and gave.

During her illness, I told her so many times, "Mom, I really admire you—not just now, but for your life's work." I especially admired her ability to constantly improve herself. My mom's life can best be described as a gradual ascent to heaven.

The greatest impetus to this ascent was the purification of her character in her suffering. The last two years of her life were her most difficult—yet they made her even more gentle, kind, soft—so much so that she was simply adorable to us. We placed a large, white panda teddy bear next to her bed in those final hospital days, as it seemed the two belonged together.

Her face glowed ever more brightly in that hospital bed, to the marvel and astonishment of all those who came to visit. Although the cancer claimed her body, it could not tarnish, but only brightened, her soul. She triumphed.

#### The legacy

Many of you have said to us, knowing how devoted we were to our mom, that we are nonetheless handling her departure well—that we appear to be strong. Our serenity has surprised even us. But it is simply because we cannot feel sorry for ourselves for too long. We know that we have been blessed with truly remarkable parents.

My father provided for us, not just while he was alive, but for years to come. His labor on our behalf bears fruit by the day, the week, the month. My mom has also filled our lives with such bountiful love. In fact, my arms are full.

We want to share the love they gave us to those in our orbit. We want this love to radiate in larger and larger circles, to engulf the people we know.

And so, to my mom, on this day, I say once again, "Thank you. You are with us and always will be. A mother is a giver of life. I see no death here; I see only more life to come."

*-Dr. Grace Vuoto is the Executive Director of the Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal.*

## Time to reform the Veterans Administration

By Amanda Baker

Among the top priorities of the newly elected Congress ought to be to investigate the effectiveness of the Veteran's Administration (VA) in dealing with the disability claims of our veterans. This federal agency must be made accountable to our deserving veterans. If necessary, salaries of federal bureaucrats ought to be curtailed and the sums diverted for greater and better care for our veterans.

Ron Ouellett, a 67-year-old disabled veteran from the Vietnam era, typifies the frustration many veterans experience with the VA. In an exclusive interview, he explains how he has been denied benefits he thinks he deserves and has been battling a pampered, bureaucratic system that largely doles out hefty salaries to employees while failing to address all the needs of service members who have made many sacrifices on behalf of the nation.

Mr. Ouellett has been retired for 11 years after being medically discharged, lives with his wife in the Villages retirement community in Florida and is dedicated to his 17-year-old granddaughter. When he discusses the VA, his voice hardens and he is angry. He remembers dates and events as crisply as if they had happened



yesterday.

“I could write a book on what’s going on (at the VA), and now that I’m a disabled veteran, I’ve got to fight with the VA for everything that I’ve got, or everything that I’m trying to obtain,” Mr. Ouellett said.

His story dates back to July 20, 1961, a little more than a month after he graduated from

high school, when he went into the Navy as a radioman. He completed basic training in Great Lakes, Ill., and went to radio school for six months in Bainbridge, Md., in the fall of 1962. After “flunking out” of submarine school in Connecticut, Mr. Ouellett was sent to Honolulu, Hawaii to be on the admiral’s communication staff. He was honorably discharged

on July 9, 1965, and married his first wife on the same day a year later. The VA granted him 10 percent disability when he was discharged.

Mr. Ouellett was employed by the VA from 1990 to 1999 as a police officer, and was in the news business simultaneously, working for two local radio stations and a weekly newspaper. He also obtained a degree in criminal justice with the help of the VA. After being medically discharged, he retired and moved to Florida.

When he was in the Pacific, Mr. Ouellett contracted a skin fungus that stayed dormant for close to 40 years. The VA has supplied him with medication for the condition, but, according to him, has not done anything further to help him. He has been fighting for more aid since 2007.

“This (skin condition) has come back with a vengeance. ... When I’m sleeping, I scratch, and when I scratch, I bleed. The bleeding ... totally destroys my undergarments ... my pillowcases ... my bed linens, and some outer garments,” he said. “In 2007, I was made aware that I was entitled to a clothing allowance, so I applied for it. Well, I was denied. So I got angry, and I wrote a couple of letters to the hospital director, basically calling him everything under the sun, and I said, ‘Why don’t you take it out of your \$30-40,000 bonus, what’s \$600 to you, it’s no big deal.’ And I have been denied ever since.”

Since 2007, Mr. Ouellett has filed two notices of disagreement, and he’s waiting to get a hearing with the Veteran’s Benefits Administration.

“I’m going up there with my stained underwear, when and if I get a hearing. And I’m going to dump it in front of the hearing examiner and going to say, ‘Now call me a liar,’” he said.

Mr. Ouellett also has a pending claim with the VA for hearing loss. Two doctors, one of whom did surgery on his ears, have examined him. Both of their medical opinions were that his hearing loss started when he was in the military. While the VA has supplied him with “a dozen hearing aids,” Mr. Ouellett said, they are still denying him further treatment.

“Bottom line is, I’m still deaf. I’ve lost hearing because of what occurred when I was in the military. And then I have another claim for PTSD. And you (have) got to wait three to four years (for that claim to be filled). I’m going to be dead and buried by the time these people get off their fannies,” Mr. Ouellett said. “I want the VA to pay me before I croak.”

Mr. Ouellett was very adamant to point out that his problem with the VA isn’t the medical care, which he called “second to none.” At one point in time, it was VA medical care that saved his life when he had double bypass surgery after September 11. His problem is with the VA bureaucrats.

“I don’t want to paint them with a broad brush, but the (bureaucrats) that I’ve dealt with are wimps, are sissies. They hide behind their fancy titles and their empty suits and stuffed shirts. That’s what they do,” he said. “I’ve been treated in six VA hospitals from Boston to Miami, and they all have the same problem: they operate short-staffed. Skeleton staffs, but yet, life goes on.”

Mr. Ouellett said that VA hospital directors average a salary between \$165 to 185,000 a year. Then, if they do their job well and save the VA money, they are given a \$30 to 40,000 bonus at the end of the year.

“Those medical professionals are really dedicated people. If you want to give bonuses, give them to the medical professionals, instead of the bureaucrats. Give them more money in their salaries. They deserve it,” he said.

It is virtually impossible to get a hold of a VA bureaucrat, Mr. Ouellett said. He has written to more than one VA secretary, called and left messages, and has still not received replies to his question. When *Reflections* contacted the VA for comment, we also received a dismissive written response: “Please ask the veteran to call our VA regional office at 1-800-827-1000 to find out about the status of his claim. The patient representative at the VA medical center can assist him with his clinical needs. Questions about a Director’s claim has no bearing on a veteran’s claim.”

This typifies Mr. Ouellet's frustrations. "The bottom line is, as a taxpayer ... as a disabled veteran and as a retired employee, I don't think it's right for these federal employees at the top levels of pay to wind up getting \$30-40,000 dollar ... bonuses," Mr. Ouellett said. "Basically, they sit there at the top, they hide in their offices (and) they're surrounded by a bevy of secretaries. When I was a police officer at the VA ... I protected these bureaucrats from being assaulted by disgruntled, crazy, angry veterans. I protected these people. Now that I'm retired and on the other side of the fence, I can understand why some of these veterans get angry."

Mr. Ouellett emphasized that, as a taxpayer and a veteran, the VA exists to serve him, not the other way around. He does not want to jump through hoops

when he calls the VA office; he wants someone to pick up the phone and address his concerns. He wants the people who pull the most weight in the VA – the medical teams, specifically – to be recognized, and for that recognition to be reflected in their paychecks.

"Who wins the battles? It's not the generals. It's the privates and the sergeants. Who runs the VA? It's not the administrators, or the assistants to the assistant. It's the clerks, the nurses, the doctors (and) the therapists. Those are the people who make the VA work. And those are the ones who are paid the least," Mr. Ouellett said.

According to Mr. Ouellett, VA bureaucrats are not doing enough work to warrant their outrageous salaries, plus the extra bonuses they get on top of that. His appeals and letters and medical claims have gone

unnoticed and been denied, but he's "not going to take no for an answer."

"I'm arguing that (someone) should go in there and remind them that...there's new SOP (standard operating procedures). And you're going to be taken off your high horses and now you're going to start serving the veterans," he said.

Disabled veterans like Mr. Ouellett should feel that the nation is on their side, rather than that they are fighting an uphill battle against a cold bureaucracy. Congress must act to render the VA cost-effective, efficient and more accountable to our deserving service members.

*-Amanda Baker is an outreach coordinator at the Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal.*

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## Obama's inflation economy

By John Manfredo

Consumers beware: inflation is coming to America.

Inflation is a dangerous threat facing our society, and it comes in many ways, not just from monetary policy. Many companies will be inflating their costs due to new federal safety regulations that will be enacted this year. This will be done by forcing companies to institute costly record-keeping procedures and tougher pollution regulations. These regulations will require companies to replace four-to-six-year-old trucks with units that will cost 10 percent to 15 percent more—a cost that will ultimately be passed onto the consumer.

Another reason inflation will soon come to America is due to employer health care costs. This will happen because Obamacare now requires employers to cover dependents until the age of 26 and eliminates lifetime caps on reimbursement. This will drive insurance premiums through the roof. Medical malpractice insurance costs for doctors will also escalate. This is yet another cost which will ultimately be passed on to the consumer. An excise tax on defibrillators and other medical devices will add 2 billion dollars per year on health care expenses.

Inflation will occur because overall regulatory costs in all businesses are starting to rise, due to increased federal regulations, as well as new



regulations that come from the financial reform bill. This financial reform will give the Federal Reserve power to take over any bank they deem “too big to fail.” Indeed, the same Federal Reserve that printed new money which devalued the savings of Americans so they can give that newly-printed money to foreign banks.

The biggest reason inflation will be coming to America, is that quantitative easing will continue. The Fed is continually buying U.S.

Treasury debt by printing more money to finance trillion dollar deficits. They will continually be financed by the Federal Reserve’s printing press due to the lack of demand for these treasuries in the market place. Inflation is simply a hidden tax. Politicians, in fact, love inflation, because it allows them to overspend, run up large deficits and accumulate debt that will be repaid with devalued currency. Inflation penalizes the working poor and middle class the most, due to the

fact that their incomes never rise as rapidly as the prices on consumer goods. At the same time, inflation pushes all of us into higher tax brackets, raises the tax revenue on gasoline, excise-taxed expenditures and allows local governments to collect more money on real-estate taxes.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is inaccurate. The first reason the CPI numbers are cooked, is due to the fact that most health care costs do not show up in the CPI index, because the CPI ignores employer health care expense. Next, the CPI does not include food and energy costs. The CPI also allows the substituting of cheaper low quality made products in place of regular products. The CPI index is computed in a manner to ensure that the Treasury Department will not have to pay out more money in TIPS (Treasury Inflation Protected Securities).

Another reason Inflation is inevitable is because of our national debt and interest rates. Low interest rates, as well as government policy, make loans more readily available for everyone to acquire. Due to this easy money, as well as this easy lending economic climate, people who would not normally take out loans due to the interest they would have to pay back, now start entering into the borrowing market, because of the lack of interest they will have to pay back. As a result, this creates poor investment loans, which always results in a bursting bubble. But this time, it can be the currency that bursts, and not technology stocks or houses. The national debt will explode because the style of

accounting the federal government uses to showcase its balance sheet is fraudulent. Trillions of dollars in unfunded liabilities in Social Security and Medicare are not even on the balance sheet.

Currently, interest rates are at an all-time low; they are bound to go up. And when interest rates do rise, the amount of interest we will have to pay on the debt will skyrocket. We might not even be able to pay off the interest of our gross national debt, much less the principle amount.

Moreover, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have a combined 6 trillion dollars worth of debt. Their debt is backed by the U.S. government; if Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac default on their debt, our national debt can balloon overnight from over 13 trillion dollars to 19 trillion. The government only has two options: default on the debt that we owe to countries like China and Japan, making them angry, or inflate our way out of debt, making our debt easier and cheaper to finance from foreign government and banks.

In addition, China, Russia and other emerging markets are pushing to oust the dollar as the world's reserve currency. If this movement gains momentum, the stock piles of dollars being held overseas, as well as U.S. treasuries, will be dumped out of the foreign banks and government holdings and will be sent back to the United States. If, or when this happens, millions of dollars will then be put back into our monetary system and cause a massive expansion in our money supply.

Obama's policies have all but ensured that we will soon likely uncontrollable inflation. Therefore, buying some gold, silver or other precious metals, may be a good way for Americans to protect their savings from the Federal Reserve and Washington's relentless assault on the nation's wealth and prosperity.

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