

PART VI
SOCIAL
ISSUES

BOOMERS AND BOOMERANGS

Time was when grandparents often moved in with their children and grandchildren, especially when the grandparent was a widow or widower, or just had trouble making ends meet financially. Today, it is the children and grandchildren who move in with the grandparents.

A recent Census Bureau report shows that there are three times as many households where the children and grandchildren are living in the grandparents' home as there are where the grandparents are living with their children and grandchildren. Moreover, this trend is growing.

Back in 1970, there were a little more than 2 million children under 18 who were living in their grandparents' households. By 1997, that had reached nearly 4 million. Six percent of all children under 18 live in their grandparents' households.

There was a time when any adult who had gone out into the world would be embarrassed to come back and live with his parents, much less bring his or her family too. Today, this is such a common occurrence among the baby boomers that there is a word for grown children who leave home and then come back—"boomerangs."

Perhaps the worst situation of all is when both parents have skipped out and dumped their children on grandma and

grandpa. This happens about one-third of the time when grandchildren are living in their grandparents' home.

These grandparents are not rich people living on investments and annuities. Most of the grandparents are working, even if their children aren't. Moreover, they suffer more depression and other health problems than grandparents without such burdens.

Bad as this is, what is worse is to contemplate what is going to happen when the last of the responsible generation—those who feel a responsibility to look out for both their aging parents and their adult children—pass from the scene, leaving behind only the “me” generation.

This is only one of many social time bombs ticking away, while we enjoy a prospering economy. We may hope that the “me” generation will grow up when they run out of other people to dump their responsibilities on. But don't bet the rent money on it.

People don't usually grow up when there are other people who make excuses for their immaturity. In a “non-judgmental” world, who is to tell irresponsible parents to grow up?

Even when the parents are present and have their children in their own homes, they seem increasingly to be letting these children pretty much raise themselves. When a woman was complaining recently about some bratty and even dangerous behavior she sees in children, I asked, “Where are their parents?” She replied: “There are no parents today.” I had to admit that she had a point.

One of the biggest excuses for lax parenting is that both parents “have to” work, in order to “make ends meet.” Yet, within living memory, it was common in working-class families—black and white—for the husband to work and the wife to stay home to raise the children. Why didn't both parents have to work then, in order to make ends meet?

Were people so much richer then? On the contrary, they were much poorer. Today's families living in poverty have things that average Americans could not afford then.

People today eat in restaurants more times in a month than they used to in a year—or, in some cases, a decade. As a young man, I was uneasy when I began eating in restaurants, because I had so seldom eaten in one while growing up. As for having a car, the thought never crossed my mind.

If people in those days had lived the way we live today, of course it would have taken both parents working to make ends meet. They would probably have had to put the children to work too.

People make choices and have their own priorities—and adults take responsibilities for their choices and priorities. It is a cop-out to say that they are “forced” to have two-income families just “to make ends meet.”

When we have a system where children are fed in schools and other basic responsibilities are also lifted from the shoulders of their parents, why should we be surprised that the sense of parental responsibility seems to be eroding? We are not surprised when a couch potato doesn't have the kind of muscles found on someone who exercises. Our society is increasingly turning out moral couch potatoes.

DEEP TROUBLE FROM SHALLOW PEOPLE

A recent news story told of an Asian-American girl applying to Wesleyan University with test scores in the 1400s and a Dominican girl applying to the same institution with test scores in the 900s. A member of the admissions committee recommended against admitting the Asian-American girl and in favor of admitting the Dominican girl.

Why? The Dominican girl had more handicaps to overcome. Besides, the admissions committee member added, "I am willing to take a chance on her."

Actually, he is taking no chance whatever. He will not lose one dime if this girl fails miserably. The people who will lose will be the people who have contributed their money to Wesleyan University, in order to promote education, and instead have their contributions used to make some admissions committee member feel like a little tin god.

The Dominican girl herself will also lose if she goes in unprepared and fails, when she could have gotten some additional preparation first and then applied to a less demanding college, where she would have a better chance of success. Above all, American society loses when such feel-good self-indulgences undermine the connection between performance and reward, reducing incentives for high-ability, low-ability, and average students alike.

Unfortunately, this admissions committee member is by no means unique. All across the country, at both elite institutions and non-elite institutions, admissions committee members act as if they have some deep insight which enables them to judge individuals' inner motivations, rather than their actual record—and to pick out those who will become “leaders,” as that undefined term is conceived in the psychobabble of the day.

This would be incredible arrogance, even if admissions committees were composed of higher-caliber people than they usually are. Given the kinds of third-raters who too often find their way onto admissions committees, even at elite colleges, it is a tragic farce. After all, someone who has graduated from Harvard or MIT with top honors is likely to have a lot better career options than becoming a staffer on an admissions committee at Harvard or MIT.

The mystery is not why shallow people do shallow things. The mystery is why we put so much arbitrary power in the hands of shallow people—especially when that power would be dangerous in anybody's hands. College admissions committees are just one example.

Social workers have gotten gestapo-like powers to snatch people's children from their homes on the basis of unsubstantiated charges that have never even been heard in a court of law. They can deny an orphan a decent home because the family that wants to adopt does not fit their arbitrary notions and unproven theories. Minority children have especially been denied homes with white families who want them and instead have been consigned to a life of drifting from one foster home to another for years on end.

Our public schools are the most massive examples of arbitrary power put into the hands of shallow people. While social work and college admissions committees usually fail to attract

people of high intelligence, the public schools positively repel many such people by requiring them to sit through years of unbelievably stupid education courses, as a precondition for a permanent career.

Students' whole futures depend on getting a decent education, but their teachers may prefer using them as guinea pigs for the latest fads, such as psychological manipulation, social engineering and proselytizing for politically correct causes. If—heaven help us—the child is very bright and is bored to death by the drivel presented by shallow teachers, the answer may well be to drug the student with Ritalin, rather than let him or her become restless.

The time is long overdue for us all to recognize that there are tasks and roles beyond the capacity of even the most intelligent people—and that only the least intelligent are likely to take on those impossible roles. It has been known for centuries that fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

There is no need to abolish college admissions committees, social workers or teachers. But their roles need to be kept within much narrower and more defined bounds. Above all, what they do must be subjected to some test other than what makes them feel good or what sounds good to their like-minded colleagues. Otherwise, we are putting the inmates in charge of the asylum.

THANKSGIVING AND “FAIRNESS”

There was a time when Thanksgiving meant an occasion for counting our blessings. But, now that we have so many blessings that previous generations could hardly have dreamed about, we take them all for granted and are much more likely to count our grievances and the ways in which others have been unfair to us.

Everybody is for “fairness”—because we all use the same word to mean very different things. Most of us think you have been treated fairly when you have been treated the same as everyone else—subjected to the same rules and judged by the same standards. But some think that you have been treated fairly only if you have had the same chances as everyone else.

These are very different and completely incompatible notions. When the rules of basketball treat me the same as they treat Michael Jordan, that does not mean that we have equal chances of success. In fact, that virtually guarantees that I have no chance.

People on opposite sides of political and legal issues often talk right past each other because they are using the same words to mean totally different and mutually contradictory things. When statistics are flung around on the “disparities”—often called “inequities”—between different groups, the im-

plication is that such statistical differences could not exist without unfair treatment.

Even in situations where there is a total absence of evidence for this unfair treatment, that scarcely causes a pause. If there is no evidence, then there must be “covert” discrimination, a “glass ceiling” or some other elusive and sinister influence that you cannot substantiate. This kind of circular reasoning says in effect, “heads I win and tails you lose.”

Politically, there are few ideas more potent than the notion that all your problems are caused by other people and their unfairness to you. That notion was the royal road to unbridled power for Hitler, Lenin, Mao, and Pol Pot—which is to say, millions of human beings paid with their lives for believing it.

The unfairness that these demagogues talked about was not a myth. Nothing is easier than finding examples of unfair treatment among human beings. The fatal misstep is in assuming that such unfairness can be presumed whenever results are unequal. For the truly clever, unfairness is simply defined as anything producing unequal results or unequal prospects.

To those with this mindset, if individuals’ “life chances” are unequal, then that is unfair. This might be an interesting argument if you were filing a class action lawsuit against God, but it is idiocy when trying to hold any given human being responsible for a whole galaxy of complex interactions beyond the control of anyone made of flesh and blood.

When we confuse the vagaries of fate with the sins of man and look for “leaders” to redress this unfairness, we are setting ourselves up to become dupes of those who know how to arouse emotions and promise the impossible. That lesson is written in blood across the history of the 20th century.

Any serious study of geography alone would show the ut-

ter unrealism of expecting people whose histories and cultures evolved in very different physical settings to have the same skills and experiences. How could the peoples living in the Himalayas have developed the same seafaring skills as people living in the Greek islands? How could the Eskimos have learned to grow pineapples?

These are just some of the more obvious geographic sources of unequal results—and geography is just one of many influences on our ability to create wealth or do the thousands of other things which influence our “life chances.” First-born children average higher IQs than later children. Technology makes some people’s jobs obsolete and opens up great opportunities for others.

The unfairness of other people is just one more item on this very long list. How many are interested in the unfairness that has made us so much more fortunate than people in previous centuries? If the average American of today could be transported back over the centuries and become a nobleman in the Middle Ages, that would produce a reduced standard of living and a shorter life span. Maybe that is a reason to count our blessings instead of our grievances.

WAS THE BALL JUICED?

When Mark McGwire had his incredible 70-home run season in 1998, nobody thought that his record would be broken just three years later. Babe Ruth's record of 60 home runs lasted 34 years, until Roger Maris broke it by one home run in 1961 and then held the record for another 37 years. But Maris' mark has been topped six times within the past three years by Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa and Barry Bonds.

Spectacular increases in home runs have often raised the question: Has the ball been juiced up to travel farther, in order to increase the number of home runs? That question was raised back in 1961, when Roger Maris hit 61 home runs, and it was raised even earlier when Babe Ruth first ushered in the era of big home run hitters in the 1920s. For a long time, the period before 1920 has been referred to as the "dead ball" era and the period after 1920 as the "lively ball" era.

There was stronger statistical evidence of a sea-change in home run hitting before and after 1920 than in more recent times. From 1900 to 1920, only three batters hit 20 or more home runs in a season and none hit 30. Moreover, each of these three batters did it only once during that era. But, during the 1920s, half a dozen players hit 40 or more home runs in a season, with Babe Ruth doing it eight times.

This dramatic change in home run production in both ma-

for leagues was long regarded as proof positive that the ball had been changed. But a closer look suggests that it was batting styles that changed. It was not the existing sluggers who suddenly started hitting many more home runs. It was the new sluggers, with new batting styles, who began hitting unprecedented numbers of home runs in the 1920s.

None of the established batting stars of the years before 1920—Ty Cobb, Tris Speaker, Joe Jackson, Eddie Collins—hit as many as 20 home runs in a season during the decade of the 1920s. Some of the old-timers had big seasons in the 1920s, but that did not include big home run totals.

Eddie Collins topped .330 five times during that decade but never broke into double digits in home runs. Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker, between them, hit over .350 seven times during the 1920s, but Speaker's highest home run total was 17 and Cobb never exceeded 12. Neither did Shoeless Joe Jackson. And they were all hitting the same ball that Babe Ruth was hitting.

The top hitters of the past continued to hit as they always had—choked up on the bat and going for contact, rather than swinging for the fences. It was the new players, who grabbed the bat down at the end of the handle like Ruth, who began hitting the ball out of the park with greater frequency.

Those who hit 40 or more home runs during the 1920s either began their careers in that decade (Lou Gehrig, Mel Ott, Chuck Klein) or reached their peak then (Babe Ruth, Rogers Hornsby, Cy Williams). If it was the ball that was responsible for the big surge in home runs, then the old and the new batting stars alike would have seen dramatic increases in homers. But that was not what happened.

When Roger Maris broke Ruth's home run record in 1961, it was during the first year of baseball's expansion beyond the 16-team limit that had existed since the beginning of the cen-

tury. With expansion teams stretching the pitching thin, many batters had banner years. But the three top pitchers all had earned run averages under 3.00 in 1961, while throwing the same ball as the rookie pitchers who were rushed into the big leagues and the washed-up pitchers who were able to hang on with expansion teams.

The most recent escalation of home run hitting has come at a time of bigger players and smaller ball parks. Not only have the new stadiums been built with shorter distances to the fences, older parks like Yankee Stadium have been remodeled to bring the fences closer. It used to be 415 feet to the left field bullpen in Yankee Stadium, but it is not that far to dead center field in most of the major league parks today. None has the 461 feet to the center field wall that Yankee Stadium had during the careers of Ruth, Gehrig, DiMaggio and Mantle.

You can never prove a negative, so those who want to believe that the ball has been juiced can continue to believe that. But the evidence is against them.

THE DANGERS OF "EQUALITY"

Any smell more subtle than ammonia or a sewage treatment plant is usually hard for me to detect. However, I happen to be able to smell gas escaping better than most people. On more than one occasion I have walked by someone's home, smelled gas and left a note on the door. While later passing that house again, I have seen the gas company out digging up the ground, and—after that—no more smell of gas.

A sense of smell is just one of innumerable things that can differ greatly from one person to the next. Moreover, many of these differences are essential to the survival and progress of the human race.

People have different vulnerabilities and resistances to a variety of diseases. That is why one disease is unlikely to wipe out the human species, even in one place. An epidemic that sweeps through an area may leave some people dying like flies while others remain as healthy as horses.

There are children who are years late in beginning to talk and yet who end up scoring over the 90th percentile on math tests. Then there are other children whose speech is so precocious that they sound like little geniuses when you hear them talk—and yet they have trouble subtracting two from four or tying their own shoelaces—and always will.

Individuals differ radically from one another in all sorts of

skills, interests and talents. What all this means is that the capabilities of the human race vastly exceed the capabilities of even the brightest and the best individuals.

When the brightest and the best take over making decisions for other people, usually through the power of government, those decisions are likely to be based on less knowledge, experience and understanding than when ordinary people make their own individual decisions for themselves. The anointed may know more than the average person, but far less than all the ordinary people put together.

Scientists who study the brain say that some abilities develop greatly at the expense of other abilities. Socially as well, some talents are developed by neglecting others. Concert pianists seldom have a college education, because the demands of the two things are just too great. Therefore, for both biological and social reasons, the only way for everyone to be equal would be for them to be equal at a lower level of ability than what some people are capable of in some things and other people are in other things.

In other words, if everyone were equal in their many capabilities, the whole species would be no more capable or insightful or resistant to diseases than one individual. Our chances of surviving or progressing would be a lot less than they are now. Even the enjoyment we get from watching Tiger Woods play golf or Pavarotti sing would be lost, for we would all be mediocrities in golf and singing and a thousand other things.

A recent book on the publishing industry showed that 63 out of 100 best-sellers had been written by just six authors. It is not uncommon in baseball for just two players to hit more than half the home runs hit by the whole team.

Ironically, the fact that nearly two-thirds of the best-sellers were written by the likes of Tom Clancy and Danielle Steel was

revealed by a man who was one of the founders of the left-wing *New York Review of Books*. Yet one of the key assumptions of the left is that statistical disparities are suspicious, if not sinister, especially if these are differences in income and wealth.

But if people differ radically in performance, why is it surprising that they also differ radically in the rewards they receive? And if we are determined to equalize, can we equalize upward or only downward? Can you make a mediocre golfer another Tiger Woods or only penalize Tiger Woods for being better?

Where the desire for equality turns from a quixotic hope to a dangerous gamble is in politics. To create even the semblance of equality requires a concentration of power in the hands of political leaders. And, as the history of the 20th century has shown repeatedly and tragically, in countries around the world, once concentrated power is put into the hands of political leaders, they can use it for whatever purpose they have in mind—regardless of what others had in mind when they granted them that power.

Becoming the pawns of politicians is a high price to pay for letting demagogues stir up our envy and beguile us with promises to equalize.

IS THE FAMILY BECOMING EXTINCT?

To the intelligentsia, the family—or “the traditional family,” as they say nowadays—is just one lifestyle among many. Moreover, they periodically announce its decline, with no sign whatever of regret. Sometimes with just a touch of smugness.

The latest census data show that the traditional family—a married couple and their children—constitutes just a little less than one-fourth of all households. On the other hand, such families constituted just a little more than one-fourth of all families a decade ago. Any reports of the demise of the traditional family are greatly exaggerated.

Snapshot statistics can be very misleading when you realize that people go through different stages of their lives. Even the most traditional families—including Ozzie and Harriet themselves—never permanently consisted of married couples and their children. Kids grow up and move out. People who get married do not start having children immediately. If every single person in the country got married and had children, married-couple families with children would still not constitute 100 percent of households at any given time.

With rising per-capita incomes, more individuals can afford to have their own households. These include young unmarried adults, widows and widowers, and others who often

lived with relatives in earlier times. When more such households are created, traditional family households automatically become a smaller percentage of all households.

Incidentally, the growth of households containing one person—about 25 percent of all households today—is the reason why average household incomes are rising very little, even though per capita incomes have been rising very substantially. Gloom and doomers love to cite household income statistics, in order to claim that Americans' incomes are stagnating, when in fact there has been an unprecedented and sustained rise in prosperity, among women and men, blacks and whites, and virtually everybody else.

Marriage does occur later today than in the past and more people don't get married at all. But 53 percent of all households still contain married couples, with or without children currently living with them, while some of the other households contain widows and widowers whose marriages were ended only by death.

Despite attempts to equate married couples with people who are living together as "domestic partners," married couples are in fact better off than people who are not married, by almost any standard you can think of. Married couples have higher incomes, longer lives, better health, less violence, less alcohol and less poverty.

As Casey Stengel used to say, "You can look it up." One place to look it up is in the book *The Case for Marriage* by Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher. But this is just one place among many. You don't usually hear these kinds of facts because they are not considered to be "politically correct" when the media, politicians, academia and the courts are busy trying to make all kinds of living arrangements seem equal.

The latest census report on "America's Families and Living Arrangements" contains all sorts of statistics but avoids show-

ing the most basic statistics on the average income of married-couple families compared with “other family households” or with “non-family households.” The Census Bureau apparently does not want to be politically incorrect.

If you dig through the census’ numbers, however, you will discover some revealing clues. While both “unmarried partners” and “married spouses” are spread up and down the income scale, the bracket with the largest number of men who are unmarried partners is the bracket between \$30,000 and \$40,000. The bracket with the largest number of husbands is between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Among married-couple households, the bracket with the largest number of households is \$75,000 and over. Among “other family groups,” the bracket with the largest number of households is that under \$10,000.

Women who are shacking up are four times as likely as wives to become victims of violence, and their children are 40 times as likely to be abused by live-in boy friends as by their own parents.

Despite all this, it remains dogma among those who set the ideological fashions that marriage is just another lifestyle, no better or worse than any other. Even the Census Bureau seems unwilling to publish statistical data that would go against this vision and rile up the anointed.

LIFE AT THE BOTTOM

Poverty used to mean hunger and inadequate clothing to protect you against the elements, as well as long hours of grinding labor to try to make ends meet. But today most of the people living below the official poverty line not only have enough food, they are actually slightly more likely than others to be overweight. Ordinary clothing is so plentiful that young hoodlums fight over designer clothes or fancy sneakers. As for work, there is less of that in lower income households today than among the affluent.

Most of today's poor have color TV and microwave ovens. Poverty in the old physical sense is nowhere near as widespread as it once was. Yet life at the bottom is no picnic—and is too often a nightmare.

A recently published book titled *Life at the Bottom* paints a brilliantly insightful, but very painful, picture of the underclass—its emptiness, agonies, violence and moral squalor. This book is about a British underclass neighborhood where its author, Theodore Dalrymple, works as a doctor. That may in fact make its message easier for many Americans to understand and accept.

Most of the people that Dalrymple writes about are white, so it may be possible at last to take an honest look at the causes and consequences of an underclass lifestyle, without fear of

being called “racist.” The people who are doing the same socially destructive and self-destructive things that are being done in underclass neighborhoods in the United States cannot claim that it is because their ancestors were enslaved or because they face racial discrimination.

Once those cop-outs are out of the way, maybe we can face reality and even talk sense about how things became such a mess and such a horror. As an emergency room physician, Theodore Dalrymple treats youngsters who have been beaten up so badly that they require medical attention—because they tried to do well in school. When that happens in American ghettos, the victims have been accused of “acting white” by trying to get an education. On the other side of the Atlantic, both the victims and the hoodlums are white.

The British underclass neighborhood in which Dalrymple works, like its American counterpart, features what he calls “the kind of ferocious young egotist to whom I would give a wide berth in the broadest daylight.” He sees also “the destruction of the strong family ties that alone made emergence from poverty possible for large numbers of people.”

Dalrymple’s own father was born in a slum—but in a very different social setting from that of today’s underclass. For one thing, his father received a real education. The textbooks from which he was taught would be considered too tough in today’s era of dumbed-down education.

Dalrymple’s father was given the tools to rise out of poverty, while today’s underclass is not only denied those tools, but receives excuses for remaining in poverty—and ideologies blaming their plight on others, whom they are encouraged to envy and resent. The net result is an underclass generation that has trouble spelling simple words or doing elementary arithmetic, and which has no intention of developing job skills.

By having their physical needs taken care of by the welfare state, as if they were livestock, the underclass are left with “a life emptied of meaning,” as Dalrymple says, since they cannot even take pride in providing their own food and shelter, as generations before them did. Worse, they are left with no sense of responsibility in a non-judgmental world.

Some educators, intellectuals, and others may imagine that they are being friends of the poor by excusing or “understanding” their self-destructive behavior and encouraging a paranoid view of the larger world around them. But the most important thing anyone can do for the poor is to help them get out of poverty, as Dalrymple’s father was helped by those who taught him and held him to standards—treating him as a responsible human being, not livestock.

No summary can do justice to the vivid examples and penetrating insights in *Life at the Bottom*. It needs to be read—with the understanding that its story is also our story.

GAY MARRIAGE

The issue of gay marriage is one of many signs of the sloppy thinking of our times. Centuries of laws, policies and traditions have grown up around marriage as a union of a man and a woman. Now the demand is that all those laws, policies and traditions simply be transferred automatically and en masse to an entirely different union that chooses to use the same word.

Homosexuals were on their strongest ground when they argued that what happens between consenting adults is nobody else's business. Now they want to make it everybody's business by requiring others to acquiesce in their unions and treat them as they would other unions, both in law and in social practice.

Why is marriage a government concern in the first place? There are at least three reasons.

First of all, a marriage between a man and a woman has the potential to produce additional people, who are neither consenting nor adults. The wellbeing of these children is important both for their sake and for the sake of the society as a whole, whose future these children represent. This consideration obviously does not apply to homosexual unions.

Second, men and women are inherently in very different positions within a marriage. The inescapable fact that only

women become pregnant means that male and female situations are never going to be the same, no matter how much “gender neutral” language we use or how much fashionable talk there is about how “we” are going to have a baby. Laws must make them jointly responsible for the baby that she alone will have. This consideration likewise does not apply to homosexual unions.

Third, time has very different effects on men and women. As the years pass and women lose their physical attraction, men are typically rising in income and occupational status. It is usually easier for a middle-aged man to abandon his wife and make a second marriage with a younger “trophy wife” than for a woman to remarry equally as advantageously. Since a woman has often invested years of her life in creating a home and family, the marriage contract is one way of trying to assure her that this investment will not be in vain.

These and other differences between the sexes simply do not apply when the people in a domestic union are of the same sex. When they are simply “consenting adults,” they can consent on whatever terms they choose to work out between themselves. It is nobody else’s business and should not be the law’s business.

If they choose to consider themselves married, that is wholly different from saying that a whole elaborate body of laws, policies and traditions—which evolved from the experiences of innumerable generations of male and female unions—should automatically apply to their very different circumstances. You can call yourself anything you want, including the queen of Sheba, but that does not give you the right to force other people to call you the queen of Sheba.

After years of dumbed-down education, it may be inevitable that we would now have a population which includes many people who cannot see beyond words to the realities

that those words are supposed to convey. It is hard to imagine any previous generation of Americans who would have taken seriously the idea of making marriage laws apply to domestic unions which lack the very features that caused marriage laws to exist in the first place.

The issue of gay marriage is just one of many examples of the victim's ploy, which says: "I am a victim. Therefore, if you do not give in to my demands and let me walk over you like a doormat, it shows that you are a hate-filled, evil person." Whatever its failings as logic, this tactic has been a big success politically.

The only rewards for giving in to unreasonable demands are more unreasonable demands. Having gotten far more money spent for AIDS than has been spent on other fatal diseases affecting far more people, gay activists are now demanding federal research on the kinds of recreational drugs used in night clubs by homosexuals, so as to make them safer. Imagine if alcoholics were to demand that the feds spend tax dollars to make drunkenness safer!

Homosexuals are not the only group to have played this game—and won. Our vulnerability to such ploys is far more dangerous than any particular issue or any particular group, because it means that we are sitting ducks for any slick political demagogues who come along and choose to take away anything we have, including our freedom and everything else that makes this America.

THE EINSTEIN SYNDROME

What have famed pianist Arthur Rubinstein, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, India's self-taught mathematical genius Ramanujan, Nobel Prize-winning economist Gary Becker, talk show host G. Gordon Liddy and renowned physicists Richard Feynman, Edward Teller and Albert Einstein all had in common?

Aside from being remarkable people, they were all late in beginning to speak when they were children. Edward Teller, for example, did not say anything that anyone understood until he was four years old. Einstein began talking at age three but he was still not fluent when he turned nine.

While most children who are late in beginning to speak are male, there have also been some famous female late-talkers—celebrated 19th century pianist Clara Schumann and outstanding 20th century mathematician Julia Robinson, the first woman to become president of the American Mathematical Association. In addition, there have been innumerable people of exceptional ability in a number of fields who were years behind the norm for developing the ability to speak when they were children.

Parents and professionals alike have been baffled as to the reason for delayed speech in children whose precocious intellectual development has been obvious, even when they are

toddlers. Some of these kids can put together puzzles designed for older children or for adults. Some can use computers by themselves as early as age two, even though they remain silent while their peers are developing the ability to speak.

No one really knows for sure why this is so. But these children have only begun to be studied within the past decade. My own book *The Einstein Syndrome* is one such study. More research on these children is being conducted by Professor Stephen Camarata at the Vanderbilt University medical school. He was himself late in talking.

Research on Einstein's brain has suggested to some neuroscientists that he was late in talking because of the unusual development of his brain, as revealed by an autopsy. Those portions of his brain where analytical thinking was concentrated had spread out far beyond their usual area and spilled over into adjoining areas, including the region from which speech is usually controlled. This has led some neuroscientists to suggest that his genius and his late talking could have been related.

At this point, no one knows whether this is the reason why Einstein took so long to develop the ability to speak, much less whether this is true of the other people of outstanding intellect who were also late in beginning to speak. What is known, however, is that there are a number of disabilities that are more common among people of high intellect than in the general population.

Members of the high-IQ Mensa society, for example, have a far higher than normal incidence of allergies. A sample of youngsters enrolled in the Johns Hopkins program for mathematically precocious youths—kids who can score 700 on the math SAT when they are just 12 years old—showed that more than four-fifths of them were allergic and/or myopic and/or left-handed.

This is all consistent with one region of the brain having above normal development and taking resources that leave some other region or regions with less than the usual resources for performing other functions. It is also consistent with the fact that some bright children who talk late remain impervious to all attempts of parents or professionals to get them to talk at the normal time. Yet these same kids later begin to speak on their own, sometimes after parents have finally just given up hope and stopped trying.

Noted language authority and neuroscientist Steven Pinker of MIT says, "language seems to develop about as quickly as the growing brain can handle it." While this was a statement about the general development of language, it may be especially relevant to bright children who talk late. As the whole brain grows in early childhood, increasing the total resources available, the regions whose resources have been preempted elsewhere can now catch up and develop normally.

My research and that of Professor Camarata have turned up a number of patterns in children with the Einstein Syndrome that were similar to what biographies of Einstein himself reveal. Most children who talk late are not like those in our studies. But a remarkable number are.

Unfortunately, many of these children get misdiagnosed as retarded, autistic or as having an attention deficit disorder.

LOOSE LIPS

Some of the intelligentsia are yelling louder than ever that they are being silenced. Professors, journalists and others who have made grossly offensive remarks in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attack are shocked that other Americans are criticizing them for it. To them, apparently, free speech means being free of criticism by others who want to exercise their own free speech rights.

As the *Chronicle of Higher Education*—the trade publication of academia—put it, “professors across the country have found their freedom to speak hemmed in by incensed students, alumni, and university officials.” Apparently none of these people has a right to be incensed or to express their reactions to the profs.

The self-righteousness of those who want to be exempt from criticism is incredible. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, events “have left emotions so raw that people are struggling to think critically about what happened—and some administrators would prefer that professors not even try.”

Thinking critically? When a professor at the University of New Mexico makes a joke approving the attack on the Pentagon, is that thinking critically—or thinking at all? At one of the California State University campuses, a professor who said

that American actions had helped bring on the terrorist attacks was “shocked by the anger his remarks prompted.”

Even the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, while characterizing these responses as “part of the American impulse toward anti-intellectualism,” has to admit that “no one has been fired or locked up for joking about bombs or criticizing President Bush.” All that has happened is that others have asserted their own rights of free speech. But even that is said to have a “chilling effect.” As one professor at the University of Texas put it, the message from the academic administration was “if you stick your neck out, we will disown you.”

Apparently other people don’t even have a right to disassociate themselves from your remarks. Apparently anything short of uncritical acceptance of whatever asinine statements the profs make seems to them like a violation of the First Amendment.

This seeking of privileges in the name of rights extends far beyond the campuses. Journalists have been wrapping themselves in the First Amendment for years—even as they assume the role of citizens of the world, who soar above the parochial concerns of the United States of America. One of the cable networks doesn’t want its employees to use the word “terrorists” to describe those who launched an attack that killed thousands of American civilians.

Various media outlets apparently feel a need to give equal time, if not moral equivalence, to Osama bin Laden and others in the terrorist organizations.

Would anyone have thought of giving Hitler free time to broadcast his propaganda on networks during World War II?

The most unconscionable media act of all may well have been the banner headline on the front of the *New York Times* of October 10, 2001: “U.S. Said to Plan Copter Raids in Afghanistan.” The *Times’* motto is “All the News That’s Fit to

Print.” But, while reporting what has happened is news, reporting what is about to happen with American troops in a military operation is more like espionage.

Nor is this the first time that the media have been reckless with the lives of fellow Americans in combat. During the Gulf War a decade ago, one of the reporters on the scene broadcast to the world that the Iraqi missiles being fired at American troops were missing and landing “five miles north of here.” That is the kind of information that an enemy needs to adjust his range. It is the kind of information which spies and spotters are supposed to provide. But here it was being supplied free of charge.

Perhaps that is what to expect from journalists who claim all the privileges of Americans, while acting as citizens of the world, neutral as between “both sides.” Since they are so totally incapable of self-criticism, the rest of us should at least understand the implications of their self-indulgence.

There are American troops who can die needlessly in combat, and American children who can grow up as orphans, because somebody forgot the old wartime maxim, “Loose lips sink ships.” There is great consternation in the press and in Congress that President Bush has ordered stricter limits on who gets military briefings. But it is reassuring that irresponsible people will now have adult supervision.

“THE DUTY TO DIE”

Our betters have been telling us how to live our lives for so long that it is only the next logical step for them to tell us when to die. We have grown so used to meekly accepting their edicts, even on what words we can and cannot use—“swamp” has virtually disappeared from the English language, replaced by “wetlands,” as “bums” has been replaced by “the homeless,” “sex” by “gender”—that it seems only fitting that they should now tell us when to die.

The new phrase is “the duty to die.” The anointed have proclaimed this duty, so who are we ordinary people to question it? Former Colorado governor Richard Lamm has said that the elderly should “consider making room in the world for the young by simply doing with less medical care and letting themselves die.”

Colorado didn’t seem that desperately over-crowded to me, but Lamm is one of the voices of the anointed, so their arbitrary dogmas become well-known facts by sheer repetition.

In the *Hastings Center Report*, described as a journal of medical ethics, a medical ethicist says that “health care should be withheld even for those who want to live” if they have already lived beyond the politically correct number of years—which

he suggests might be 75. He says that, after such a “full rich life” then “one is duty-bound to die.”

There’s more. Another medical ethicist would consider extending the limit to 80 years but, after that, medical care should be denied to all who have “lived out a natural life span.”

You may wonder who these people are and who gave them the right to play God. But the answer is simple. They are legion and it is we who have supinely accepted their pronouncements on so many things for so long that they see no reason to limit how far they can go.

There was a time when Americans told people like this where they could go. But one of the many phrases to fade from our vocabulary is “None of your business!” Today, everything is everybody’s business. The next step is for it to become the government’s business.

This collectivist mentality has led to big noises being made in the media and in academia about whether corporate executives or professional athletes are being paid “too much.” I don’t know how many millions of dollars Derek Jeter gets paid for playing shortstop for the Yankees, but I do know that not one of those millions comes from me. That’s between him and George Steinbrenner. It’s none of my business.

How did we get sucked into collectivizing decisions that were once up to individuals? Purple prose is one factor. One of those who wants to see old-timers removed from the scene declares that the costs of keeping them alive are “a demographic, economic and medical avalanche.” Melodramatic phrase-making has become the royal road to power.

What is far more of a threat than the little dictators who are puffed up with their own importance is the willingness of so many others to surrender their freedom and their money in exchange for phrases like “crisis” and “compassion.” Will

America go down in history as the country which defeated collectivism in the 20th century and then became collectivist itself in the 21st century?

Collectivism takes on many guises and seldom uses its own real name. Words like “community” and “social” soothe us into thinking that collectivist decision-making is somehow higher and nobler than individual or “selfish” decision-making. But the cold fact is that communities do not make decisions. Individuals who claim to speak for the community impose their decisions on us all.

Collectivist dictation can occur from the local level to the international level, and the anointed push it at all levels. They want a bigger role for the UN, for the International Court of Justice at the Hague and for the European Union bureaucrats in Brussels. Anything except individual freedom.

You cannot even build or remodel your own home without finding yourself under the thumb of local bureaucrats and tangled in red tape. A couple who are trying to have a home built in coastal California are discovering that it takes far less time to build the house than it does to deal with the arbitrary edicts of local bureaucrats and the reams of local regulations. The husband has taken to singing in the shower: “We shall overcome some day. . .”

Maybe they will and maybe they won’t. Maybe we are all destined to give up our freedom to those ruthless enough to take it from us—or glib enough to soothe us into handing it over to them.

SHOCKED BY THE OBVIOUS

The obvious makes headlines in California. Maybe this shows that a sense of reality or common sense is not something that can be taken for granted among Californians.

A recent headline stretching across the top of the front page announced that “Population dwarfs housing” in San Mateo County, on the San Francisco peninsula. The same headline would have applied throughout most of the state—and it should not have surprised anybody anywhere. But apparently a recent release of Census data brought much news that should not have been news.

Census statistics showed that the housing supply in San Mateo county grew only half as fast as the population. Should this have surprised anyone, given that more than two-thirds of the land in that country is off-limits for building anything? But, in California, there seems to be no connection in most people’s minds between “open space” laws and housing so scarce that it is outrageously expensive. Often the very same people are passionately in favor of both “open space” and “affordable housing”—and see no conflict between these goals.

Nor do they see any conflict between arbitrary height restrictions on buildings and the clogged freeways that plague all of California. They would undoubtedly be shocked if told that open space and limits on building heights increase traffic

deaths by forcing more people to drive greater distances from their dispersed housing to the places where they work. Such obvious common sense would undoubtedly produce headlines in California if someone would just go collect the statistics.

Whether the fear of looking like Manhattan would overcome the fear of death, if people stopped and thought about it, is not clear—because very few have stopped to think about the costs of most of California's sacred cows. Only recently have blackouts caused some to reconsider their automatic opposition to building power plants in general or nuclear power plants in particular.

For years, California's movie stars and environmental activists so demonized nuclear power plants that nobody bothered to find out what scientists thought or what the experience has been with nuclear power plants in Western Europe over the past decades. Facts play a very minor role in many decisions.

For example, to many Californians, the words "public power" still have a magic ring, despite the fact that people around the world have discovered the hard way that having politicians run economic activities produces disasters. That is why even left-wing governments in various countries have started selling government-owned enterprises to private industry. But few Californians either seek or welcome such facts. Nor are they likely to consider that Chernobyl was "public power."

Another headline on the same front page which announced that housing was lagging behind population growth also announced that the median age in the San Francisco Bay area was rising. Of course. As housing becomes ever more expensive, those who can afford it are increasingly restricted to those with higher incomes.

Contrary to political rhetoric, these are not some separate class of “the rich,” but are simply people who have reached an age where their earnings have peaked, even though many of those very same people were counted among “the poor” in earlier years. Once you get past political rhetoric, it is easy to see why the most expensive places in the bay area tend to have the oldest ages and the poorest places the youngest ages.

In upscale Marin County, for example, the median age is 41. In San Mateo County, posh Portola Valley has a median age of 47.5, while run-down East Palo Alto, with a predominantly minority population, has a median age of just under 26.

Another headline, inside the same newspaper, declares: “Housing grows more nationwide than in state.” Lots of things grow more nationwide than in California. That is because California politicians so heavily restrict, tax and micro-manage so many economic activities that people are left freer to grow elsewhere.

The missing link in many Californians’ thinking is the link between what they do and the consequences that follow. In California, you show what a good person you are by being in favor of all sorts of politically correct goals—and blithely disregarding the costs these goals will impose on others or the consequences for the whole society. That is why these obvious consequences produce such shocking headlines.

FAMILIES AND DICTATORS

In one sense, the Elian Gonzalez story is over. In another sense, it may be years before it is over, in the sense that the truth finally comes out.

Given how young Elian Gonzalez is and how old Fidel Castro is, it may be only a matter of time before Elian will be free to tell the truth, though that time may be measured in decades. How long the Castro regime will last after Castro himself is gone is problematical. But Cuba has no tradition of freedom to assure that it will become a democracy any time soon.

The one thing that is clear already is that this case was not about parental rights, which do not exist in Cuba, nor about "the rule of law," which did not exist in the Clinton administration. Judging by the polls, the American people do not understand that.

Part of the problem is that most Americans have no conception of a totalitarian dictatorship or the ruthlessness with which they use family members as hostages. This is nothing new, but our schools and colleges teach so little history that the public can hardly be expected to understand what an old and widespread pattern this is, among dictatorships of the left or right.

Back in the 1930s, for example, Nazi agents were infiltrat-

ing the many German organizations in Brazil. Those Germans in Brazil—many of them born in Brazil—who opposed Nazi takeovers of their organizations were reported to the Hitler government and their relatives back in Germany were subject to visits from the Gestapo.

Castro has retaliated against the brother of baseball pitcher Orlando Hernandez of the Yankees, who defected from Cuba. The family of a woman who defected from China a few years ago has likewise faced retaliation. Against this background, there is much overlooked significance in the fact that Castro has never let the entire Gonzalez family come to the United States at the same time. First the grandmothers came over while father Juan Miguel Gonzalez stayed behind. Then Juan Miguel came over with his wife and one son, while the grandmothers and another son stayed behind. But Castro always had his hostages in Cuba.

Those who do not understand this will have a hard time explaining some very strange things that went on during this long struggle over the fate of Elian Gonzalez.

Let's go back to the beginning, when this little boy was rescued from the sea, after the boat he was on sank, drowning his mother and others on board. Those who believe that his father was saying and doing what he freely wanted to say and do must face the fact that, with his son hospitalized after this traumatic experience, in a city that could be reached within the hour from Havana, the father waited for months before coming to the United States.

If that was the act of a free man, then he must be one of the most unfit parents around. More likely, he was as unfree as all the other people in Cuba.

What about what Juan Miguel Gonzalez said, that these were "distant" relatives in Miami, people he barely knew, who

were holding his son against his father's wishes? It was Elian's uncle on his father's side. Are uncles distant relatives?

What is even more telling is that telephone records show that Juan Miguel Gonzalez phoned these "distant" relatives, whom he supposedly barely knew, just about the time when Elian and his mother were making a desperate attempt to reach American soil. The Miami family said that he asked them to take care of Elian but the father denies this. In Cuba, he had better deny it.

Then there were those grandmothers who came over, publicly asking for the return of Elian to Cuba. Yet, a Dominican nun who saw them privately in Miami said that these grandmothers showed fear like she had never seen before. The nun was at first in favor of returning Elian to Cuba and was, moreover, a friend of Janet Reno. But once she saw the fear of those grandmothers, she concluded that Castro was calling the shots and she wanted Elian kept out of his clutches.

The famous midnight raid was what sealed Elian's fate. Far from being made to uphold "the rule of law," that raid was made right after a court ruling that opened the door to a hearing requesting asylum for Elian. By seizing the boy at gunpoint and turning him over to his father, Janet Reno and the Clinton administration silenced Elian, who must now say whatever the Castro regime wants him to say. Those who want the truth will have to wait until Castro is gone.

THE “AUTISM” DRAGNET

The U.S. Department of Education and the National Institutes of Health have launched a campaign to get a government program created to “identify” children with autism at age two and then subject them to “intensive” early intervention for 25 hours a week or more. It sounds good, but so have so many other government programs that created more problems than they solved.

Just who is to “identify” these children and by what criteria? A legal case in Nebraska shows the dangers in creating a government-mandated dragnet that can subject all sorts of children to hours of disagreeable, ineffective or even counter-productive treatment for something they do not have.

A four-year old boy, whom we can call Bryan, was diagnosed as “autistic” and put into a program in which he grew worse instead of better, despite the protests of his parents. Eventually, these parents sued the school district, calling in as their expert witness Professor Stephen Camarata of Vanderbilt University.

Professor Camarata examined Bryan and concluded that he was not autistic and should not be kept in the program that was not doing him any good. However, the hearing officer sided with the school district, for reasons that are a chilling

example of what can happen when bureaucratic criteria prevail.

According to the hearing officer: "The difficulty of the testimony of Dr. Camarata, is that it is obvious that he is frequently relying on a medical definition of autism, as opposed to the one contained in Nebraska Department of Education Rule 51." But, since autism is a medical condition, the problem is with the bureaucratic rule, not the medical definition.

When is a child autistic in Nebraska? According to the hearing officer, the "criteria established by the Nebraska Department of Education in order for a child to be verified as having autism" involve "varying degrees of atypical behavior" in a number of areas. These criteria reflect a lockstep view of how every child is supposed to develop.

Given that lockstep vision, "precocious or advanced skill development" in a child "while other skills may develop at normal or extremely depressed rates" is one of the criteria for autism. Similarly when the "order of skill acquisition frequently does not follow normal developmental patterns." In other words, if other kids can ride a tricycle before they can read and a particular kid can read before he can ride a tricycle, then he is in trouble.

Another sign of autism, according to bureaucratic rule 006.04B2b: "The child's behavior may vary from high levels of activity and responsiveness to low levels." If X turns him on and Y leaves him cold, then he is on his way to being labeled "autistic" in Nebraska.

Another sign of autism: "Speech and/or language are either absent, delayed, or disordered." This dragnet would bring in the great pianist Arthur Rubinstein, India's mathematical genius Ramanujan, Nobel Prize-winning economist Gary Becker, and physicists Richard Feynman, Edward Teller and Albert Einstein—among many others.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, people are pushing for a federal dragnet to find “autistic” children and subject them to “treatment” that none of us would want to undergo. They assure us that “experienced professionals” can identify autism in children as young as two years of age.

Even assuming that this is true, how many highly trained professionals are available to evaluate the vast numbers of children who would be caught in a nationwide “autism” dragnet? Would the whole country become Nebraska writ large?

Many children have already been labeled “autistic” or “retarded” on the basis of evaluations that lasted less than ten minutes—and many of these evaluations have later been contradicted, either by more highly qualified specialists or by the course of events as the child developed.

Parents need to seek out the best available medical and other evaluations of a child with problems. But that is very different from a federal dragnet controlled by armies of bureaucrats who can plague parents and children alike.

Parents of late-talking children have reported that they have been urged to allow their kids to be labeled “autistic” in order to get federal money that can be used for speech therapy. Maybe that has contributed to the “increase” in autism we hear about—which in turn has contributed to the stampede for a new federal program.

RACIAL PROFILING OF AUTHORS

Now that police departments are supposed to stop racial profiling, maybe it is time for book publishers and bookstores to stop as well.

I first became aware of the racial profiling of authors when I saw my book *Migrations and Cultures* in the black studies section of my local bookstore. Since the book is about migrations from Europe and Asia, obviously the only reason for putting it there was that the author is black.

Racial bean counters are asking publishers to tell them which of their authors are black and no doubt some of these publishers are complying. But the practical consequence of this racial profiling is that a black author who writes a book about cameras or cooking is liable to have his book put on a bookstore shelf based on the race of the writer, rather than the subject of the book. This means that readers who are looking for books on cameras or cooking are unlikely to find his book in the section where such books are kept.

Some people may actually think that they are doing black writers a favor by setting up a black authors' section of a bookstore. But, with friends like these, who needs enemies? Black writers, like white writers, want their books to reach the readers—and anything that interferes with that is bad news.

University of California Regent Ward Connerly found the

same practice in an east coast bookstore that I found on the west coast. His partly autobiographical and partly political book, *Creating Equal* was nowhere to be seen in either the biographical section of the bookstore or in the political section. It was on the shelves for "African-American Interest." The store manager said that this was done as a "service to the community."

What a service—putting a book where it is least likely to be found! If it is a service to any black writers, it is a service only to those who write exclusively for and about fellow blacks. But does either the black community or American society in general need a literary version of racial apartheid?

It is no service to readers either. Imagine that you are looking for a book on the history of military conquests and cannot find anything you like in the history section of your local bookstore—and that a book on that very subject by a black writer (yours truly, for example) is off in another part of the store.

Someone who stood in the black studies section of a major bookstore for 20 minutes reported that not a single white person entered that section during that time. Why would anyone want to put books where only a fraction of the public is likely to look—especially if it is a book on a subject of no special interest to that particular fraction?

It is bad enough that bookstores engage in the racial profiling of authors. But so do some publishers.

The ridiculous lengths to which publishers can carry racial profiling was demonstrated to me when copies of my recently published book *Basic Economics* were sent out to *Jet* magazine, the *Amsterdam News* and other black publications. After I complained, copies were then sent to the *Wall Street Journal* and other publications dealing with economics.

I had naively believed that publishers were not only in the

business of publishing books but also of selling them. But apparently keeping up with fads is considered more important.

The mindless political correctness of the racial bean counters has invaded and corrupted one institution after another. A recent advertisement in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* lists a job as “Vice-Provost for Diversity and Equal Opportunity.” In other words, this job is being campus quota czar. You have reached the holy grail of “diversity” when you have black leftists, white leftists, female leftists and Hispanic leftists as professors.

Major corporations across the country have their affirmative action officials and many also have “diversity consultants” who come in and harangue the employees with the politically correct party line on race. Not since the days when the Nazis spoke of “Jewish science” has the idea been so widespread that race is destiny as far as ideas are concerned.

Only such an underlying assumption could create even the semblance of rationality to the notion that you are promoting “diversity” of viewpoints by having people of different skin colors on campus or in business—or with their books in different parts of bookstores.

CHANDRA LEVY CLUES

One of the clues in the Chandra Levy case that may have been dismissed too quickly was a call to the police on the morning of her disappearance, reporting a woman's scream heard in the building where she lived. This seems to have been disregarded as an unrelated event because it occurred hours before the time when Chandra Levy was supposed to have used her computer in her apartment.

But nobody actually saw her using the computer. All that is known is that the computer was used. If Chandra Levy was abducted hours earlier, whoever had her also had access to her keys. Why would such a person, or an accomplice, come back to that apartment and use a computer? Only to throw off the police.

Obviously, no ordinary street criminal would do that. Only someone with a vested interest in misleading the police would do it. But then, nothing else about the Chandra Levy case suggests that her disappearance was the work of a random street criminal.

Ordinary rapists, muggers and robbers do not go to such trouble to dispose of a body that a massive police dragnet fails to find it. Street criminals get what they want and then leave the scene before they are either caught by cops or recognized by witnesses.

Everything about the way Chandra Levy left her apartment suggests that she was going to meet someone she knew. Ordinarily she was very security conscious and took precautions, such as having her cell phone with her. Yet on this occasion she left everything behind in her apartment and took only her keys with her.

This does not necessarily mean that she knew the person who abducted her or killed her. She could have been lured to where that person was waiting by a message from someone she did know and trust, and who said that he or she would be at that place. Chandra might well have screamed when she was ambushed by somebody else.

All this suggests premeditation. Sometimes people have an argument that escalates out of control and leads to violence or death. But at such an emotional moment, one is not very likely to come up with a scheme for disposing of the body so cleverly that an army of cops cannot find it.

Murders are all too common. But murders in which the body cannot be found are much rarer. There has to be some compelling reason why a killer does not just flee the scene of the crime.

Obviously, if the crime occurred in the killer's home or on his job, then the body must be moved. But, if it happened somewhere else, then the dangers of hanging around or carting a body around would have to be weighed against whatever advantage could be gotten by hiding the body.

What do you gain by hiding the body? In some cases, it may be possible to hide the fact that any crime was committed. If a globe-trotting reporter were murdered in London and the body never found, then that reporter might just be regarded as missing in action anywhere around the world. But that was impossible in the case of Chandra Levy.

As an intern whose term was up at a particular time, and

whose parents were expecting her back in California shortly afterwards, Chandra Levy's disappearance was bound to be noticed, whether a body turned up or not. With the passage of time, the likelihood of an accident would have to decline to the vanishing point and foul play left as the only reasonable conclusion.

If her death was caused by someone who knew her, then that person would also know this. Thus there would be no point in trying to conceal the very existence of a crime. All that could be concealed would be the identity of whoever was responsible. Misleading the police about the time at which her abduction happened might be worth spending some time at her computer or having someone else spend time there.

In any event, someone obviously thought it was very important that her body not be found. But why? If her body were found in a park or on the street with a fatal gunshot wound, for example, how much of a clue would that be? Enough to take the risks of spending time finding a secure place to dispose of her remains?

What would make her body a bigger clue would be if she were pregnant. That could point the police toward whoever was responsible for her death. Moreover, pregnancy could have set in motion a chain of events that led someone to feel a need to get rid of her permanently. Pregnant young women can cause big trouble, especially if they feel betrayed by whoever was responsible.

BARRY AND THE BABE

This season, Barry Bonds has been a Giant in more than name. While baseball fans and the media have been focussed on his record-breaking home-run feats, far less attention has been paid to his other feats that have been even more spectacular—and, in fact, unique.

Barry Bonds is the first batter in the entire history of the National League—going back into the 19th century—to have a slugging average over .800. The only other player in the history of baseball to slug over .800 was Babe Ruth, who did it two seasons in a row.

In other words, a slugging average of .800 is rarer than a batting average of .400. The last player to hit .400—Ted Williams—did it 60 years ago. But Ruth slugged .800 twenty years before that—and nobody else has done it again until this year.

Slugging averages tell you more than either batting averages or home run totals. As far as batting averages are concerned, a bunt single and a tape-measure home run are the same. But they are rarely the same in their effect on the outcome of a ball game.

The total number of home runs is not the whole story either. The year that Roger Maris broke Babe Ruth's record for home runs in a season, Mickey Mantle actually hit home runs in a higher percentage of his times at bat. It is just that Mantle

was walked more than Maris. A big reason why Maris was walked less than a hundred times that year was that Mantle was on deck. Walking Maris would just get you in deeper and deeper.

Just as batting averages count hits in proportion to your times at bat, slugging averages count your total bases in proportion to your times at bat. If you hit a single and a double in five times at bat, that's three total bases and a slugging average of .600. That slugging average for a whole season is rarer than a batting average of .300.

A slugging average of .700 is of course even rarer. Some of the great sluggers of all time—Joe DiMaggio, Hank Aaron, Willie Mays—never reached a slugging average of .700 in even their best seasons. So a slugging average over .800 is practically unheard of.

What does an .800 slugging average mean? It means 8 total bases every ten times at bat— all season long. You can get 8 total bases with two singles, a double and a home run. Or you can do it with two home runs or four doubles or other combinations. But, however you do it, it is hard to keep on doing it for a whole season. Only Barry and the Babe have done that.

It is not coincidental that Ruth and Bonds each holds his respective league's season records for being walked. These are not the kind of guys you can afford to pitch to when the game is on the line. It is significant that Bonds hit his 70th home run in the last inning of a game where the score was 9 to 2. He had been walked again and again earlier in that game and in previous games when the score was close.

Where does this incredible season put Bonds among the all-time greats? It certainly moves him up the list but one season is not a whole career. Like Roger Maris, Bonds hit over 20 home runs more in his record-breaking season than he did in

any other season. Will he turn out to be a one-year wonder, like Maris?

This is not to say that Bonds would not have been a star player, even if he had never had this spectacular season. He would have been headed for Cooperstown anyway. Maris too was an outstanding player and had won the Most Valuable Player award the year before breaking the home run record, as well as in that year.

But if you are talking about being up there in the rarefied atmosphere of Babe Ruth, that is another story. Bonds never had a slugging average of .700 before this year. Mark McGwire reached that level twice and Babe Ruth nine times. Ruth's lifetime slugging average was .690, a level Bonds never reached in his best season before this year.

Take nothing away from Barry Bonds. He hit home runs this year with a greater frequency, in proportion to his times at bat, than anyone in the history of baseball. He homered once every 6.5 official times at bat, compared to once every 7.3 at bats for McGwire and once every 9 at bats for Ruth in his best seasons.

While Bonds' incredible performance gave new prominence to slugging averages, Ruth's lifetime dominance in that statistic makes clear that the Babe was still the greatest all-around slugger of them all, regardless of how many home runs others have hit.

MEDIA FRAUD

Media bias is no longer news. Poll after poll has shown that the vast majority of journalists vote for Democrats, even though the country as a whole is pretty evenly split between the two major parties.

By itself, there is nothing wrong with this. It becomes a problem when media bias becomes media fraud. Media bias in editorials and columns is one thing. Media fraud in reporting “facts” in news stories is something else.

Three excellent and devastating new books on media fraud have been published this year, naming names and turning over rocks to show what is crawling underneath. These books are *Coloring the News* by William McGowan, *Bias* by Bernard Goldberg, and *It Ain't Necessarily So* by David Murray, Joel Schwartz and S. Robert Lichter.

In even the best known and most prestigious media outlets—the *New York Times* and “60 Minutes,” for example—crucial facts have been left out of news stories when those facts would have undermined or destroyed a liberal argument. Conversely, false claims have been widely reported as facts in the media when those claims supported the liberal vision of the world.

A classic media fraud was the 1996 story of a wave of arson directed against black churches by racists. It made head-

lines across the country and was featured on network television news. It sparked indignant editorials and angry outbursts from black activists. The President of the United States recalled his own sadness as a child at the burning down of black churches in Arkansas.

In the end, however, the whole thing turned out to be completely false. Those few journalists who bothered to check out the facts found that there were no facts to support this story and that what facts there were completely refuted it. Even a commission appointed by President Clinton reached the same conclusion. Moreover, not a single black church in Arkansas had burned down during Bill Clinton's childhood.

When this front page fraud was finally exposed, the new story was buried as a small item back on page 20 of the *New York Times*.

William McGowan's *Coloring the News* offers the best explanation for such journalistic malpractice. Many news organizations have created special editorial office caucuses consisting exclusively of black, Hispanic, feminist, or homosexual journalists, who decide how the news about their respective constituencies will be reported—or whether it will be reported at all.

For example, when a homosexual man was attacked and killed by anti-gay hoodlums, that was huge, front-page news across the country. But when two homosexuals lured a boy next door into their home and then raped and killed him, at about the same time, that was widely ignored, as if it had never happened. Similarly biased treatment has appeared when it came to reporting on corrupt black politicians like D.C. mayor Marion Barry or the dangerous double standards used for women in the military—standards which have already led to death in training and may cost still more lives in actual combat.

The issue is not what various journalists or news organizations's editorial views are. The issue is the transformation of news reporting into ideological spin, along with self-serving taboos and outright fraud.

While William McGowan's book seems the most perceptive of these three, all are very valuable and each has its own special emphasis. *It Ain't Necessarily So* focuses on media irresponsibility when reporting on medical and scientific issues, while *Bias* focuses more on the actions and the cast of characters at CBS News, where its author worked for many years. But all three of these books provide a real education on media fraud, which is infinitely more important than media bias.

Democratic nations are especially vulnerable to misinformation. The media in a totalitarian country may tell as many lies as it wants to, but that does not affect the decisions made for the country by its dictator or its ruling party, which has access to the truth, even if the masses do not. But, in a country where the masses choose their leaders and influence policies, a fraudulent press can mislead the voters into national disaster.

THE INSULATION OF THE LEFT

Nature lovers marvel at the fact that newly hatched turtles instinctively head for the sea. But that is no more remarkable than the fact that people on the political left instinctively head for occupations in which their ideas do not have to meet the test of facts or results.

While many studies have documented the predominance of the political left in the academic world, the exceptional areas where they do not have such predominance are precisely those areas where you cannot escape from facts and results—the sciences, engineering, mathematics and athletics.

By contrast, no area of academia is more dominated by the left than the humanities, where there are no facts to challenge the fantasies that abound. Leftists head for similar fact-free zones outside of academia.

Philanthropy, for example, is another field in which facts take a back seat to beliefs and emotions. When you are handing out money, you call the tune. It doesn't matter if other people have the facts on their side if you have the big bucks on yours.

When the foundations put their money behind bilingual education or global warming, then all sorts of conferences, organizations and movements will emerge to carry forth their

message. Leftists flock to foundations, including those set up with money donated by conservative businessmen.

When these foundations give big bucks to finance bilingual education programs and propaganda, or bankroll “global warming” hysteria, they cannot be forced to confront facts about the counterproductive effects of bilingual education or asked to prove that the globe has warmed by a single degree in 20 years.

Fiction and opinion are likewise dominated by the political left. If you can tell a good yarn, whether in a book or a motion picture, the only test you face is whether people will buy the book or go see the movie.

On TV talk shows, what matters is whether you can talk the talk that keeps people tuned in. You may scare the daylights out of them about fictitious dangers in apples or beef without a speck of evidence that you know what you are talking about. But, so long as it sounds good, that’s all that matters.

Any engineer, businessmen or athletic coach who knew no more about what he was doing than the talking heads on TV or foundation officials have to know would be heading for disaster in no time. When your bridge collapses or your business goes bankrupt or your team gets beaten again and again, you are history.

Nowhere are half-baked ideas more safe from facts than in government. When the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission assumes that statistical “imbalances” in a company’s workforce show discrimination, the only test of that assumption is whether federal judges share it.

If the EEOC and the courts share this same assumption, then employers are out of luck—perhaps to the tune of millions of dollars—if their workforce does not fit the prevailing preconceptions. Even if in fact the accused employer couldn’t

care less about the complexion, the nationality or the bedroom habits of his employees, that doesn't matter. What matters is what those with power choose to believe.

It doesn't matter whether factual studies show that "whole language" and "whole math" methods of teaching lead to lower test scores in these subjects. What matters is whether those with the money and the power in the Department of Education happen to like these notions—or are willing to cater to the teachers' unions that like them.

One of the reasons why government absorbs so much money and takes on ever-increasing powers is that it is home to so many people whose beliefs could not withstand the draconian tests of science, the marketplace or a scoreboard. What we the taxpayers are ultimately paying for is their insulation from reality, as they pursue the heady pleasures of power.

As if that were not enough, the left promotes the idea that there is something wiser and nobler about having decisions made by third parties who pay no price for being wrong. That is called "public service" and it will undoubtedly be hyped in college commencement speeches this year—as it is every year—despite scandalous revelations in Washington or decades of economic failure and monumental human tragedies in left-wing governments around the world.

W. GLENN
CAMPBELL
(1924–2001)

He could be generous, he could be irascible, but he could never be anything other than Glenn Campbell. During his long career, and from his retirement in 1989 until his recent death on November 24th, no one else was ever described as being “like Glenn Campbell.” He was an original.

It would be an understatement to call Glenn Campbell controversial and a virtual impossibility to keep track of all his battles, including those with more than one administration of Stanford University, on whose campus his Hoover Institution was and is located.

There was a Hoover Institution before Glenn Campbell became its director in 1960, but it was he who added world-class scholars to its huge library and massive archives, making it a think tank that would eventually be ranked number one among the think tanks of the world by the distinguished British magazine *The Economist*.

He also brought in the millions of dollars that supported their research and caused the institution to grow in size and in stature. But his achievement went even beyond that.

In an era when academic thinking was almost exclusively on the political left, the Hoover Institution became a refuge for top scholars who were out of step with that orientation, and who were therefore persona non grata at colleges and uni-

versities for which they were academically qualified but politically blackballed.

While the media almost invariably referred to the Hoover Institution as “conservative” or “right-wing,” a survey of its scholars during the 1980s found that there were slightly more Democrats than Republicans. In the surrounding Stanford University faculty—as with faculties at most universities—there were whole departments without a single Republican, at a time when the country was almost evenly split between the two parties.

Glenn Campbell liked to say that the Stanford faculty was leaning so far to the left that the upright scholars at the Hoover Institution seemed to be leaning far to the right.

While the Hoover scholars included such icons of free market economics as Milton Friedman, George Stigler, and Gary Becker—all Nobel Prize winners—they also included Nobel Prize-winning economist Kenneth Arrow, whose orientation was very different. These were all academically-based scholars who were affiliated with the Hoover Institution under one arrangement or another, spending varying amounts of time there. Other leading scholars were exclusively affiliated with the Hoover Institution and permanently in residence.

These included Peter Duignan and Lewis Gann, whose monumental histories of Africa were internationally recognized for their scholarship, but who were never on the faculties of any university. Given the benefits of being at the Hoover Institution—someone described it as having a MacArthur Foundation fellowship all the time—it was probably no great loss to them. But it was a huge loss to innumerable college and university students who would never hear anything that challenged the “politically correct” version of African history.

Other scholars in residence included the distinguished British historian Robert Conquest, whose monumental book,

Harvest of Sorrow, spelled out the horrors of the man-made famine in the Ukraine which took millions of lives in the 1930s. While this famine was denied, not only by the Soviet government and its fellow travelers in the West, and downplayed or widely ignored by much of the intelligentsia, when the official Soviet files were finally opened under Gorbachev, it turned out that even more people had died than Conquest had estimated.

In short, the Hoover Institution was not only a refuge for scholars who refused to march in ideological lockstep with the fashions of the times, it was a refuge for ideas that were largely banished from academia and the media, but which could not be obliterated so long as they had a base from which inconvenient facts and analyses could be developed and published in books, articles, monographs and op-ed columns.

It was Glenn Campbell's contribution to America to preserve a genuine diversity that so many academics talked about but refused to permit on their campuses. That will be his enduring monument.