

The Conservative Social Psychology Blog

Archived Blog Articles Exclusive to www.theconservativesocialpsychologist.com website.

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*Note that all blog articles were involuntarily removed from my website on July 15th, 2024 by the site host company's planned WordPress update that erased all content and linkable versions of the separate articles from 2020-2024. The content for most of these articles was recovered from the author's original word processor files and compiled here.

Several articles were lost during this event, including "Calling Out Media Hypocrisy Every Time You See It" and "Big Tech's Role in the DNC's Informational Operation".

“The Land of Confusion”

July 5, 2024

Much liberal media attention has been given to President Joe Biden’s mental acuity after last week’s debate. While conservative media has been discussing this issue for four years, Democrat voters have had the issue hidden from them by the smoke and mirrors Democrat Media Complex. Rachel Maddow and Jake Tapper are the hands that feed narrow minds whatever fictionalized conspiratorial swill the DNC throws down to them for their daily propaganda.

There is a mistaken belief that journalism was once a noble and unbiased profession, where Americans could rely on reporting of actual news with no agenda. It is time to let go of that idea. It is not so now, and it never was. The mainstream media and Hollywood, the mouthpieces that funnel culture into our brains, were always liberal and progressive.

There were social psychology studies in the 1980’s on media bias due to the widespread belief that the media was liberal. Guess what? A bunch of liberal professors did studies to show that the media was not biased. What a surprise “ending” to that issue!

Think about how the media treated Ronald Reagan. Iran-Contra was the scandal they had waited for. For those of you old enough to remember the Reagan years, don’t romanticize it. Don’t forget how he was treated.

Think back to how Reagan was portrayed by Hollywood. Remember that lost scene of a Saturday Night Live episode I once wrote or podcasted about from around 1979 where they mocked Reagan as a racist and a threat to our democracy. Of course they mocked him, because he threatened their progressive big government racket. Does that sound familiar? The liberal media used the same playbook on every Republican presidential candidate except for John McCain. That’s because McCain was a liberal. The media said that George W. Bush was Satan, Hitler, an idiot, etc. They said that Mitt Romney was an evil super conservative when we now know he was just a weak liberal. And of course, Donald Trump is the worst person on earth in their eyes. The liberal-progressive sky-is-falling-B.S.-routine is tired and played out. Don’t keep falling for it. In social psychology, it’s called linking a target to an undesired outgroup. It’s a calculated tactic and America keeps falling for it. Be smarter than that, America.

Search for the song “Land of Confusion” by the band Genesis. It’s a great song to mindlessly listen to on the radio (well, at least I remember it on the radio...). Watch the video to go with it. Using puppets, it caricatures the Reagans and makes fun of Ronald Reagan as having dementia and putting our nation at risk. Reagan did have some issues after his surviving an assassination attempt early in his presidency. Bill O’Reilly covered this in his book “Killing Reagan” ([click here for my 2020 review of the book](#)). Has the mainstream media covered Joe Biden’s issues for the past 4 years? Not at all.

The only reason all of America knows about Biden's mental issues now is the competing interests of the DNC operatives clamoring to remove him from the ballot and swoop in with a last minute replacement that there won't be time to vet, and the Biden administration that is fighting the DNC to all keep their jobs and relevance. Don't worry, the mainstream media is quickly getting on the same page with what the DNC wants them to do so they will all be in lockstep again soon enough. There is no room for diversity of thought in the DNC, which is why they keep winning elections. Well, it's one reason...

Stay the course and take every chance you get to remind people of Joe Biden's failures and incompetencies. Expect the Democrats to either keep Biden or bring someone new in, but the platform will be the same. They will run on "don't worry about our socialism, just remember you hate Trump because he is pure evil and must be stopped. He was impeached twice, is a convicted felon, insurrectionist, etc." Don't fall for it. See through the tactic. They use pure Alinsky strategies and they are predictable at every turn.

Review of “Crisis”

January 19, 2024

It’s been a few years since I explored the Kelly Turnbull fiction series by Kurt Schlichter. Having left academia a few years ago, I am now too intellectually lazy to write an academic style review that I did with the past four books. Maybe that’s a good thing from your perspective. In fact, I’m too lazy to link to the past four reviews. They are all still there on my Conservative Social Psychology blog, I promise.

“Crisis” is technically the fifth book in the series but I have no idea chronologically which books would go there. Schlichter develops storylines out of order and that is actually a really cool literary feature of the series. It was frustrating in the beginning but now that I am invested in the characters and storylines, it is a strength of the entertainment. Plus the world is used to asynchronous storylines after being subjected to a variety of diversionary tales from the woke/non-woke Star Wars franchise.

“How the Squishy Neocons Became Progressives”

November 18, 2022

In my home state of Oklahoma, former Republican Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister switched parties and ran for governor as a Democrat. She lost, but at least Joy Hofmeister switched parties. I can respect that in the unseemly game of politics where people rarely have the integrity to show their true colors.

Republicans managed to lose a lot of Republicans by suddenly doing much needed Republican things. In the Republican community we have a term for those we are losing. We call them RINOs (Republican in Name Only). The past six years have amplified this internal divide. The neoconservatives (“neocons”) are highly liberal and support internationalism and free trade. We end up losing that group of the Republican coalition anytime we sit down to the GOP table to discuss actual conservative policies.

There are at least three main factors that led to the squishy neocons’ panic and flight from conservatism: cognitive dissonance, propaganda, and an extreme dislike of President Trump.

Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) occurs when there is a mismatch between our attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions. It creates an unpleasant physiological arousal and it can be reduced by making a change. For neocons, “I am a Republican”, “I disagree with the Republican Platform”, and “I disagree with the Republican candidates” are all dissonant (misaligned) and produce cognitive dissonance. There are many ways to reduce that dissonance. The neocon can change his attitudes to agree with the platform and candidates or even add a consistent component to the mix by attending a GOP event. They can also change their behavior and switch parties. All of those reduce the cognitive dissonance. Many neocons appear to be heading in the direction of switching their party and it is only a matter of time. But they were not voting Republican anyway and the Democrats have cleverly exploited them with a “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” strategy of appealing to the neocons and making them unwitting pawns in their Alinsky game.

Propaganda is also a contributor to the neocons’ looming exit. The mainstream news outlets have taken a decidedly progressive turn in their programming. Former giants of the news industry such as CBS, ABC, NBC, CNN and The New York Times have all become progressive activist mouthpieces. Despite how true conservatives make fun of neocons, the neocons do have some conservative tendencies which is why they managed to tentatively align with the GOP for decades. Though loyalty to institutions is a hallmark of conservatism (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009), unfortunately the neocons’ loyalty is to institutions of propaganda whose megaphone was snatched by progressives in their calculated long march through the institutions.

The neocons extreme dislike of President Trump is a third factor. Remember the Never Trump movement? Trump’s behavior toward neocon cherished candidates (i.e., Jeb!) in the 2016 primary was so repulsive to neocons that they could not see past it and look at policy. Again,

their loyalty to their behavioral ethics (apparently they stand for no mean Tweets) left them susceptible to ignoring President Trump's policies and also ignoring the extreme corruption of President Biden. Remember when Biden plagiarized a speech and dropped out of the 1988 presidential campaign? What about Biden's China connections and a coked-out Hunter Biden? Neocons discount that because they are so uniformly turned off by President Trump. But it doesn't matter, because they have resolved their own dissonance by disavowing so many Republican policies and candidates that they are now progressives. Meghan McCain resolved her dissonance by filming a campaign ad for Joe Biden.

So, to my squishy neocon GOP tentmates I have some thoughts. Ask yourself:

1. Are you a social conservative? Do you support abortion and Critical Race Theory?
2. Are you a fiscal conservative? Do you vote to redistribute wealth and increase taxes on businesses and individuals?
3. Are you a free market capitalist? Do you vote to increase business regulations?
4. Do you support individual liberties? Do you vote to restrict gun ownership? Do you vote to increase government surveillance of citizens? Do you vote to restrict speech?

If you don't have truly conservative answers to these questions, please change your party affiliation from Republican and stop voting in our Republican primaries. You are not a Republican and in most states by voting in Republican primaries you are technically breaking the law.

Stop making social media posts like "I'm a life-long Republican and I support Democrat Candidate X and you should too."

Change your party affiliation. Stop claiming to be a Republican and supporting Democrats. You are taking away resources from campaigns who waste time sending mailers to the Republican voter lists and knocking on your doors. Plus, you look ridiculous to both Republicans and Democrats. Have some self-respect and just switch parties.

We figured out the problem with the political divide. The call was coming from INSIDE the house! It was you, the squishy neocons of the well-established D.C. Swamp.

Go ahead and give your red ties and elephant gear away, start wearing blue, and go all in on embracing your inner donkey. We all see it anyway. Get your votes the hell out of my Republican primaries. Stacy Abrams is waiting for you with open arms. She said to she will cleanse your soul if you send a check and she will make that nasty dissonance go away.

“Where Have You Gone, Disney? You Struck Out”

September 15, 2022

One of my early memories as a child was playing with a Mickey Mouse that talked when I pulled his string, saying brilliant things like “Don’t pull my string.” I remember my mom and dad taking me to see the classic Disney movies at the Saturday matinees in the old Washita Theatre in Chickasha, Oklahoma. I remember my mom speaking wistfully about the Mickey Mouse Club show of her youth and her singing at Disneyland when it first opened. I remember our cross-country drive to Disneyland when I was 6, costing what must have been a substantial amount of my father’s salary. I have countless other positive memories of Disney. I lost the Texas Farm Bureau hat my grandfather gave to me during that Disney trip on the first dip of the Pirates of the Caribbean ride and it was in an envelope at my home in Chickasha when I returned. That was impressive to a six-year-old. Talk about making memories!

My family loves Disney. As adults, we have taken our family to both U.S. theme parks and resorts multiple times. We immerse ourselves in the Disney experience. The children watched the Disney Channel with full freedom for years until three years ago when the liberal indoctrination began to bombard them during commercials. Now we stick to Disney Plus, which allows them to choose older programming. We shield the kids from the Disney of now to give them the Disney of yesterday. That’s clearly not a sustainable strategy.

Disney built its empire on being family-friendly entertainment. It was an American institution, which made it a target. Just like with the media, higher education, and Christian churches, progressives sought to bring down Disney exactly as Andrew Breitbart predicted they would with their “long march through the institutions” strategy. It’s a brilliant tactic. Identify the wholesome institutions to which conservatives listen, grab the microphone from the Mouse and start spewing propaganda to undermine their core values. Progressives are pulling the talking Mickey’s string and making him say what they want. Satan couldn’t have hatched a more sinister plan if he tried. Disney had the chance to stand up and fight for their customer base, but they rolled over and let the progressives go for their throat. The progressives don’t want Disney—they want us! Disney is just their latest tool to undermine our values.

The line from the 1968 Simon and Garfunkel song come to mind: “Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio? Our nation turns its lonely eyes to you. What’s that you say, Mrs. Robinson? Joltin’ Joe has left and gone away.” Disney had the chance to step up to the plate and swing for American values.

Unfortunately for Disney, they let that moment pass. They no longer share the wholesome family values of the majority Americans. They mock Christians with the programming they infect other platforms with such as “Little Demon”. We can all save the extra money we spent

on Disney products and use it to offset the rising costs of food, fuel, education, and everything else touched by the Democrats and the Biden Administration.

Disney, you missed your chance to stand up for American values. When the game was on the line, bat firmly placed on your shoulders, you struck out looking. You were a coward, and America is worse off for missing out on the wholesome joy you provided before you sold your soul and alienated your customer base. The progressives won't care about you when your customers are gone. They used you. You struck out.

“Primary Shenanigans”

September 8, 2022

Recently the Democrats have been masters of persuasion. Their tactics of capturing key strategic persuasion points in their long march through the institutions (education, media, religion), creating false narratives (Russian collusion, impeachment, January 6th), controlling information (Hunter Biden’s laptop, social media shadow banning), weaponizing bureaucratic entities (the IRS, DOJ, and FBI), and hiring spineless RINO neocons as Never Trump pundits has proved to be effective in making it seem like it is uncool to be a conservative. Unfortunately for the Democrats, true conservatives stopped paying attention to those persuasion efforts within the institutions.

Their latest tactic is a grassroots social media effort to influence primaries by having progressives appeal to their Republican friends to do the right thing and vote for Candidate X in the closed primary. It’s not enough for Democrats to have their own extremist progressive candidates in their own closed primaries who can’t win general elections. They also want to persuade Republicans to vote for the weakest candidate in the Republican primary. Conservatives won’t fall for it. We stopped taking progressives seriously a long, long time ago.

Nevertheless, it is a fascinating persuasion tactic that is 1) new to the social media age, and 2) not new. That’s why some states have closed primaries and some have open primaries where anyone can vote. If the primary is closed, you end up with more extreme candidates and an ugly general election. If the primary is open, one side will show up to vote for their own interests in the opponent’s primary. It will always be a somewhat unsolvable problem. The key is that in a fair fight, the better ideas will ultimately win in America.

Republicans need to continue to communicate their good ideas and watch as the Biden administration makes it easier and easier for people in the middle to choose the better ideas that conservatives offer over the extremist progressive agenda pushed by the Democrat Media Complex. But Republicans also need to be savvy enough to recognize the ever-morphing Democrat shenanigans before they happen, not long afterwards.

“The Economics of Zero Commissions at Online Brokerages”

December 9, 2021

In the United States, the stock market has become much more accessible for investors in the past 50 years. After the 1975 deregulation of brokerage commissions (Charles Schwab Corporation, 2021), Charles Schwab Corporation led the way in “discount brokerages” that made investing cheaper and easier for middle- and lower-class Americans. E*TRADE revolutionized investing in the early 2000’s with opportunities for online investing by everyone, with low commissions on trades as a low barrier to entry for investors.

In 2019, most online trading platforms removed their commissions for trading stocks. That means someone could open an account and purchase or sell a stock with no additional fee for the transaction (for how the business model works, see Carey, 2021). By removing this barrier to entry and additional decision factor for trading, it increased trading activity among investors who handle their own stock trades online.

The outcome of no commission trades was quite predictable from basic economic principles. First, there was no longer anything resembling a monopoly. When there were only a handful of brokerages in the 1970’s, other brokerages could not enter and compete and there was no incentive to capture market from each other (it was kind of a racket...). Once Schwab entered as a disruptor in the deregulated industry, there was competition and fees decreased. When E*TRADE had a monopoly as the only online trading platform, they charged fees lower than their competitors but as high as they could to capture value. Then other online platforms like Capital One Investing, Fidelity, Charles Schwab, and TD Ameritrade all joined the competition and drove the fee prices down to the point where the only way to capture market share was to charge no fees for a stock trade. Then the others were forced to follow or go out of business.

Mature, competitive markets stabilize their supply and demand around equilibrium and all competitors end up charging a price equal to their variable costs for their product (which in this case is apparently zero dollars).

References

Charles Schwab Corporation (December 9, 2021) [Company history](http://www.aboutschwab.com). www.aboutschwab.com

Carey, T. W. (July, 18, 2021). [Who wins a brokerage price war? With commissions at zero, do customers or brokers benefit?](#) *Investopedia* (online)

“Kelly Johnston Interview (EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with Kelly Johnston, 28th Secretary of the United States Senate”

November 2, 2021

Kelly Johnston was the 28th Secretary of the United States Senate, and the second youngest ever selected (1995-1996) to the position. He was born in Edmond, OK and attended the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. Early in his career he served as a newspaper reporter and editor in Oklahoma. He held a number of notable Republican administrative positions during the late 1980's and early 1990's. He worked on 35 congressional campaigns in 25 states over 25 years. He gives insightful political commentary at his newsletter ([Against the Grain](#)). I had the opportunity to interview him. Here is our discussion. Follow [this link](#) for my previous interview with him in September of 2020.

RM: Will you place the events of January 6th in a historical context of similar events that have occurred at the U.S. Capitol? What has been the traditional structural relationship between the Capitol Police and the Senate?

KJ: The US Capitol is no stranger to violent events. Several come to mind. Of course, the British invasion and burning of the Capitol in 1814. The shooting of a former Congressman turned lobbyist by a Louisville Courier reporter, Charles Kincaid, in 1889. The Puerto Rican nationalist shooting of the House chamber during a roll call vote in 1954. But most recently, in November 1983, a female-led domestic terror group bombed the Senate side of the Capitol (and many other places in Washington, DC) that was connected to the infamous Weather Underground. No one was harmed in the 1983 event and the people behind it were never sentenced - they were serving time for other crimes. President Clinton commuted the sentence of one of the bombers, Susan Rosenberg, on the last day of his presidency.

As for January 6th, there is still much that we do not know. What makes this event noteworthy is that it disrupted and potentially threatened a constitutionally-required certification of the electoral college results that would occur later that day, unimpeded. We know that the response to the violent event, in which 140 police were injured and one protester was killed, was encircling the Capitol with concertina wire and fencing along with 25,000 National Guard troops for at least 3 months. We know is that none of the perpetrators was armed with more than bear spray and an occasional baseball bat. We know that Democrats feverishly politicized the tragic and violent events of that day to undermine the credibility of any official investigation. The Capitol Police remain mostly silent, misinformation is abundant. We are learning that the Capitol police had intelligence warning of the worst actors. Many of the facts remain in dispute, many of the perpetrators are now viewed by a large percentage of Americans as political prisoners. I fear that we may never have a credible official account of

what truly transpired. And that is the most tragic element of the event, aside from the death and injuries.

RM: Chuck Schumer, Nancy Pelosi, Joe Biden, and Mitch McConnell were all in Washington when you were there. What is your take on each of them?

KJ: First, I respect them all, as I do all members of Congress (to varying degrees - respect does not equal agreement). Nancy Pelosi usually has an iron grip on her caucus and legendary legislative skills, but she appears to have become captive of the most radical elements of her caucus today, the 95-member House Progressive Caucus. It must frustrate her. Sen. Schumer - and I hate to say this - is the worst Majority Leader in recent history. His appreciation for the history and culture of the Senate appears tepid at best, and he seems more interested in the politics than the substance of issues. He is always trying to push the envelope to push his caucus' agenda. I'm told that he has little ability to say "no" to his colleagues, which is both an art and essential skill of a floor leader. All floor leaders are largely political creatures but Sen. Schumer is deeply consumed by the acquisition and maintenance of political power for his party. He would jettison many of the long-standing rules if he could to advance his "agenda." Only a handful of Democrats seem to be reigning him in.

Sen. McConnell, on the other hand, whom I have known for 30 years is the most effective leader of the Senate, minority or majority, in my lifetime. He reveres and protects the institution, respects and honors the history of the Senate, all while expertly advancing his agenda. He guesses wrong on the politics sometimes, and yes, he famously broke with Donald Trump over January 6th. But his legislative mastery is legendary, and deservedly so.

RM: I met Jim Inhofe a few weeks ago and was impressed. He was elected during the famous 1994 election that was so favorable for Republicans. I cast my first ballot for him in that election. What was he like to work with early in his Senate career?

KJ: I never worked with him in the US Senate per se, other than as Secretary of the Senate, but I was proud to work closely with him during his first races for the US House (1986) and the Senate (1994). I traveled extensively with him during the final month of the latter campaign, when he flipped a 12-point polling deficit into a 13-point victory that November. It was astounding and was the definitive election that officially turned Oklahoma from a Democratic to a Republican state. A lot of people thought he would not be a good Senator, given the perception of him as a conservative "bomb thrower," but he is highly and widely respected as a serious and substantive legislator and author, both on environmental issues and now national defense concerns. He works well with his colleagues from both parties. He is now the longest-serving Republican Senator in Oklahoma history.

RM: What is the filibuster and why is it such a big deal?

KJ: The "filibuster" has evolved over time, but essentially it means the three-fifths supermajority requirement under the rules to end debate and force a final vote on most legislative items. There are exceptions, including budget votes under the 1974 Budget Act and, now, the executive branch and judicial nominations. A supermajority requirement to end debate and bring a matter to a close has been the Senate's custom, if not its rules, since 1804. Then-Vice President Aaron Burr persuaded Senators to eliminate the motion for "the previous question" which only required a majority vote to stop amendments and bring a bill to a final vote. That motion is still part of the House rules. It is a big deal for a few reasons. First, Senate has long preserved the ability for full and open debate, and for all Senators to be heard. Rule XXII protects the ability for every senator to be heard at least twice on any matter before debate can be ended. Second, the filibuster is part of the Senate's "purpose" to cool the passions of the day and distinguish itself from the majoritarian House by protecting "minority" rights. Lastly, it forces bipartisan compromise on major legislative issues and protects politics and partisanship from running roughshod over Congress.

RM: The mid-term elections are coming in 2022. What should Republicans expect at the local, state, and federal levels?

KJ: It is way too early to tell, but the President's and his party's polling descent is almost unprecedented and almost impossible to win back. Events in Afghanistan began the slide but have only been confirmed by the onerous vaccine and school mask mandates and his surrender to the most extreme elements of his party. The gubernatorial elections in Virginia and New Jersey are instructive - both Republicans were trailing by double digits as recently as August, and we now know what happened - they exceeded expectations, even dramatically, thanks to a massive shift of suburban Republicans back to their party, coupled with independents. I see no reason to believe that things will change, but a year is a couple of lifetimes in politics, and Republicans must be careful not to overplay their hand.

RM: The GOP has always been a large tent. How do the Bush Republicans and the Trump Republicans find common ground and move forward together in advancing conservative platforms?

KJ: Republicans have long struggled with the notion of a "big tent," which derives from the late GOP national chairman and longtime political consultant, Lee Atwater, in reference to George H. W. Bush's successful presidential win in 1988. The big tent failed them in 1964 with Barry Goldwater, but Ronald Reagan was able to make it work mostly in opposition to failed Democratic policies and politicians (e.g., Jimmy Carter). Virginia GOP gubernatorial nominee (winner?) Glenn Youngkin was able to unite both pro-Trump and anti-Trump Republicans, along

with fickle independent voters over issues that mobilized voters, like education and crime. An anti-Biden sentiment, given his mismanagement of foreign policy, the economy, and overall weakness was also a factor. Republicans are very good (as are Democrats) at unifying in opposition. 2022 and perhaps 2024 will prove no different.

Review of “Collapse”

July 19, 2021

Here I will review the fourth book in Kurt Schlichter’s series of Kelly Turnbull political action novels. You can read my reviews of the first book here ([Review of “People’s Republic”](#)), of the second book here ([Review of “Indian Country”](#)), and of the third book here ([Review of “Wildfire”](#)). Written in 2019, the fourth book in the series is “Collapse” and follows up on the events in “Wildfire.” Written out of order for the chronology of events, the order of events is “Indian Country,” “People’s Republic,” “Wildfire,” and “Collapse.” All of the books are set in a future where there is a civil war in the United States and the nation splits into two countries along political lines. The People’s Republic is the country formed out of leftist ideology.

Fittingly, “Collapse” opens with Barack Obama Freeway in Oahu, HI, PR, a looming threat from communist China, and Mazie Hirono Road. In the United States, the Thirty-Second Amendment requires US military service of two years by the age of 30 in order to earn citizenship, voting rights, and the ability to hold public office. Senator Nick Searcy is a leader in the Conservative Party, which is more conservative than the Republican Party, and the US Vice-President is Ric Grinnell.

There is a high-stakes race to disable a key aircraft carrier and a cool Supermax prison in Colorado. There is also a little “Glengarry Glen Ross” reference, which is the hallmark of a good book. Turnbull’s early adventures take him to Tijuana, San Diego, and the San Diego Zoo which no longer holds animals.

Once again writing prophetically in 2019 (given the recent liberal response to the COVID pandemic), Schlichter set a scene where a woman coughs on a bus and gets kicked off by a People’s Security Force officer when another woman screams “Health criminal! Health crime!” (p. 91). There is Jimmy Carter People’s Navy Base, Camp Rashida Talib, Antifa Monument, a glimpse into the realities of calling up reservists, The Gavin Newsom Freeway, Old Camp Pendleton in San Diego, and SoFi Stadium having turned into Maxine Waters Pavilion of Social Justice. There is also the Conservative Party congresswoman from PA Taylor Swift, Prime Minister of Sweden for Life Greta Thunberg, and perhaps my favorite character of the series so far, Ross Warren the demolition man.

The details of the Charlie Company, 5th Battalion, 327th Parachute Infantry were stunning. Schlichter provides a vivid description of the sensory experience of being a paratrooper preparing to drop into combat and the experience of doing so.

Also prophetic given the recent public school, school board, and parent conflicts across the nation this past year over COVID protocols and Critical Race Theory indoctrination, Schlichter wrote of a teacher in the People’s Republic “She had learned that slogan at a recent teacher’s workshop. Her school did not actually have classes anymore – every day was a workshop about combatting privilege or economic fairness or the need to stamp out gender boundaries” (p. 242)

There is a dramatic battle towards the end of the book that takes characters with whom the readers have become attached and shows the brutality of war and how the good guys don't always make it home. I won't give anything away, but the last few chapters were edge-of-your-seat-can't-put-it-down exciting with an extremely satisfying ending.

As characteristic of Schlichter's fiction writing there are no wasted words, no wasted time, and no superfluous character development or unnecessary exploration of feelings and emotions. Every word has a purpose and every word fulfills its mission.

The Turnbull books aren't for everyone. I can easily picture Bill Kristol crying while reading "Collapse," traumatized by the violence, wiping away his tears and being emotionally moved to sign up for citizenship with the People's Republic while empathetic to Martin Rios-Parkinson's character. I look forward to fact checkers determining that last statement as true, as with the next one: "Crisis" is another home run for Kurt Schlichter in the Kelly Turnbull series.

His new book "The Split" comes out this week on July 22nd, 2021.

Review of “Wildfire”

July 5, 2021

Here I will review the third book in Kurt Schlichter’s series of Kelly Turnbull political action novels. You can read my reviews of the first book here ([Review of “People’s Republic”](#)) and of the second book here ([Review of “Indian Country”](#)). Written in 2018, the third book in the series is “Wildfire” and follows up on the events in “People’s Republic,” with “Indian Country” having been a prequel to “People’s Republic.”

“Wildfire” opens with Turnbull in Putin’s Russia in the year 2035, doing a deal with the organization that has replaced the KGB, now the FSB. After much action, we quickly learn that Wildfire is a Soviet virus bioweapon called Marburg X that is designed to be highly infectious and to tear a society apart both by the infection and the fear of it. A communist country developing a highly contagious virus to destroy other nations sounds familiar doesn’t it? Once again, Schlichter shows his prescience in writing fictional events.

In a key early scene in Mexico City, old enemies resurface. We also learn that Washington, DC in the new People’s Republic was renamed as Capital City. There is a Maxine Waters Airport and radio giant Larry O’Connor has fled to Texas in the United States, and broadcasts back into the People’s Republic on Radio Free America. People’s Republic President De Blasio works in Trump Tower in New York City and the Vice-President works in the former White House in Capital City, PR. The People’s Intelligence Agency is housed in the old CIA building in Capital City.

Schlichter is frighteningly prescient again with Eric Swalwell’s call for a nuclear strike on an American city, which seemed far-fetched until President Biden made his remarks recently in the real world. It is a sober reminder of the reality of so much of what these novels present as a potential trajectory for America. As always, I am praying we don’t follow the People’s Republic path. This path has the Pentagon overrun with a colony of violent former criminals and vagrants and Arlington National Cemetery as a landfill.

One catalyst to the People’s Republic pathway is restricting citizen’s rights to own firearms. My favorite Turnbull quote from a key scene is: “Wonderful. This is what a disarmed populace looked like. Living in fear of the biggest and strongest” (p. 263).

As expected in a Turnbull novel, there is a great deal of combat, tactical detail, fighting, and shooting. In this one, there is also a little bit of cannibalism. Schlichter improves his fiction writing skills with each novel, and “Wildfire” has a greater development of characters (more emotional depth, within the context of a soldier who plays his cards very close to the vest) than the first two. There is also a benefit of recurring characters for Turnbull to develop a history with allies and rivals. This makes readers strongly invested in the success and potential failure of every calculated decision the hero makes to survive and save the world.

Overall, I enjoyed reading “Wildfire” and look forward to reading the next book in the series, “Collapse”.

“Social Injustice”

July 2, 2021

Social justice is in vogue these days with mainstream culture. Here I discuss some examples of social injustice that should outrage all Americans. Each of these examples illustrates unfairness.

New York City recently counted 135,000 fake votes by mistake in an election. Hillary Clinton still says the 2016 election was stolen from her. How are we supposed to trust our elections when so many errors occur? All we want are fair elections. All conservatives ever ask for is a fair fight.

People present in the Capitol on January 6th are not receiving the normal treatment from the Washington, D.C. or Federal courts. Normally, those who are arrested for protesting in the Capitol (such as Jane Fonda) receive a standard \$50 fine, an arrest record, and no conviction record. For those on January 6th, it is different. Here is an example. A 2018 protester who was arrested from the Senate gallery for screaming during the Kavanaugh vote got the \$50 fine and no jail. In contrast, Anna Morgan-Lloyd entered the Capitol on January 6th, caused no damage, spent 10 minutes in the building in a hallway before leaving on her own, and was arrested and jailed for two days before her trial. This resulted in three years of probation with restrictions on firearms, travel, and mandated check-ins with a probation officer. Ashli Babbitt was shot by law enforcement for calmly climbing through a broken window with no justice for her death. Hillary Clinton violated an FBI warrant by destroying evidence with no recourse.

We have concluded Pride month, so my Microsoft-mandated Pride month wallpaper has changed back to normal, as have all of the festive corporate logos. I find it bizarre that so many corporations are comfortable virtual-signaling their solidarity on a sexual issue. I find it inappropriate for children to be bombarded with sexualization of any variety. For any social issue, there is a substantial difference between tolerance, acceptance, support, and full-blown promotion. Parents should choose when and how to discuss sexual issues with their children.

Speaking of children, at what point did our society decide it is acceptable to murder children? I have only read the Bible a few times, but I don't recall anything that says it is acceptable to do that and I remember a lot that says it is not. If someone is not religious, I guess the argument that a fetus lacks awareness is the same as shooting an inconvenient adult house guest in their sleep because they are unaware of it.

I find it ironic that conservative people of color are being driven from many churches and universities because of the forced opinions of non-people of color on how to be a person of color. A white person telling a person of color how to be a person of color because they know better than the person of color sounds like true white supremacy to me, and is quite condescending. I suspect that Larry Elder agrees with me on this, but you will have to ask him yourself.

Critical Race Theory still teaches people to discriminate based on race and is still Marxist. Purchase my new book "Implicit Biases and the Unconscious: Liberal Biases, Racial Prejudice, and Politics". It's your tool to fight Critical Race Theory.

Review of “The Man Who Killed Kennedy”

April 16, 2021

People have a general fascination with conspiracies and palace intrigue. As Dan McAdams (2006) pointed out, people also gravitate toward a narrative of redemption. The only thing people like more than watching someone fall from grace is watching them climb back to the top. By all counts, Roger Stone’s “The Man Who Killed Kennedy: The Case Against LBJ” fulfills the desires for conspiracies, palace intrigue, and a fall from grace. While redemption is certainly not in the cards for Lyndon Johnson (LBJ) or John Kennedy (JFK), an unexpected redemption does take place with the portrayal of the misunderstood, good at heart, and always under attack Richard Nixon.

When I worked in a maximum-security prison, I could count on the inmates lying to me at least 70% of the time and telling the truth at best 30% of the time. A problem came when they told the truth, because no one believed them. Political strategist Roger Stone is a seasoned member of the political world, and his task was to sort through the information provided at different times by shady characters and to create a coherent narrative. He has done that well. Once you realize that Stone 1) provides verifiable information that you might want to follow up on, and 2) he fills in the gaps with some of his personal knowledge from his political experience, then you will recognize the plausibility of his argument that Lyndon Johnson orchestrated the assassination of John Kennedy. At the very least, the book is interesting and entertaining for every single page.

Early in the book, Stone tells of a drunken Richard Nixon offering his veiled insights into LBJ’s role in the assassination. He also outlined LBJ’s general vulgarity and the famous Box 13 scandal where LBJ magically found enough votes to win the 1948 Senate election with a little help from his shady friends. John and Robert Kennedy’s father had been highly involved with the mob, and helped secure John Kennedy’s election with Chicago votes. Robert Kennedy aggressively pursued destroying organized crime as well as taking down LBJ. All of this serves to connect some of the major players and to establish joint motives within the conspiracy.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover allegedly blackmailed people with great frequency and had his role minimized during Robert Kennedy’s term as Attorney General. The book suggested that LBJ used the CIA and the Mafia to have JFK killed and blamed Cuba as cover. Both Cuba and the KGB reports showed they believed LBJ did it and Barry Goldwater believed it as well. Stone alleged that George H. W. Bush, H. L. Hunt and Clint Murchison were involved.

The CIA had previously attempted to assassinate Fidel Castro using the mob. Stone offered his take on what had happened in the Watergate Scandal and its relation to the Kennedy assassination. He also described an interesting connection between Gerald Ford and the FBI during Ford’s time on the Warren Commission. Additionally, LBJ was known to have heavily promoted Bell Helicopter contracts for his personal financial gain.

In an interesting insight that speaks to motive, John Kennedy was going to replace LBJ for the next presidential ticket, possibly with Terry Sanford. John Kennedy had courted big oil money in his election and when elected then went against the oil depletion tax at the beginning of his term, a move that would harm big oil (a staple in Texas, where LBJ was from and financially invested). LBJ's mistress Madeleine Brown worked at Jack Ruby's club, and Jack Ruby killed Lee Harvey Oswald.

Malcolm Wallace was a hit man who allegedly killed department of agriculture inspector Henry A. Marshall for LBJ. John Kennedy's assassination day parade route was changed to go past the Texas Book Depository at the last minute, with the sharp turns included to help them route to the Trade Mart. John Kennedy joked the day before his assassination about being assassinated. Richard Nixon was in Dallas the day before the assassination, and Bill Moyers ordered the top of the car removed the day of the shooting. Ultimately, the oath of office that took place on the day of the assassination with Jackie Kennedy looking on now seems more like LBJ as Scar from the movie *The Lion King*.

Stone also proposed evidence that the CIA developed Oswald to take the fall and the mob used Ruby to silence him. Interestingly, Prescott Bush pushed for Nixon to have his son George H. W. Bush as the Vice-Presidential Candidate in 1968, and ultimately George H. W. Bush became Director of the CIA. There was an exploration of the conspiracy theories surrounding the assassination of Robert Kennedy, such as the famous woman in the dress, the role and position of a security guard, and whether there were 8 versus 13 shots fired.

Stone criticized Bill O'Reilly's "Killing Kennedy" for neglecting important facts that implicate LBJ's questionable actions. Of course, Bill O'Reilly's book series is based on only presenting verified facts. That doesn't mean that what Mr. Stone presented is not verified, but rather that Mr. O'Reilly likely did not deem them sufficiently verified to include them in his book. That is part of the appeal of Mr. Stone's book, that it explores other potential scenarios for which there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence. Indeed, Stone masterfully lays out the argument for Lyndon Johnson's guilt.

Three final interesting events discussed were Operation Northwoods, the USS Liberty, and the Victorio Peak Gold heist. Operation Northwoods was a proposed CIA operation that would have the U.S. government engaging in real or falsified acts and blaming them on Cuba to justify a war with Cuba. The proposed acts included blowing up a U. S. ship, shooting down a U. S. plane, and sinking boats of Cuban refugees, all to be secretly carried out at the direction of the U. S. government and blamed on Cuba. Stone alleged that Johnson arranged to have Israel attack the USS Liberty in 1967 to blame Egypt and justify going to war with Nasser in Egypt. He accused LBJ of being responsible for 51 deaths in his lifetime, resulting from his arranged 17 murders and the 34 servicemen who died on the USS Liberty. Lastly was the Victorio Peak gold heist, where he accused LBJ of allegedly stealing hidden gold from government land at Victorio Peak in New Mexico.

How much of the book is true? Stone is forced to rely on death bed confessions and hearsay from the dark corners of the political sphere. Still, the unified theme from their recalled details, combined with verifiable evidence in archived, public parts of the investigation lead me to believe that much of what Mr. Stone has put together has merit. What I do know is that the book was worth buying, worth reading, and I was intellectually engaged every minute that I read it. Who better to guide us through the dark side of politics than Roger Stone? He's a man I fully trust to know every inch of the underbelly of politics and to shine light on things that we may not want to see. I thank him for putting together information in a way in which no one else has had the courage.

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“One Year Anniversary of This Blog”

February 26, 2021

On February 28th, 2020, I launched this blog. I was tired of being censored writing for other people’s platforms. I launched this blog on my existing website to let me write about important topics in a timely manner that would not be delayed, watered down, or blocked by editors. It was a pivotal decision as I would face much censorship from editors and social media platforms during the course of the election season and beyond. My website articles and podcast are an important means through which I can communicate directly with my audience.

For this one-year anniversary, I selected my three favorite articles from the past 12 months. They are listed in order of my preference. If you haven’t read them, check them out.

[Review of “Militant Normals”, September 16, 2020](#)

[What The New York Times and CNN Didn’t Tell You About What I Said, October 30, 2020](#)

[The Psychology of Quarantine: Social Media to the Rescue! March 14, 2020](#)

This is the thirty-third article that I have written exclusively for my website. Coming up soon I will do a podcast to reflect on one year of my [podcast](#), which began on March 9, 2020. When I started these, I had no idea that the pandemic was coming or would impact our lives the way that it has.

As always, I am humbled that people take time from their day to read, listen to, and view what I have created. I thank all of you very much from the bottom of my heart.

“A View From the Front Line of Welfare”

February 24, 2021

There are many conservatives who work in mental health as counselors, therapists, and social workers. Outnumbered by liberal ideology, they are men and women who go to work each day to help others. In doing so they often find new rules of behavior and an increasingly oppressive infiltration of progressive ideology that condemns conservative viewpoints. Additionally, they are uniquely positioned to see the failings of many government welfare programs.

Here I interview one of those conservatives on the front line of social work. Due to concerns about employment, he is presented anonymously here. His words are his own, not mine. But his perspective is interesting and worth hearing. Here is my interview with him.

Q: Given that you are politically outnumbered in your discipline, please reveal as much or as little as you wish to disclose about yourself in answering these questions. What are some of your notable work experiences? Have you served in the military or law enforcement?

A: I served in the Navy for 4 years, from 1991-1995, with 2 Persian Gulf tours on warships. I also am a retired police officer, with 17.3 years of service. I have also worked for HHSC (welfare office) and the social security administration.

Q: What is your political affiliation? Who did you vote for during the past several presidential elections?

A: Republican, I have voted for the Republican candidate every time, with the last exception being when Ross Perot ran as an independent in 1992. I voted for Perot that time.

Q: What are the general politics of your co-workers? What about the politics of the people you serve?

A: I would think 80+% are Republican...as for SSI recipients that I currently serve and the welfare people I used to serve, I would think 90% democrats. Many of them are long time benefit recipients, often going back 3 or more generations. I do not count retirees on SSA benefits, that is not considered a social program like SSI is, since they paid into the program for at least 10 years to be able to collect on it.

Q: How have politics infused the work of some of these jobs?

A: We are not allowed to talk about ANY political candidate at work, to co-workers, or the public, nor can we support them on social media if our page mentions our job. (Hatch Act regulates this.) Also, policies tend to change depending on what party controls politics...i.e. we will likely soon see a shift in benefits that illegal aliens are allowed to receive.

Q: Have you encountered any situations where conservative political views were discouraged and progressive views are encouraged?

A: Yes, we are forced to do some work tasks such as name change for a same sex couple, or a sex change on a person, even though it is against our political/religious views. I have also been

told to not criticize a Democratic Senator (Pelosi), as federal employees are told to support them. I was threatened with disciplinary action if I made further comments.

Q: What changes in the political dynamics of the workplace have you seen over time?

A: None that I can think of.

Q: What advice do you have for conservatives who are entering a job in social work?

A: Stay out of it--common sense is not used, and it is discouraging to see people getting money from the government that they do not deserve.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

A: In reality, I think most people in jobs like mine don't think that a lot of the people on benefits deserve them, but we have to follow policies, not common sense. We really just do what we have to do to keep our jobs, even though we don't agree with it. Case in point, I worked a Medicaid case where the lady lived in a \$500k house, drove a brand new, paid for Cadillac Escalade, got \$4,000 per month in child support...but both her kids qualified for CHIP, since child support does not count as income, and resources are not looked at. So, I was making \$28,000 per year working there, but had to pay for insurance for myself and my child, but she got it free. Very disheartening! It is the type of job that you don't necessarily get on purpose, a lot of people just "fell into" a job there.

“Goodbye, Mr. Limbaugh”

February 17, 2020

For a few months of the pandemic of 2020, I got to spend my lunch hour listening to Rush Limbaugh on the same old radio I had listened to him on two decades earlier. From his television show to his radio show and even his podcasts, I have spent many years being entertained and taught by the talent on loan from God. Whether listening in my car or on my phone, I have enjoyed every minute of it.

I have written previously about Rush Limbaugh in the following articles:

[Review of “Talk Radio’s America”](#)

[The Landscape and Recent History of Conservative Media in the United States](#)

[God and Man on AM Radio](#)

I will miss his down to earth, passionate conservative commentary and the way that he was unyielding in the face of criticism. He gave conservatives strength even through the small things. I remember one of his shows where he was talking about himself (imagine that...). He said that people were under the impression that he got mobbed and harassed everywhere he went by angry liberals and that he couldn’t go to dinner with his wife. He said that wasn’t true, and that he was never approached or bothered by anyone in public. I thought if Rush Limbaugh isn’t harassed at dinner, then The Conservative Social Psychologist will never be bothered at dinner for being a conservative. Then I found the courage to step back into the fight for conservative values, outnumbered as usual but full of resolve. I would not be the outspoken conservative that I am without Rush Limbaugh’s example, inspiration, and stoicism.

Last year, I wrote to Mr. Limbaugh at a time when he was suffering but said that he still read every letter that came to him. So, this evening as I say a prayer of thanks for his influence and comfort for his family, I like to think that he read my letter. Goodbye, Mr. Limbaugh. I will miss you every day at lunch.

Letter to Rush Limbaugh 3-23-2020

I started watching your old TV show as a sophomore in high school in 1992 and have listened to your radio show for many years. You have given conservatives across the nation a powerful voice. I am alone in my field as a conservative professor and I write for Psychology Today as The Conservative Social Psychologist. I appreciate that you go on air and fight for us. I pray for your recovery and I thank you for your years of work on our behalf.

Review of “Indian Country”

February 14, 2021

Recently I have been reading the Kelly Turnbull political action novels by Kurt Schlichter. You can read my review of the first book here ([Review of “People’s Republic”](#)). Written in 2017, the second book in the series is “Indian Country” and is a prequel to “People’s Republic.” “Indian Country” begins in Baghdad in 2022 with an exciting terrorist hunt, and then changes the setting to Indiana, where Southern Indiana was preparing to secede from the People’s Republic (PR). Indiana was part of the People’s Republic after the United States split into the Red USA and the Blue People’s Republic of North America. All of Indiana had gone to the PR with the Treaty of St. Louis.

Captain Turnbull returns with his Wilson Combat 1911A1 .45 in this action thriller where the nation is divided into two after Hillary Clinton’s election as President in 2020. In this alternative USA, the Army base at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, is where people earn the right to vote and hold office during U. S. Army Basic Combat Training. Writing in 2017, Schlichter was quite prescient. For example, Indian Country had Kanye running as a third-party presidential candidate in 2020, a vicious People’s Volunteers paramilitary group of thugs that sounded quite a bit like Antifa, and a \$19 an hour minimum wage in the PR. Additionally, Schlichter mentioned an absurd concept that now exists—that of an animal psychologist who connects with animal feelings. PR President Elizabeth Warren’s progressive policies turned the People’s Republic into the dystopia that you might expect.

The book follows Turnbull’s insurgency in Jasper, Indiana, with the goal of making the town ungovernable so that the U.S. can negotiate for this Red patch of land in Blue territory. The showdown with People’s Volunteers at end of Chapter 5 was a masterful, suspenseful scene pushing all of the right buttons of drama and persuasion, all while set in the middle of a PSYOP. One of my favorite characters was Pastor Bellman, who prefers Amazing Grace to new songs with bass guitars and drummers. Two other endearing characters were Larry Langer, the local bad boy, and Ted Cannon, a Dubois County Sherriff’s Deputy. The book builds to a final showdown between Turnbull and his former mentor, Colonel Jeff Deloitte.

Schlichter employs an effective literary tactic of changing perspective, where he explores the battle strategies and characters from both perspectives. Given the level of strategic detail that he writes into his battle scenes, this makes the novel incredibly engaging to a detail-oriented reader. As usual, the battle scenes were intense, detailed, and an unpleasant look at the unpleasant business of warfare. My favorite line was Larry Langer’s “Damn, that is messed up.”

With more background and character development than “People’s Republic,” “Indian Country” takes the series to the next level of writing and leaves me looking forward to the next book in the series, which is “Wildfire.” Now that they are in the business of filmmaking, I encourage “The Daily Wire” to make the Kelly Turnbull novels into a series of films!

“The Latest Informational Operation Against Conservatives”

January 10, 2021

Managing information is key to political power, and the Democrats have struck a mighty blow for that this past weekend. Let's look at an outline of events.

2016: Maxine Waters calls for conservatives to be harassed in public, calls for impeachment over false Russian Collusion

Early 2020: House impeaches president over a phone call with a brief request to investigate alleged Hunter Biden crimes

Mid-2020: Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez [calls for a list](#) of conservatives who have supported the president to be archived for harassment

Mid-2020: Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube suppress stories about Hunter Biden and flag most of the president's posts

Late 2020: Trump attempts to repeal Section 230, which would force different regulations for Big Tech Social Media companies such as Twitter and Facebook.

Late 2020: Biden [appoints Big Tech people](#) to transition team

This week, early 2021: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube ban a sitting president over Capitol riots claiming they were organized on Parler

This week, early 2021: Facebook sanctions 500,000 users for conservative content with a particular hashtag

This week, early 2021: Twitter and Facebook lose users, Parler jumps to #1 in the Apple Store

This week, early 2021: Apple and Google ban Parler from their app stores, knocking Parler off of iPhone and Android devices.

This week, early 2021: Amazon drops Parler servers, forcing Parler to go offline

This week, early 2021: Pelosi calls for impeachment again

The big players in this conservative social media blackout are publicly traded companies.

According to OpenSecrets.org:

--In 2020, 95.49% of Apple's employee donations to federal candidates went to Democrats (\$5,721,210) versus 4.51% to Republicans (\$270,470)

--In 2020, 88.61% of Facebook's employee donations to federal candidates went to Democrats (\$5,964,122) versus to the 11.39% that went to Republicans (\$766,608)

--Google did not report their data after 2014. In 2014, they had 60.28% (\$1,026,669) of employee donations to federal candidates going to Democrats and 39.72% (\$676,457) going to Republicans. However, much has likely changed with their political donations since 2014.

--In 2020, 85.82% of Amazon's employee donations to federal candidates went to Democrats (\$7,339,821) versus 14.18% to Republicans (\$1,212,871).

These actions are clearly designed to destroy the ability of conservatives to share ideas with each other and the rest of the world. It is a powerful blow against free speech from a monopoly. As we know, attitudes of citizens are manipulated by politicians. Sometimes it is in hopes of persuading them to something good, sometimes it is in the hopes of persuading them to something that is in the politician's best interests. However, the actions of Big Tech to silence

conservatives by shutting down their competitor (Parler) and silencing a sitting president (President Trump) are the worst actions I have seen in politics. The complicity of the mainstream media and the Biden administration in these events fan the flames of division. The brazenness of the Democrat Leadership to attempt to impeach the president this week pokes the eyes of half of the country.

I watched two grown men fight over the last CO2 pellet gun at the store on Friday because they were so scared that they needed something to defend their families, even something that would prove to be ineffective to do so. Big Tech wants to break the backs of conservatives by banding together as gatekeepers and shutting down our communications. Let's hope that free speech and free markets ultimately win the day.

Here is what I wrote in [Big Tech's Role in the DNC's Informational Operation](#) on November 18, 2020

Review of "People's Republic"

December 20, 2020

"People's Republic" is the first book in the Kelly Turnbull political fiction series by Kurt Schlichter. It is an action-packed adventure that stands alone as an action novel, but touches off a neural network of political history to readers who are knowledgeable about current politics and history. The novel is set in a time when the United States of America had split into liberal and conservative nations. The People's Republic of North America (PRNA) held the coastal cities and some other areas for the liberals (Blues), while the United States of America held "flyover country" with the capitol in Dallas, Texas. Featuring details familiar to me early on like a Dallas ranch, a Glock 19, and Shiner Bock, I found the book very comfortable from my perspective. There is quite a bit of violence, with each incident outlined in great detail. The hero, Kelly Turnbull, is an ex-military soldier-for-hire within the USA, tasked to retrieve an asset from Los Angeles deep in the PRNA.

One of the great strengths of this novel is Schlichter's ability to attend to detail. In describing Turnbull's plans and strategies it is written from the experience of a combat veteran. The author slips in many subtle reasons behind each dystopian detail, answering exactly the questions I ask in my mind with the subsequent sentences. These details are written with the eye of an operations/supply chain expert. All of this leads up to the heart pumping final showdown scene.

Though it may have seemed far-fetched fiction in 2016 when the book was published, it seems more realistic in 2020. It is easy for many in the USA to forget how realistic much of the novel is, and how many other countries are similar to how the PRNA is described. The dynamic of the USA and PRNA is similar to that of what happened in East and West Germany, a fact which is likely not lost on the author who served the U. S. Army from there. Recently, it is illegal for citizens to celebrate Christmas in North Korea, Cuba, and Somalia. That's just one example of multiple places where government intrudes on liberty.

The book is gritty and intense, like what we face as a nation at this moment in time. It is not overly graphic in its violence. Though it talks about secession and a split nation, its lesson is to heed the warning and fix our problems now to avoid the brutality of a civil war. This type of warning is common among dystopian novels. Aldous Huxley did not want to see "Brave New World" come to fruition and George Orwell didn't want to live on "Animal Farm" or in "Nineteen Eight-Four". It is unfair to criticize Schlichter for writing these dystopian novels with the untrue assertion that he wants or promotes civil war. The books serve two purposes. First, "People's Republic" is a literary bellwether of what to expect if we let our guard down as a society. Second, it's just a damn fun, kick ass book to read.

Former "neo-conservative" Swamp cheerleader and RINO super booster Bill Kristol has commented on what he called "the appalling books of Kurt Schlichter". As I read "People's Republic", waiting for the appalling part to drop, I could feel the exact moment in the book that Bill Kristol became appalled. I suspect that he threw up when he read page 23. The book is not

for the faint of heart. But if you are a conservative, if you like the action of “Die Hard” movies, and if you like to read, “People’s Republic” will be very entertaining.

Review of “One Vote Away”

December 6, 2020

A U. S. Senator from Texas, Ted Cruz went to Harvard Law School and clerked for Chief Justice William Rehnquist at the U. S. Supreme Court. He also served as Solicitor General of Texas and taught U. S. Supreme Court litigation at the University of Texas School of Law in Austin, TX. He is the host of the podcast “Verdict”. His book [“One Vote Away: How a Supreme Court Seat Can Change History”](#) is a fascinating look at the Supreme Court through the eyes of one of the smartest men in American politics.

In “One Vote Away”, Cruz discusses pivotal Supreme Court cases about religious liberty, school choice, gun rights, sovereignty, abortion, free speech, capital punishment, and elections. All of these involve cases with which he either argued to the court or made the case for an accompanying law in the Senate. The book is framed around cases that were decided with a 5-4 vote, illustrating the importance of electing a President and Senators who confirm justices that align with a voter’s values. His writing style is easy to follow and for me this book was an update to the constitutional law class that I took several decades ago from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Missouri. These issues are critical and the cases themselves, legal context of the precedents, and his intimate knowledge of the players involved and their motives makes this a real-life political thriller.

Cruz was my Solicitor General when I lived in Texas, so this book brought to life many of the cases that I remember him litigating at the time and provides a behind the scenes tour into how and why he handled them the way he did. For example, in 2003 several Texas Democrats fled Austin to hide out in a Holiday Inn in Ardmore, Oklahoma to prevent quorum and avoid a vote on redistricting. Cruz gave his insights into that event.

Relevant to the post-2020 election months, he outlines the 2000 Bush-Gore case that litigated the selection of a president. In that case, the U. S. Supreme Court was unhappy that the Florida Supreme Court reissued its original decision without acknowledging that the U. S. Supreme Court vacated its original decision with a 9-0 vote. Such is the clash of egos among federal courts. The delay of the election results also delayed his marriage proposal to his future wife.

Most interesting was the insight into his courtroom tactics and persuasion strategies. Cruz discussed his own unique debate style and detailed his leadership of strategy in the Senate confirmation hearings of Justice Brett Kavanaugh. He also mixed in some humor, such as returning to his law class at the University of Texas and explaining to his class that he was the litigator who put Justice Ginsburg to sleep.

Cruz gave his assessment of each of the Republican Supreme Court Justice selections of the past 75 years. His book is a tour through the psychology of group processes, decision making, and persuasion and gives readers a front row seat into his courtroom strategy and tactics. Cruz is the most relevant, consequential, ideologically fundamental, principled conservative of my generation. I voted for Cruz in the 2016 Oklahoma Presidential Primary, and I look forward to

voting for him for President again in the future. "One Vote Away" is an excellent book for any student of American law and politics.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with Kurt Schlichter, author of “Crisis”

December 2, 2020

Kurt Schlichter’s new book [“Crisis”](#) is his fifth novel in the Kelly Turnbull fiction series. Schlichter, who is known for his [Townhall.com](#) column, “Unredacted” podcast, “Fighting Words” podcast, non-fiction books about politics, and generally bad ass-ery, has developed this series of novels to fill the void of entertainment for conservatives given Hollywood’s prominent liberal slant. The author is a retired Army Infantry colonel, protégé of Andrew Breitbart, and a Los Angeles trial lawyer. Perhaps his most noteworthy professional accomplishment was making my phone autocorrect words to “ahoy”, which means the rhetoric of his articles violated my smart phone’s safe space.

I had the opportunity to interview Colonel Schlichter about “Crisis” and his Turnbull series. I plan to start the [Turnbull Series](#) by reading [“People’s Republic”](#) first. One thing I can guarantee is that this series is highly entertaining with an edge, like the rest of Colonel Schlichter’s work. Be sure to read his non-fiction books [“Militant Normals”](#) and [“The 21 Biggest Lies About Donald Trump \(and You!\)”](#).

Here is our discussion.

RM: What was Andrew Breitbart’s observation about the need for conservative entertainment and how did it influence you to write this series?

KS: Andrew pointed out that conservative can't just complain about how the industry is full of libs. We need to make our own content, but it needs to be good content. The message is secondary - you have to entertain!

RM: Who is Kelly Turnbull? What is a general overview of the series and character?

KS: Kelly Turnbull is the hero, a military guy who finds himself returning into blue America - it has split into red and blue nations - and carrying out missions among the leftist lunacy. Over the 5 books, the character has developed and now he's pretty distinctive - sullen, funny and violent.

RM: If someone is interested in reading “Crisis” but has not read the other four books, should they jump in with “Crisis” or start at the beginning?

KS: Either way - I'd read them chronologically but I don't think you have to. They jump around in time, mostly because I write the stories I feel like writing when I feel like writing them.

RM: As liberals continue to do strange, scary, and mildly amusing things, there have long been rumors that your Turnbull series is the playbook for the left. Do you think they read your series and then make their absurd moves or do you just know them well enough that you can create their absurdities as fiction before they happen?

KS: I started writing them in 2016 and I thought I was going overboard and being a bit wacky and all of a sudden these crazy things I'm writing - like misgendering being a felony - are coming true! I just take the current nuttiness to the next level - and reality is right on my heels.

RM: What is your favorite thing about writing this fiction series?

KS: I have fun writing them and readers have fun reading them. That's key - conservatism need not be bitter and boring. It's fun!

“President Trump’s Record on Science”

November 6, 2020

In October of 2020, I did an interview with Christoph Drosser for a German radio show about President Trump’s record on science. It was part of a very interesting episode with all other perspectives being from liberal scientists. Most of what I said in the interview didn’t make it into the program due to time constraints of a radio show. I enjoyed the full episode and if you get a chance, [listen to it here by following this link](#). The episode is in German (a German voice over for my part), but there is an article that accompanies it with a summary. Here is the full transcript of my interview.

CD: Do you feel like an exotic animal in the intellectual landscape of American universities?

RM: That’s funny! Yes, I do often feel like an exotic animal as a conservative in academia. When I was asked by an editor at Psychology Today to write a blog for them, I needed a title that I knew would be unique. At the time Jonathan Haidt was conducting empirical studies in search of conservatives in social psychology and finding none. So I outed myself and became “The Conservative Social Psychologist.” It was a terrifying experience in the beginning, and now I get e-mails from people all across the world either telling me that I’m great or that I’m terrible. Fortunately, being a scientist means that I am well-prepared to defend my ideas. If you’ve been to a scientific conference and see how we attack each other’s ideas, you will know what I mean. But yes, I do feel like a curiosity at times and I miss just doing science and teaching classes without politics being involved.

CD: Faculty in higher education in the US is predominantly liberal, especially in the humanities and social sciences, you are quoting a lot of studies that prove this. What do you think are the main reasons?

RM: I don’t think it is deliberate. I have been on and chaired many faculty hiring committees and politics are never evaluated. I know that there are studies that show faculty would discriminate against conservatives and many probably would. But I suspect it’s more of the principle of similarity. Once the academy tipped to be overwhelmingly liberal, the people drawn to it and hiring within it just had more in common with each other. I think that is the main driving force. My understanding is that 80 years ago, academia was predominantly conservative.

CD: Have you personally ever had bad experiences, being called out or bullied by colleagues or students for your conservative point of view?

RM: I haven’t had any experiences of being bullied or harassed. There can be occasionally awkward moments because everyone assumes I am a liberal so they speak more freely about politics around me, but nothing that has targeted me. In fact, I love working in a university. In general, faculty are actually deeply tolerant, empathetic people. People of many types are accepted at universities. Politics have become a more touchy subject lately, but what doesn’t make the news is every time a liberal professor just shrugs their shoulders when they find out a student is a conservative and says “OK.” I don’t want to diminish the negative experiences of conservative students on many campuses right now, but overall universities are wonderful

places. I also receive many correspondences from students across the nation who tell me about specific examples of pro-liberal/anti-conservative classroom rhetoric from professors that has nothing to do with the curriculum.

CD: In which way could a politically more balanced composition of faculty lead to “better science?”

RM: Mostly by providing different perspectives. I have always had colleagues who have me look over their work as a pre-review before submission for peer review. I now have several liberal colleagues who regularly run their work by me for my input on their hypotheses and framing of questions, specifically because I am a conservative. Working in the social sciences, it is easy to come up with a question to measure an attitude that makes sense to a liberal that doesn't fit with a conservative's way of thinking, or vice versa. It may be that it doesn't get construed in the way the researcher thinks it will. It's a new dimension to use to make sure we have reduced variance in the measure. My perspective isn't the definitive one, but we can talk about it and it can inform their work.

Another way it can lead to better science is that with more balance, politics will infiltrate the classroom less where it isn't relevant. With fewer political biases presented in class, the reputation of our universities will recover and be less politically polarizing. The overall reputation of our universities has consequences for science, since the experiences of the policy makers shape their stereotypes of scientists, affecting their willingness to listen.

CD: You teased me with the sentence "I am highly pleased with the President's work in most areas of his administration. I am not as pleased with the administration's support of science" – can you elaborate on that?

RM: The President's job requires balancing many things. In no particular order, maintaining freedoms, ensuring safety for citizens, growing the economy, and fighting for American interests at all times. I will assume that as a scientist, my views on what the President has accomplished outside of the realm of science are irrelevant to this discussion, but I am pleased with most of his policies (a few include eliminating multiple regulations to add a new Federal regulation, appointment of Federal judges and Supreme Court Justices, and leveling the playing field for free trade with other countries).

With regard to science, I think it is short sighted to allow for harvesting natural resources from protected federal land, I oppose selling off protected federal land, and I oppose the reduction of some of the regulations on clean air and water. Federally protected wetlands should remain federally protected as well.

CD: The trump administration replaced a lot of leaders of scientific government institutions with scientists or administrators from industry and lobbying groups that were very critical of these institutions. Do you agree with this policy?

RM: I certainly agree with changing up perspectives. The focus of the administration appears to be on incentivizing science and technology. Artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, 5G and rural internet, medicine—these are all worthy investments. Prioritizing science is tricky, because

scientists often find cross-disciplinary research to be crucial. Beyond that, it is short sighted to focus on applied research and ignore basic research (or vice versa). In the early 2000's, I was highly critical of President Bush for the policy of only funding applied research. As I said then, we will need basic research to push the applied research years from now. Prioritizing resources is one thing, but abandoning support for entire fields of research is another. Historically, Republicans do not do this well. I believe that one reason for this is that there are so few Republican scientists that the GOP doesn't have voices they will listen to. That is unfortunate, because I know plenty of liberal scientists who speak the truth about science and are not politically motivated. The GOP would be wise to listen to them. But much of it is perception.

CD: Regarding the president's attitude towards science, nowhere has it arguably been more consequential than in the coronavirus pandemic. Would you agree that the president ignored scientific advice and carries a big share of the responsibility for the infections getting out of hand?

RM: I do not agree with that at all. Right now, the Republicans have been highly critical of Trump for shutting down the economy and listening to Dr. Fauci. The Democrats have been highly critical of Trump for allowing things to carefully open back up with precautions. Which is it, did he listen to the scientists too much or not enough? From March through May, President Trump stood with a panel of scientists right in front of the cameras and spoke directly to the nation every single day. For his base, the briefings were disappointing oftentimes because he yielded the floor to the scientists and he allowed them to correct him when he misspoke. He asked the scientists if he was right at times and let them take questions when he didn't know the answer. He didn't hide anything from the citizens. It was the most transparent I have ever seen politics and science. We all got to watch the messy process of science play out as they referred to new studies, which refuted other studies, etc. The evidence was coming in and we saw it in real time. The criticism from Republicans is that you can't trust science, or the scientists, because they are all over the place. That's simply not true. There wasn't a body of scientific evidence for SARS-CoV2 from which to draw. We watched its creation in real time. That is phenomenal, and if you throw politics aside, science did a good job. We have a large, free nation and our rates of infection and death are not at the top of the leaderboard for nations. Love him or hate him, Dr. Fauci is a celebrity. Everyone knows who he is. That happened because President Trump let it happen, even encouraged it. Fauci had the leeway to say things, take them back, and go on every show in America to get direct questions. Four states make up a large number of the 200,000 tragic deaths in the U.S. Roughly 25,000 from New York, 15,000 from California, 15,000 from Florida, and 15,000 from Texas. That is roughly 1/3 of the deaths in the U. S. coming from three heavily populated states.

“What The New York Times and CNN Didn’t Tell You About What I Said”

October 30, 2020

Andrew Breitbart’s number 1 rule was “Don’t be afraid to go into enemy territory.” So I when extremely biased liberal outlets ask me for interviews, I generally agree. However, having been burned a few times on the national stage, I now insist on e-mail interviews when practical. Those give transparency and allow me to show what was really said, good or bad. It has helped me clear the record a few times, but what doesn’t get shown are the egregiously biased omissions from the legacy media. Since we are approaching election day, I thought I would share a few from this year.

The New York Times Interview (May 2020)

The questions revolved around the political polarization of the pandemic lockdown. Why do liberals support lockdowns and conservatives support restarting the economy? Do they value life differently? Do conservatives have more emphasis on the costs of the economic shutdown such as health? Here was my response.

“There are quite possibly two elements at play with the political polarization of the pandemic lockdown. First, liberals and conservatives have very different sets of moral foundations. According to Jonathan Haidt's research, liberals emphasize the moral foundations of harm/care and fairness/reciprocity, while conservatives emphasize harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. During the pandemic, both liberals and conservatives are likely to feel equal amounts of sadness and empathy for the extreme loss of life, but conservatives are more likely to place those emotions within the larger context of the economic shutdown. Second, many liberals and conservatives get their news from very different media sources and greatly distrust sources that do not align with their viewpoints. This is an outgrowth of the group polarization that has occurred in recent years. Fortunately, one value of a free press is that it accommodates many viewpoints and ideally one set of facts. The reconciliation point for liberals and conservatives will be to rally around fact-based objective truth reporting by major media outlets. That is the best chance to reduce group polarization.”

Of course, the NYT article ended up being a parade of liberal social psychologists explaining how Trump’s policies are bad (which would be irrelevant to the research data on human behavior, even if true, right?), Republicans are evil, and did not include a comment from the only conservative they chose to interview to balance the other 15 social scientists. There is irony in those editorial choices in light of the last three sentences of my response.

CNN Interview (October 2020)

The questions in this early October interview revolved around election anxiety. Here was my response.

“When a person tries to avoid thinking about something, it usually comes back with a vengeance. Thought suppression often leads to a rebound effect, and thinking about something else, called a focused distracter, reduces the rebound. So people who are having election anxiety should try to focus on something non-political.

Anxiety increases arousal and shrinks a person's working memory capacity, so they it can make us more susceptible to peripheral route persuasion. That means that glitzy messages with little substance can more easily change our attitudes in that condition. Have you ever noticed those types of political ads that play to that?

People who are high in need for cognition are people who need to really analyze information to be comfortable. They might be better off critically analyzing information, but that is going to be 1/3 of people at best. If they feel overwhelmed because there is so much information in today's media cycles, then no amount of research and critical thinking will help them. They need to cognitively pivot to a non-political interest or use relaxation techniques."

Again, none of this was included in the article which presumably bumped my comments and those of another conservative for an extensive discussion of a "study, published recently as a pre-print without outside peer review" that fit the narrative that people less afraid of COVID don't follow CDC recommendations.

President Trump has famously accused CNN and the legacy media of being Fake News. These accusations are easy to dismiss unless you have experienced it first hand. Sometimes it's the writers, sometimes it's the editors, sometimes its both. But the egregiously biased spin of the legacy media is infuriating if you think about the people who trust the legacy media and believe them. Those people have no idea of the ongoing FBI investigation of Hunter Biden and barely any familiarity with the Tara Reade sexual assault accusation against Joe Biden. They don't know about Barack Obama and Joe Biden's involvement in illegally surveilling Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, and they don't know about Joe Biden dropping out of the 1988 presidential campaign due to plagiarism. They also don't know about Fusion GPS and the Steele Dossier. These are major scandals at the highest levels. It is pure Alinsky tactics of accusing your opponent of the corruption that you yourself are doing.

They also don't know about the strange gaffes, weird unwanted hugs, weird unwanted kisses, and weird unwanted hair sniffing of Joe Biden at campaign events. That's probably why they mask, muzzle, and quarantine him. They don't know about him reading the teleprompter in interviews or being fed questions in townhall campaign events. It is a sad day when the legacy media cannot be trusted to tell the complete truth. Being a journalist, like being a regular human, should be easy: tell the damn truth.

“Andrew Breitbart’s Legacy: Do Not Accept Defeat”

October 25, 2020

Where have you gone, Andrew Breitbart? Our nation turns its lonely eyes to you. The most important person in the 2020 election tragically left this world 8 years ago. But his legacy lives on with Breitbart News Network, writers/commentators like Dana Loesch, Larry O’Connor, Kurt Schlichter, and thousands of other citizen journalists with blogs and websites.

Breitbart referred to the biased legacy news groups and Hollywood industry that openly support Democrats as the Democrat-Media Complex. It is the large, closed-loop propaganda machine that influences public opinion by killing stories that show Democrats in a negative light and by promoting stories that savage Republicans whether true or not. Of course, President Trump has labeled some of this as “fake news”.

In his book *Righteous Indignation*, Breitbart discussed his early life in Los Angeles and his time at Tulane University, as well as his early career in Hollywood as a movie runner. These experiences shaped his perspective and understanding of how the Democrat-Media Complex operates. Seeing the internet as the great equalizer to this, he found his way to being a fan of the Drudge Report and eventually Matt Drudge introduced him to Arianna Huffington. Breitbart helped her to create the Huffington Post. In doing so, he created a platform for liberals to speak and show the world their true colors. One of their first impactful stories was to take down Bill Clinton donor Larry Lawrence, who had lied about his Merchant Marine service in order to get interred in Arlington National Cemetery, a scandal of the Clinton Administration. Ultimately, Lawrence was dis-interred from the cemetery.

Breitbart also outlined the rise of progressivism and discussed Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson as well as the media’s terrible treatment of George W. Bush. He gave a history of socialism, Marxism and the Frankfurt School’s ideology in the U.S. Perhaps most importantly, well in advance of the 2016 election, he outlined the Alinsky tactics of the left in forcing their socialist agenda on our nation. If you look up Alinsky’s tactics for community organizers, you will recognize the media gaslighting that has occurred over the past 4 years. Joe Biden corruption in Ukraine? Blame Trump for the thing of which you are yourself guilty. Textbook Alinsky.

He advocated going into enemy territory to argue, outlining his experiences as a hated conservative guest on Bill Maher’s show and passing the Coulter threshold (the point where you stand up for what you believe in, unafraid of missing dinner invitations or having spineless fellow conservatives scold you for not acquiescing to liberals). Of course, he gave detailed accounts of two of his biggest stories to break, the ACORN scandal and the Anthony Weiner scandal.

Andrew Breitbart taught a generation of conservatives to walk towards the fire. Among his recommendations: 1. Don't be afraid to go into enemy territory, 2. Expose the left for who they are—in their own words, 3) Be open about your secrets, 4) Don't let the Complex use its PC lexicon to characterize you and shape the narrative, 5) Control your own story—Don't let the complex do it, 6) Ubiquity is key, 7) Engage in the social arena, 8) Don't pretend to know more than you do, 9) Don't let them pretend to know more than they do, 10) Ridicule is man's most potent weapon, 11) Don't let them get away with ignoring their own rules, 12) Truth isn't mean. It's truth, 13) Believe in the audacity of hope.

Andrew Breitbart showed conservatives that taking the high road when facing an ideological enemy with a scorched earth strategy is a foolish, losing game plan. He showed conservatives how to stand up and fight for our beliefs. He showed conservatives how to be citizen journalists and to use the internet as the great equalizer. He showed conservatives that a damning cell phone video is compelling evidence.

Since 2016, the Democrat-Media Complex has told us there was nothing to see with Hillary Clinton's private server e-mails, DNC Russian collusion, FBI surveillance of Trump's 2016 campaign, Joe Biden firing a Ukrainian prosecutor, and Hunter and Joe Biden accepting money from other countries. The Democrat-Media Complex shapes this narrative. But in the internet age, unyielding citizens shape the true narrative and the Democrat-Media Complex can't control that (and it drives them crazy).

The government works for us, the citizens. The media works for us, the citizens who are their audience. As citizens, we have the power to elect officials and hold them to a high standard. We have the right to have our voices heard. Conservatives must join together, unafraid, and stand up for what we believe is right. When you vote, don't vote for who you are told to vote for. Vote for the person whose positions on issues align with yours. Have the courage to walk towards the fire and do not be afraid. Our nation depends on citizens to hold each other accountable by honest inquiry and critical accountability.

Andrew Breitbart's legacy lives when citizens join together to say enough is enough and we are not going to accept defeat. Do not accept defeat.

Review of “Killing Reagan”

September 27, 2020

In the book “Killing Reagan: The Violent Assault that Changed a Presidency” (2015), Bill O’Reilly and Martin Dugard bring President Reagan’s life into a vibrant narrative that shows Reagan as a man. He is a deeply talented, driven, and flawed man. The narrative does not paint Reagan in a positive or negative light, but paints him as he was: A man who did great things.

Reagan found himself ideologically alone among the communists prevalent in Hollywood at the time. I can relate to being ideologically alone in my profession. But Reagan wasn’t silent, and he continued to fight for what he believed was right. In his early career as President of the Screen Actors Guild, advising Vice-President Richard Nixon, and campaigning for Barry Goldwater, Reagan developed his ideas and refined his technique, but he never strayed from his anti-communist, pro-America foundation.

His love of his wife Nancy Reagan was a big part of him as a man, and though she may have seemed like the villain at times in the story, by the end she is a strong, loving, compassionate figure worthy of empathy.

A secondary figure in the story is John Hinckley, who attempted to assassinate Reagan. Combined with Reagan’s signing National Mental Health Week proclamation and his Alzheimer’s, the book places mental health as an important context. Reagan experienced many physical and mental health problems after the assassination attempt. These problems affected his administration, leading to a secret 25th amendment evaluation in March of 1987.

What was the best part of reading this book? For me it was this: While reading the book, I became aware that Hollywood is in a nearby town filming a feature about Reagan’s life. I get to play a role in the movie, and scenes that I read about in “Killing Reagan” will actually come to life for me as I witness history from the front row as a participant. But I will write about all of that in a future post. In the meantime, I recommend you read “Killing Reagan”.

“Kelly Johnston Interview (EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with Kelly Johnston, 28th Secretary of the United States Senate”

September 20, 2020

Kelly Johnston was the 28th Secretary of the United States Senate, and the second youngest ever selected (1995-1996) to the position. He was born in Edmond, OK and attended the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. Early in his career he served as a newspaper reporter and editor in Oklahoma. He held a number of notable Republican administrative positions during the late 1980's and early 1990's. He gives insightful political commentary at his website (www.againstthegrain.expert/). I had the opportunity to interview him. Here is our discussion.

RM: What was your role as Secretary of the United States Senate? What should citizens know about how that body of government truly operates in governing in our interests?

KJ: The Secretary of the Senate is the chief legislative, financial, and administrative officer of the Senate. The Secretary is considered the "senior" officer, one of five, confirmed by the Senate, and the only one who is sworn in on the floor of the Senate, in session. The other officers are the Sergeant at Arms, the Secretary for the Majority, the Secretary for the Minority, and the Chaplain. The Secretary is responsible for the legislative process - the Parliamentarian, the Bill and Journal Clerks, the document room, historical office, chief counsel for employment, and more offices (some 19 in all) that fall under his/her jurisdiction. The current Secretary is Julie Adams. Most notable is the first Secretary, Samuel Otis, who still holds the record for the longest tenure in the office - 25 years. A visit to Congress Hall in Philadelphia, next to Independence Hall, features Otis's office just off the grand Senate floor. It is worth a visit for anyone living in or visiting the Philadelphia area.

Not to be overlooked is the role of the chief financial officer of the Senate, and also his/her responsibility for the Senate Office of Security. The Secretary is responsible for the handling of all confidential and classified information in the Senate.

RM: Your role in the Senate came while your Majority Leader was running for President. What was Bob Dole like as both a politician and as a man?

KJ: Bob Dole was not only a serious and very hard-working legislator, but he also enjoyed enormous bipartisan respect and demonstrated a unique ability to reach across the aisle and work with Democrats, especially on agricultural and hunger issues (he, with Sen. George McGovern, are the architects of much of our nation's nutrition programs). His remarkable WWII experience, where he was seriously wounded in Italy as part of the 10th Mountain infantry division, shaped and influenced him in many ways - especially his long road to recovery and painful disabilities that have hindered him physically but not deterred his entire life. Because of that, among his considerable legislative and political skills, he inspired a great many of us.

Interestingly, he was considered an "ardent conservative" when first elected to the House and then the Senate but was considered a "moderate" as his career progressed. Dole could sometimes appear dour and even bit negative on the stump, but behind the scenes, he demonstrated a terrific and quick sense of humor and was fun to be around. He could have been a great stand-up comic (and, often was) Sadly, that reality never really emerged until after his 1996 election defeat. He was one of the most successful Majority Leaders in the Senate's history.

RM: You spent time as a local news reporter and editor in Oklahoma for many years. How has local and national journalism changed over the past 50 years?

KJ: I was a part-time newspaper reporter during my college years (1974-1976) for the Chickasha Daily Express, also serving briefly as the editor of my campus newspaper, The Trend (University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma). Little did I know, but I was auditioning for a job as The Donrey Media Group's state capitol correspondent when I was assigned, in 1976, to cover a campaign visit to Lawton by President Gerald Ford. I won the job, working from our flagship paper, the Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. I would later be promoted as Editor of the Henryetta Free-Lance, then a daily newspaper (sadly no longer). I left the news business for a political campaign in late 1978, then on to Washington, DC.

I mention all that to provide a frame of reference for my answer: I no longer recognize my former profession. I was trained, both in college and my first jobs, to pursue objective truth and clearly delineate between journalism and editorializing. My news coverage focused on facts and context; I save the editorializing for my weekly column or clearly-marked editorials. I used visuals (photos) as often as possible.

The keywords here are "objective truth," which tragically have been replaced by "narrative." In our post-modern world of subjective truth ("your truth," "my truth,"), so many journalists no longer pursue objective truth but instead focus on their preferred narrative. Major news outlets color or distort their headlines and stories to favor certain narratives over others, and demand conformity from their newsroom and editorial colleagues (so much for "diversity"). And with the advent of social media since around 2008, traditional media have opted to monetize division and focus on niche markets, such as conservatives (FOX) or liberals (CNN). Print media has largely gone all-in for their leftist audiences. However, let me make an exception for "local media," which I find does a much better job at retaining their "objective truth" roots. I have canceled my subscriptions to most major national media, such as the Washington Post and New York Times, and instead turn to the Tulsa World, Daily Oklahoman, Chicago Tribune, and even the Myrtle Beach Sun-Times, among others. I also ignore most of the wire services (especially AP), although Reuters and, to a lesser extent, Bloomberg, retain some objectivity (not always).

This is why, I think, you are beginning to see explosive growth in independent journalism, such as The Epoch Times, "Just The News," and Sharyl Attkisson's "Full Measure" News. Chicago's WGN TV is now going national. People are yearning for objective journalism, I think smarter heads in the media are taking advantage of this opportunity. There is hope.

RM: I have had the chance to spend time with former Governor George Nigh, who was governor during your time covering the Oklahoma State Capitol as a reporter. Despite having different political views than me, Governor Nigh is extraordinarily entertaining. What were some of the central issues from your time covering Oklahoma politics during the oil bust? Was Governor Nigh effective in working in a bipartisan manner?

KJ: I love Governor Nigh. I first met him when I had a one-on-one interview in 1977 early in my days as a wet-behind-the-ears state capitol news correspondent for Donrey's 12 newspapers in Oklahoma, and Nigh was Lt. Governor, a position he would serve in for 16 years if memory serves. A gracious, approachable, positive, and gregarious person, he was always delightful. Nigh was an "old fashioned" Democrat; culturally and socially conservative, as Oklahoma was then and remains, but knew how to take care of Democratic constituencies and work with the business community. He hated polarizing politics, eschewed controversy, and always tried to find a common denominator. I remember voting for him every chance I had, and the newspapers I worked for always endorsed him.

RM: The United States Senate procedures will take center stage in the coming months after the passing of Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. What do we need to know about the operations of the Senate to understand what is coming?

KJ: The Senate's role here is actually very straightforward, as outlined by the Constitution: The President is empowered to nominate to fill vacancies in the Supreme Court, and the Senate gets to decide whether to confirm or not, or even whether to consider the nomination. There is no law or "rule" that restricts when such nominations can be made or confirmed (during a two-year Congress). Any other considerations (whether to hold a confirmation vote before or after an election) are purely political.

There have been 29 Supreme Court vacancies in election years in our country's history. Presidents have nominated someone in every instance, and the Senate, on 17 occasions, have confirmed them. Sometimes they have rejected them, and most recently, in 2016, they chose not to act. The Senate follows historical precedent, except when it doesn't. Given that the Senate majority (at present) is of the same political party as the President, I fully expect a nomination to be made, and the Senate to act on it with hearings by the Senate Judiciary Committee and, possibly, a vote by the full Senate either before or after the election, during a planned "lame duck" session. Ultimately, it is about who has the votes. We will soon find out.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with Meredith Dake-O'Connor, Journalist

September 16, 2020

RM: You were at Breitbart News early in its history. How did Breitbart News transform the expectations of conservatives for their news?

MDOC: One of the first ways it transformed expectations was speed, more specifically, speed with context. If you were made aware of something newsworthy, chances are you could read it on Breitbart early, if not first, with a flag planted on opinion and context. It wasn't always opinion, but there was definitely an expectation that you were reading Breitbart because you wanted *Breitbart's* reporting, not just news. There was also a get-it-up first mentality. If Drudge linked to someone else or Fox had reported it before we had a post or video up, we were too slow.

Conservatives rightly got used to reading stories on the Breitbart sites that were nowhere else. No story was too small, or too big, to tackle. If there was corruption or injustice, Breitbart would cover it and his websites broke a lot of stories – stories that still impact today and stories that occupied the highest levels of power. I'm not going to pretend that Breitbart covered every Republican/conservative scandal. Breitbart once answered that criticism, I honestly can't remember if it was in private or in public, by saying if you're looking for coverage of Republican/conservative scandals, you have dozens of cable channels and websites to do that. We were going for news the big boys weren't covering for all sorts of reasons, not the least of which was their bias.

Another expectation was how Breitbart, the man and his websites, directly engaged the culture and the world of entertainment. There was an effort to write about things people who weren't news junkies were talking about. And not only that, to have really compelling writers write about things people who weren't news junkies talked about. And lastly, to talk about culture and entertainment without insulting someone with conservative views. Before everyone and everything had a platform, there wasn't a lot out there in pop culture and entertainment that didn't have a slight edge against conservatives. It was a place for people to gather, people who disagreed, without being hostile and talk about fun things. That was Big Hollywood. It was meant to be fun.

Speaking of fun, that was another expectation. Andrew was often referred to as a "happy warrior," and he was. And he expected the same from all of us. If you were writing about something or someone you disagreed with, it was expected that you do it with a smile - certainly in the early days. We were the pirate ship of original trolls, laughing at ourselves and those who couldn't take a joke. There was great news – news you wouldn't read anywhere else. And there was a joy that you wouldn't get anywhere else, either.

RM: Please tell us a little about Andrew Breitbart's personality and vision. What is his legacy for conservatives?

MDOC: For this I'll direct you to one of my columns I wrote about Andrew.

<https://www.breitbart.com/the-media/2013/02/28/the-art-of-war/#>

I was a pretty good writer once, ha, and I don't think I can improve on this. A notable excerpt:

“The week that Andrew died was the same week that we were working on the relaunch of Breitbart.com. The new setup was very different than the old, and we spent hours in training learning the ins-and-outs of the technical infrastructure. During one of the many 10-hour days, I remember Andrew looking over my shoulder at the fake webpage I had created for practice. He seemed very pleased with it and asked me several questions about my methods. He was nervous about the launch, but he could barely contain his excitement about the new features and paced around the room smiling.

Later that week we were watching the Academy Awards on a projector in the office. Andrew was doing a “*Mystery Science Theatre: 3000*” type commentary on the affair. After the initial raucous laughter had died out, everyone gave at least a courtesy chuckle to all his jokes. During a portion of the show when they were showing clips of movies only people in LA or NYC had seen, Andrew made a joke that happened to really tickle me. I have a loud laugh anyway, but no one else was laughing, so it was really loud in the echoey office. I saw Andrew’s head pop out of the cluster of people around him (even when it was just the editors, Andrew was always surrounded) and look right at me. He had the biggest smile on his face. It conveyed something like, “Aha! I got one!” I realized that he was happier with me then, for laughing at his joke, than he was with me the whole dang week I’d been killing myself learning the site.

People remember Andrew Breitbart as the warrior, the one who would walk–no, run– towards the fire with reckless abandon. But he was more than that. He was the ultimate happy warrior. He loved to get into the middle of the fight, but he was having a ball while he was doing it. And when the fight was over he would yell, ‘Let’s all go to Applebees!’”

Primarily, Andrew was a joy to be around. He had an aura of laughter. Reflecting, now that I am older and have more life experience, he had an aura of compassion, too. There really was no one in life who Andrew wouldn’t talk to. He was generous with time, genuinely interested in everyone he met. Stories tugged at his heartstrings.

But Andrew was also a fighter. And he took arrows and attacks from the left that no politician would dare take. (Well, until perhaps recently.) If there was anyone who ever played 4-D chess with the media and the left, it was him and it sometimes drove us all insane.

The hardest thing about Andrew is that you really couldn’t predict exactly how he would respond – how he would want his websites to respond. We certainly had a general understanding of his beliefs, but his tactics changed constantly, instantly, and often drastically.

I wish more of his joy in news and in life was his greatest legacy, but while there are still many who carry on that torch, his greatest impact was showing that you can take the hits. You can take the criticism. He talked about that once (emphasis mine):

“Who in the Republican Party is going to come and defend me, you know, when I’m accused of bad things or things start going bad? That’s the thing that kinda has me fearful is that *I’m starting to realize that the infrastructure of the right, the reason why we fight so hard is because they don’t fight hard enough.* They are representing a group of people who are the majority in this country. The people who are the far left in this country are like 5-10%. They are able to control it because they fight to win. And the Republican Party should represent 55% of this country. But to me, it seems, it’s fighting to protect its own hide.”

I think there’s a pretty direct line from that mentality to today. But more importantly, he was a man of joy and loved his family more than anything else in the world.

RM: How has political journalism changed since you began your writing career?

MDOC:

I’ll speak broadly on this first:

At the start of my career, journalists sort of loathed the guerilla-style raw reporting those of us at Breitbart tried to perfect. We were activists, but we also wanted to do great journalism and shed light on under-covered stories of corruption. We were the pirate ship of happy warriors, combating a growing age of media and social media manipulation (the scope of which we could not even conceive at that time). But we knew we were unique. We had no intention of being ABC News. We knew we were activists with a point of view doing acts of journalism in an industry that had left half the country behind in their reporting. I don’t think any of us ever wanted the majority of media to be remade in our image. We were a necessary spoke in the wheel of free press, which had become unbalanced. At least, that’s how I always saw it.

Traditional journalists were given beats to cover, often intentionally avoiding topics that they were passionate about or personally an activist. Today that is flipped on its head. Now kids go to school and major in climate science and minor in journalism because they are passionate about combating climate change through journalism. We now see the majority of young reporters who are activists first, reporters second. As someone who lived that life, it is filled with perilous blind spots that not only damages your reporting, but can also drive yourself mad. This is why I ultimately left that atmosphere and pursued mainstream journalism.

I’m so disheartened when I see young (and old) journalists’ twitter and insta feeds these days. I think a lot of us made the choice to be activist journalists to influence the industry to be better, not turn the industry into us.

This isn’t all on editors and journalists, either. I had the privilege to sit in many executive meetings with heads of global news organizations. I think a lot of executives of media organizations saw the Breitbart model as a profit-generating model, and pushed for this change. I think the executives won this hard fought battle with a lot of really great editors and reporters fighting this change. That executive involvement is universal, by the way, from what I’ve seen. I have yet to encounter any media organization that doesn’t have

business people or executives (many of which have little-to-no editorial experience) attempt to get involved in the editorial process and decisions.

There has been a major cultural shift in journalism that I believe manifests differently based on generation.

First, the younger reporters:

We now have a generation of young people who have been taught to value intersectionality over facts and view “silence” as the literal equivalent to violence. And they are showing up in newsrooms. And they are activists before being journalists. And the intersectionality/privilege/silence mentality is a heavy, painful burden that must influence and contextualize all reporting, regardless of how much it actually resembles reality. And I want to emphasize this is a painful, heavy burden they have been conditioned to carry. When it is challenged, when their reporting is pushed back on with relevant facts and arguments, it causes great mental distress. That distress binds the hands of a lot of good editors and colleagues, who now have to make their coworkers “feel safe” before they are allowed to help them become better journalists. I had multiple friends who were in various mainstream newsrooms recount Election Night 2016 to me, with young reporters crying at the outcome, asking to go home instead of do their job. (It wasn’t just young reporters, either.)

I don’t know where this train ends, but I fear for this industry – my industry – that I have fallen in love with and want to be better.

We also have an older generation of journalists lamenting the loss of the gatekeeper age. Nearly every single person in the U.S. can “report” on a story unfolding in their hometown with the technology in their pocket that used to take tens of thousands of dollars in resources to achieve. With that has brought some incredible innovation in reporting, not just technologically, but in the craft. It has also, sadly, brought resentment.

This is incredibly visible in the age of Trump. Columnists, self-proclaimed thought leaders, and the most prestigious of journalists knew their opinions mattered. They knew people listened to them. They knew they were influential. And almost universally they told America not to vote for Trump, that Trump was dangerous, and over and over they declared his campaign to be finished. They printed their front pages early and congratulated themselves before their election night coverage began.

And then he won.

That destroyed every image they had crafted of themselves as being important and influential. And not only that, but small organizations for whom they had no respect called it right. It was a massive gut punch to their crafted reality. And thus started the endless conspiracy theories and baseless allegations – the vast majority of which have been proven false. But we still have an edge from the older generation of reporters when they talk to the American people. They haven’t forgiven America for not listening to them. And anyone who disagrees with them is no longer a voting body that needs to be covered and understood, but one to be looked at with disdain.

Looking at reporting today I'm not seeing an industry that has learned lessons from 2016, that is trying to understand and accurately cover how America will vote. I see a group of activists trying to influence how America should vote.

Believe it or not, there are greater challenges facing the journalism industry than just bias against Trump. But they are so vast it is hard to tackle concisely. At the beginning of my writing career, everyone wasn't a political junkie. Everyone didn't spend hours of their life scrolling news feeds on social media and constantly consuming content. With the advent of the 24-hour news cycle, we had created an event and invited everyone to become addicts. Now we have an hour-by-hour news cycle (or even less), and it has broken our brains, because our reporting changed to get people addicted.

I cannot tell you how many conversations I sat in with executives asking how we can "gameify" our coverage, essentially making it as addictive as Candy Crush. I am not joking, news apps (remember those?) were being designed to get people addicted to them, just like mobile games. But instead we're addicting consumers to end-of-the-world scenarios and salacious headlines.

I have not seen, as of yet, the journalism industry as a whole adapt to the new responsibility before them. They are dealing with a nation of polarized addicts, and instead of suggesting we take a break or see the full context of what is happening in the world, they are pouring us another drink. And I think this comes from two fronts; executives trying to get as many clicks/hits/revenue generation touch points as possible, and a younger generation that truly believes not constantly consuming and confronting every single topic in the world is the equivalent of justifying it. News consumers are asked to be omniscient and omnipresent (and thus responsible for responding/engaging) and news executives are looking to capitalize on it.

It's a cynical state of the media, but I believe it is the reality. It wasn't always this way. I hope that journalism professors and industry leaders work to change the craft of journalism to the new way (and frequency) America consumes news. The future of our country depends on it.

RM: Political discourse has been quite treacherous for the past four years. How do you recommend people deal with political differences among family and friends on social media, at work, and at family gatherings?

MDOC: So speaking about those who are not in the business of discussing this in the public square, I have a couple of suggestions that I personally have started to employ. I was the ultimate activist and political junkie most of my life. And I appreciate all of my friends and professors and family members that tolerated my righteous indignation for years. I have real compassion for people with passionate views who feel the need to shout them from the rooftops. I was one.

Let's start with compassion. Have compassion for their views, for where they are. Something I am learning is often when I see people who are really nasty in conversation or on social media concerning politics, it's coming from a place of great pain – probably from something that is not related.

One also has to establish at the outset of any conversation an agreement that both of you love each other and respect each other, and that, regardless if anyone changes their

minds, you will still love each other and respect each other. If those things can't happen, what's the point of a political conversation?

I talked a little bit about this here

(<https://www.facebook.com/meredith.dake/posts/10100227339907945>) but one of the hardest lessons I have learned (and am still learning) is try to respect a person's side of the argument, in spite of their ability to argue it. We have a lot of new activists and just generally opinionated people whose diet of information on the most complicated issues of the day is Instagram and Facebook memes. That causes a great loss of nuance, which is where reality lives.

Lastly, I would try to establish the ground rules for the purpose of the conversation. I can listen to opposing opinions all day to learn and internalize and think about them, knowing that I have my established worldview and I am not going to change my mind. I can have a greater understanding and compassion for the other side of the abortion argument, for instance, but I am never not going to be pro-life. So I'm happy to have that discussion, to hear about experience, to discuss statistics, but ultimately the discussion will be full of friction if the person on the other side is coming to the table with an expectation that I will change my mind. Fruitful discussions can happen with an exchange of ideas when I have no expectation of the other party to accept my arguments, simply to listen to them with curiosity and respect. But again, if all parties aren't on the same page with these ground rules, it's hard to have any sort of fruitful or edifying discussion. I am sure you are familiar with the term "emotional readiness." There has to be a shared emotional readiness to have these discussions placing them in the proper context of your relationship.

As far as social media – oh dear. A thing I am trying to do is argue less, and simply speak statements of fact in the kindest, most generous way possible allowing for the vast nuance of the world. Arguing over social media is not done well, especially in a comment-by-comment format. The best discussions I've seen online are column-responding-column format.

But it is truly OK to not engage – to move to the other side of the room when the politics start, to scroll by when you see someone post a meme that is so nasty and petty it makes you want to throw your phone across the room. Especially in today's age where it's more likely than not that the person you see on your facebook feed posting stuff that makes you want to scream is someone whom you haven't seen, hugged, or sat down and had an in-person conversation with in several months. The nastiest and most terrible comments I've seen during all this clearly come from a place of fear and of pain. Pray for them and scroll on. And maybe text them and check in.

RM: Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have all been accused of censoring conservatives. How crucial will control of information be in this election? How important is it to establish other channels for disseminating and consuming unfiltered information?

MDOC: I shared a compelling news story from Daily Caller on my Instagram story not that long ago. I just had a screenshot of the article with the headline. A follower of mine went to Google and put in the headline with "Daily Caller" in the search bar and Google did not pull up the story in their results. He tried multiple searches to get it and could not do it. Finally he had to go directly to Daily Caller and search for the story internally to find it.

(Side note: There are SO MANY interesting insights on this – which I consider to be typical – user behavior on how people use the internet. Maybe another time.)

It is crazy, and concerning, that a first-hand account of a story that was dominating the news cycle that day was being filtered by Google. I can barely imagine on a larger scale the amount of information manipulation that is happening millions of times a day.

I would say that this is an incredibly serious problem, but for this election in particular a little less so. Trump has many ways in which he talks directly to the American people without filters or context. So for Trump himself, any sort of censoring or even blatant attempt to mischaracterize comments is easily circumvented for those who go looking for a larger picture. And I think more than just the typical Trump voter goes looking for information past the headlines when it comes to Trump's comments.

What we have right now are these information channels that began flirting with curating content based on what they believed the USER wanted to see and read. They have now taken that mechanism and are curating content based on what THEY want the user to see and read. However, there are ways in most of these information channels to turn off that personalized curation and there are tons of search engines and social platforms popping up every day that are fighting this controlled content curation. This is a problem that is going to correct itself with innovation, hopefully, but it is imperative on us, the consumers, to find these mediums and support them. The greater short-term (and perhaps long-term) issue is the clustering of content. Right now, we have a voting base that is voting on two (or more) totally different knowledge foundations. They aren't reading the same stories or watching the same channels, so there is no longer a decision-making path of having a shared common knowledge and then coming to different conclusions. In many ways this is a broader cultural phenomenon that could tear at the foundations of our society. We're not even consuming the same entertainment or pop culture anymore. There are 100s of shows on multiple streaming platforms to choose from. We are losing a common culture of art. There are so many benefits to that; more stories are being told, more art is being made. However, if it's not shared by the culture at large, it just breaks the country into further factions.

I don't know what the solution is, I just know that as a society we're going to have to learn how to have a common culture without shared information consumption. I don't see the information channels shrinking any time soon.

RM: Given your experience with an early internet radio show on BlogTalkRadio, what role do independent websites, blogs, and podcasts play in informing the public?

MDOC: Innovation will be the thing that helps solve the problems I laid out above. More importantly, independent innovation. There's a well-known political commentator who talks a lot about the "death of expertise" and is generally cynical about the information age. I feel the exact opposite. I love the information age, and while it shows some real failure in government and media, I love that we have a body of people reading studies on the effectiveness of masks and how disease spreads through water droplets. This is what these independent channels can do. They can give people access to niche expertise immediately. But as mentioned above, it comes with the danger of losing a shared knowledge base, which further fractures the culture.

These independent channels of information do not have the same problems I listed above, such as the executive interference. There's no advertising exec or vice president or even an activist editor looking over their shoulder making sure their coverage fits with the narrative. This allows for more stories and better education for all. It also serves as another check on our government's power. Politicians no longer just worry about the local three stations' FOIA requests, there are 100 bloggers in every town who have the power of the internet and they are willing to use it.

RM: From your experience, what are some of the lessons that came out of how the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) innovatively handled grassroots bloggers?

MDOC: CPAC was really the first in the conservative movement to challenge the media status quo. The RNC eventually followed after them, in many ways. The bloggers lounge was one of the first times that niche and aspiring writers and commentators had access to figures that were previously only given to the largest organizations. This created an explosion of exposure and information. Different questions were being asked to top officials, and the staff that surround these figures began to see the power of social media and alternative media. It also took the point-of-view of the questioner out of the DC-East Coast media complex and gave it to a far broader audience. It allowed more obscure political figures ("the obscure caucus" as some joke) to have some time in the spotlight (however dim the actual light was). It was a lesson in speaking directly to people where they gather, verses asking people to tune in to hear you.

It also created an incredible networking opportunity for these niche individuals to meet. Now you had small-time bloggers in Iowa and Kentucky learning FIOA lessons from watchdog bloggers in Illinois, all discussed over copious amounts of alcohol.

RM: As a social psychologist, perhaps one of the most interesting current conservatives is Meghan McCain. She walks into the lion's den every day on *The View* and stands up for conservatives. She eloquently stands up for conservatives she agrees with and for conservatives she disagrees with. As someone in a profession where I am politically outnumbered "everyone to one," I have a tremendous respect for her. Is it productive to societal discourse for her to take on such a role or do liberals just ignore her perspective? She effectively inspires conservatives, but does she break down conservative stereotypes by liberals? She plays a pivotal role between the new Trump portion of the party, the old Bush portion of the party, and the moderate John McCain portion of the party. How can we learn from her example as one of the central conservatives of the moment?

MDOC:

Full disclosure: I know Meghan and have hung out with her and her husband socially on multiple occasions.

I, too, have the greatest respect for her and what she does every day. That show needs her. I'm not going to pretend to be an expert of The View's audience so I can only go off what I see on social media and my personal impression watching the show.

I think one of the greatest things Meghan has done is given some liberals a view of a complex conservative person. Meghan has a long history of saying what she believes, boldly. So no one could accuse her of saying anything she does now for profit or gain. She is who she is and no one is going to question that. And because they actually

believe that Meghan believes what she says, they now have to confront a person who they know, who they know loves them and respects them, in a respectful way. They are... not always respectful to her, but that is the ultimate goal.

There's certainly a lot about expressing yourself politically that one can learn from Meghan, but beyond that I think her social media use and how she talks about her life is where the biggest lessons can be learned. It is an art to share your pain, your grief, and your struggles without oversharing and compromising your own privacy on a public platform. Meghan does this expertly.

The other thing conservatives can learn from Meghan is how she engages people she disagrees with, especially conservatives. She has a very, very real reason to despise Trump and to never consider voting for him. And there's not one conservative who could have any argument against her, even with his accomplishments. But I have never seen her engage anyone who says they are voting for Trump because of his accomplishments, or even because they like him, with disdain. It would be so easy for her to make that personal – to take that personally. I haven't seen her do that. The theme of this conversation seems to be compassion. Meghan shows it so well.

RM: Given the McCains' historically complicated relationship with the GOP that became a little more complicated at the DNC, it seems appropriate to probe a little further. It seems to me that Meghan McCain embodies the conflict among conservatives who dislike Trump, like some of his policies, recognize the effectiveness of his work, and dislike the current liberal agenda. Is this a fair statement?

MDOC: Sure, and again, this is a very personal thing for the McCain family – rightly so. Not only is it personal in relation to Trump, but in relation to Biden. She talks about this a lot in her interview with Ben Shapiro (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbuA5gl6tPs>). It's definitely a fair statement.

RM: We have seen quite a few Republicans featured at the Democratic National Convention (Colin Powell, John Kasich, Cindy McCain, and others). We have also seen a strong pitch that Joe Biden is a moderate. Is this a solicitation to moderate Baby Boomer Republicans and moderate Democrats, neither of which are currently influential voting blocks? Will this be effective or will it alienate what is the true progressive base of the Democratic Party?

MDOC: I don't really consider Biden a moderate and it's a hard sell for Dems – especially when you have both Biden and Harris calling it the "Harris administration." Not to mention Biden has a long track record. If anything, I think this was a "return to sanity" ploy by Dems promising compromise and character in office. That might be compelling if every single local and state Democratic government official hadn't just botched their dealing with Antifa and COVID. The negotiating points for the nation's toughest issues have been shifted far left, and voters have yet to show they are willing to come to the negotiating table with a starting point of "let's abolish the police" or whatever extreme equivalent in other issues. It's really a question if voters will tolerate Trump's bluster, because his governance has been largely successful for moderates and conservatives. As far as progressives, they are desperate. They will vote for Biden, if they vote at all.

RM: What is the biggest current threat to American citizens?

MDOC: The greatest threat to American citizens is that there are people out there – entire countries and cultures – who hate America and everything we stand for. They hate our freedom and our diversity and they are actively, constantly planning to tear apart the nation and terrorize us through violence. These are sophisticated enemies who are constantly innovating warfighting for the purpose of eradicating America.

Our second greatest threat is Americans forgetting the greatest threat and not supporting those who stand in the gap on our behalf. We have so many challenges on the home front right now that need to be addressed. And while there are certainly places that America needs to improve, a lot of it has a whiff of sophisticated warfighting. I have faith American citizens will once again look on each other with compassion and selflessness and unite. It's a struggle right now, but "the only way out is through."

Review of “Militant Normals”

September 16, 2020

When I first encountered the work of Kurt Schlichter, I was shocked. It was on the Townhall VIP broadcasts, which are not for the faint of heart. He was right about what he said, but it just didn't seem like a political commentator was supposed to say it like that. Then I realized that he talked (and wrote) like how my friends and I would talk about politics at a bar or on the porch late at night. Then it hit me—he wasn't like the other political commentators; he was like me and the people that I know. He was normal.

After reading his articles, one of his books, listening to his two different podcast venues, and watching more of his Townhall VIP sessions, I found him to be very much as he describes himself—the conservative id. That metaphor, of course, speaks to me as a psychology professor.

In Schlichter's 2018 book [“Militant Normals: How Regular Americans Are Rebellious Against the Elite to Reclaim Our Democracy”](#) he captures the fundamental truth of why Donald Trump is our President. It is in the elegant distinction of Normal versus Elite.

The Elites are not necessarily rich, but they buy into the culture surrounding elitism. We know better than you, we make the decisions, that sort of thing. The Normals are humble everyday people who go to work, take care of the people they love, and don't think they are better than anyone else. It sounds simple, right? The Normals work all of their lives for the Elites and the Elites make the world go 'round, right?

Not at all. The Normals elect the Elites to political power. The Elites work FOR the Normals. The Normals are the customers of the Elites who run mega corporations like Amazon, Google, or any giant enterprise. The Elites work FOR the Normals. But the Elites forget this humility from time to time and the Normals have to remind them by doing something wild like burning down cities and marching on the capitol. Wrong again, some of the braver Normals just wear red MAGA hats and even more of them just vote to drain the swamp.

It is a clash of Elites versus Normals, not rich versus poor. The Normals are not voting against their own interests, as the Elite like to say. The Normals are smart and very capable of voting for their own interests. The Normals are tired of institutional bureaucratic inertia—or “The Swamp.”

Like Schlichter, Larry O'Connor is another Breitbart protégé. Both men understand what all of us Republicans experienced during the George W. Bush years. Republicans were made laughing stocks by the media. Every session of every scientific meeting I attended for 8 years had a minimum of 20 Bush jokes to even enter the session, most of them enshrined within the PowerPoint itself. George W. Bush stoically did what I and many others thought was right at the time—he remained classy and above the fray, never stooping to the level of the mud-slinging. But the mud-slinging wasn't just for him. His supporters went to the ideological battlefield every day to face humiliation. He didn't stand up for us. It was an old model and we didn't know he could. Look, George W. Bush is one of my two favorite Presidents (Reagan is the other) and you will rarely hear me criticize him. This isn't even a criticism of Bush's strategy during the context of that time period, but I am noting that Donald Trump stands up for his supporters.

Bush encountered the new age of the internet, and mud-slinging was at a whole new level. Barack Obama was the media darling and a Democrat, so he was left alone by the media. Donald Trump is a Republican, so he takes shots from the media. I watched an old Saturday Night Live a few months ago with Kirk Douglas hosting in February of 1980. There was a segment where Ronald Reagan was portrayed as a racist. Do you see the pattern? Normals see it and it is not a new phenomenon. Republican Presidents get harassed by the media and Hollywood. What is new is that Republicans are fighting back.

We Republicans haven't had a true prize fighter in the ring for us since Reagan. Go back and listen to Reagan's speeches. Listen to the speeches he gave in 1964, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1986, 1988 and you will find it doesn't matter. He was tough and he fought for us. He fought for California, he fought for the U.S., he fought the media and he fought the Communists. He was hated by the media, by Hollywood and he was a former Democrat, but he produced major conservative wins. Does that sound familiar?

To contrast our choice this year, we are at the climax of a four year tantrum by the Democrats who have yet to acknowledge that President Trump won the votes in the electoral college with the rules that were in place when the campaigns were set—rules that are always there—against someone who thinks Trump stole the election but should have actually been in jail for using a private server to communicate classified information.

When I worked in a maximum security prison, we signed a form. It was the last form they gave us and the only one they didn't go over with us. I was the only one in my new employee training cohort who read the form. We had just signed 30 forms that were all carefully explained to us. Why are they slipping this one in at the end with no explanation, telling us to just sign it? I bet this is the only one worth reading. It was the one that said if there was a prison riot and I was taken hostage, my employment would be automatically terminated and as policy they would not negotiate for my release. I thought that was good to know, so that I wouldn't sit around waiting for the warden's security to get me in that scenario. I figured I had two options: Fight my way out or team up with the prisoners and lead them into battle with the cowards who had turned their backs on me. Hypothetically, anyway. Given the riots and four year tantrum of the Democrats, a vote for many DNC candidates this year is akin to negotiating with a hostage taker. Vote for us and the chaos and trouble will stop, because we are the ones doing it. That's the Democrat platform this year!

We Normals are tired of liberals being able to exercise free speech, political virtue signaling, and cancel culture in the streets and workplaces and expecting us to stay quiet and maintain "civility." Free speech works both ways. Activism works both ways. Resistance works both ways.

Colonel Schlichter's basic premise is that the Normals sit and yield the operations of democracy to the Elite until the Elite lose sight of who they work for. Then the Normals wake up, fight back, and elect a fighter. Then they go back to Normal until the Elite slap them around long enough and they wake up and fight again.

Speaking of slapping conservatives around, the Obama administration spied on the Trump campaign and used the IRS to target conservatives. That's not President Trump abusing power, those are Democrats.

What about violence? Congressman Steve Scalise was FREAKING SHOT by a man hunting Republicans. In Jacksonville, FL, a man FREAKING DROVE A VAN into a tent of Republican volunteers while hunting

Republicans. In Portland, OR, Aaron Danielson was FREAKING SHOT by a man hunting Republicans. Rand Paul was FREAKING ATTACKED by his longtime neighbor with longtime political differences who promptly used the “brush pile made me do it” defense. Then Rand Paul and his wife got mobbed after the RNC. These aren’t attacks on ideals—they are active attacks targeting Republicans for being Republican. This isn’t chaos due to Donald Trump. We have Donald Trump to fight for us against an opponent that has been less than civil. This is intimidation.

Schlichter’s book captures the sentiment that Normals are sick of being slapped around by liberals, reminding me of the end of an old Kenny Rogers song. We Normals listen to Kenny Rogers sometimes.

Coward of the County, by Kenny Rogers

When Tommy turned around they said, “He look! Old Yellow’s leaving”

But you could’ve heard a pin drop when Tommy stopped and locked the door

Twenty years of crawling was bottled up inside him.

He wasn’t holding nothing back, he let ‘em have it all

When Tommy left the bar room, not a Gatlin boy was standing...

I walk away from trouble when I can

Now please don’t think I’m weak, I didn’t turn the other cheek

And Papa, I should hope you understand

Sometimes you gotta fight when you’re a man

Hey Republicans, sometimes you gotta fight when you’re a man.

Review of “Talk Radio’s America”

September 14, 2020

In 2019, I listened to an episode of “The Rush Limbaugh Show” on News Radio 1000 KTOK in Oklahoma City. On that episode, Rush recommended reading Brian Rosenwald’s *Talk Radio’s America: How an Industry Took Over a Political Party That Took Over the United States*. Rush was smitten with Rosenwald’s description of the early years of Rush’s career and the giant legacy he had left for talk radio. Rush is a big fan of Rush, hence the appeal of the book to him. However, I am also a big fan of Rush so I bought the book and read it last year.

The book will be of interest to readers who follow conservative talk radio or Republican politics. In addition to beginning with a history of “The Rush Limbaugh Show,” it also covers Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity, Mark Levin, Newt Gingrich, Breitbart News, and the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine. The rise of conservative talk radio is set in the context of the creation of Fox News, the Contract with America, and the Clinton administration. It shows how and why the politics of the party shifted further right and led to the Tea Party movement. There is also discussion of President Donald Trump.

Basic political strategies such as making talking points and party members available for interviews are chronicled for the arms race of persuasion between Republicans and Democrats. Bill Clinton’s southern respect for talk radio and willingness to guest for hosts of all types proved crucial for him.

The author, Rosenwald, does not appear to be a conservative Republican. At the very least, his anti-Trump biases come out in his last few chapters. However, the author made an attempt at being unbiased in covering Trump. How often do we see a journalist do that?

As a compliment to the article, I recommend reading Victor Davis Hanson’s article “Limbaugh: A Genius at Radio” (*National Review*, February 11th, 2020).

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with Olga Khazan, author of “Weird: The Power of Being an Outsider in an Insider World”

August 31, 2020

When the COVID-19 pandemic began its full force lockdown of Oklahoma in March of 2020, I was awaiting the arrival of the latest psychology book I had pre-ordered. When it arrived a few days into the massive collective panic, we were all receiving mixed messages about how to protect ourselves from the newest coronavirus. People microwaving their mail was a real thing at that time. In that context, I decided to open the box anyway and begin to read the book I had been impatiently waiting to be released to the public.

What book could be worth risking my life to read? The book [“Weird: The Power of Being an Outsider in an Insider World”](#) did not disappoint me. The author of the book, Olga Khazan, is a writer for *The Atlantic*. I had read a number of her articles on health and psychology years ago and one day she contacted me for an interview. After that, she interviewed me for a few more articles. She is one of the best writers of psychological science in the business. Her politics don’t align with mine, but guess what? I am a scientist and she is a science writer and our science aligns. As a conservative writer, I engage in political discussions (and fights) all day long most days. Having discussions about science with other scientists and science-knowledgeable people is as good as it gets for me. That’s the reason I got into psychology. In my social psychology courses I always told students about the importance of Hollander’s concept of idiosyncrasy credits and that no one ever talks about those. In her book, she became the first person I have encountered has made reference to that important concept. Perhaps that means that academically we are “weird” together!

In the book *Weird*, Khazan highlights the advantages and disadvantages that can come from standing out and being different. She talks about her own experiences growing up in Texas in a Russian family. She discussed a woman who had left the Amish and joined non-Amish society. She discussed a transgendered politician in a small conservative town, a former Mormon missionary and a plus-sized model pioneer. She discussed many people, all of whom would be considered “normal” if they weren’t living among a different group of people. Some left the new group and some stayed. Some had found their advantages as outsiders who thought differently and stood out, and some could not overcome or reframe that experience.

The most important thing is that she interviewed people who were all special, strong, and resilient in some way and all of whom make a difference in their sphere of influence, however large or small. The book reminded me of the story of the ugly duckling, who was different than the other ducks and turned into a swan. That children’s story gives hope to those who are different. “Weird” does the same.

Her book is entertaining, emotionally powerful, and mixes in a great deal of empirical research from experimental psychology. Everyone feels left out or isolated at times and thus anyone can connect with the human elements of pain and pride in the stories she has collected. Khazan’s self-disclosure creates a strong bond with the reader and is a literary tool she used quite effectively. I suggest that you read her book.

I had the opportunity to interview Olga Khazan about her book. Here is our discussion.

RM: How did you become interested in writing about health, science, and psychology?

OK: I've always had an interest in it, from what I can recall. In college, I was torn between majoring in psychology, journalism, or pre-law. I'm lucky I have a career that combines elements of all three.

RM: What are your two favorite articles that you have written for *The Atlantic* and why are they your favorites?

OK: I really enjoyed writing [this one](#) because it brought me back to Midland, Texas, where I'm from, to report on teen pregnancy prevention, which I'm really passionate about. And almost every woman I know identifies with [this one](#), about how men view women's humor.

RM: What do you think is the hallmark of a good journalist?

OK: Curiosity. Understanding what pisses you off and why.

RM: You wove other people's stories around your deeply personal narrative. Was it scary to disclose so much of your own insecurities and pain? Was it therapeutic to put it on paper in such a way that you could deeply reflect on your own journey?

OK: It wasn't that scary, because I write in a pretty self-confessional style on our site and on my Twitter account. I did wonder if people would end up with the wrong impression of me or something like that, but some people will choose to misread anything, no matter how careful and opaque you are. It wasn't really very therapeutic, but I don't really write for therapy. Usually I only write about something if I've already processed it on a level beyond therapy or even what I would talk about with a friend. Once I heard a good memoirist (I forget who) say that you shouldn't write about something you aren't ready to talk about. I think that's good advice.

RM: What was the most personally powerful story that you encountered from one of your interviewees? Did that story change you in anyway?

OK: The story of Emma Gingerich, the woman who ran away from the Amish, really stayed with me. I think she's one of the most tenacious people I've ever met, and she had to overcome so much. Obviously, all outsiders face hurdles, but the twist to her story was that she was raised in a different time than everyone else. She hadn't used a computer or phone until she was practically an adult. Whenever I feel like what I'm facing is just too much and I'll never be able to do it, I think about everything she overcame and muster that last bit of energy :)

RM: Is it rewarding to think that your book can help others who feel left out and inspire them to reframe their experiences? What message do you have for those who find themselves “weird”?

OK: I would say the big takeaway is that what you tell yourself matters. As I write in the book, a big strength that the more successful “weirdos” have is that they’re able to tell themselves better narratives about whatever is happening to them. Rather than being a victim, they’re the underdog who’s poised for a win. Rather than an oddball, they’re the creative genius. I don’t mean to make this sound easy—I’m a pretty negative person, and I find it hard to put a happy face on things. But **trying** to come up with a better story for your life is a really good way to tap into those last reserves of resilience and make it through a difficult time. (Actually, it’s okay if you’re even lying to yourself a little bit, as long as you’re not so delusional as to be hurting yourself or others.) When the poop really hits the fan in my life, I’ve started telling myself, “at least I can write about this.” It’s my own version of coming up with a more positive way of seeing things.

“Analysis of President Trump’s 2020 State of the Union Address”

February 4, 2020

Published August 23, 2020

Here I analyze President Trump’s State of the Union Address from February of 2020. I analyze political speeches through the lens of Jonathan Haidt’s Moral Foundations Theory. With Haidt’s Moral Foundations there are norms of harm/care and fairness/reciprocity, which are the two foundations through which liberal Democrats tend to analyze information. Conservative Republicans tend to analyze information through those two along with ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. I created a scorecard and I analyzed the 2020 State of the Union speech using these moral foundations. Similarly, in 2018 I analyzed President Trump’s State of the Union address for *Psychology Today* ([State of the Union 2018](#)).

For harm/care and fairness/reciprocity, each had 15 instances of things the president said that fit into those categories. For ingroup/loyalty and authority/respect there were 4 instances in each of those categories and there were 9 instances for purity/sanctity. That shows the President and the President’s speechwriters were looking to give information that hit on the common ground between Democrats and Republicans.

Some examples of the harm/care foundation were when he discussed health care, prescription cost decreases, the opioid epidemic, and neonatal research. Examples of fairness/reciprocity were things like criminal justice reform and replacing NAFTA with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Three times President Trump discussed that as being fairness and reciprocity. He even used those terms, which clearly identified them in the fairness and reciprocity foundation for which he was looking to appeal. He also discussed our allies paying their fair share with NATO. Examples of ingroup/loyalty were his awarding the Medal of Honor to Rush Limbaugh, which played to his base of conservatives. His list of great Americans would also have done the same.

In the authority/respect foundation, he discussed military strength and immigration policies that he framed as needing to enforce and following laws. In the purity/sanctity category he emphasized the burden of illegal immigration on taxpayers as well as the issue of prayer and public schools.

One of the things I found fascinating in this speech compared to previous speeches is that there is more construal on the part of the audience. Construal means perception—it’s the way that we perceive something. Let’s take his discussion of the Alamo. The Alamo for conservative Republicans plays on the ingroup/loyalty foundation. For Democrats who may look at racial injustices and other views of history that they tend to take may look at that under the fairness/reciprocity foundation and see that as a negative. Clearly Republicans and Democrats are speaking different languages when it comes to moral foundations and its different than what we’ve seen in the past when you would find common ground in those two foundations. Its emblematic of the kind of group polarization we are seeing at this time in history between Republicans and Democrats.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with Kurt Schlichter, author of “The 21 Biggest Lies about Donald Trump (and You!)”

August 15, 2020

The new book [“The 21 Biggest Lies about Donald Trump \(and You!\)”](#) is an essential read for any Trump voter who is constantly defending their support for the President. The author of the book, Kurt Schlichter, is a retired Army Infantry colonel, [Senior Columnist for Townhall.com](#), protégé of Andrew Breitbart, and a Los Angeles trial lawyer. He is also the host of two podcasts: “Fighting Words” and “Unredacted.”

The book debunks 21 well-circulated myths about President Trump and his supporters, and does so with the fact-based, objective rebuttals that you would expect from a successful trial lawyer. This book makes the case that President Trump is not evil, not bigoted, and that he has highlighted the most fundamental elements of conservatism during his administration. It also makes the case that President Trump’s supporters are also not evil, bigoted, and have called for the most fundamental elements of conservatism over the more superfluous elements that the establishment GOP promoted for decades.

I had the opportunity to interview Colonel Schlichter about his book. Here is our discussion.

RM: Your latest book is an important resource to help defend Trump voters. Why is this book so important? Did you feel a responsibility to write it?

KS: People want to know they can fight back, and I’ve got a few tricks up my sleeve from lawyering, the Army and comedy. But I feel no responsibility to do anything except be amusing.

RM: What are the two most important myths dispelled in your book?

KS: There’s really only one overarching one – that liberals are worth arguing with. They aren’t, because in their bizarre post-modern milieu truth is not objective. So why waste time arguing with people who literally cannot be argued with because to argue assumes the possibility of changing your mind. When you are simply saying whatever supports your narrative, that’s an alien concept.

RM: How is Andrew Breitbart’s influence on you woven into this book?

KS: Fight and refuse to consider them worthy of respect. They can only win if we submit. They thrive on their unearned position and the prestige they get by default. Deny them those and they freak out.

RM: Bill O’Reilly advises people not to talk about politics at work. Your book appears to be designed to prepare people to fight back rather than avoid conflict. What advice do you have for conservatives as they navigate workplaces and family dinners that might be politically treacherous?

KS: Never start a fight, but win it if it's forced upon you. I don't go pestering people about my views, until and unless they mess with me. Then go for it.

RM: From your perspective, how has Donald Trump forced a change in how the GOP engages in nation building through military action in foreign countries?

KS: The garbage foreign policy elite has not had a real success since the Wall fell. Their policy was an academic exercise that depended on patriotic Americans dying to try to make their lame theories come true. Trump simply placed American interests first, and that meant no new wars we did not need or intend to win.

RM: How do conservatives "normalize" conservatism again in the public sphere of media and the new cancel culture?

KS: Brute political force. We start with laws barring the social, cultural and economic discrimination against us in all the institutions. Those institutions that fail to conform must be destroyed.

RM: As an attorney, you famously defended Ben Shapiro against defamation claims made in the Texas "Clock Boy" incident that occurred in 2015. What can we learn about the seeds of the current cancel culture from that moment in time?

KS: He tried to leverage legal power against Ben. That was dumb. He was in a venue where we could get a fair trial. The smart libs fight in venues (judicial and cultural) where they have the advantage and can win without regard to such bourgeois conceits as "facts" and "law."

RM: My area of scientific expertise is attitudes and persuasion, and you served in the military and worked the Los Angeles Riots of 1992. Will you explain the difference between Information and Kinetic operations, and how that is applicable to what we see with the recent riots across the U. S.?

KS: Kinetic operations use force to generate effect. For example, bullets kill the enemy, hence no more enemy. Info ops use imagery and persuasion to create an effect by causing the target to take or forego an action. The riots were an info op designed to demoralize normal citizens and make them retreat from political participation by generating hopelessness and fear. But the violence the media helpfully depicted created the illusion that it was kinetic. They actually forced nothing – even the destruction they caused happened only because liberal mayors refused to unleash the cops, who could have shut it down in a flash.

RM: You run a business. How have the pandemic lock downs and mandates affected small business in California? What do you think of President Trump's performance in leading the federal government through this?

KS: It's a disaster for businesses that are brick and mortar, like restaurants. Interestingly, the pandemic accelerated the changes already in place thanks to technology by forcing companies to experiment with remote working. I would not want to be in commercial real estate right now. Business found out remote working generally works; it's never going back to how it was with 95% of folks in an office.

I think Trump did fine. I think people are frustrated and don't really understand that he's the President and not Harry Potter. There's no magic wand. The mistakes were at the state and municipal levels.

RM: What is the biggest current threat to American citizens?

KS: Democrats who do not believe that non-Democrats have any legitimate rights or interests. They risk causing open conflict because the rest of America is not simply going to shrug and accept serfdom.

RM: Why should someone spend their hard-earned money on your book? What value do they get from it?

KS: It's hilarious, and I want money.

Review of the Clarence Thomas Movie “Created Equal”

July 29, 2020

[“Created Equal: Clarence Thomas in His Own Words”](#) is a new documentary of the life of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. The movie documents his rise from extreme poverty to become one of the most important legal minds of his generation. In his childhood, he was raised by his grandparents and followed very strict rules. During his time in college, he strayed away from being a conservative, only to gravitate back to conservatism.

Towards the end of the movie, Thomas discusses at length his experience as a Black conservative and how that does not fit with people’s stereotypes of what he should and should not believe. Those reflections are fascinating because they touch on several different psychological themes. Prejudice is a negative attitude against a group of people. The cognitive component of prejudice is called a stereotype. The discrimination component is the behavioral aspect of the prejudiced attitude. The experience of Justice Thomas as a Black conservative, violating other people’s stereotypes, leads to a phenomenon called subtyping. Subtyping occurs when we see someone who does not fit with our belief of what someone in a group should act like and we recategorize them and classify them as something different from a member of that group. Someone who deviates from a stereotype and is welcomed into another group gets subtyped. The other group members might say “You’re not like the rest of them,” whatever the stereotyped outgroup may be. In this case, most Democrats perceive the stereotypes of “Black” and “Conservative” as conflicting.

We see regular subtyping of conservatives when it comes to different ethnic groups. For example, Nikki Haley, Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Devin Nunes, and Tim Scott are all current leaders and thought shapers in the Republican Party, and all are ethnic minorities. Similarly, all are dismissed by many as not being representative of their ethnic groups. By dismissing their ethnicity, Democrats and others ignore the diversity of thought of any social category. Outgroup homogeneity is a social psychological phenomenon where all of the people in the outgroup are perceived to be the same while ingroup members are celebrated for their diverse range of ideas and individual differences. Thus, many Democrats view these Republican minorities not as ethnic minorities, but as Republicans, and discount the great diversity of the GOP. This is the context to Joe Biden’s recent statement “If you have a problem figuring out whether you’re for me or Trump, then you ain’t Black.” Biden is featured prominently in the film as he chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1991 and led the opposition to the nomination of Justice Thomas.

In the past we have seen this subtyping of Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, Clarence Thomas, and J. C. Watts (from my home state of Oklahoma). We see it with conservative commentators as well. Stacy Washington, Candace Owens, Diamond & Silk, and Dinesh D’Souza are some of the minority commentators who are regularly viewed as not representing their groups because they have ideas that deviate from the stereotype of what their ethnic group members might hold.

The Clarence Thomas documentary is fascinating and worth looking at through a social psychological lens of prejudice, outgroup homogeneity, and subtyping.

“Microbiologists Discuss SARS-CoV-2”

May 11, 2020

I recently interviewed two microbiologists about the basics of SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19. You may read that interview at the Oklahoma Academy of Science webpage (link below) or on the Articles and Chapters section of my website.

<https://www.oklahomacademyofscience.org/covid-19-in-ok.html>

“Vicarious Living: NPR Hidden Brain Podcast”

April 8, 2020

A recent NPR Hidden Brain Podcast examined how people gain satisfaction from watching other people do things that they wish they were doing themselves. The episode is “Close Enough: The Lure of Living Through Others” (aired March 30, 2020, originally aired in 2019). In addition to interviews with a handful of people about living vicariously through videos and imagination, the episode features an interview with Dr Ed O’Brien. O’Brien is an experimental social psychologist at the University of Chicago and discusses his research on mental simulations. Though the episode does a good job of creating an entertaining narrative and highlighting O’Brien’s fascinating research, it lacks a discussion of the concepts of vicarious learning, perspective taking, empathy, and mirror neurons. Still, it is worth listening to the episode. You can listen to the episode, read the transcript, or read a summary of the episode below:

[Click here for the episode](#)

“The Landscape and Recent History of Conservative Media in the United States”

March 22, 2020

When I was a kid, every day we had an old black and silver radio in the kitchen. We ate breakfasts, lunches, and dinners together as a family and listened to the radio for the first two meals of the day. Eventually TVs became affordable enough to have more than one in the house, so we put a small one in the kitchen when I was a teenager. For many years of my childhood, fellow Oklahoman Paul Harvey captured my attention with his greeting of “Stand by for news” and signed my lunches off with “Paul Harvey, Good Day!” And of course, Harvey’s *The Rest of the Story* radio segments and books were family favorites. I was listening to the forerunner of a modern conservative media explosion of talk radio, cable television, podcasts, and websites.

The Fairness Doctrine Era

At the time I was listening to Paul Harvey on the radio, the Fairness Doctrine was in place. The Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Fairness Doctrine required broadcasters to present both sides of a public issue. The Fairness Doctrine was in effect from 1949 until Ronald Reagan had it repealed in 1987. During this time period, conservative giant William F. Buckley was the strongest conservative voice, having founded *National Review* in 1955. Buckley’s TV show *Firing Line* ran from 1966-1999 and he also wrote the classic books *God and Man at Yale* (1951) and *Up from Liberalism* (1959).

The Classics of the New Era

The year after the Fairness Doctrine was repealed, Rush Limbaugh’s radio show became nationally syndicated in 1988, but had been in Sacramento since 1984. Limbaugh had a popular TV show that was produced by Roger Ailes from 1992-1996. His TV show warmed conservative audiences up for the launch of Fox News in 1996, for which Roger Ailes was the first CEO. Britt Hume, who had served for 23 years at ABC News and as the chief White House Correspondent from 1989-1996, and Bill O’Reilly, who had served at both CBS and ABC News, gave Fox News immediate legitimacy.

Bill O’Reilly hosted *The O’Reilly Factor* on Fox News from 1996-2017. Sean Hannity started at Fox News in 1996 with *Hannity & Colmes* and maintains his TV show *Hannity* as well as his popular radio show *The Sean Hannity Show*. Laura Ingraham’s radio show ran from 2001-2018 and her Fox News show *The Ingraham Angle* has run since 2017.

Bill Kristol and Fred Barnes operated *The Weekly Standard* from 1995-2018. The neo-conservative publication faltered with conservative audiences after Donald Trump’s 2016 election and Bill Kristol’s Never Trump position.

Matt Drudge created *The Drudge Report* website in 1995. One of his staff members, Andrew Breitbart, went on to found *Breitbart.com* in 2005. Breitbart’s site helped launch the conservative media careers of several notables including Dana Loesch, Larry O’Connor, Ben Shapiro, and Kurt Schlichter.

Glenn Beck’s radio show launched in 2000 with national syndication following in 2002. His TV show ran on CNN (2006-2008) and Fox News (2009-2011). He launched his own independent media platform The Blaze in 2011.

Larry Elder’s show has been around since the early 1990’s, morphing back and forth from TV to Radio.

The Best of the Neophytes

The Federalist was founded in 2013 and includes the notable Senior Editor Mollie Hemingway. *Townhall.com* was founded in 1995 and has had a resurgence in the past few years, with notable writers Katie Pavlich, Larry O'Connor, and Kurt Schlichter. *RedState.com* was founded in 2004 and has also seen a recent surge of popularity. *Conservative Review* was founded in 2014 and is now owned by Blaze Media, with Mark Levin as the editor. Levin's radio show has been aired since 2002 and his Fox News TV show since 2017.

The Dispatch was founded in 2019 by former *National Review* writer Jonah Goldberg and features Senior Editor David French, also a former *National Review* writer. *The Dispatch* leans more towards libertarians and Never Trumpers. *The Hill* was founded in 1994 and features Joe Concha. *The Washington Examiner* was founded in 2005 and features Byron York as the Chief Political Correspondent.

There are several new conservative leaning TV networks. One America News was founded in 2013 and features Alex Salvi and Graham Ledger. Newsmax started as a website in 1998 and launched its TV channel Newsmax TV in 2014, recently adding Sean Spicer to their lineup.

There are many conservative personalities that have podcasts of their radio shows, or just stand-alone podcasts. Ben Shapiro of *The Daily Wire* hosts *The Ben Shapiro Show*. Ted Cruz and Michael Knowles host *The Verdict*, which became the number one podcast in America when it launched during the Senate Impeachment Hearings in January of 2020. Stacy Washington's *Stacy on The Right* podcast is also growing in popularity.

These conservative media outlets offer a wide variety of perspectives and differing views on many issues. The repeal of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987 created an opportunity for conservatives to test their ideas in the marketplace. Platforms such as radio, television, independent websites, YouTube channels, internet radio, and podcasts have all allowed conservatives a chance to be heard and to display an arrange of voices.

Further Reading

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“COVID-19 and Concepts from Social Psychology: Emotional contagion, social dilemma, and psychological reactance”

March 16, 2020

There are several social psychological concepts that are relevant to the current COVID-19 Pandemic. Here I will discuss emotional contagion, social dilemmas, and psychological reactance.

Emotional contagion: The rapid spread of emotions through a social network or crowd. For example, in 1938 Orson Welles did a radio broadcast of War of the Worlds that frightened people across the nation. People heard the broadcast of an alien invasion and panicked. Some called the police, who were also panicking in some places. The fear spread from person to person. During this pandemic, the spread of fear has been on display for several weeks.

Social Dilemma: A conflict where what is in the best interest of individuals is different than what is in the best interests of the collective group. Voluntary watering restrictions is an example. When a town goes on voluntary watering restrictions, it is in each person's best interests for everyone else to limit their water usage while that person waters the heck out of their lawn that now looks even better compared to the lawns of their neighbors. But if everyone does that, the water supply will drop and the town will have mandatory restrictions. That's exactly what happens, and city planners take the rapid increase of consumption into account when they declare voluntary watering restrictions. They know that they will quickly get to the mandatory restriction level with the new surge of usage. With the pandemic, it is in everyone's short-sighted individual interests to carry on with life and let other people worry about self-quarantines. However, it is in the best interest of the collective group for social distancing and self-quarantines to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Psychological reactance: When people believe a freedom is being taken from them, they respond by performing the thing they think they aren't supposed to do. One study sought to solve a graffiti problem and used two different signs. One said, "Do not write on these walls under any circumstances." The other said, "Please do not write on these walls." Two weeks later there was more graffiti on the wall of the first sign than of the second (and more graffiti on the first actual sign, too!). People are ornery suckers, and don't take being told what to do all that well. That's why many people, predicting large restrictions to their freedoms coming at the city, state, and federal levels, have defiantly increased their social contact with others during this pandemic.

“The Psychology of Quarantine: Social Media to the Rescue!”

March 14, 2020

Given the recent COVID-19 Pandemic, it is an appropriate time to review the research on the psychological impact quarantines. Quarantines differ from isolation. Quarantines restrict people who are potentially exposed to the contagion in order to protect others. Isolation separates those who have been infected by the contagion to protect those who have not. Here I will discuss quarantines.

In *Lancet* on March 14th of 2020, Brooks et al. (2020) published a review of 24 psychological studies of quarantine. They reviewed research from outbreaks of SARS, Ebola, H1N1, Middle East respiratory syndrome, and equine influenza. They suggested that the collective benefits of quarantine must be calculated along with the potential psychological costs when deciding to mandate quarantine. This should apply to both mandated quarantine and self-quarantine.

One study of hospital staff found quarantine was more predictive of stress disorders than staff who had not been quarantined. Compared to non-quarantined staff, quarantined staff had increased exhaustion, detachment, anxiety, irritability, and worse concentration after their quarantine. Another study showed that quarantine predicted post-traumatic stress symptoms in quarantined hospital staff three years later. A separate study found post-traumatic symptoms increased post-quarantine for both children and parents, with a 400% increase in symptoms for quarantined children over non-quarantined children.

A study of college students found no differences on post-traumatic symptoms or mental health problems between quarantined and non-quarantined students. This is good news for college students in a quarantine!

One study of 1656 quarantined individuals found small percentages of anxiety (7%) and anger (17%) during the quarantine, but the symptoms nearly disappeared 4-6 months later (3% anxiety, 6% anger).

Three years after SARS, healthcare workers who had been quarantined were more likely to abuse alcohol.

In general, quarantine does change behavior. After a quarantine, people are more likely to avoid people who are coughing or sneezing, avoid crowded places that are enclosed, and avoid all public spaces for several weeks.

A history of psychiatric illness increases the level of quarantine related anxiety 4-6 months post-quarantine.

Overall, here is what you can expect to experience in a quarantine.

--The longer the quarantine, the worse the deterioration in mental health, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and anger. Avoidance behaviors increase with length of quarantine.

--Increased sense of boredom, frustration, and sense of isolation.

--If supplies are inadequate, this increases frustration during the quarantine and predicts increased anxiety and anger 4-6 months post-quarantine.

--If information from health officials is inadequate, fear increases. Individuals who perceive compliance with the quarantine as difficult are the most likely to experience post-traumatic stress symptoms after the quarantine.

--The more financial loss the person experiences from the quarantine, the more anger, anxiety and other psychological disorder symptoms they experience months later. This disproportionately affects lower income people more than higher income people.

--Quarantined people report experiencing stigma in their local neighborhoods if they have been targeted for mandated quarantine. They face withdrawn social invitations, fear, and criticism. This is increased when media coverage features dramatic negative headlines, which occurred during the SARS outbreak.

Based on the research, the top two things you can do during a quarantine to reduce the psychological impact:

--Frame it as an altruistic act that helps other people.

--Remain active in your social network.

A quarantine highlights one of the most important elements of social media—social connection that can occur remotely. Take advantage of your social media and stay connected. It's the best thing you can do for yourself in a quarantine AND it helps other people, which helps you too!

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