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THEY SAID IT

Livin' on a dream ain't easy
The closer the knit the tighter the fit
The chills stay away
You take 'em in stride the family pride

You know that faith is your foundation
With a whole lotta love and a warm conversation
But don't forget to pray
Making you strong where you belong

Livin' in the love of the common people
Smiles from the heart of the family man
Daddy's gonna buy you a dream to cling to
Mama's gonna love you just as much as she can, as she can . . .

Waylon Jennings, "Love of the Common People," 1967.

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RACE AND WHITE VOTERS.

As we proofread last week's newsletter (yes, Virginia, we do proofread; we're just amazingly bad at it), it occurred to us that this week we should revisit one of the statements we made in that article, not because it was wrong, but because we didn't really mine the thought behind it deeply enough.

The line in question read as follows:

Still, the fact remains that this white and working class flight from the Democratic Party is not about race as much as it is about the Party's abandonment of all that these voters – blue-collar, Midwestern, Southern, Appalachian – hold dear.

In the context in which the sentence appeared, it was absolutely and unquestionably true. White Americans – and working-class whites in particular – have, in fact, abandoned the Democratic Party in droves over the last four decades. And that desertion has been almost completely unrelated to race, contrary to the whining and rationalization engaged in by the abandoned Democrats and their allies in the press.

The single exception to this rule involved the recalcitrant Southern segregationists, who raged against LBJ after he signed the Civil Rights Act. These men and women certainly ran away from the Great Society, although a great many of them didn't run to the GOP, but to a fellow Southern Democrat, George Wallace and his American Independent Party. It is worth remembering, we believe, that Wallace carried five southern states in 1968 and won nearly ten million votes.

Contrary to the post-hoc analysis provided by many on the left, the Republican Party did not embrace these racial reactionaries. And while many of them ended up in the GOP, they did so not because of racial prejudices but because of their discomfort with the extreme radical direction that the Democratic Party was pursuing, as illustrated by the riots at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago. Or, as we noted last week, they left the Democratic Party, for all intents and purposes, because the Democratic Party first abandoned them and all that they held dear.

When Ronald Reagan officially became a Republican in 1962, he famously declared that “I didn’t leave the Democratic party. The Democratic party left me.” He may or may not have been the first to make such a claim, but he certainly wasn’t the last. On issue after issue after issue – from abortion to national security; from the religious inheritance of the nation to the proper role of government – the Democratic Party from George McGovern and Eugene McCarthy on, has abandoned its erstwhile voters, sticking its big, ugly proverbial finger in the eye of a huge segment of its Depression-era coalition in pursuit of greater power and a more self-effacing nation.

And that, at long last, brings us to the reason why the line quoted above struck us as needing to be discussed a little further. There is little question, as we said, that white voters and white blue-collar voters in particular did not make race a determining factor in their decision to leave the Democratic party, particularly in their decision as expressed in the midterm election two weeks ago. But this formulation about race-free decision-making only holds true if you look at it from said voters’ perspective *exclusively*.

Now, bear with us a minute as we try to make our point, since it is, we think, a subtle one. If you look at this equation differently; if you turn the focus of your attention away from the voters and their vote choices and toward the other primary noun in the sentence – *namely the Democratic Party* – then the issue of race actually becomes relevant, if not explicitly so. White and working-class voters have moved and continue to move away from the Democratic Party based, to a great extent, on their perception that the ruling elites

– people like President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder – dislike them, and perhaps dislike them rather vehemently. This perception is, we’re afraid, undoubtedly accurate. And that, quite naturally, has led many to speculate that there is, in fact, a racial component to the “white flight” from the Democrats, but that the racial obsession belongs to said ruling Democrats, not to the fleeing white voters.

Indeed, a great many of modern conservatism’s most prominent and most identifiable commentators have made precisely this argument. The left – led today by Barack Obama – hates white, middle class and working class voters. And since Obama is black, this hatred must, therefore, be premised on the notion of race.

In the summer of 2009, for example, Rush Limbaugh, likely the big daddy of them all when it comes to influential conservative commentators, said the following in response to the President Obama’s appointment of Sonia Sotomayor:

So here you have a racist. You might want to soften that, and you might want to say a reverse racist. And the libs, of course, say that minorities cannot be racists because they don’t have the power to implement their racism. Well, those days are gone, because reverse racists certainly do have the power to implement their power. Obama is the greatest living example of a reverse racist, and now he’s appointed one.

Likewise, also in the summer of 2009, *Fox News*’s Glenn Beck, likely the small daddy of them all when it comes to influential conservative commentators, called President Obama a racist in a discussion about the Henry Louis Gates flap and Obama’s role in it. To wit:

This president, I think, has exposed himself as a guy, over and over and over again, who has a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture . . . I don’t know what it is.

All of this makes a certain amount of superficial sense, we think. And certainly it makes for great headlines. But if you scratch the surface of the charge, it tends to flake away, revealing something a little more subtle but undoubtedly more important underneath.

Now, we have no idea whether Obama, as a black man, indeed harbors any personal enmity toward white people. Maybe he does; maybe he doesn't. But, despite Limbaugh and Beck's insistence to the contrary, it doesn't matter. And it doesn't matter because the reality is that Obama's personal racial feelings are irrelevant to his policies and his ideological formulations.

This conflict, which Beck and Limbaugh have associated with race is, we think, really about class. The ruling class, as we have noted countless times before, thinks the country class is vile, stupid, and insignificant. And the fact that the current leader of the ruling class is black, while the members of the country class happen to be white, is, by and large, immaterial. This is a hatred that both transcends and pre-empts race.

Consider, if you will, who Barack Obama is and how he came to the position he in which we find him, i.e. the most powerful man in the world.

His own ethnicity notwithstanding, Barack Obama has nearly always lived in and moved easily through the corridors of erstwhile white privilege, the corridors of ruling-class power: prep school, the Ivy League, Ivy League law school, prominent and prestigious law school teaching appointment, etc. Given this and given the fact that the left's animosity pre-dates Obama, we can't help but think the President's hostility to traditional American ideals and the voters who embrace them is really not racist in nature, but classist. It is far more likely, in our opinion, that Obama dislikes the coincidentally white "average Americans" simply because of the company he has kept throughout his life, the myths and stories he has read and listened to, and the educators to whom he has been exposed.

In short, Obama doesn't dislike white and working class Americans because he is black. He dislikes them because he is a liberal. He dislikes them because he is a member in good standing of the nation's ruling class, its so-called elites, who fashion themselves intellectuals and believe that their willingness to obsess over this nation's historical shortcomings provides them the philosophical and moral high ground.

What we think happened to Beck and Limbaugh is that they got too fancy with their analysis, mistaking class-generated animosity toward traditional white America with race-generated animosity toward traditional white America. In so doing, they violated Isaac Newton's first and second rules of "Reasoning in Philosophy," which require that "We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances... Therefore, to the same natural effects we must, so far as possible, assign the same causes."

When Beck and Limbaugh concluded that Obama is a racist, they both overlooked the history of the ruling class's disdain for average Americans and added unnecessary and largely unknowable variables to their equations. They presumed, in other words, that Obama's race accounted for his dislike of traditional, white, European culture, when his known ideology and educational history were true and knowable and more than sufficient to explain the "appearance" of his thoughts and actions.

It is worth remembering, we think, that a great many of Obama's political close calls during the 2008 campaign season were self-inflicted and dealt specifically with his discomfort with "traditional" Americans and their culture. Moreover, some of them revealed his associations and comfort with men and women who were known as vocal and aggressive, sometime violent, critics of traditional America and traditional American values. Obama's own comments about his grandmother being a "typical white person" or about rural Pennsylvanians "clinging" to God and guns in the face of uncertainty did him considerable harm, if not electorally, then personally.

When it was discovered that Obama's political career had been launched at a party thrown by two erstwhile terrorists, William Ayers and Bernadine Dohrn, many Republicans insisted that this showed disqualifyingly poor judgment on Obama's part and insisted that it meant that he could not be trusted to deal with other terrorists. These people missed the point entirely. The "terrorism" aspect of the controversy was a sideshow. The real ignominy was Obama's obvious lack of discomfort with radical American haters like Ayers and Dohrn.

Obama countered that Ayers, the onetime ringleader and co-founder of the Weather Underground, was just a "guy in the neighborhood," thinking that this absolved him from any culpability. In truth, it served precisely the opposite purpose, demonstrating irrefutably that Obama moved in the same social, political, and academic circles with people who hated this country and its traditions so much that they actually tried to overthrow its government by violence. Ayers was, in fact, just a guy in the neighborhood – a neighborhood in which Obama felt completely at home.

A similar phenomenon can be seen both in Obama's approach to foreign policy and the right's reaction to that policy. Consider, for example, the recent controversy over the new book by conservative author Dinesh D'Souza and the endorsement of the theories contained therein by former Speaker of the House and future presidential candidate Newt Gingrich. D'Souza thinks that Obama has some secret, hidden agenda that motivates him. And Newt apparently agrees. And the key to understanding all of this, apparently, is Obama's Kenyan heritage. D'Souza explains:

Theories abound to explain the President's goals and actions. Critics in the business community--including some Obama voters who now have buyer's remorse – tend to focus on two main themes. The first is that Obama is clueless about business. The second is that Obama is a socialist – not an out-and-out Marxist, but something

of a European-style socialist, with a penchant for leveling and government redistribution.

These theories aren't wrong so much as they are inadequate. Even if they could account for Obama's domestic policy, they cannot explain his foreign policy. The real problem with Obama is worse--much worse. But we have been blinded to his real agenda because, across the political spectrum, we all seek to fit him into some version of American history. In the process, we ignore Obama's own history. Here is a man who spent his formative years – the first 17 years of his life – off the American mainland, in Hawaii, Indonesia and Pakistan, with multiple subsequent journeys to Africa.

A good way to discern what motivates Obama is to ask a simple question: What is his dream? Is it the American dream? Is it Martin Luther King's dream? Or something else? . . .

What then is Obama's dream? We don't have to speculate because the President tells us himself in his autobiography, *Dreams from My Father*. According to Obama, his dream is his father's dream. Notice that his title is not *Dreams of My Father* but rather *Dreams from My Father*. Obama isn't writing about his father's dreams; he is writing about the dreams he received from his father.

So who was Barack Obama Sr.? He was a Luo tribesman who grew up in Kenya and studied at Harvard. He was a polygamist who had, over the course of his lifetime, four wives and eight children. One of his sons, Mark Obama, has accused him of abuse and wife-beating. He was also a regular drunk driver who

got into numerous accidents, killing a man in one and causing his own legs to be amputated due to injury in another. In 1982 he got drunk at a bar in Nairobi and drove into a tree, killing himself.

An odd choice, certainly, as an inspirational hero. But to his son, the elder Obama represented a great and noble cause, the cause of anticolonialism. Obama Sr. grew up during Africa's struggle to be free of European rule, and he was one of the early generation of Africans chosen to study in America and then to shape his country's future . . .

The climax of Obama's narrative is when he goes to Kenya and weeps at his father's grave. It is riveting: "When my tears were finally spent," he writes, "I felt a calmness wash over me. I felt the circle finally close. I realized that who I was, what I cared about, was no longer just a matter of intellect or obligation, no longer a construct of words. I saw that my life in America--the black life, the white life, the sense of abandonment I'd felt as a boy, the frustration and hope I'd witnessed in Chicago--all of it was connected with this small piece of earth an ocean away, connected by more than the accident of a name or the color of my skin. The pain that I felt was my father's pain."

In an eerie conclusion, Obama writes that "I sat at my father's grave and spoke to him through Africa's red soil." In a sense, through the earth itself, he communes with his father and receives his father's spirit. Obama takes on his father's struggle, not by recovering his body but by embracing his cause. He decides that where Obama Sr. failed, he will succeed. Obama Sr.'s hatred of the colonial system becomes Obama Jr.'s

hatred; his botched attempt to set the world right defines his son's objective. Through a kind of sacramental rite at the family tomb, the father's struggle becomes the son's birthright.

All of this is fun and interesting. But it's covered in navel lint. Or to be more precise, it injects an absolutely unnecessary variable into the equation, namely Obama's ethnic heritage, which is not only silly, but compromises the theory, making it appear, again, that race is something over which Obama's opponents can, should, and do obsess. Like Limbaugh and Beck, D'Souza ignores Newton (and Descartes, and Aquinas, and countless others).

Obama's political predilections – his rejection of the "special relationship" with Britain, his world apology tour, his own obsession with America's wrongs and not its rights – are all far more easily explained by the fact that he is a liberal in the great tradition of the post-60s liberals. He is one of them, no more, no less.

Just under 14 months ago, we called Obama the first "post-Western" president in America, noting that he had always been "associated, both personally and intellectually, with the strains of American leftism that have always tended to see the United States and its Western progenitors as forces for evil rather than good in the world, the pseudo-intellectual types whom the late Ambassador Kirkpatrick famously described as the 'blame America first' crowd." In that piece, we quoted, among others, *Commentary's* Jennifer Rubin, who put it this way:

Obama plainly embodies that mindset of liberal elites. America is flawed. America has no distinct message or values, and its interests are entitled to no more weight than Belgium's or Cuba's. It's wrongheaded to assert our national interests. We should be seeking consensus and righting the great wrongs that America has done to other nations—both its stinginess in redistributing wealth and its failure to

cater to other nations' geopolitical and psychological concerns. Russia needs reassuring. The Arabs need validation. And it's the president's job to lower America's profile so as to not incur the wrath of hostile powers.

You'll note that this explanation is sufficient, and the injection into the discussion of Obama's ethnicity is both superfluous and complicating. More to the point, we suppose, any discussion of Obama's ethnicity confuses the issue and makes it appear that his critics – in this case D'Souza and Gingrich – are the ones obsessed with race. And this is precisely backwards.

Obama's guilt; his unhappiness with American foreign policy failures; his distaste for Britain and for the special relationship are, more than anything, simply the ritual liberal denunciation of "eurocentrism," the ordinary, everyday rejection of "dead white males" as the prime movers in world history. Obama's post-Westernism is, in a very real sense, nothing more than a wan imitation of that which the intellectuals at Harvard and Yale, and Columbia, and the rest of elite academia have been embracing for decades. America is flawed and needs fixing, in Obama's eyes, not because he is black, but because he is nothing more than your standard-issue liberal intellectual wannabe.

We realize that we too have gone a long way to make a simple point, but we think it's an important point and one that is well worth making. Last week, we suggested that race is not a determining factor in the vote choices of most of those who abandoned the Obama coalition and who have been abandoning the Democratic coalition more generally at various points for the last four-plus decades. This is, essentially, true, though it is important to note that a broader, more piercing examination of the issue shows that race does, in fact, play some role, but in the formulation of the policies that the majority of white and working class American reject, not in the rejection of those policies.

Of the two parties, it is the Democrats who remain obsessed with race. And it is therefore the Democrats who can be counted upon to dismiss any and all

challenges to their preferred policy outcomes to be premised on race and racial obsessions. It is going to be a long two years, in other words, though this self-destructive obsession will hardly end when Obama leaves office. Obama, after all, is a mere irrelevancy here. He's a run-of-the-mill liberal. And the next Democratic leader will all but certainly be precisely the same, irrespective of his or her personal ethnic heritage.

ISLAM AND WESTERN GOVERNANCE.

When honest observers try to explain why it is that more people don't speak out against radical Islam and against the atrocities committed in the name of Islam, they almost invariably focus their comments on two principal explanations, one for Westerners and one for so-called "moderate" Muslims.

In the case of the former, the explanation is that they are uncomfortable talking about radical Islam because they are uncomfortable talking about Islam at all, knowing that the subject is very delicate. In places like . . . well . . . all of Europe and Canada, speaking ill of Islam can be considered a criminal offense. Note well the example of Dutch Parliamentarian Geert Wilders, who all this fall has been on trial in his homeland for allegedly "inciting hatred," by making a film juxtaposing verses from the Koran against the acts of violence for which extremists use those verses as justification. The prosecution in Wilders' case has conceded that its case is remarkably weak, yet the filmmaker remains an official enemy of the state awaiting likely trial. He was banned for some time from entry into Great Britain, and he serves, more or less, as an example to others who might be contemplating similar criticism against Islam.

In Canada, one doesn't even need to say or write anything defamatory about Muslims to feel the wrath of the frightened and politically correct state. In the case of the writer Mark Steyn, for example, the Canadian "Human Rights" ninny charged him with an offense against Muslims simply for quoting the text written by a radical imam but which some Muslim or

another in Canada thought portrayed his religion in an unflattering light. And while Steyn beat the official rap, he remains *persona non grata* in his homeland, which he has dubbed “The Demented Dominion.” Moreover, he is considered far too “controversial” by civic and university officials in London, Ontario to be allowed to speak freely.

Even in the United States, where that pesky ol’ First Amendment prevents government types from actually blocking free speech or prosecuting derelicts for daring to engage in such subversive talk, various men and woman who have had the audacity to speak out against radical Islam are branded by the powers that be as “racists,” “Islamaphobes,” or, worse yet “Zinoist mouthpieces.” Our own friends, the incomparable Daniel Pipes and the irreplaceable Steven Emerson, have been labeled “anti-Islamic,” and far worse, by those who take issue with the audacity they demonstrate in daring to discuss Islamofascism and the terrorism it precipitates.

Additionally, as you may recall from earlier this fall, anyone, anywhere who dared even to question the propriety of placing an Islamic “cultural center” near Ground Zero was labeled an ignorant, racist hillbilly – or words to that effect – by the likes of New York Mayor Nurse Michael Bloomberg and the President of the United States Barack Obama. Never mind that the “cultural center’s” developer as much as conceded that the placement of the mosque at that site was deliberate and provocative. Any criticism of any sort was deemed beyond the bounds of civic discourse.

As for the Muslims throughout the world who might dare to speak out, the explanation for their reticence to do so has almost always centered on the intimidation practiced against them by their fellow Muslims, the violent extremists in particular. We are told time and again that only a few moderates dare to speak out against the radicals who pervert Islam and use it as an excuse to wage war for fear of their own lives or those of their families. And this is despite the fact that the moderates comprise the overwhelming majority of Muslims worldwide.

In this case, the examples of Salman Rushdie and Ayaan Hirsi Ali are, we think, instructive.

You may recall that Rushdie, the son of Anglo-Indian parents who were nominally Muslim, wrote a book called *The Satanic Verses*, which was published in 1988. Rushdie’s book was deemed sacrilegious by some Islamic radicals, most notably Iran’s Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who issued a *fatwa* (religious opinion) calling for the author’s death. Rushdie has – as of yet, at least – not been assassinated, but he has had to live in hiding for many years, and was the victim of at least one assassination attempt, carried out in 1989, allegedly by the Lebanese Shi’ite Muslim group Hezbollah.

As for Ayaan Hirsi Ali, she may, in fact, be one of the bravest women in the world, not that your traditional leftist American feminists could be bothered to notice. Ali, for those who don’t know, is an erstwhile Somali woman who fled to Europe, who applied for and received asylum in the Netherlands, who was elected to the Dutch parliament, who helped write Theo Van Gogh’s controversial film *Submission* (which resulted in Van Gogh’s assassination by an Islamic radical), who has been highly critical of Islam’s treatment of women, who has been the subject of countless death threats, who had to go into hiding because of said threats, who had her Dutch citizenship challenged because she allegedly lied by using a false name on her asylum application, and who, after endless harassment, left the Netherlands for the United States, where she continues to speak out against Islam’s treatment of women and to be threatened with death for sacrilege and apostasy.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is not, of course, typical. But she, like Wilders, serves as a great example to others who might think to follow in her footsteps: think twice, the warning goes, lest you wind up dead, like Hirsi’s friend Van Gogh, or abandoned by all your friends and family, like Hirsi herself.

In general, these two explanations tend to explain the majority of the reticence of potential critics to condemn radical Islam, or at least that’s what we

have come to believe. But despite the manifold and manifest examples confirming these explanations, there is still, we believe, an additional explanation that is far too often overlooked. And this explanation is critical because it is one over which we, as a people, ultimately have control.

At the end of a piece published last week in the *Wall Street Journal Europe*, two scholars from the Hudson Institute, Nina Shea, a senior fellow and Director of the Institute's Center for Religious Freedom, and Paul Marshall, also a senior fellow at the Center, wrote the following paragraph, which, we believe, contained tremendous, if too often overlooked insight. To wit:

One result of this legal confusion is that many Europeans, including many Muslims, will think it wisest to keep silent on all matters Islamic. The late Professor Nasr Abu-Zayd, who, under similar laws, was driven out of Egypt to the Netherlands for his liberal interpretation of Islam, wrote that such charges "confine the world's Muslim population to a bleak, colorless prison of socio-cultural and political conformity."

Now, we suppose that people like Shea and Marshall, who dedicate their lives to the study of issues such as these, think about the "chilling effect" that political correctness and government intimidation can have on Muslims, but we don't suspect than many others do. Indeed, we'd never given it much thought before, and we doubt seriously than many mainstream political analysts have either. Truth be told, we'd actually guess that most mainstream analysts think precisely the opposite and are, in fact, partially responsible for the misperception of Muslims as a solitary, undifferentiated block that uniformly chafes at any criticism of radical Islamists.

The truth, we suspect, is that most Muslims in America and throughout the West detest the Islamists and believe that they should be held up to contempt and ridicule. But they are afraid to say so or to cause much

commotion about it – and not just because they fear the violent coercion of the extremists, but also, or maybe especially because they fear the somewhat less violent though equally real coercion of *their government*.

It is bad enough to be called a heretic against Islam by violent extremists, but it is exponentially worse to be called a heretic against Islam by the very government sworn to protect you from said extremists. These are the people who are supposed to believe in freedom, liberty, individual rights, and the social contract, yet they are willing to throw all of these aside if any individual Muslim dares not to conform to the ruling class's prejudices regarding poor and oppressed minorities. Why would anyone voluntarily bring that upon himself? Why would anyone incur the ruling class's wrath, in addition to the extremists, just to make a point?

We may not be able to prove this supposition, of course, though we think that there is some circumstantial evidence to back it up. For example, in a poll published last week by Gallup, only 43% of American Muslim respondents believed that the Ground Zero mosque should be built on the proposed location. A greater number, 44%, told Gallup that the mosque should either be moved or turned into an "interfaith institution." Needless to say, this doesn't comport well with the mainstream notion of "Muslim opinion," though prominent Muslims can be forgiven for not wanting to make a big deal about this, for fear be called an "Islamophobe" by the ever-tolerant Nurse Bloomberg.

In a piece for *The Christian Science Monitor* also published last week, Joseph Bosco, a former Defense Department official who worked on "Muslim Outreach," alleged that the "99.9 percent" of Muslims who abhor terrorism have not "met the challenge" of "delegitimizing . . . would-be holy warriors." "Muslim leaders," Bosco wrote, "have made several statements condemning terrorism. But there has been little follow through. They spend more time pointing out alleged Islamophobia than working to undermine violent jihadists."

That's all well and good, we suppose. And certainly Bosco has a point. But at the same time, it appears never to have occurred to him – a former prominent government agent in the service of Muslim outreach – that part of the reason that there is no “follow through” is because of the government itself. Bosco complains about a “cognitive dissonance” on the part of moderate Muslims, but never even contemplates the cognitive dissonance that exists on the part of the government. The government tells us it wants Muslims extremism to be defeated, specifically by “moderates,” yet it takes a role – passive in this country, active in much of the rest of the West – in stifling the voices of those very same moderates.

Bosco calls for “unflinching honesty” in addressing the problems that moderate Muslims have in condemning their radical co-religionists. We agree. But we wonder, quite seriously, whether the ruling classes of the United States and especially Canada and Europe would be prepared for such honesty. If Bosco's example provides any clues, then we doubt it.

Over the course of several years, we have commented repeatedly on the hindrances to effective counter-terrorism thrown up by political correctness. And we have also commented repeatedly on the need for Muslims to take the lead in combating extremism. What we never realized, never even contemplated, was the notion that the two might be intimately related. Political correctness and the associated arrogance of the ruling class have, over the years, proven to be a royal pain in the backside, and there was always the possibility that they would cost lives. Now, though, it appears that the stakes are even greater than we thought and that these ruling class prejudices just might be preventing the peace that we all claim to want.

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