

February 23, 2014

Ron Christie says Justice Thomas is right about the country's obsession with race. *Are we obsessed with race and racism in our society? Before you answer the question, consider how issues of race are brought up in the media and discussed around the proverbial water cooler. Do we discuss the remarkable progress we've made as a country since the dark days of segregation and Jim Crow?*

Do we consider how blacks lived in the South in the not too distant past—like my grandparents, who ran the risk of being lynched for looking at someone white? That's given way to interracial marriage no longer being a taboo. The Supreme Court didn't repeal the statute banning interracial marriage in Virginia until 1967.

Unfortunately, very little of the dialogue involving race in America today is positive, uplifting, or inspirational. Instead, there is a compulsion by many on the left to brand their political opponents as being racist. Two specific events occurred in the past week that have me firmly convinced that there is an obsession with race in America today that is destructive to our societal cohesiveness.

First, consider the pivotal vote held by autoworkers in Chattanooga, Tenn., last Friday in which the majority ruled and decided not to join the United Auto Workers union. Perhaps these workers did not want their dues siphoned off for political activity. Perhaps they were motivated by the union influence in Detroit, which ultimately led to the town seeking bankruptcy protection. Whatever the reason behind their decision, the employees ultimately voted 712-626 against joining the UAW. Case closed? Hardly. ...

Bethany Mandel hopes Hillary will not run.

At a Shabbat (Sabbath meal) this past week, conversation veered into the political realm, as it often does when my husband and I are guests. We began to discuss the likelihood of Hillary Clinton running, the papers recently unearthed by my former colleague Alana Goodman, and about how Bill's wandering eye could impact Hillary's campaign. Around the table were three young people, ranging in age from about 9-17. Adult participants in the conversation soon realized that it was impossible to conduct a conversation about the Clintons with children present, and soon, the mother (rightfully) asked for a complete change in subject. Before doing so we reflected how sad it is that a president's legacy cannot truthfully be discussed with innocent ears listening.

For how long can this mother shield her children from the topic? If Hillary runs, perhaps only a few more months. With the Clintons back in the news, pundits will be (and should be) discussing how ready America is to relive the sex scandals of the '90s. Anyone who believes that Bill has learned his lesson need only look to Anthony Weiner to understand that old dogs can't, and won't, learn new tricks. Bill's wandering eye, both in the past and, in all likelihood, the future, will be a topic of conversation for as long as a Clinton occupies the White House.

The conversation led me to reminisce about how my own understanding about marriage and sexuality was shaped during my childhood by the scandal. Bill Clinton taught me about sex, about truth, and about politics. Do I really want to have the same conversations with my children that my

mother had to have with me? These were some of the many questions my poor mother (and all of her friends) had to grapple with: ...

Megan McArdle on letting your kids fail.

I'm on the road this week, giving talks on my new book about learning to fail better: that is, first, to give ourselves the permission to take on challenges where we might very well fail; second, to pick ourselves up as quickly as possible and move on when things don't work out. This is, I argue, vital on a personal level, as well as vital for the economy, because that's where innovation and growth come from.

The other day, after one of my talks, a 10th-grade girl came up and shyly asked if I had a minute. I always have a minute to talk to shy high school sophomores, having been one myself.

And this is what she asked me:

"I understand what you're saying about trying new things, and hard things, but I'm in an International Baccalaureate program and only about five percent of us will get 4.0, so how can I try a subject where I might not get an A?"

I was floored. All I could think as I talked to this poor girl is "America, you're doing it wrong."

I was 15 in 10th grade. If you can't try something new in 10th grade, when can you? ...

Peter Berkowitz from the Hoover Institution on how we might improve colleges.

Liberal education is in decline. And professors and administrators at our best liberal arts colleges are hastening its demise.

Much has been written about liberal education's skyrocketing costs, its failure to provide students with the knowledge and intellectual skills they need to succeed in a competitive globalized economy, and its burdening of students with massive debt. But these big problems are only part of the story.

As important as is its contribution to individual economic well-being and to national prosperity, liberal education's traditional and proper aim is even more comprehensive and vital to the public interest: to prepare students to seize the wide range of opportunities and meet the full spectrum of responsibilities characteristic of free men and women.

When it lives up to its own standards, liberal education equips citizens with the mental habits needed to engage effectively in political debate and cast votes in an informed manner. Moreover, by acquainting students with the rich variety of opinions within Western civilization about moral, political, and religious life and introducing them to competing opinions in other civilizations, liberal education promotes the virtues of toleration and moderation.

Liberal education is not neutral. When true to itself, it encourages gratitude toward free societies for offering the opportunity to study fundamental ideas and seminal events, and for maintaining—

by means of customs, laws, and political institutions—a framework that allows individuals and their communities a wide sphere in which to organize their lives as they think best. ...

The cold winter creates a major tourist attraction in Northern Wisconsin. WSJ tells us about Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

When Dan Gross learned that Lake Superior had frozen over enough this winter for people to walk to the ice caves along Wisconsin's northern shoreline, he recruited a handful of friends to make the sojourn. On a recent Sunday, they rode their snowmobiles through the woods and arrived on the frozen lake at noon.

"The ice was incredible," said Mr. Gross, a 46-year-old heating and cooling technician from Des Moines, Iowa, of the majestic formations that decorate a string of caves carved into the sandstone cliffs centuries ago. "But I was really amazed by all the people," he said of the miles of visitors snaking their way from cave to cave on the frozen lakeshore. "It was like an exodus.

The migration is the handiwork of both mother nature and Facebook. Frigid temperatures gripping the Midwest have sealed the Great Lakes beneath vast sheets of ice, turning Lake Superior into flat, frozen tundra the likes of which has been seen just a couple of times in the past two decades. Since earlier this winter, when waves crashed and then froze against the cliffs, tens of thousands of visitors have flocked to see the resulting icicles, and their stories and pictures have exploded in news media and social networking. The attention has transformed the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore into a veritable museum of snow and ice, and a wildly popular tourist destination. ...

CBS News shows us a NASA photo of the frozen great lakes.

A deep freeze has settled in over the Great Lakes this winter and a new image released by NASA shows the astonishing extent of the ice cover as seen from space.

NASA's Aqua satellite captured this image of the lakes on the early afternoon of Feb. 19, 2014. At the time, 80.3 percent of the five lakes were covered in ice, according to the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (GLERL), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Earlier this month, ice cover over the Great Lakes hit 88 percent for the first time since 1994. Typically at its peak, the average ice cover is just over 50 percent, and it only occasionally passes 80 percent, according to NASA's Earth Observatory. [Earth from Above: 101 Stunning Images from Orbit] ...

Daily Beast

Justice Thomas Is Right About America's Obsession With Race

It's become a compulsion to use the label for any political opponents—and it's destroying our cohesiveness as a society. Is no one proud of the progress we've made?

by Ron Christie

Are we [obsessed with race and racism](#) in our society? Before you answer the question, consider how issues of race are brought up in the media and discussed around the proverbial water cooler. Do we discuss the remarkable progress we've made as a country since the dark days of segregation and Jim Crow?

Do we consider how blacks lived in the South in the not too distant past—like my grandparents, who ran the risk of being lynched for looking at someone white? That's given way to interracial marriage no longer being a taboo. The Supreme Court [didn't repeal the statute banning interracial marriage](#) in Virginia until 1967.

Unfortunately, very little of the dialogue involving race in America today is positive, uplifting, or inspirational. Instead, there is a compulsion by many on the left to brand their political opponents as being racist. Two specific events occurred in the past week that have me firmly convinced that there is an obsession with race in America today that is destructive to our societal cohesiveness.

First, consider the pivotal vote held by autoworkers in Chattanooga, Tenn., last Friday in which the majority ruled and decided [not to join the United Auto Workers union](#). Perhaps these workers did not want their dues siphoned off for political activity. Perhaps they were motivated by the union influence in Detroit, which ultimately led to the town seeking bankruptcy protection. Whatever the reason behind their decision, the employees ultimately voted 712-626 against joining the UAW. Case closed? Hardly.

The idea that racism was a motivation behind the decision not to unionize by the workers in the Volkswagen plant was too rich for one MSNBC analyst not to capitalize upon. In reflecting upon the vote not to unionize, Timothy Noah [offered the following insightful commentary](#):

"The opposition, I gather, portrayed this as a kind of Northern invasion, a re-fighting of the Civil War. Apparently there are not a lot of black employees in this particular plant, and so that kind of—waving the Confederate flag—was an effective strategy."

The notion that a decision not to unionize is equated with a Northern invasion and re-fighting of the Civil War would be laughable except that Noah is paid by MSNBC to offer political analysis. Without facts, interviews with plant employees, or evidence, the wide net of racism is cast to describe a decision that I suspect was motivated by economics, not skin color. I would point out to Noah that people like my grandfather moved north to work at General Motors because he was not able to get a job—due to real racism—in the Deep South during the Jim Crow era.

Next, consider the liberal uproar over comments made by Justice Clarence Thomas last week before a group of college students in Florida. Justice Thomas, America's second black jurist on the Supreme Court offered the following observation:

"My sadness is that we are probably today more race and difference-conscious than I was in the 1960s when I went to school. To my knowledge, I was the first black kid in Savannah, Ga., to go to

a white school. Rarely did the issue of race come up. Now, name a day it doesn't come up. Differences in race, differences in sex, somebody doesn't look at you right, somebody says something. Everybody is sensitive."

Note here that Thomas is speaking for himself based on his own observations of attending school in Savannah during the segregated South. During the heart of the Jim Crow era, Thomas did not encounter the issue of race as the first black student to attend a white school in his hometown. No matter—Thomas was accused of being out of touch for suggesting that America is too sensitive on matters of race, a notion my colleague [Janelle Bouie discussed here](#) last week.

While I didn't grow up in the 1960s, hardly a day goes by in which race doesn't come up in our political discussions. While those on the left proclaim their tolerance and support for blacks, the words of some in their ranks belie a hatred toward black conservatives unlike anything I've ever seen. Justice Thomas touched on this point in his Florida speech last week when he noted:

The worst I have been treated was by northern liberal elites. The absolute worst I have ever been treated... The worst things that have been done to me, the worst things that have been said about me, by northern liberal elites, not by the people of Savannah, Ga.

From firsthand experience, I know exactly what Justice Thomas is describing. There is hardly a day that goes by when vile and racist comments don't fill my inbox—usually at the hands of people who tell me how racist Republicans are or how I've "sold out" for being a black conservative. Consider the following comment left on The Daily Beast site [following my article](#) discussing the irony of the North Carolina NAACP asking marchers protesting against voter-ID laws to bring along an ID to the rally:

I have never been compelled to call someone an Uncle Tom, but my goodness, if this article doesn't fit the bill, I don't know what does. Honestly, I don't know why this was even published in the Daily Beast, a news source I often respect. Shame on them for even giving this guy the time of day.

I find it sad during the era in which America celebrates our first black president that discussions regarding matters of race are often cause for acrimony rather than constructive engagement. Calling someone racist or accusing him or her of racism is a mechanism to stifle rather than encourage debate.

Rather than obsess over matters of race, let's acknowledge the progress we have made as a country that instituted slavery to one in which our 44th president is black. There is much to be proud of yet much more work to do for America to become truly color-blind. By working together to have an honest dialogue on race rather than polarizing the discussion by ascribing racist motives to one's political opponents, we will calm the waters the roil our political discourse today.

PJ Media

How Bill Clinton Stole a Generation's Innocence

Will he ruin another?

by Bethany Mandel



At a Shabbat (Sabbath meal) this past week, conversation veered into the political realm, as it often does when my husband and I are guests. We began to discuss the likelihood of Hillary Clinton running, [the papers](#) recently unearthed by my former colleague Alana Goodman, and about how Bill's wandering eye could impact Hillary's campaign. Around the table were three young people, ranging in age from about 9-17. Adult participants in the conversation soon realized that it was impossible to conduct a conversation about the Clintons with children present, and soon, the mother (rightfully) asked for a complete change in subject. Before doing so we reflected how sad it is that a president's legacy cannot truthfully be discussed with innocent ears listening.

For how long can this mother shield her children from the topic? If Hillary runs, perhaps only a few more months. With the Clintons back in the news, pundits will be (and should be) discussing how ready America is to relive the sex scandals of the '90s. Anyone who believes that Bill has learned his lesson need only look to Anthony Weiner to understand that old dogs can't, and won't, learn new tricks. Bill's wandering eye, both in the past and, in all likelihood, the future, will be a topic of conversation for as long as a Clinton occupies the White House.



The conversation led me to reminisce about how my own understanding about marriage and sexuality was shaped during my childhood by the scandal. Bill Clinton taught me about sex, about truth, and about politics. Do I really want to have the same conversations with my children that my mother had to have with me? These were some of the many questions my poor mother (and all of her friends) had to grapple with:

Mommy, what are they saying Bill and Monica did exactly?

Mommy, what did Bill do with that cigar?

Mommy, do all daddies do that with ladies that aren't their mommies?

Mommy, is Chelsea okay? Is she allowed to be mad at her daddy? Does she have to be?

Mommy, why does this cartoon in the paper show Monica under the desk?

Mommy, what did they find on the blue dress?

Mommy, what does "is" mean? Isn't he smarter than I am?

Before I had children, I often reflected on how interesting it would be to see a scandal like Clinton's play out now, in an era of 24/7 cable news and Twitter. Now that I have a daughter, I pray something like the Lewinsky drama never emerges while my children are as young and impressionable as I was. The scandals may not hurt Hillary if she runs, but they will all be rehashed, exposing an entirely new generation to the conversation. For the sake of parents and children everywhere, let's hope that our kids can keep their innocence longer than I was able to. For that to happen, let's hope Hillary decides to sit out 2016.

Bloomberg News

Go Ahead, Let Your Kids Fail

by Megan McArdle

I'm on the road this week, giving talks on my new book about learning to fail better: that is, first, to give ourselves the permission to take on challenges where we might very well fail; second, to pick ourselves up as quickly as possible and move on when things don't work out. This is, I argue, vital on a personal level, as well as vital for the economy, because that's where innovation and growth come from.

The other day, after one of my talks, a 10th-grade girl came up and shyly asked if I had a minute. I always have a minute to talk to shy high school sophomores, having been one myself.

And this is what she asked me:

"I understand what you're saying about trying new things, and hard things, but I'm in an International Baccalaureate program and only about five percent of us will get 4.0, so how can I try a subject where I might not get an A?"

I was floored. All I could think as I talked to this poor girl is "America, you're doing it wrong."

I was 15 in 10th grade. If you can't try something new in 10th grade, when can you? If you can't afford to risk anything less than perfection at the age of 15, then for heaven's sake, when is going to be the right time? When you're ready to splash out on an edgy assisted-living facility?

Now is when this kid should be learning to dream big dreams and dare greatly. Now is when she should be making mistakes and figuring out how to recover from them. Instead, we're telling one of our best and brightest to focus all her talent on coloring within the lines. This is not the first time I've heard this from kids and teachers and parents. But I've never heard it phrased quite so starkly.

Let me enumerate all the ways that this is a bad idea:

- She is spending her high school years in terror of making the slightest mistake. Even if that was necessary to success -- and it's not -- surely she'll have plenty of time later to agonize about putting a foot out of place. Why not let her wait until she's, I dunno, 20?
- At the time in her life when failure should have the lowest cost, she should be learning to try things that are great, and maybe a little crazy. And, also, learning how to identify when your great, crazy idea isn't working so well. And to move on after the occasional embarrassing flop. Apparently, she can't afford to do any of that, because it might jeopardize her perfect grade-point average.
- The subjects that she is most likely to avoid are the ones she's unfamiliar with -- and the ones that are especially difficult. So we're taking insanely bright, hardworking kids and discouraging them from trying things that they might be great at, because what if they got a B instead of an A?
- We are drilling into their heads that success consists of jumping through a series of hoops to please authority. Of course, this is a valuable skill that everyone needs to learn, because hey, that's part of life. But it is far from the only skill, and it is certainly not the most valuable one we could teach.
- We are also teaching her that success is doing what comes easiest, which is the opposite of true.
- The longer this kid goes without failing, the more dreadful it will come to seem. When you've never coped with failure, it often comes to seem imperative that you arrange your life so that it never happens. Since that's not actually possible, you spend a lot of time trying to arrange away the inevitable.
- And when the inevitable comes, you are in no way prepared to handle it. I watched a lot of MBAs and tech wizards melt down after 2001 because they had done everything they were supposed to and how could they possibly be out of a job? From the way we carried on (and I include myself), you would have thought the law of gravity had been repealed.

America needs more bright, hardworking kids taking on challenging academic work. But it does not need them to learn that success is a formula -- or a zero-sum game in which the race goes to the safest. In fact, that's exactly the opposite of what we need -- and more important, it's the opposite of what those kids need.

Don't get me wrong, I understand the pressure this kid is under. I too agonized about getting into a good college -- and wept when I didn't get into my first choice. But no one told me at the age of 15 that I'd better focus all my energies on being absolutely perfect. (And I sure wasn't!) I was talking about this with my father the other day, and he said that was a deliberate choice my parents made. "If you can't screw up in high school," he said, "it's hard to think of a better time."

But we have become crazy on the subject of college. Now, more than ever, we view a college degree as an absolute prerequisite for a minimally decent life. And if we're in the upper middle class, it has to be a degree from an elite school. Kids who a generation or two ago would have gone to a local college, or the state university, are now applying to Harvard University. And since

the number of slots at those elite colleges has barely budged, parents are essentially trying to push an ever-larger number of kids through a medium-sized funnel.

To keep their kids from falling off the side, they're pushing them harder than ever -- micromanaging their lives, orchestrating things so that their children have as little opportunity as possible to go astray. It's totally understandable. But it's bad for the kids, bad for the parents, and bad for the nation.

(The flip side, of course, is even worse: As getting into college becomes a team sport, poor kids are becoming like Nadia Comaneci. They need to hit everything just right, make a perfect 10, or they'll never get the gold. One mistake will knock them clear out of the running, because there's no one around to make sure they get back on track.)

This is insane. It's insane because everyone hates it -- parents, kids, even college admissions officers. It's insane because it is not producing better citizens, or more productive citizens, or happier citizens. Rather the opposite, in fact.

It's insane because there is no formula.

One of my favorite books is "Popular Crime," by the great Bill James. And this is one of my favorite passages:

First of all, as I see it, no one has any ability whatsoever to figure out what is going to be important to people. I look back on my own life. When I was in high school I had two habits that greatly irritated my teachers; actually, many more than two, but let's focus. One was writing funny notes to my classmates, trying to make them crack up in the middle of class. The other was spending hours of valuable study time making mystifying totals from the agate type in the sports pages. I was called on the carpet any number of times and told to stop doing this stuff and pay more attention to What Was Really Important.

As I look back on those years, the two most useful things that I was doing, in terms of preparing me for my career, were 1) Writing humorous notes to my classmates, and 2) Making mystifying totals from the agate type in the sports pages. By writing amusing if vulgar notes to my classmates, I was learning to write -- not learning to write in a way that would please English teachers, but learning to write in a way that would hold the interest of people who had no reason to read the note, other than the expectation that they would enjoy reading it. That's much, much closer to writing books than writing insipid research papers to please bored English teachers. The adults in charge thought they knew what was important, but in retrospect they were just completely wrong.

At the personal level, most of us could attest to this -- you never know what will end up being important, but it's probably not what you think. And at the economy level, this is basically a pithy summation of what economist Joseph Schumpeter dubbed "creative destruction": the process by which old ideas, and companies, and even markets are destroyed in order that something previously undreamt-of can replace them.

Do we want a society that dreams new things and then makes them happen? I hear that we do, every time I hear a teacher, or a politician, give a speech. So why are we trying so hard to teach the next generation to do the exact opposite?

Real Clear Politics

[How to Improve Our Colleges and Universities](#)

Liberal education is in decline. And professors and administrators at our best liberal arts colleges are hastening its demise.

by Peter Berkowitz

Liberal education is in decline. And professors and administrators at our best liberal arts colleges are hastening its demise.

Much has been written about liberal education's skyrocketing costs, its failure to provide students with the knowledge and intellectual skills they need to succeed in a competitive globalized economy, and its burdening of students with massive debt. But these big problems are only part of the story.

As important as is its contribution to individual economic well-being and to national prosperity, liberal education's traditional and proper aim is even more comprehensive and vital to the public interest: to prepare students to seize the wide range of opportunities and meet the full spectrum of responsibilities characteristic of free men and women.

When it lives up to its own standards, liberal education equips citizens with the mental habits needed to engage effectively in political debate and cast votes in an informed manner. Moreover, by acquainting students with the rich variety of opinions within Western civilization about moral, political, and religious life and introducing them to competing opinions in other civilizations, liberal education promotes the virtues of toleration and moderation.

Liberal education is not neutral. When true to itself, it encourages gratitude toward free societies for offering the opportunity to study fundamental ideas and seminal events, and for maintaining—by means of customs, laws, and political institutions—a framework that allows individuals and their communities a wide sphere in which to organize their lives as they think best.

And liberal education enriches private life by expanding our sympathies, deepening our self-knowledge, and cultivating the life-long pleasure of learning for its own sake.

Thus, the nation has a vital interest in the quality of its liberal education. Given several recent studies, there is reason to believe America is being short-changed by its colleges and universities.

Last year the National Association of Scholars published [“What Does Bowdoin Teach? How a Contemporary Liberal Arts College Shapes Students”](#); Harvard University issued “The Teaching of the Arts and Humanities at Harvard College: Mapping the Future”; and, acting on a request from Congress, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences produced [“The Heart of the Matter.”](#)

Together they paint a disquieting picture of general curricula without focus or form; humanities disciplines suffering plunging enrollments; a self-perpetuating left-liberal campus orthodoxy entrenched by courses offered and not offered, visiting speakers chosen and not chosen, and written and unwritten speech codes; along with disciplinary procedures that treat due process as a crude impediment to justice.

Gathering and synthesizing pertinent data from publicly available sources including academic catalogues, institutional websites, and media accounts, a cogent new report from the American

Council of Trustees and Alumni, [“Education or Reputation: A Look at America’s Top-Ranked Liberal Arts Colleges.”](#) confirms the dire findings. The report focuses on the “Top 25” small residential liberal arts colleges as determined by U.S. News & World Report (several ties brought the total number of colleges counted in the Top 25 to 29).

Our top-ranked liberal arts colleges have eviscerated the core curriculum. Of the Top 25, ACTA reports, “only two require an economics course. Only three require a survey in U.S. history. Only five require a survey course in literature.” Amherst College, Grinnell College, Hamilton College, Middlebury College, and Vassar College have open curricula with no requirements. Bates College, Bowdoin College, Haverford College, Oberlin College, Smith College, Swarthmore College, Wesleyan University, and Williams College do not require undergraduates to study literature, American history, the principles of American politics, or economics.

Our top-ranked liberal arts colleges, while aggressively promoting multiculturalism, have incongruously demoted language study. The majority of them do not require students to achieve even intermediate-level proficiency—the equivalent of three college semesters of study—in a foreign language.

Our top-ranked liberal arts colleges have discouraged the free exchange of ideas and free inquiry. According to a study by the redoubtable Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, incorporated by ACTA into its report, all of the top liberal arts colleges seriously impair freedom of speech. Fourteen—including Carleton College, Colgate University, Middlebury College, and Wellesley College—have in place “at least one policy that clearly and substantially restricts freedom of speech.” Several punish “offensive speech.” Some American college and universities have actually banished unfettered expression to designated “free speech zones”—a dodge reminiscent of how Russia marginalized protesters during the Winter Olympics.

Our top-ranked arts colleges have raised fees to extraordinary heights. According to ACTA, “The ‘sticker price’ of higher education has risen 538 percent since 1985—compared to a ‘mere’ 286 percent increase in medical costs and a 121 percent increase in the consumer price index during the same time period.” At the top colleges (not including the three military service academies, which do not charge), annual tuition, room and board, and fees range from a low of \$53,318 at Grinnell to a high of \$61,167 at Wesleyan. The median cost is above \$58,000 per year.

The lowest cost exceeds the national annual median household income of \$52,762.

Our top-ranked arts colleges have substantially increased administrative costs. More than half of the U.S. News Top 25 “increased administrative spending at a faster rate than instructional spending during the five year period ending in 2011-2012, the most recent year for which financial data are publicly available.” Meanwhile, “four schools—Davidson College, Grinnell College, Pomona College, and Scripps College—each increased administrative expenditures by at least 25 percent over five years, after adjusting for inflation.”

And our top-ranked liberal arts colleges have downgraded the faculty’s traditional mission of teaching undergraduates. They have reduced teaching loads while increasing incentives for professors to devote their hours outside of the classroom to research and scholarly publication rather than to discussing ideas with students.

To reverse the decline over which faculty and administration have presided, ACTA calls on trustees, donors, alumni, parents, and students to take action. In their different roles, they can begin by persuading all liberal arts colleges to publish data on their academic standards, including results of nationally normed tests of core collegiate skills, and grade distributions each semester in each department and program.

Liberal arts colleges should also be convinced of the need to reestablish a core curriculum that provides students with a common foundation including math, science, literature, principles of American politics, U.S. history, economics, religion, foreign languages, and world civilizations.

They should be urged to protect the free exchange of ideas by eliminating explicit restrictions on free speech; by expunging broadly written campus code provisions that can be and are interpreted to mean that causing a fellow student or faculty member to feel awkward or uncomfortable is an actionable offense; and by proclaiming at every opportunity—including, for example, on the home page of their websites, prominently in course catalogues, at ceremonies welcoming freshman, and at graduation—the centrality to liberal education of liberty of thought and discussion, of intellectual diversity, and of free inquiry.

And liberal arts colleges should be pressed to improve transparency and accountability by making available data on college budgeting, and they should be pushed to restructure incentives so as to encourage faculty to devote more hours to teaching.

One should not underestimate the entrenched interests—ideological, methodological, and financial—that resist reform of our liberal arts colleges. Nor should one underestimate the threat to freedom posed by failure to achieve reform.

Peter Berkowitz is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

WSJ

[Lake Superior's Ice Caves Become Hot Tourist Draw](#)

A Natural Wonder in Northern Wisconsin Becomes Accessible by Foot; 'It's Gone Viral'

by Jesse Newman



Visitors are able to view the ice caves at Wisconsin's Apostle Islands National Lakeshore from up close this month.

CORNUCOPIA, Wis.—When Dan Gross learned that Lake Superior had frozen over enough this winter for people to walk to the ice caves along Wisconsin's northern shoreline, he recruited a handful of friends to make the sojourn. On a recent Sunday, they rode their snowmobiles through the woods and arrived on the frozen lake at noon.

"The ice was incredible," said Mr. Gross, a 46-year-old heating and cooling technician from Des Moines, Iowa, of the majestic formations that decorate a string of caves carved into the sandstone cliffs centuries ago. "But I was really amazed by all the people," he said of the miles of visitors snaking their way from cave to cave on the frozen lakeshore. "It was like an exodus."



The migration is the handiwork of both mother nature and Facebook. Frigid temperatures gripping the Midwest have sealed the Great Lakes beneath vast sheets of ice, turning Lake Superior into flat, frozen tundra the likes of which has been seen just a couple of times in the past two decades.

Since earlier this winter, when waves crashed and then froze against the cliffs, tens of thousands of visitors have flocked to see the resulting icicles, and their stories and pictures have exploded in news media and social networking. The attention has transformed the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore into a veritable museum of snow and ice, and a wildly popular tourist destination.

"We love it that people have discovered how wonderful it is here, despite the fact nature is challenging them," said Bob Krumenaker, the park's superintendent, noting the cold and biting wind that greet visitors. "But it's a whole new world now. It's really challenging for us to manage."



The attention has transformed the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore into a veritable museum of snow and ice, and a wildly popular tourist destination.

Most people come by car, but with just 50 parking spaces, many visitors are having to walk for miles along the state highway just to reach the trailhead. Some couples arrive on cross-country skis and snowshoes, and parents tote bundled children in oversize sleds. Once inside the caves, kids slide down icy drops on their rear-ends, landing with a hard thump on the floors, and teenagers pose for pictures beneath the icy fringed arches.

"They loved it," said one Wisconsin mother, pointing to three sleeping children in a toboggan at her feet.

Most winters, the park is open, but the caves aren't navigable without such thick ice. Already this year, the caves alone have drawn close to half of the roughly 150,000 visitors that in 2013 toured the entire park's 21 islands and surrounding waters by kayak, boat or ferry.

"It's gone viral," said Mr. Krumenaker, who has been fielding media calls from around the nation and world. "We've never seen anything like it, and it keeps getting bigger and bigger."



A visitor takes a photograph of the ice caves at the Wisconsin park earlier this month.

Mr. Gross and his friend Brad Lewis, an exterminator from Hayward, Wis., spent hours exploring the frosted landscape, shimmying on their stomachs from one dark cavity to the next. "Picture an igloo with mauve icicles hanging from the ceiling," said Mr. Lewis, describing the inner sanctum of one such hollow. "It's a whole different world."

The last time the caves were safely accessible was in 2009—and this year's coating of ice on the lake, though thick, could quickly disappear. The National Park Service closed the caves Thursday because of a severe winter storm, and park officials hoped to be able to reopen access on Saturday.

On a recent visit, Mary Thiel, 45, who lives nearby, brought along four friends and a thermos of soup. Crawling into a small cave to take shelter from the wind, the friends sat cross-legged on the ice and soaked in the scenery.

"The formations on the ceiling were beautiful," she said, referring to the delicate, feathered icicles called hoarfrost that dangle inside some cave walls. "It's kind of humbling to stand there and see what this lake can do."

CBS News

[Ice-covered Great Lakes seen from space](#)

by Megan Gannon



This NASA satellite photo shows the Great Lakes, 80.3 percent covered by ice.

A deep freeze has settled in over the Great Lakes this winter and a new image released by NASA shows the astonishing extent of the ice cover as seen from space.

NASA's Aqua satellite captured this image of the lakes on the early afternoon of Feb. 19, 2014. At the time, 80.3 percent of the five lakes were covered in ice, according to the [Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory \(GLERL\)](#), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Earlier this month, ice cover over the Great Lakes hit 88 percent for the first time since 1994. Typically at its peak, the average ice cover is just over 50 percent, and it only occasionally passes 80 percent, according to [NASA's Earth Observatory](#). [[Earth from Above: 101 Stunning Images from Orbit](#)]

Cold temperatures that have persisted in the region are largely responsible for this year's thick layer of ice, but cryospheric scientist Nathan Kurtz, of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, told the Earth Observatory that "secondary factors like clouds, snow and wind also play a role." And some lakes are more frozen than others. While the ice cover over Lake Erie, Lake Superior and

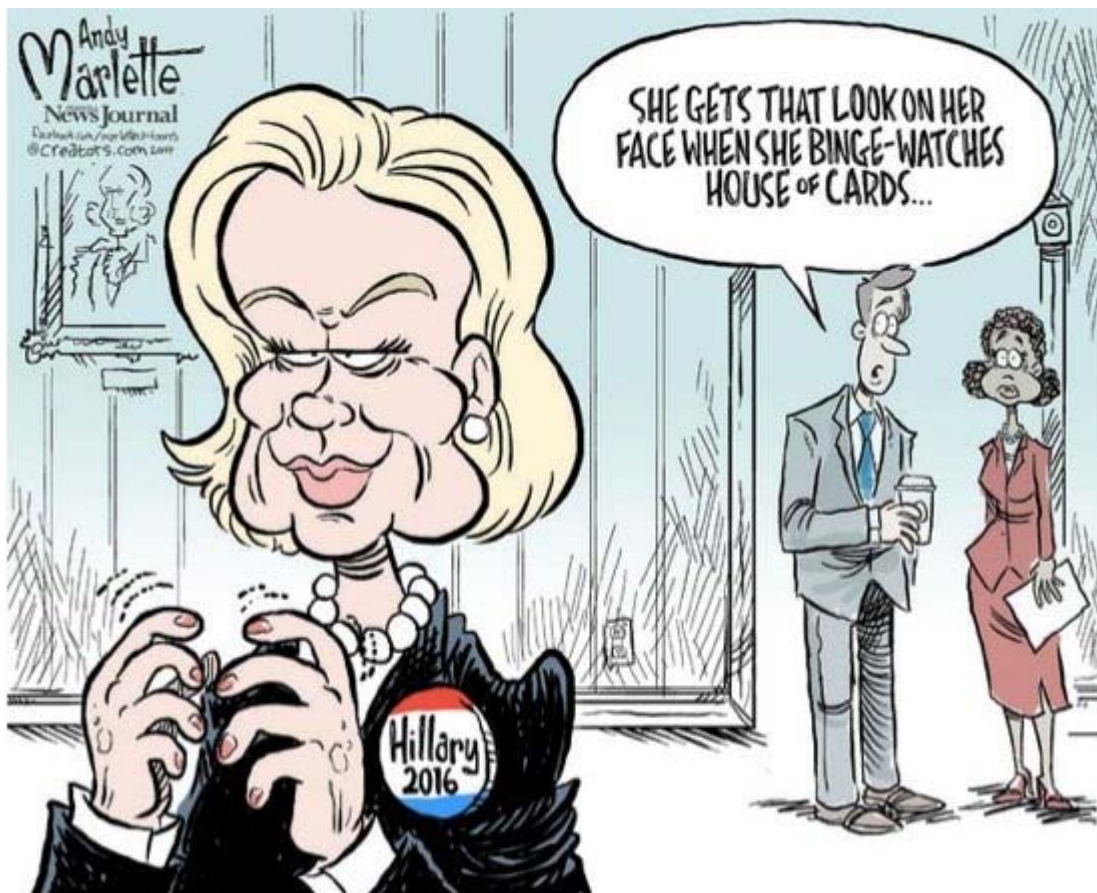
Lake Huron is approaching 100 percent, Lake Ontario is only around 20 percent frozen and Lake Michigan is about 60 percent covered, according to the latest update from GLERL.

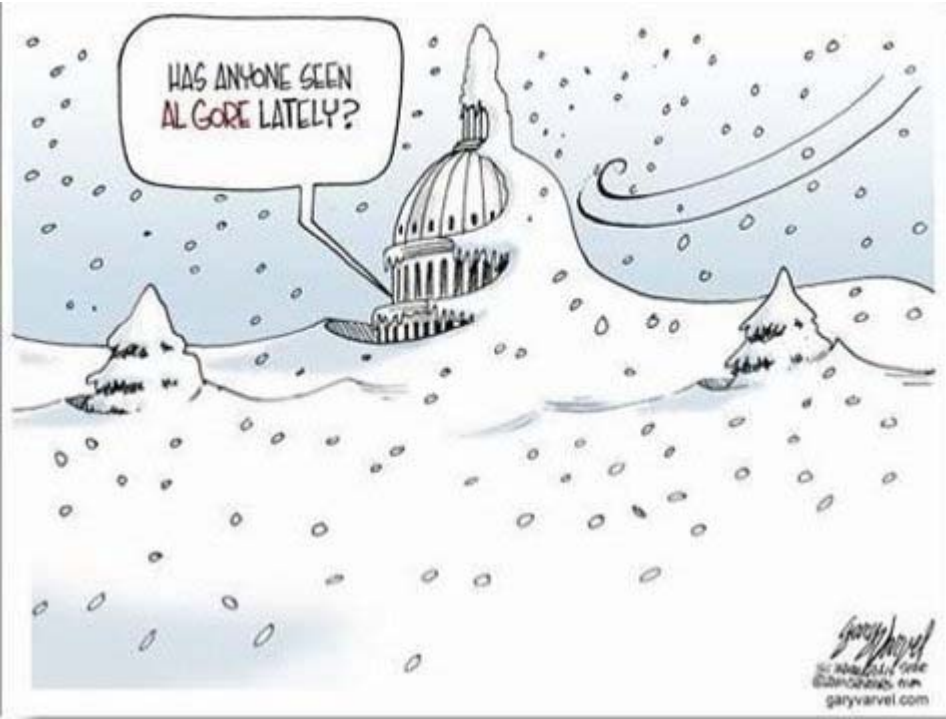
NASA researchers also put together a false-color image combining shortwave infrared, near infrared and red wavelengths to pick out ice from other elements that look white in visible-wavelength images like snow, water and clouds. In this image, ice appears pale blue, and the thicker it is the brighter it looks. Open water, meanwhile, is shown in navy, snow is blue-green and clouds appear either white or blue-green, according to the Earth Observatory.

The ice could have environmental effects on the surrounding region.

"The biggest impact we'll see is shutting down the lake-effect snow," Guy Meadows, director of Michigan Technological University's Great Lakes Research Center, explained in a statement. This "lake-effect" snow usually gets dumped on the region when weather systems from the north and west pick up evaporating lake water. The ice cover is [reducing evaporation](#), but that could be a good thing for the Great Lakes, which experienced record low water levels last year.

In another plus, the ice is thick enough over Lake Superior for visitors to reach the [Apostle Islands' ice caves](#) for the first time since 2009. And Meadows said the ice could also protect the spawning beds of whitefish and some other fish species from winter storms.





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