

May 11, 2014

Daniel Henninger tries to find out why the left has become crazy.

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James Oliphant of the National Journal posts on how the left media do the administration's bidding.

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But Carney needn't have worried. He had plenty of backup.

He had The New Republic's Brian Beutler dismissing Benghazi as "nonsense." He had Slate's David Weigel, along with The Washington Post's Plum Line blog, debunking any claim that the new email was a "smoking gun." Media Matters for America labeled Benghazi a "hoax." Salon wrote that the GOP had a "demented Benghazi disease." Daily Kos featured the headline: "Here's Why the GOP Is Fired Up About Benghazi—and Here's Why They're Wrong." The Huffington Post offered "Three Reasons Why Reviving Benghazi Is Stupid—for the GOP." ...

More on the media's cover for failure from **Mark Steyn**.

A week before the 2012 election, I wrote:

"Someone at the highest level of the United States government made the decision to abandon American consular staff to their fate and cede U.S. sovereign territory to an al-Qaeda assault team — and four out of five Sunday news shows don't think it's worth talking about.

In the smoking ruins of that consulate in Benghazi, Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods fought for hours and killed 60 of the enemy before they were overwhelmed, waiting for the cavalry that never came. They're still waiting – for Candy Crowley, David Gregory, Bob Schieffer, and George Stephanopoulos to do their job."

Democrats and their media enablers openly giggle at the word "Benghazi" now. So funny, isn't it? Those provincial simpletons at Fox News are still droning on about dead Americans in Benghazi as if anybody but their drooling rubes care about it, ha-ha... If the Democrats are right about that, it doesn't speak well for the American people. Those four Americans died serving the United States - not Obama, not Clinton, but their fellow Americans. ...

Heather Mac Donald reports on the Fed's pursuit of 55 colleges and universities. It warms Pickerhead's heart to see the academy harassed by the government. Serves them right. They haven't lifted a finger to help any other institutions similarly treated. In fact, they have been enablers of government overreach and intrusion.

For decades, universities have nurtured the most lunatic forms of feminism, denying the biological differences between males and females, promoting the idea that Western civilization is endemically sexist, and encouraging in their students ever-more-delusional forms of victimhood. It is therefore deeply gratifying to see these same universities now impaled by the very ideology that they have so assiduously promoted.

The Obama administration has released the names of 55 colleges and universities that it is investigating over their sexual-assault policies, part of an accelerating campaign against universities for allegedly turning a blind eye to the purported epidemic of campus rape. The list is top-heavy with the elite of the elite — Harvard, Princeton, UC Berkeley, Swarthmore, Amherst, and Dartmouth, among others. A more deserving group of victims would be hard to find.

Parroting over 20 years worth of feminist propagandizing, the White House claims nearly 20 percent of female college undergraduates are sexually assaulted during their college years. To put that number in perspective: Detroit residents have been fleeing the city for years due to its infamous violent crime. And what constitutes an American urban crime wave? In 2012, Detroit's combined rate for all four violent felonies that make up the FBI's violent-crime index — murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault — was 2 percent. The rape rate was 0.05 percent. And yet, despite an alleged campus sexual-assault rate that is 400 times greater than Detroit's, female applicants are beating down the doors of selective colleges in record numbers.

Stanford, one of the 55 colleges under investigation by the Department of Education for allegedly ignoring sexual violence, this year received over 42,000 applications, at least half from females, for a freshman class of about 1,700; every other elite college was similarly swamped with female applicants. According to the White House Council on Women and Girls, "survivors" of the alleged campus sexual-assault epidemic "often" experience a lifetime of physical and mental infirmity that includes depression and post-traumatic stress syndrome. How could highly educated baby-boomer mothers, who have spent their maternal years fending off phantom risks to their children from pesticides and vaccines, suddenly send their daughters off to a crime scene of such magnitude, unmatched even in the most brutal African tribal wars? What happened to the Sisterhood? Shouldn't it be warning its members and forming alternative structures for educating females? ...

Jonathan Marks in Contentions posts on anti-Semitism at Vassar. There is great sickness in higher education.

Vassar has recently distinguished itself in at least two ways. First, it is one of a tiny group of colleges whose faculty supported the American Studies Association's boycott of Israel in substantial numbers. Thirty-nine faculty members signed a letter that sang the praises of the boycott-Israel movement. Second, as I have written here before, Vassar was the venue for an open forum at which two professors were vilified for leading a trip to Israel and at which Jewish students who spoke up were heckled. William Jacobson has provided extensive coverage of the situation at Vassar and was there to speak earlier this week.

*In a blog entry describing reactions to Jacobson's speech, Jewish studies professor Rebecca Lesses draws attention to a series of posts by Vassar's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine, the most shocking of which includes this language: "Of course, mainstream media hasbarats have been around for decades, as have 'hasbaratchiks,' fifth-columns in foreign governments who subvert national policies to serve Israel." The author of the linked article, Greg Felton, also wrote a book entitled *The Host and the Parasite: How Israel's Fifth Column Consumed America*. Lesses observes that the *Occidental Quarterly*, on which the SJP draws, is an anti-Semitic magazine. While I hesitate to take the word of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which she cites, for it, a look through the *Occidental Quarterly*, which includes an article about libertarianism as a creed advanced by Jewish intellectuals to advance Jewish "group evolutionary interests," tends to support the charge. ...*

Once and awhile the president gets called on his mendacity. WaPo's Glenn Kessler gives four Pinocchio's to the liar in chief. Four is their highest award. Nobody lies it better.

In addressing a dinner of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in Los Angeles, President Obama made a rather striking claim—that Senate Republicans have filibustered "500 pieces of legislation that would help the middle class."

*Regular readers knows that *The Fact Checker* has objected to the way that Senate Democrats tally these figures, but the president's claim makes little sense no matter how you do the numbers.*

The Facts

First, some definitions: A filibuster generally refers to extended debate that delays a vote on a pending matter, while cloture is a device to end debate. Filibusters are used by opponents of a nominee or legislation, while cloture is filed by supporters.

Since 2007, there have been 527 cloture motions that have been filed, according to Senate statistics. This is apparently where Obama got his figure. But this tells only part of the story as many of those cloture motions were simply dropped, never actually voted on, or "vitiating" in the senatorial nomenclature.

WSJ

Obama Unleashes the Left

How the government created a federal hunting license for the far left.

by Daniel Henninger

In the U.S., the politics of the left versus the right rolls on with the predictability of traffic jams at the George Washington Bridge. It's a lot of honking. Until now. All of a sudden, the left has hit ramming speed across a broad swath of American life—in the universities, in politics and in government. People fingered as out of line with the far left's increasingly bizarre claims are being hit and hit hard.

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Mozilla co-founder Brendan Eich was driven out as CEO for donating money to support California's Prop. 8. An online protest tried to kill Condi Rice's appointment to the Dropbox board of directors over Internet surveillance. Incredibly, Dropbox CEO Drew Houston didn't cave.

Earlier this year, faculty and students held a meeting at Vassar College to discuss a particularly bitter internal battle over the school's boycott-Israel movement. Before the meeting, an English professor announced the dialogue "would not be guided by cardboard notions of civility."

In the Harvard Crimson, recently, an undergraduate columnist wrote: "Let's give up on academic freedom in favor of justice." How would that work? "When an academic community observes research promoting or justifying oppression, it should ensure that this research does not continue." She explicitly cited for suppression the work of conservative Harvard government professor Harvey Mansfield.

It's obvious that the far left has decided there are no longer constraints on what it can do to anyone who disagrees with it. How did this happen? Who let the dogs out?

The answer is not university presidents. The answer is that the Obama administration let the dogs out.

The trigger event was an agreement signed last May between the federal government and the University of Montana to resolve a Title IX dispute over a sexual-assault case.

Every college administrator in the U.S. knows about this agreement. Indeed, there are three separate, detailed "Montana" documents that were signed jointly—and this is unusual—by the civil-rights divisions of the Justice and Education Departments. Remarked DoJ's Joceyln Samuels, "The government is stronger when we speak with one voice."

That's real muscle. But read the [agreement](#). It is Orwellian.

The agreement orders the school to retain an "Equity Consultant" (yes, there is such a thing) to advise it indefinitely on compliance. The school must, with the equity consultant, conduct "annual climate surveys." It will submit the results "to the United States."

The agreement describes compliance in mind-numbing detail, but in fact the actual definitional world it creates is vague. It says: "The term 'sexual harassment' means unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature." But there are also definitions for sexual assault and gender-based harassment. All of this detailed writ is called "guidance." As in missile.

No constitutional lawyer could read this agreement and not see in it the mind of the Queen of Hearts: "Sentence first, verdict afterwards!" Indeed, the U.S. Education Department felt obliged to assert that the agreement is "entirely consistent with the First Amendment."

First Amendment? It's more like a fatwa. The Obama administration has issued a federal hunting license to deputize fanatics at any university in America. *They* will define who gets accused, and on what basis.

The White House enabled these forces again last week, releasing an Education Department [list](#) of 55 colleges that are "under investigation" for possible Title IX violations. Not formally cited but "under investigation." The list includes such notorious Animal Houses as Catholic University, Swarthmore, Knox College, Carnegie Mellon and Harvard Law School. In truth, every school in America is effectively on the list.

Make no mistake, universities under constant pressure from the Obama administration and the most driven members of their "communities" will comply and define due process downward. If the liability choice falls between the lawyer brigades at the Holder Justice Department or some 19-year-old student or an assistant professor who didn't post the course's "trigger warning," guess who will get tossed to the Marcusian mobs at Harvard and Vassar?

If it's possible for the left to have its John Birch moment, we're in it. Wave goodbye to cardboard civility.

National Journal

[Progressive Bloggers Are Doing the White House's Job](#)

This administration enjoys an advantage afforded no other: a partisan media that has its back, minute-by-minute.

by James Oliphant

When Jay Carney was grilled at length by Jonathan Karl of ABC News over an email outlining administration talking points in the wake of the 2012 Benghazi attack, it was not, by the reckoning of many observers, the White House press secretary's finest hour. Carney was alternately defensive and dismissive, arguably fueling a bonfire he was trying to tamp down.

But Carney needn't have worried. He had plenty of backup.

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It's been a familiar pattern since President Obama took office in 2009: When critics attack, the White House can count on a posse of progressive writers to ride to its rescue. Pick an issue, from the Affordable Care Act to Ukraine to the economy to controversies involving the Internal Revenue Service and Benghazi, and you'll find the same voices again and again, on the Web and on Twitter, giving the president cover while savaging the opposition. And typically doing it with sharper tongues and tighter arguments than the White House itself.

While the bond between presidential administrations and friendly opinion-shapers goes back as far as the nation itself, no White House has ever enjoyed the luxury that this one has, in which its arguments and talking points can be advanced on a day-by-day, minute-by-minute basis. No longer must it await the evening news or the morning op-ed page to witness the fruits of its messaging efforts.

Credit the explosion of social media, the fragmentation of news, the erosion of the institutional press. Fortuitously for the president, the modern media landscape not only provides ample space for the expression of pure partisanship, it actively encourages it. Backing your friends and belittling your enemies is a healthy business model, one rewarded by a torrent of clicks, retweets, "likes," and links. "The incentives are to play ball," says one former liberal blogger, "not to speak truth to power. More clicks. More action. Partisanship drives clicks."

The Obama administration had the good fortune to come to power just when the forces undermining the traditional media became truly disruptive, creating a Web-based royalty. And those who came of age, who mastered the new tools, were largely in step with the administration—in many respects mirroring the young Turks in Obama's ranks who used those tools in similar ways to get the president elected.

The new landscape has allowed the White House communications shop do what it does best: Figure out new ways to bypass the mainstream media. It holds off-the-record briefings, sometimes with Obama in the room, for select progressive bloggers from outlets such as *TPM* and *ThinkProgress*. (More than once, a *National Journal* reporter who previously worked at a liberal outlet has been invited as well.)

The outreach to progressive bloggers is part of a multipronged White House media strategy that also involves briefings with the likes of bureau chiefs, prominent columnists, even conservative writers such as Byron York and David Brooks, although certainly with each group, the mileage varies.

Consider: A search of White House records shows Ezra Klein, then with *The Washington Post's Wonkblog*, visiting more than 25 times since 2009; last week, a *Post* story detailed the travails of Lesley Clark, a White House reporter for McClatchy who has been to the Oval Office three times in the last three years, and has asked one question directly to Obama in all that time.

The hope, from the White House's perspective, is that progressive media elites sway the mainstream press. "Obviously, all journalists are reading each other on Twitter," says Tim Miller, executive director of the conservative America Rising PAC and a former spokesman for Jon

Huntsman. "If you've got very articulate, passionate bloggers on the left who are making arguments why something shouldn't be news, that might have a shaming effect on other journalists who might not want to be mocked or who might be convinced by their arguments."

Certainly, the writers don't always do the Democrats' dirty work. Zaid Jilani, a former blogger for *ThinkProgress*, an arm of the progressive Center for American Progress, said the White House reacted angrily when he wrote a post critical of the administration's Afghanistan policy. Other progressive writers say they have gotten pushback from Obama aides when they haven't toed the line on issues such as surveillance and immigration.

Still, Jilani worries that some endorse the White House's positions not because they always agree with them, but because they don't want to give the GOP any fodder. "That's a hard thing to separate," he says.

Joan Walsh, an editor-at-large at *Salon*, brought this tension to a head last year when she slammed Klein for being too critical of the Obamacare rollout and, in essence, giving aid and comfort to the enemy. "On one hand, yes, it's important for Democrats to acknowledge when government screws up, and to fix it," Walsh wrote. "On the other hand, when liberals rush conscientiously to do that, they only encourage the completely unbalanced and unhinged coverage of whatever the problem might be."

Unbalanced. Interesting word for a card-carrying member of the progressive media to use.

Steyn On Line

[The Cavalry That Never Came](#)

by Mark Steyn

A week before the 2012 election, I [wrote](#):

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Yesterday, Hugh Hewitt devoted most of his three hours on air to Benghazi. I put the night [in context](#):

MARK STEYN: Not a lot of U.S. ambassadors get killed in the line of duty.

HUGH HEWITT: Right.

MS: If you discount the poor fellow who was on the plane with General Zia in Pakistan when that mysteriously blew up in mid-flight, you have to go back to Kabul over 30 years ago for the killing of a U.S. ambassador. So it happens extremely rarely.

Within half-an-hour, the President knew what was happening and why it was happening. Yet he did not act. Why? For me, that question remains as important as it was a year and a half ago:

MS: Brave men fought valiantly all through that horrible, long night, and saved dozens of people. But they were waiting for the help that never came, the help that was two hours away but was never ordered. And the official explanation is that 'Oh, well, we could have sent somebody, but they wouldn't have got there in time.' Well, you know, just to go back to your sporting analogies, a terrorist attack on a U.S. facility is not a cricket match or a soccer match... You don't know how long it's going to last till the attack ends... Even if they had sent forces and they hadn't gotten there in time to save the ambassador or to save the other three people who died, they could have got there in time when the people who committed this act were still sifting through the rubble of the U.S. facility. And so they would have caught them, instead of these guys being free to wander around, swank around the Maghreb boasting about what they were able to pull off.

So who took the decision not to act, and why?

MS: Was it just about electoral advantage? Was it just to protect Joe Biden's soundbite ...al Qaeda is dead and General Motors is alive? Or is it actually worse than that? In other words, in those first few moments, when the President is informed what's going on, does somebody, does somebody take the decision that because this whole thing is unhelpful to their view of the world, they are not going to send force? Because that, to me, does render whoever made that decision ...unfit for office.

As I go on to say, Chris Stevens was one of them, a Team Obama loyalist. But they abandoned him and dishonored him in death because the President's political needs outweighed his life. The heartlessness of all these caring, compassionate Democrats would impress Putin - if it was ever applied to America's enemies. You can read the entire transcript [here](#).

National Review

[The Obama Administration's Deserving Victims](#)

The campus sexual-assault controversy is of liberal higher ed's own making.

by Heather Mac Donald

For decades, universities have nurtured the most lunatic forms of feminism, denying the biological differences between males and females, promoting the idea that Western civilization is endemically sexist, and encouraging in their students ever-more-delusional forms of

victimhood. It is therefore deeply gratifying to see these same universities now impaled by the very ideology that they have so assiduously promoted.

The Obama administration has released the names of 55 colleges and universities that it is investigating over their sexual-assault policies, part of an accelerating campaign against universities for allegedly turning a blind eye to the purported epidemic of campus rape. The list is top-heavy with the elite of the elite — Harvard, Princeton, UC Berkeley, Swarthmore, Amherst, and Dartmouth, among others. A more deserving group of victims would be hard to find.

Parroting over 20 years worth of feminist propagandizing, the White House claims nearly 20 percent of female college undergraduates are sexually assaulted during their college years. To put that number in perspective: Detroit residents have been fleeing the city for years due to its infamous violent crime. And what constitutes an American urban crime wave? In 2012, Detroit's combined rate for all four violent felonies that make up the FBI's violent-crime index — murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault — was 2 percent. The rape rate was 0.05 percent. And yet, despite an alleged campus sexual-assault rate that is 400 times greater than Detroit's, female applicants are beating down the doors of selective colleges in record numbers.

Stanford, one of the 55 colleges under investigation by the Department of Education for allegedly ignoring sexual violence, this year received over 42,000 applications, at least half from females, for a freshman class of about 1,700; every other elite college was similarly swamped with female applicants. According to the White House Council on Women and Girls, "survivors" of the alleged campus sexual-assault epidemic "often" experience a lifetime of physical and mental infirmity that includes depression and post-traumatic stress syndrome. How could highly educated baby-boomer mothers, who have spent their maternal years fending off phantom risks to their children from pesticides and vaccines, suddenly send their daughters off to a crime scene of such magnitude, unmatched even in the most brutal African tribal wars? What happened to the Sisterhood? Shouldn't it be warning its members and forming alternative structures for educating females? Instead, every year, millions of girls walk into this alleged maelstrom of violence like innocent lambs to slaughter. Even more puzzling, every year those same girls graduate from that cauldron of predation in ever more disproportionate numbers, and go on to lead highly lucrative careers.

It should not be necessary to tell a feminist that rape is the most violent crime — with the emphasis on *crime* — that a woman can experience, short of murder. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports list rape as the second most serious violent felony. If the campus feminists really believed that campuses are experiencing an epidemic of criminal sexual assault, they would demand that every campus sexual-assault allegation be brought in criminal court, where the assailant can be sentenced to years in prison if convicted. Instead, they favor secret proceedings before an increasingly byzantine set of campus tribunals made up of judicially clueless bureaucrats and professors whose most severe punishment is expulsion. Imagine if a stranger broke into a female's dorm room at night and raped her at knifepoint. Would that case be taken to the campus Title IX gender-bias tribunal? Unlikely. If someone were merely robbing females of their iPads at gunpoint around the campus library, that case, too, though far less serious than rape, would most certainly be prosecuted criminally.

There are several reasons why no one is pushing to bring campus sexual-assault cases to court. It certainly helps that the procedures before college gender tribunals are egregiously stacked against defendants. The Obama administration recently recommended that campuses deny students facing sexual-assault charges the right to cross-examine their accuser, a trend already well underway on campuses across the country. It also wants campuses to use a flimsy

preponderance-of-evidence standard for guilt, and to allow repeated proceedings against a student after an initial acquittal, as KC Johnson and Hans Bader have explained.

The campus sexual-assault tribunal also has a performative aspect: It dramatizes the patriarchy before a sympathetic audience of adults. “Our task is to give voice to the daily forms of violence we too often accept as inevitable,” a Harvard graduate student recently told the *New York Times*, describing her work protesting Harvard’s sexual-assault policies. The campus sexual revolution began with students’ demand to be free of any intrusive parietal oversight from college officials; now, in a bizarre turnaround, the children of that revolution want colleges to actually write rules for sex and police their enforcement. The colleges are only too happy to comply. In 2013, Yale came up with an embarrassingly graphic set of hypothetical sexual scenarios between gender-unidentifiable students, in an effort to delineate what constitutes permissible sex. One would have hoped that a world-class academic institution would have better things to do. Meanwhile, here is a message to girls: This is sex that we’re talking about, the very realm of the irrational and the uncontrolled. See Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, and Euripides’ *The Bacchae* (if those texts are still available at your school). Norms of chivalry, courtship, and modesty once tried to channel this primal drive; with those conventions now demolished as sexist, females (and males) are on their own — and often at sea. A highly legalistic definition of consent — the current desideratum of campus sex bureaucrats — is hardly a sufficient substitute for traditional social checks on the sexual instinct and will never be able to regulate the inexpressible and often conflicting emotions around intercourse.

But the main reason “survivors” don’t demand to bring their cases to criminal court is that they know that what they have experienced is something far more complex and compromised than criminal sexual assault, almost invariably involving mixed signals, ambiguity, and a large degree of voluntary behavior on their part.

Girls often drink themselves blotto both before and during parties precisely to lower their sexual inhibitions. The authors of campus-rape surveys discovered early on that when the students whom the pollsters deem rape victims are asked if *they* think they have been raped, the “victims” overwhelmingly respond in the negative. In the 1986 *Ms.* survey that sparked the campus-rape industry, 73 percent of respondents whom the study characterized as rape victims said that they hadn’t been raped when asked the question directly. Forty-two percent of these supposed victims had intercourse again with their alleged assailants.

The alleged campus-rape epidemic could be stopped overnight if women’s advocates sent a simple message to girls: Don’t get drunk and get into bed with a guy whom you barely know. Keep your clothes on and go home to your own bed at night. And most controversially: Demand that any boy court you long enough to reveal his character and his respect for yours before you even think about having sex with him. The feminist advocates are more interested in preserving the principle of male fault, however, than in protecting females from regretted sex. And so rather than sending an unequivocal message of personal empowerment and responsibility, they put the entire onus of sexual responsibility on males, treating females as the invariably helpless victims of the male libido.

The colleges under investigation by the Department of Education may have sustained a public-relations black eye, but sadly, they will suffer not the slightest drop in their endowments or enrollments. They will even continue to coddle their students’ melodramatic oppression fantasies. The Title IX investigations, triggered by student complaints, are premised on the preposterous conceit that colleges are creating so hostile an environment for females that those females are actually prevented from learning. Here’s how the colleges should respond:

“Are you kidding me? Get a grip. This is the most welcoming, safe, lavishly endowed community ever created in human history, where students with the desire to absorb wisdom can do so in leisure, surrounded by supportive faculty and well-meaning administrators. There are millions of girls in Asia who are studying ten hours a day to gain the privilege of learning on an American campus; if they were to come to this ‘hostile’ environment, they would seize every educational opportunity available to them.”

Instead, however, the colleges’ student-services deans and rape counselors, who live precisely for these moments of conflict, will grovel before their accusers and promise to make amends. The *New York Times* has been hawking an article from Columbia’s student newspaper that purported to expose the college’s inadequate response to sexual assault. The original article triggered campus protests against the administration and penitence from the grown-ups. What it mostly showed, however, was the hold of the gender-studies mentality on far too many students. The student journalists were outraged that the school’s sexual-assault policies refer to “rape” “euphemistically” as “non-consensual sexual intercourse,” and to alleged “rapists” as “respondents.” One “survivor” — “Natalie” (a pseudonym) — complains that a Title IX investigator used abbreviations in taking down her story, resulting in “holes” that made her account not “sound like a strong case” (it probably wasn’t) and keeping her “from having ownership over the retelling of her history with emotional and sexual violence.” Natalie had been in a “fragile state” from a previous “emotionally abusive relationship,” and promptly entered into another “‘destructive and unhealthy’ physical relationship” with another male that was “confusing at best.” That male, the article explained, “often forcefully pinned [Natalie’s] arms back against the mattress during sex; [she] would cry during and after they slept together. Not until months after their break up did Natalie recognize this as non-consensual intercourse.” If Natalie was unhappy with their sexual relationship, she would have been wise to have put an end to it. The Columbia student article provided no evidence of flawed assault policies, beyond the mere fact that the school did not issue guilty findings in Natalie’s case (which she did not fully cooperate with) and one other. The article did, however, reveal the chaotic state of campus couplings in the absence of any normative restraints on casual intercourse, a situation that will claim only female emotional victims.

While the legal risks regarding regretted sex are increasingly stacked against male students, it is hard to shed a tear for them, either. They may not be guilty of rape, but they are almost certainly guilty of taking full advantage of the sexual caravansary on campus, and of acting as brutishly as females will allow them to. Males are the main beneficiaries of no-commitment sex, for males and females are not equals on the sexual battlefield. While there may be few actual rape victims on college campuses, there are undoubtedly thousands of girls feeling confused, betrayed, and exploited by callous partners who are blind to their ambivalence and who leave their bed with no emotional pang whatsoever. If male students respond to the one-sided distribution of risk and responsibility by becoming sexual prudes, society will have suffered no loss whatsoever. But don’t count on the male libido to do anything so sane.

— *Heather Mac Donald is a Thomas Smith Fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author of The Burden of Bad Ideas.*

Contentions

[What Is Going on at Vassar College?](#)

by Jonathan Marks

Vassar has recently distinguished itself in at least two ways. First, it is one of a tiny group of colleges whose faculty supported the American Studies Association’s boycott of Israel in

substantial numbers. Thirty-nine faculty members signed a [letter](#) that sang the praises of the boycott-Israel movement. Second, as I have written here [before](#), Vassar was the venue for an open forum at which two professors were vilified for leading a trip to Israel and at which Jewish students who spoke up were [heckled](#). William Jacobson has provided [extensive coverage](#) of the situation at Vassar and was there to speak earlier this week.

In a blog entry describing reactions to Jacobson's speech, Jewish studies professor Rebecca Lesses [draws attention](#) to a series of posts by Vassar's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine, the most shocking of which includes this language: "Of course, mainstream media hasbarats have been around for decades, as have 'hasbaratchiks,' fifth-columns in foreign governments who subvert national policies to serve Israel." The author of the linked article, Greg Felton, also wrote a book entitled *The Host and the Parasite: How Israel's Fifth Column Consumed America*. Lesses observes that the *Occidental Quarterly*, on which the SJP draws, is an anti-Semitic magazine. While I hesitate to take the word of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which she cites, for it, a look through the *Occidental Quarterly*, which includes an article about libertarianism as a creed advanced by Jewish intellectuals to advance Jewish "group evolutionary interests," tends to support the charge.

When the source of the passage they had quoted was brought to SJP's attention on their Facebook [page](#), they were completely unrepentant: "We at Vassar are all about the academic freedoms. If the idea is alright, who cares where they come from?"

Of course it is disappointing that the Vassar SJP believes or pretends to believe that academic freedom is a defense of their decision to cite with favor an anti-Semitic crackpot writing for an anti-Semitic publication. More shocking is their belief that "the idea is alright." Even an undergraduate can be expected to know that when you accuse a group of being part of a "fifth column," you are accusing them of treason and suggesting that they deserve the fate of traitors.

The SJP consists of students, and perhaps a national publication is not the place to discuss their foolishness. But the adults in the room, including the 39 who signed the pro-BDS letter, and the administrators who stood by while Jewish students were heckled at Vassar, ought to be held to account for inattention to a campus climate in which students feel free to post and defend anti-Jewish tropes.

Washington Post

[Four Pinocchios for Obama's claim that Republicans have 'filibustered about 500 pieces of legislation'](#)

by Glenn Kessler

"Here's what's more disconcerting. Their [Republicans] willingness to say no to everything — the fact that since 2007, they have filibustered about 500 pieces of legislation that would help the middle class just gives you a sense of how opposed they are to any progress — has actually led to an increase in cynicism and discouragement among the people who were counting on us to fight for them."

—President Obama, [remarks at a DCCC dinner](#), May 7, 2014

In addressing a dinner of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in Los Angeles, President Obama made a rather striking claim—that Senate Republicans have filibustered “500 pieces of legislation that would help the middle class.”

Regular readers know that The Fact Checker [has objected](#) to the way that Senate Democrats [tally these figures](#), but the president’s claim makes little sense no matter how you do the numbers.

The Facts

First, some definitions: A filibuster generally refers to extended debate that delays a vote on a pending matter, while cloture is a device to end debate. Filibusters are used by opponents of a nominee or legislation, while cloture is filed by supporters.

Since 2007, there have been 527 cloture motions that have been filed, [according to Senate statistics](#). This is apparently where Obama got his figure. But this tells only part of the story as many of those cloture motions were simply dropped, never actually voted on, or “vitiating” in the senatorial nomenclature.

Obama is assuming every cloture motion can be counted as a filibuster. Political scientist [Sarah Binder](#) of the Brookings Institution, in 2002 [co-wrote a paper](#) that concluded there was 94 percent correlation between cloture motions and documented filibusters between 1917 and 1996. But the Congressional Research Service, using newer data, warned in [a 2013 report](#) that “it would be erroneous, however, to treat this table as a list of filibusters on nominations.”

Indeed, when you go through the numbers, there have just been 133 successful filibusters—meaning a final vote could not take place—since 2007.

But, even if you accept the way Senate Democrats like to frame the issue, the president is still wrong. He referred to “legislation”—and most of these cloture motions concerned judicial and executive branch nominations. In the 113th Congress, for instance, 83 of the 136 cloture motions so far have concerned nominations, not legislation.

Binder declined to comment on Obama’s claim, but said: “I would certainly agree with you that if I were counting cloture votes aimed at ‘legislation that would help the middle class,’ I would not count cloture votes aimed at confirmation votes.”

Even then, while Obama referred to “500 pieces of legislation,” the same bill can be subject to as many as three cloture motions, further inflating the numbers. For instance, there may be cloture to get on the bill, cloture on the substitute bill (if lawmakers are simply using an unrelated bill as a vehicle for passage), and cloture on the underlying bill. All of these votes might take place on the same day, but it creates the illusion of the same bill being “filibustered” three times. It certainly does not mean there were three pieces of legislation. So far in the 113th Congress, 36 pieces of legislation were subject to a cloture motion—and 12 were actually filibustered. That’s a far cry from the 136 that Obama is counting in order to tally up 500.

Obama’s count also includes at least a half-dozen instances when Republicans were blocked by Democrats through use of the filibuster. In fact, in the biggest oddity, the president reached back to 2007 in making his claim, so he includes two years when he was still a senator. On eight occasions, he voted against ending debate—the very thing he decried in his remarks. Here’s a list of those votes:

2/12/08 – [Roll Call Vote #19, S. 2248 \(FISA Amendments Act of 2007\)](#)

1/28/08 – [Roll Call Vote # 3, S.Amdt. 3911 to S. 2248](#)

11/16/07 – [Roll Call Vote # 410, S. 2340](#)

10/24/07 – [Roll Call Vote #392, Nomination of Leslie Southwick To 5th Circuit Court](#)

5/16/07 – [Roll Call Vote #168, S.Admt. 1134 to H.R. 1495](#)

3/9/07 – [Roll Call Vote # 68, S.Amdt. 312 to S.Amdt. 275 to S. 4](#)

2/1/07 – [Roll Call Vote #43, Motion to Proceed To S.Con.Res. 2](#)

1/24/07 – [Roll Call Vote #22, S.Amdt. 101 to S.Amdt. 100 to H.R. 2](#)

There is one further wrinkle. The counting of cloture motions does not include the many times senators agree to have a 60-vote threshold for the passage of legislation—in other words, the equivalent of a threatened filibuster. Just this week, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid [sought unanimous consent](#) for a 60-vote threshold for a Republican-backed bill to approve the Keystone pipeline, as part of an agreement to set up a vote for an energy efficiency bill that also would have required 60 votes for passage. Republicans might argue that Reid’s demand for a 60-vote threshold on Keystone is akin to a filibuster.

Such negotiated votes “suggests once again that cloture motion counts are an imperfect measure of threatened or actual filibusters,” Binder said. “A negotiated 60-vote threshold avoids the lengthy mechanics of the cloture process, but still imposes a hurdle to simple majority rule.”

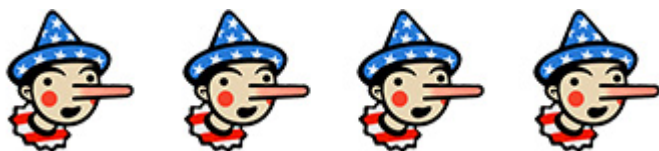
The White House declined to provide an on-the-record response.

The Pinocchio Test

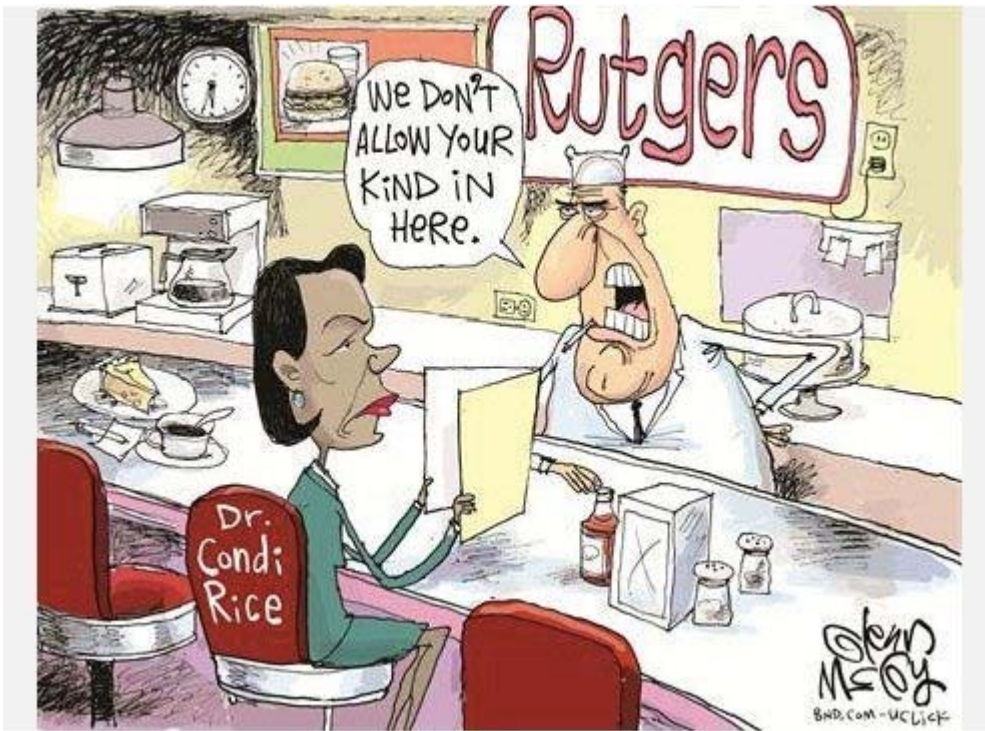
On just about every level, this claim is ridiculous.

We realize that Senate rules are complex and difficult to understand, but the president did serve in the Senate and should be familiar with its terms and procedures. Looking at the numbers, he might have been able to make a case that Republicans have blocked about 50 bills that he had wanted passed, such as an increase in the minimum wage. But instead he inflated the numbers to such an extent that he even included votes in which he, as senator, supported a filibuster.

Four Pinocchios



[\(About our rating scale\)](#)



Politics is the art
of looking for
trouble, finding
it everywhere,
diagnosing it
incorrectly, and
applying the
wrong remedies

-Groucho Marx



Yellow Lab



Black Lab



Chocolate Lab



Meth Lab