

April 1, 2015

We have another look at Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew. This time from John Fund. Fund says there is much to copy in Yew's economic success, but not so much in the political sphere.

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There is less to emulate from Singapore's brand of politics. As Frank Lavin, a former U.S. ambassador to Singapore from 2001 to 2005, notes: "Lee believed that open politics can lead to demagoguery, rent-seeking, and short-term thinking. Yet over time, Singapore did become more open, allowing for both political debate and contested elections. . . . Of Lee's many successes, his most important legacy might be the move to that more open political system to complement the open economics."

But from my visit there, I believe that the least appreciated part of Lee Kwan Yew's legacy is his method of ensuring that one generation won't bankrupt future generations by selfishly living beyond its means. It's a welfare state that works, and one he always said was available to any political leader with the courage to tell his people the truth about the limits of government's power to pass out goodies.

Glenn Reynolds of Instapundit writes on growing number of crimes that can be inadvertently committed.

Ignorance of the law, we are often told, is no excuse. "Every man is presumed to know the law," says a long-established legal aphorism. And if you are charged with a crime, you would be well advised to rely on some other defense than "I had no idea that was illegal."

But not everybody favors this state of affairs. While a century or two ago nearly all crime was traditional common-law crime — rape, murder, theft and other things that pretty much everyone should know are bad — nowadays we face all sorts of "regulatory crimes" in which intuitions of right and wrong play no role, but for which the penalties are high.

If you walk down the sidewalk, pick up a pretty feather, and take it home, you could be a felon — if it happens to be a bald eagle feather. Bald eagles are plentiful now, and were taken off the endangered species list years ago, but the federal law making possession of them a crime for most people is still on the books, and federal agents are even infiltrating some Native-American powwows in order to find and arrest people. (And feathers from lesser-known birds, like the red-tailed hawk are also covered). Other examples abound, from getting lost in a storm and snowmobiling on the wrong bit of federal land, to diverting storm sewer water around a building.

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The failure of the left to make us care about their bogus climate change claims is covered by [David Harsanyi](#).

If you want to understand why so many Democrats believe it's okay to circumvent Congress and let international agreements dictate environmental policies—well, other than their newfound respect for monocracy—you don't have to look much farther than the new poll by Gallup.

Since 1989, there's been no significant change in the public's concern level over global warming. To put this in perspective, note that the most expensive public-relations campaign in history—one that includes most governmental agencies, a long list of welfare-sucking corporations, the public school system, the universities, an infinite parade of celebrities, think tanks, well-funded environmental groups and an entire major political party—has, over the past 25 years or so, increased the number of Democrats who “worry greatly” about global warming by a mere four percentage points.

During this era, they've gone from gentle nudging to stern warnings, to fearmongering, to conflating the predictive abilities of scientists with science itself, to launching ugly campaigns to shame and shut down anyone who deviates from liberal orthodoxy—which includes not only the existence of anthropogenic global warming, but an entire ideological framework that supposedly “addresses” the problem.

And considering the absurd amount of media this crusade continues to garner, its ineffectiveness is doubly amazing. The Government Accounting Office hasn't been able to calculate the theoretical benefits of the billions we spend each year battling climate change (one theory: they don't exist). Can one imagine how difficult it would be to tabulate what hundreds of millions spent on indoctrination bought us? The return is pitiful. And completely foreseeable.

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Last week on the [24th](#) and [25th](#) we included some items on the collapse of families, both black and white. We have more today with this from the [National Review](#); “*Why Won't Liberals Talk about the Most Important Kind of ‘Privilege’ in America?*” The 'privilege the authors are referring to is marriage.

Much has been written about privilege in academic settings over the past few decades. There's the privilege of wealth, and the advantages wealth confers if a baby is lucky enough to be born into it. Much too has been written about the advantages of being born into this world as a Caucasian — known in academia as “white privilege.”

But not enough has been written about the most important advantage a baby can have in America: the advantage of being born with a mother and father who happen to be married. Call it “the marriage privilege” — the advantages are startling.

In a report last year entitled “[Saving Horatio Alger](#),” which focused on social mobility and class in America, Richard Reeves of the Brookings Institution discovered that the likelihood of a child raised by parents born into the lowest income quintile moving to the top quintile by the age 40 was a disastrous 3 percent. Worse, 50 percent of those children stay stuck in the bottom quintile. And the outlook for the children of those marriage-less children is equally stark.

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More from [Michael Barone](#).

Christmastime is an occasion for families to come together. But the family is not what it used to be, as my former American Enterprise Institute colleague Nick Schulz argues in his short AEI book [Home Economics: The Consequences of Changing Family Structure](#).

It's a subject that many people are uncomfortable with. "Everyone either is or knows and has a deep personal connection to someone who is divorced, cohabiting, or gay," Schulz writes. "Great numbers of people simply want to avoid awkward talk of what are seen as primarily personal issues or issues of individual morality."

Nonetheless, it is an uncomfortable truth that children of divorce and children with unmarried parents tend to do much worse in life than children of two-parent families. (I'll leave aside the sensitive issue of children of same-sex marriages because these haven't existed in a non-stigmatized atmosphere long enough to produce measurable results.)

As Schulz points out, that uncomfortable truth is not controversial among social scientists. It is affirmed by undoubted liberals such as Harvard's David Ellwood and Christopher Jencks. ...

National Review

[In Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew Built a Welfare State That Works](#)

The key is to ensure that one generation won't bankrupt future generations by living beyond its means.

by John Fund

Obituaries of Lee Kuan Yew, the first prime minister of Singapore who died this week at age 91, broke down into roughly two camps:

He was a hero, building a "clean as Disneyland" republic that runs like a Swiss watch.

He was an autocrat, who built a successful economy but crushed opponents and journalists who challenged his "managed" democracy.

Both statements have big elements of truth. I take a third approach, based on a fascinating visit I made to Singapore earlier this month. Lee Kuan Yew, a member of Britain's left-wing Labour party while a student at Cambridge, managed to create a workable welfare state, one that provides for people without creating Social Security-like Ponzi schemes or unsustainable entitlements. Both liberals and conservatives have much to learn from what he built, the details of which are missing in most of the tributes to him.

Lee's first priority when he became prime minister in 1959 was to reimagine Singapore's economy. "Back then, this place was a swamp, with no natural resources, and it even had to import its drinking water from Malaysia," Jim Rogers, a noted American investor who has lived in Singapore for nearly a decade, told me during my visit there.

By embracing free trade, capital formation, vigorous meritocratic education, low taxes, and a reliable judicial system, Lee raised the per capita income of his country from \$500 a year to some \$52,000 a year today. That's 50 percent higher than that of Britain, the colonial power that ruled Singapore for 150 years. Its average annual growth rate has averaged 7 percent since the 1970s. "A 2010 study showed more patents and patent applications from the small city-state of Singapore (population 5.6 million) than from Russia (population 140 million)," noted economist Thomas Sowell observes.

But that wealth wasn't used to create a traditional welfare state. Economist Mark Skousen notes that Singapore is rated along with Hong Kong as one of the two most free economies in the world. Any expansion of government is gradual and grudging. In 2013, when Singapore broadened its medical-benefits program, the local *Straits Times* newspaper made clear the government's philosophy: "The first [priority] is to keep government subsidies targeted at those who most need them, rather than commit to benefits for all. Universal benefits are 'wasteful and inequitable,' and hard to take away once given, [finance minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam] said."

That mindset is embodied in Singapore's philosophy of welfare, which rests on four pillars:

Each generation should pay its own way.

Each family should pay its own way.

Each individual should pay his own way.

Only after passing through these three filters should anyone turn to the government for help. But it will be there when needed.

Health-care expert John Goodman is credited (along with economist Richard Rahn) with first proposing medical savings accounts in the U.S. He says Singapore shows that they can work as the backbone of a health-care system. "The issue is," he says, "can individuals be counted on to manage their own health-care dollars responsibly, or does health care work better if all the dollars are controlled by government or insurance companies?"

The answer is clear.

Not only is Singapore's population healthy, but the private sector dominates health-care spending, and consumer choice keeps health-care costs down. In Singapore, the government's share of health-care spending has fallen to 20 percent, down from 50 percent 30 years ago. "Singapore has found a rational way to provide services that are provided by legalized Ponzi schemes in the rest of the developed world," Goodman told me in an interview. "Those governments have made promises they must either default on or impose draconian taxes to pay for. Singapore has avoided that problem."

It's no wonder that other countries constantly consult Singapore for guidance on how to turbo-charge their economies. In 2011, Ghana's vice president, John Dramani Mahama, told a visiting delegation from Singapore that his country "takes a lot of inspiration from Singapore in their economic transformation from a third- into a first-world country."

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USA Today

[You are probably breaking the law right now](#)

When lawmakers don't even know how many laws exist, how can citizens be expected to follow them?

by Glenn Harlan Reynolds

Ignorance of the law, we are often told, is no excuse. "Every man is presumed to know the law," says a long-established legal aphorism. And if you are charged with a crime, you would be well advised to rely on some other defense than "I had no idea that was illegal."

But not everybody favors this state of affairs. While a century or two ago nearly all crime was traditional common-law crime — rape, murder, theft and other things that pretty much everyone should know are bad — nowadays we face all sorts of "regulatory crimes" in which intuitions of right and wrong play no role, but for which the penalties are high.

If you walk down the sidewalk, pick up a pretty feather, and take it home, you could be a felon — if it happens to be a bald eagle feather. Bald eagles are plentiful now, and were taken off the endangered species list years ago, but the federal law making possession of them a crime for most people is still on the books, and federal agents are even infiltrating some Native-American powwows in order to find and arrest people. (And feathers from lesser-known birds, like the red-tailed hawk are also covered). Other examples abound, from getting lost in a storm and snowmobiling on the wrong bit of federal land, to diverting storm sewer water around a building.

"Regulatory crimes" of this sort are incredibly numerous and a category that is [growing quickly](#). They are the ones likely to trap unwary individuals into being felons without knowing it. That is why Michael Cottone, in a just-published *Tennessee Law Review* [article](#), suggests that maybe the old presumption that individuals know the law is outdated, unfair and maybe even unconstitutional. "Tellingly," [he writes](#), "no exact count of the number of federal statutes that impose criminal sanctions has ever been given, but estimates from the last 15 years range from 3,600 to approximately 4,500." Meanwhile, according to recent [congressional testimony](#), the number of federal regulations (enacted by administrative agencies under loose authority from Congress) carrying criminal penalties may be as many as 300,000.

And it gets worse. While the old-fashioned common law crimes typically required a [culpable mental state](#) — you had to realize you were doing something wrong — the regulatory crimes generally [don't require](#) any knowledge that you're breaking the law. This seems quite unfair. As [Cottone asks](#), "How can people be expected to know all the laws governing their conduct when no one even knows exactly how many criminal laws exist?"

Of course, we may hope that [prosecutorial discretion](#) will save us: Just explain to the nice prosecutor that we meant no harm, and violated the law by accident, and he or she will drop the charges and tell us to be more careful next time. And sometimes things work that way. But other times, the prosecutors are out to get you for your politics, your ethnicity, or just in order to [fulfill a quota](#), in which case you will hear that the law is the law, and that ignorance is no excuse. (Amusingly, government officials who break the law *do* get to plead ignorance and good intentions, under the doctrine of good faith "[qualified immunity](#)." Just not us proles.)

To solve this problem we need for judges to abandon the presumption that people know the law, at least where regulatory crimes are concerned, and require some proof that the accused knew or should reasonably have known that his conduct was illegal. Alternatively, Congress should adopt legislation requiring such proof. (And I would favor allowing defendants in any action brought by the federal government — civil or criminal — to have the option of arguing to the jury that the government's action against them is unfair or biased, with the charges dropped and legal fees being charged to the government if the jury agrees.)

Under the [vagueness doctrine](#), a law is void if a person of reasonable intelligence would have to guess at its meaning, because it would be unfair to punish someone for violating a law that cannot be understood. It seems just as unfair to punish people for violating a law that they couldn't reasonably be expected to know about.

Law that can't be known is no law at all. If we wish to remain a nation of laws, Congress and the courts need to address this problem, before it's too late.

Glenn Harlan Reynolds, a University of Tennessee law professor, is the author of [The New School](#): How the Information Age Will Save American Education from Itself.

The Federalist

[The Campaign To Make You Care About Climate Change Is Failing Miserably](#)

The number of Democrats who 'worry greatly' has increased by four percentage points in 25 years.

by David Harsanyi

If you want to understand why so many Democrats believe it's okay to [circumvent Congress](#) and let international agreements dictate environmental policies—well, other than their newfound respect for [monocracy](#)—you don't have to look much farther than the [new poll by Gallup](#).

Since 1989, there's been no significant change in the public's concern level over global warming. To put this in perspective, note that the most expensive public-relations campaign in history—one that includes most governmental agencies, a long list of welfare-sucking corporations, the public school system, the universities, an infinite parade of celebrities, think tanks, well-funded environmental groups and an entire major political party—has, over the past 25 years or so, [increased](#) the number of Democrats who “worry greatly” about global warming by a mere [four percentage points](#).

During this era, they've gone from gentle nudging to stern warnings, to fearmongering, to conflating the predictive abilities of scientists with science itself, to launching ugly campaigns to shame and shut down anyone who deviates from liberal orthodoxy—which includes not only the existence of anthropogenic global warming, but an entire ideological framework that supposedly “addresses” the problem.

And considering the absurd amount of media this crusade continues to garner, its ineffectiveness is doubly amazing. The Government Accounting Office hasn't been able to calculate the theoretical benefits of the billions we spend each year battling climate change (one theory: they don't exist). Can one imagine how difficult it would be to tabulate what hundreds of millions spent on indoctrination bought us? The return is pitiful. And completely foreseeable.

Why Climate-Change Alarmism Has Failed

One of the problems is the [Watermelon Effect](#). Many Americans who might otherwise be inclined to worry about incremental man-made warming will ignore it because they have no interest in assuming all the ideological baggage that comes with this admission. Joining the Left on “climate change” means joining it on array of agenda items that are often incompatible with many Americans' economic and political beliefs.

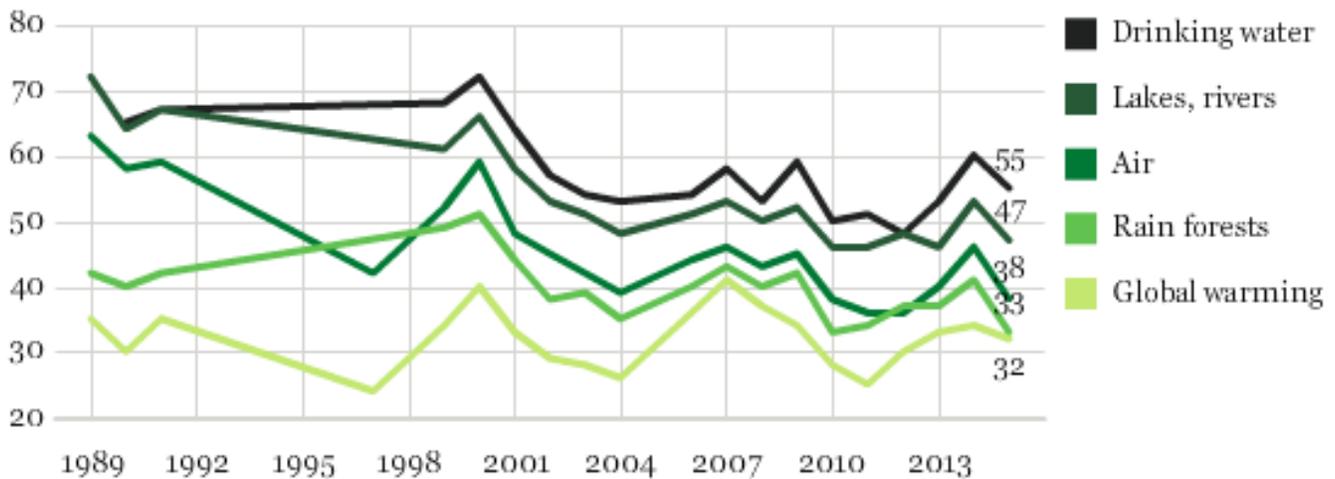
Environmentalism has always been leftist malware, infecting economic growth, the most nefarious of all things. You can flip through a Naomi Klein [book](#) or browse [Grist](#)—though, really, it's implicit in most of the agenda—to understand how many archaic ideas about top-down control litter every corner of this philosophy. Put it this way: John Holdren, whose intellectual lineage can be directly traced to the ugliest strains of this movement, a man who believes that proliferation of human beings is destroying the planet, is our Science Czar in 2015. So even if global warming is real, [I would prefer it](#).

Then, of course, there is a difference in believing climate change is real and believing that climate change is calamitous. All one needs to do is a quick cost-benefit analysis. Voters are willing to support a certain some level of environmental policy. They are “fairly concerned,” as Gallup points out. But if they truly believed the End of Days was approaching, they wouldn't be

living the lives they do. Perhaps they intuitively understand that people have a remarkable ability to adapt to change. When it comes to climate, it's what humans have been doing for hundreds of thousands of years now.

Trends in Americans' Worry About Environmental Problems

% Worried a great deal



GALLUP®

Empirically speaking, we see, despite all the new wealth and new people, a far cleaner world. This is reflected in the Gallup poll, which finds that as the shrieking gets louder, Americans become more positive about the quality of their environment and less concerned about the threats. This makes sense, since our water and air—the aggregate emissions of pollutants [has been in decline for 35 years](#)—have become progressively cleaner since 1989. You can thank technological advances in efficiency brought on by competition, not solar farms, I'm afraid.

Plus, we're not that scared anymore. As our environment improves, progressives are impelled to ratchet up the talk of catastrophic disasters. We perpetually hear about new threats that never seem to materialize (unless you actually believe every weather event is new to our generation and due to climate change). And as the fearmongering becomes more far-fetched, the accusations become more hysterical, and the deadlines for action keep being pushed right over the horizon, fewer people seem to really care.

Two Options for Democrats

So how do you win people over? I'm not sure. Shutting down debate doesn't help, though. You'll notice there is no debate, just a volley of allegations. Environmentalists attempt to [destroy the careers](#) of scientists who diverge from the consensus. If you're a liberal who questions the constitutionality of the White House's rule by edict, you're [oil-drenched sellout](#), too. The debate is over, even though there are a broad range of opinions among scientists about how dangerous climate change is, how much man has to do with it, and how we should deal with it. By declaring

the conversation over, you're done trying to convince anyone. If you're an environmentalist, can you really afford to be doing that?

It depends, I guess. The static polls are a pretty devastating indictment of effectiveness of the environmental movement, yes. But it also speaks to the contention that environmental policies are a political winner for the Left. Ask yourself: when was the last time a candidate lost because he or she wasn't gung ho enough about artificially inflating gas prices?

So if you haven't been able to win over the public over in 25 years of intense political and cultural pressure, you are probably down to two options: You can revisit your strategy, open debate to a wide range of ideas, accept that your excited rhetoric works on a narrow band of the Americans (in any useful political sense), and live with the reality that most people have no interest in surrendering prosperity. Or, you can try to force people to do what you want.

Democrats, it seems, are going to give the latter another try.

National Review

[Why Won't Liberals Talk about the Most Important Kind of 'Privilege' in America?](#)

It's marriage.

by Lee Habeeb & Mike Leven

Much has been written about privilege in academic settings over the past few decades. There's the privilege of wealth, and the advantages wealth confers if a baby is lucky enough to be born into it. Much too has been written about the advantages of being born into this world as a Caucasian — known in academia as “white privilege.”

But not enough has been written about the most important advantage a baby can have in America: the advantage of being born with a mother and father who happen to be married. Call it “the marriage privilege” — the advantages are startling.

In a report last year entitled “[Saving Horatio Alger](#),” which focused on social mobility and class in America, Richard Reeves of the Brookings Institution discovered that the likelihood of a child raised by parents born into the lowest income quintile moving to the top quintile by the age 40 was a disastrous 3 percent. Worse, 50 percent of those children stay stuck in the bottom quintile. And the outlook for the children of those marriage-less children is equally stark.

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But Reeves discovered a silver lining while crunching the data: Those children born in the lowest quintile to parents who were married and stayed married had only a 19 percent chance of remaining in the bottom income group.

Reeve's study revealed that this social-mobility advantage applied not just to the lower class: The middle class was impacted, too. The study revealed that children born into the middle class have a mere 11 percent chance of ending up in the bottom economic quintile with married parents, but that number rises to 38 percent if their parents are never married.

You'd think a finding like that would be headline news across the nation, or that the media might want to talk about the real reason for the wealth gap in America — the marriage gap.

Raj Chetty, the Bloomberg Professor of Economics at Harvard University, had this to say about the very same subject in the executive summary of his study, "Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the U.S.":

The strongest predictors of upward mobility are measures of family structure such as the fraction of single parents in the area. As with race, parents' marital status does not matter purely through its effects at the individual level. Children of married parents also have higher rates of upward mobility if they live in communities with fewer single parents.

We find modest correlations between upward mobility and local tax and government expenditure policies and no systematic correlation between mobility and local labor market conditions, rates of migration, or access to higher education.

Chetty wasn't finished. In his full paper, he had this to say:

Finally, mobility is significantly lower in areas with weaker family structures, as measured e.g. by the fraction of single parents. As with race, parents' marital status does not matter purely through its effects at the individual level. Children of married parents also have higher rates of upward mobility in communities with fewer single parents. Interestingly, we find no correlation between racial shares and upward mobility once we control for the fraction of single parents in an area.

That last sentence is worth including in every discussion we have about race and class in America. Because it turns out that once you control for the proportion of single parents in an area, the correlation between social mobility and race disappears.

Few people in America have done better work in this area than the University of Virginia's Brad Wilcox. In a recent paper published through the American Enterprise Institute, he had this to say about America's growing gap between America's marriage haves and have-nots:

The retreat from marriage — a retreat that has been concentrated among lower-income Americans — plays a key role in the changing economic fortunes of American family life. We estimate that the growth in median income of families with children would be 44% higher if the United States enjoyed 1980 levels of married parenthood today.

The reasons for the stark difference in economic outcomes are as obvious as they are important. Marriage is a form of social capital that creates the foundation for all kinds of positive results.

"Children raised in a stable, intact family are much more likely to benefit from the time, attention, and money of two parents," Wilcox explained in a recent interview. "They are more likely to thrive in school, to steer clear of encounters with the police, to avoid having a teenage pregnancy, to graduate from college, and to be gainfully employed as an adult."

The marriage deficit has been seen as the defining problem in the black community by at least one prominent black opinion-shaper: the late William Raspberry, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* columnist.

Back in 2005, he was as blunt as blunt can be about the elephant in the room when it comes to race and class in America.

“Father absence is the bane of the black community, predisposing its children to school failure, criminal behavior and economic hardship, and to an intergenerational repetition of the grim cycle,” he wrote.

The culprit, Raspberry concluded, alongside some of the top ministers in the African-American community who’d just met in Washington to call attention to the issue, was the decline of marriage. Indeed, he pointed out that some youth workers in black neighborhoods know children who’ve never seen a wedding.

Raspberry expressed little tolerance in the column for those who blame the low marriage rates on poverty, crime, or racism. “Black men aren’t *born* incarcerated, crime-prone dropouts,” he wrote. “What principally renders them vulnerable to such a plight is the absence of fathers and their stabilizing influence. Fatherless boys (as a general rule) become ineligible to be husbands — though no less likely to become fathers — and their children fall into the patterns that render *them* ineligible to be husbands.”

Raspberry wasn’t finished, highlighting the impact marriagelessness has on young girls, too:

The absence of fathers means, as well, that girls lack both a pattern against which to measure the boys who pursue them and an example of sacrificial love between a man and a woman. As the ministers were at pains to say, it isn’t the incompetence of mothers that is at issue but the absence of half of the adult support needed for families to be most effective.

And then came his conclusion:

America’s almost reflexive search for outside explanations for our internal problems delayed the introspective examination that might have slowed the trend. What we have now is a changed culture – a culture whose worst aspects are reinforced by oversexualized popular entertainment and that places a reduced value on the things that produced nearly a century of socioeconomic improvement. For the first time since slavery, it is no longer possible to say with assurance that things are getting better.

The problem of an unraveling civic culture was the central part of Charles Murray’s book *Coming Apart* back in 2012, with a focus on two white fictional neighborhoods he labeled Belmont (an archetypal upper-middle-class town) and Fishtown (after a neighborhood in Philadelphia that’s been home to the white working class since the time of our nation’s birth).

“In 1960, extremely high proportions of whites in both Belmont and Fishtown were married — 94% in Belmont and 84% in Fishtown. In the 1970s, those percentages declined about equally in both places. Then came the great divergence,” Murray explained in [a long essay](#) for the *Wall Street Journal* at the time. “In Belmont, marriage stabilized during the mid-1980s, standing at 83% in 2010. In Fishtown, however, marriage continued to slide; as of 2010, a minority (just 48%) were married. The gap in marriage between Belmont and Fishtown grew to 35 percentage points, from just 10.”

The conservative Murray, like his liberal counterpart William Raspberry, then made the connection between marriage and the other social problems that stem from the breakdown of family and religiosity.

The breakdown, Murray noted, hasn't proceeded exactly as we might think:

It is worrisome for the culture that the U.S. as a whole has become markedly more secular since 1960, and especially worrisome that Fishtown has become much more secular than Belmont. It runs against the prevailing narrative of secular elites versus a working class still clinging to religion, but the evidence from the General Social Survey, the most widely used database on American attitudes and values, does not leave much room for argument.

For example, suppose we define "de facto secular" as someone who either professes no religion at all or who attends a worship service no more than once a year. For the early GSS surveys conducted from 1972 to 1976, 29% of Belmont and 38% of Fishtown fell into that category. Over the next three decades, secularization did indeed grow in Belmont, from 29% in the 1970s to 40% in the GSS surveys taken from 2006 to 2010. But it grew even more in Fishtown, from 38% to 59%.

In writing about the very Americans that Murray described in that white working class neighborhood of Fishtown, Brad Wilcox has come to a very similar conclusion:

In the 1970s, this group was more likely to attend church than any other group in the country. But now, for both economic and cultural reasons, Middle Americans are falling behind. Middle Americans, especially Middle American men, are losing their connection to marriage, work, religion, and civil society. This doesn't bode well for the fate of our nation, or for our democratic life together.

"I am convinced," the late author Stephan Covey once wrote, "that if we as a society work diligently in every other area of life and neglect the family, it would be analogous to straightening the deck chairs on the Titanic."

Covey was right, but the case for marriage is not lost. Indeed, it's never fully been litigated in the court of public opinion, let alone the culture. Unlike social forces beyond any person's control, teaching a generation to do the simple things generations did before them to live the American dream — finish high school, find work, get married, and have children, and in that order — is possible.

We have to be talking about the policies that could encourage marriage, and pay attention to groups around the country — particularly in some of our churches — that are doing some remarkable work on the marriage front.

It's time we started talking about the connections between marriage, love, and God, too. Bonhoeffer said it best in a letter to his niece: "It is not your love that sustains your marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love."

It's time we started talking about the health and happiness of married folks (take, for instance, the fact that married people have more sex than unmarried people).

It's time we all started telling the story about the most important gap in American life, the marriage gap, and how we might close it.

We need, in other words, to be talking about the privilege that matters most in American life — the marriage privilege.

Lee Habeeb is the vice president of content at Salem Radio Network. He lives in Oxford, Miss., with his wife, Valerie, and daughter, Reagan. Mike Leven is the former COO and president of the Las Vegas Sands, and is now Chairman and CEO of the Georgia Aquarium.

Examiner

Uncomfortable Truths about Family Breakdown

Children without married parents miss out on more than just income.

by Michael Barone

Christmastime is an occasion for families to come together. But the family is not what it used to be, as my former American Enterprise Institute colleague Nick Schulz argues in his short AEI book *Home Economics: The Consequences of Changing Family Structure*.

It's a subject that many people are uncomfortable with. "Everyone either is or knows and has a deep personal connection to someone who is divorced, cohabiting, or gay," Schulz writes. "Great numbers of people simply want to avoid awkward talk of what are seen as primarily personal issues or issues of individual morality."

Nonetheless, it is an uncomfortable truth that children of divorce and children with unmarried parents tend to do much worse in life than children of two-parent families. (I'll leave aside the sensitive issue of children of same-sex marriages because these haven't existed in a non-stigmatized atmosphere long enough to produce measurable results.)

As Schulz points out, that uncomfortable truth is not controversial among social scientists. It is affirmed by undoubted liberals such as Harvard's David Ellwood and Christopher Jencks.

Growing up outside a two-parent family means not just lower incomes and less social mobility, Schulz argues. It also reduces human capital — "the knowledge, education, habits, willpower — all the internal stuff that is largely intangible — a person has that helps produce an income."

While children are born with certain innate capacities, those capacities can be broadened or narrowed by their upbringing. The numbers indicate that single or divorced parents — however caring and dedicated — are unable, on average, to broaden those capacities as much as married parents can.

These differences have sharp implications for upward mobility. Schulz points to an Economic Mobility Project analysis showing that, among children who start off in the bottom third of the income distribution, only 26 percent with divorced parents move up, compared with 42 percent born to unmarried mothers (who may marry later, of course) and 50 percent who grow up with two married parents.

All this matters more than it used to because two-parent families are much more uncommon than they used to be. In 1960 about three-fourths of Americans 18 and over were married. In 2011, less than half were.

One reason is that people are getting married later in life. Back in 1959, one of the last years of the Baby Boom, most American women got married before they turned 21.

In the past half-century, the age of first marriage has crept upward. In 1970, only 11 percent of men and 7 percent of women age 30 to 34 had never been married. In 2008, the corresponding figures were 37 percent of men and 28 percent of women.

In 1970, only 12 percent of Americans age 35 to 44 were unmarried. In 2009, 33 percent were.

Many see increased divorce as the explanation for this change. True, divorce rates spiked upward in the 1970s. But they peaked in the 1980s. Most of the change represents people not getting married at all.

In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then–assistant labor secretary, won fame — and vicious criticism — for his report lamenting that 24 percent of black births were to unmarried mothers. By 2009, that rate had risen to 72 percent — and the rate of unmarried births to all American mothers was 41 percent.

These changes have not affected all social classes uniformly. In his 2012 book *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010*, my AEI colleague Charles Murray showed that rates of divorce and single parenthood among college-educated whites, after increasing in the 1970s, are down almost to 1960s levels.

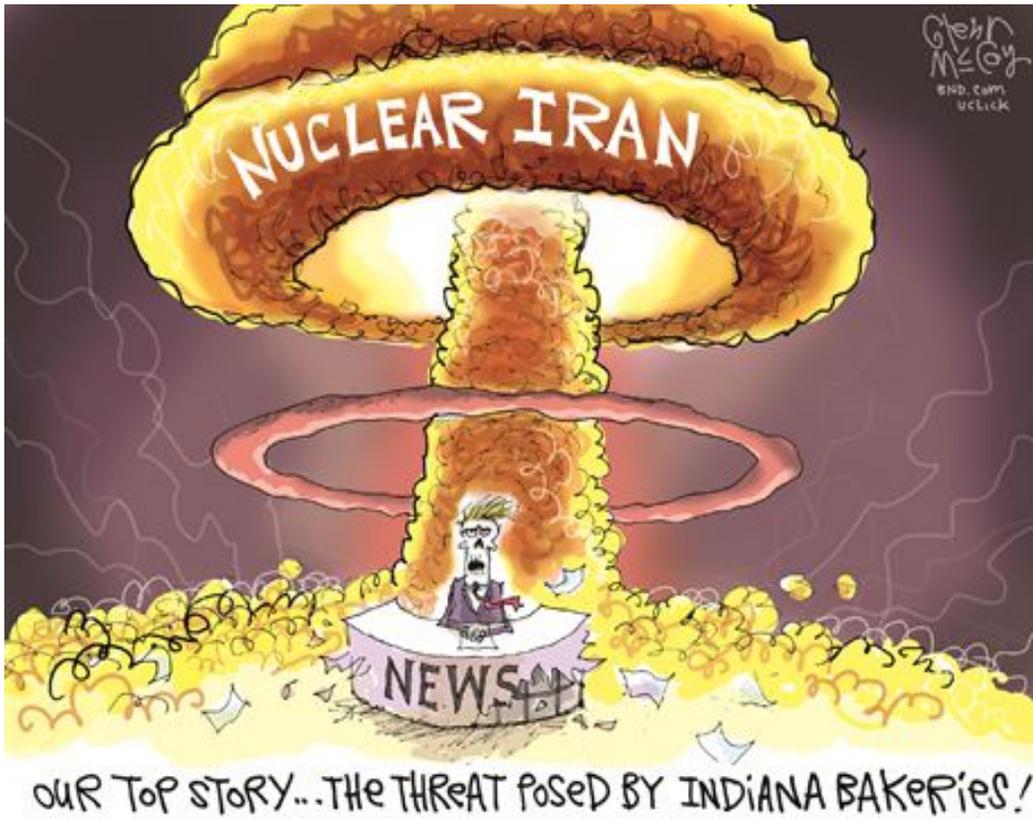
But among low-education, low-income whites, as well as blacks and Hispanics, family disintegration has become the norm.

Will these trends go on forever? Not necessarily. Schulz looks back to the 1950s, years of unusually high marriage rates. Go back further, to the years around 1900, and Americans were marrying later, and larger percentages than today never married at all.

Increasing affluence and changing mores reinforced by universal media such as movies and television helped produce the mid-century America with well-nigh-universal married parenthood.

People learn from experience. In surveys, children of divorce express disapproval of divorce — and the decline in divorce rates since the 1980s suggests they divorce less often than their parents' generation did.

So it's at least possible that those most familiar with the ill effects of family disintegration will choose in their own lives to take a different course.

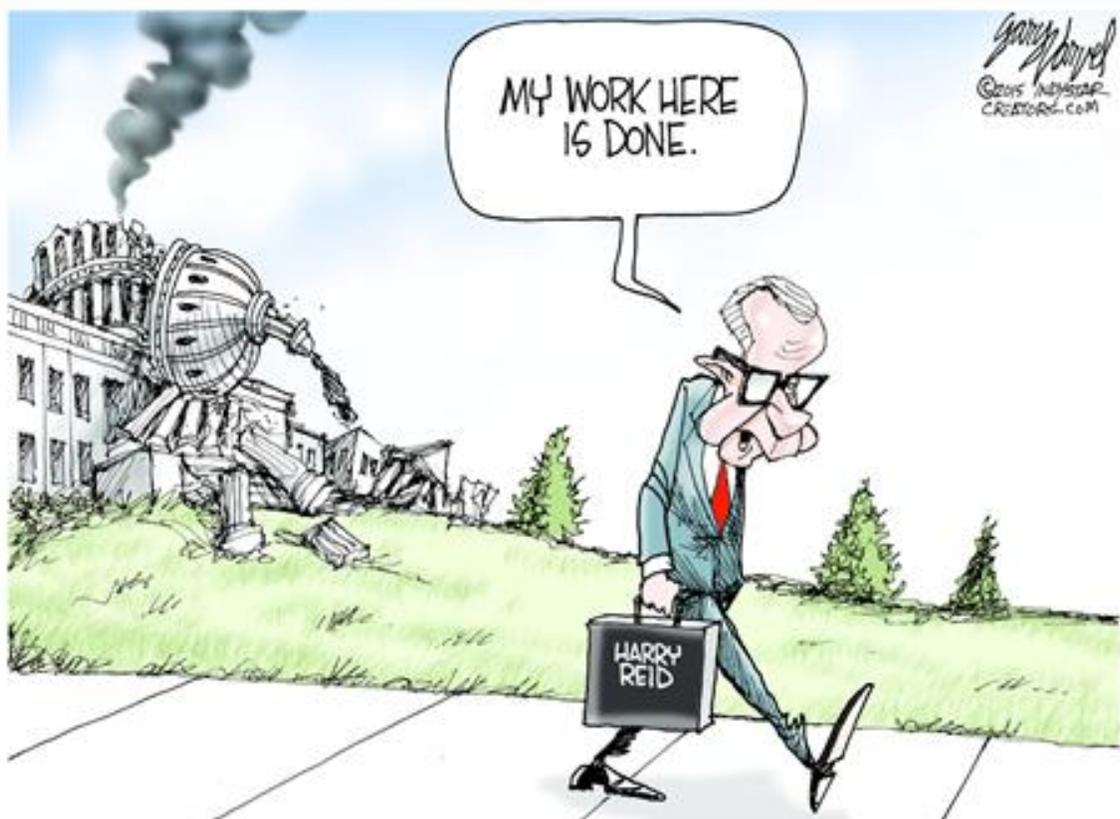
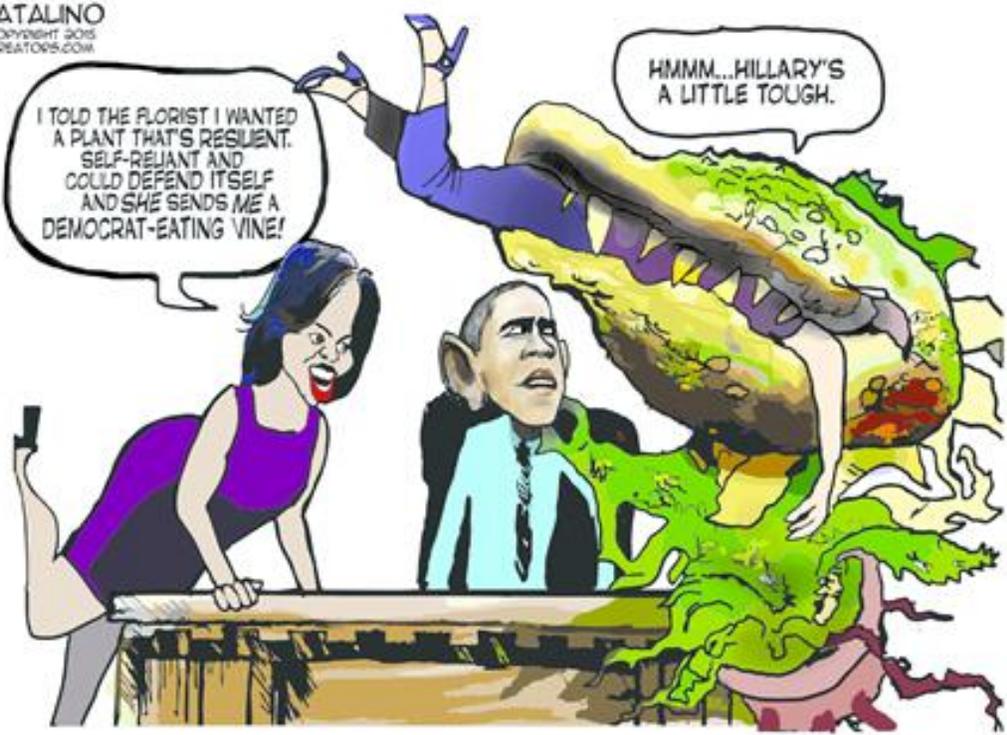




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