

September 9, 2015

Following on the theme of the last Pickings, Fred Hiatt, editorial page editor of WaPo writes on the president's Syrian legacy.

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Starvation in Biafra a generation ago sparked a movement. Synagogues and churches a decade ago mobilized to relieve misery in Darfur. When the Taliban in 2001 destroyed ancient statues of Buddha at Bamiyan, the world was appalled at the lost heritage.

Today the Islamic State is blowing up precious cultural monuments in Palmyra, and half of all Syrians have been displaced — as if, on a proportional basis, 160 million Americans had been made homeless. More than a quarter-million have been killed. Yet the “Save Darfur” signs have not given way to “Save Syria.”

One reason is that Obama — who ran for president on the promise of restoring the United States' moral stature — has constantly reassured Americans that doing nothing is the smart and moral policy. He has argued, at times, that there was nothing the United States could do, belittling the Syrian opposition as “former doctors, farmers, pharmacists and so forth.” ...

Jennifer Rubin carries the thought along.

There is nothing like the spectacle of thousands of refugees pouring into Europe to awaken American politicians and media to the Syrian civil war that has killed more than 200,000 and created millions of refugees, who flooded into Syria's neighbors before they came to Europe.

As many have pointed out, President Obama bears primary responsibility for refusing to match deeds with his declaration that Bashar al-Assad “must go.” Had Obama acted more than four years ago as critics and his own national security team urged, in all likelihood thousands would still be alive, millions of refugees would not have fled Syria, jihadists would not have found a base of operations (from whence they swarmed into Iraq, resulting in more deaths and refugees) and Russian troops would not know be established in Syria, a sign of how much influence disagreeable powers have and how little we do.

Now, it's not often that a president gets a second bite at the apple — the perfect opportunity to self-correct a horrible decision. Obama, however, got his when Assad used chemical weapons on multiple occasions. The president could have built a multi-national force, bombed Assad's military assets and tipped the balance of power away from the Syrian leader. But Obama in 2013 managed to flub that as well, and in the meantime convinced the Iranians and the Russians he was feckless. (One wonders if Vladimir Putin would have invaded Ukraine had Obama exercised muscle in Syria rather than looking for Russian help to bail him out of a conflict he never had any intention of taking on.) ...

Matthew Continetti writes more on foreign policy.

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I am not saying that the president or the Democratic Party is anti-American in ideology or rhetoric or intent. What I am saying is that the net effect of President Obama's actions has been to legitimize, strengthen, and embolden nations whose anti-Americanism is public and vicious and all too serious.

Iran is an obvious example. The anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism of the regime is inescapable. Not even Obama, [who has gone out of his way to defend the Iranians as rational actors](#), can ignore it. How has Iran's "power position" been affected by this White House? In 2009, when the regime faced its most serious challenge in years, the president was silent. In 2011 and 2013, when urged to act against the regime's closest ally in Syria, the president did nothing.

Why? To speak out in favor of protesting students, to support the Syrian rebels, to punish Bashar al-Assad for violating red lines the president himself had drawn—these acts would have jeopardized the nuclear negotiations with Iran.

The outcome of those negotiations was a deal in which the Iranians agree to suspend some elements of their nuclear research for about a decade in exchange for billions of dollars in sanctions relief. So a fundamentalist theocracy whose leaders chant "Death to America" and whose self-identity is based on a revolutionary challenge to the United States and Israel has been endorsed as a quasi-member of the "international community," and will receive an infusion of much needed cash. ...

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Rick Richman says Kerry tops Neville Chamberlin.

In his [speech](#) yesterday on the Iran deal, Secretary of State Kerry mentioned "Israel" or "Israeli" 26 times – protesting a bit too much about his concern for the ally put at existential risk by the Obama administration's cascade of concessions. Even eerier was the similarity of Kerry's words to those of Neville Chamberlain in the British parliamentary debate on the Munich agreement in 1938. ...

... Chamberlain proceeded with a 369-150 vote in Parliament, while the Iran deal will proceed against bipartisan opposition in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, both the Senate and the House as a whole, and the majority of the American people, as expressed in multiple polls. President Obama will use a partisan minority to make an end run around the Constitutional requirement for treaties – a provision the Founders intended to insure that any significant multi-year foreign commitment would not proceed without a national consensus reflected in a two-thirds Senate vote – as his secretary of state employs rhetoric, in prepared remarks, that would have embarrassed Neville Chamberlain. ...

Noah Rothman posts on Hurricane Katrina's most enduring legacy.

For a city as infatuated with its old-world charm as New Orleans, institutional change arrives slowly – if ever. Often, it takes a catalyst, sometimes a horrible one, to create the impetus for shifts and adaptations that appear in retrospect utterly transformative. The disastrous physical and psychological impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans had this catalyzing effect. For all the shocks and displacements that arose from that tragedy, its destabilizing effects also resulted in sweeping progress. The reforms to the city’s education system, which has risen like the phoenix out of the disaster, is the miracle that the left dares not acknowledge. For the nation’s entrenched public education unions, its implications are too terrible to contemplate.

The city of New Orleans did not embark on the most radical education reform experiment in generations out of a sense of altruism or adventure. In the wake of the devastation that followed the flooding of nearly 80 percent of the city, education reform was a project of necessity. After the floods, much of New Orleans’ educational infrastructure had been damaged beyond repair. The city’s tax base had fled. The Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) was [reluctantly compelled](#) to ask some 7,000 teachers and staff – many of them displaced themselves — to find new work. In November of 2005, with flood waters still lingering in disadvantaged parts of the city, the OPSB acquiesced to the surrender of four-fifths of the entire New Orleans public school system to the all-charter Recovery School District (RSD). ...

Washington Post
[Obama’s Syria achievement](#)
by Fred Hiatt



Smoke rises from the detonation of an ancient temple in Palmyra, Syria.

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One reason is that Obama — who ran for president on the promise of restoring the United States’ moral stature — has constantly reassured Americans that doing nothing is the smart and moral policy. He has argued, at times, that there was nothing the United States could do, [belittling the Syrian opposition](#) as “former doctors, farmers, pharmacists and so forth.”

He has argued that we would only make things worse — “I am more mindful probably than most,” [he told the New Republic](#) in 2013, “of not only our incredible strengths and capabilities, but also our limitations.”

He has implied that because we can’t solve every problem, maybe we shouldn’t solve any. “How do I weigh tens of thousands who’ve been killed in Syria versus the tens of thousands who are currently being killed in the Congo?” he asked (though at the time thousands were not being killed in Congo).

On those rare occasions when political pressure or the horrors of Syrian suffering threatened to overwhelm any excuse for inaction, he promised action, in statements or White House leaks: training for the opposition, a safe zone on the Turkish border. Once public attention moved on, the plans were abandoned or scaled back to meaningless proportions (training [50 soldiers](#) per year, no action on the Turkish border).

Perversely, the worse Syria became, the more justified the president seemed for staying aloof; steps that might have helped in 2012 seemed ineffectual by 2013, and actions that could have saved lives in 2013 would not have been up to the challenge presented by 2014. The fact that the woman who wrote the book on genocide, Samantha Power, and the woman who campaigned to bomb Sudan to save the people of Darfur, Susan Rice, could apparently in good conscience stay on as U.N. ambassador and national security adviser, respectively, lent further moral credibility to U.S. abdication.

Most critically, inaction was sold not as a necessary evil but as a notable achievement: The United States at last was leading with the head, not the heart, and with modesty, not arrogance. “Realists” pointed out that the United States gets into trouble when it lets ideals or emotions rule — when it sends soldiers to feed the hungry in Somalia, for example, only to lose them, as told in “[Black Hawk Down](#),” and turn tail.

The realists were right that the United States has to consider interests as well as values, must pace itself and can’t save everyone. But a values-free argument ought at least to be able to show that the ends have justified the means, whereas the strategic results of Obama’s disengagement have been nearly as disastrous as the human consequences.

When Obama pulled all U.S. troops out of Iraq, critics worried there would be instability; none envisioned the emergence of a full-blown terrorist state. When he [announced in August 2011](#) that “the time has come for President Assad to step aside,” critics worried the words might prove empty — but few imagined the extent of the catastrophe: not just the savagery of chemical

weapons and “barrel bombs,” but also the Islamic State’s recruitment of thousands of foreign fighters, its spread from Libya to Afghanistan, the danger to the U.S. homeland that has alarmed U.S. intelligence officials, the refugees destabilizing Europe.

Even had Obama’s policy succeeded in purely realist terms, though, something would have been lost in the anesthetization of U.S. opinion. Yes, the nation’s outrage over the decades has been uneven, at times hypocritical, at times self-serving.

But there also has been something to be admired in America’s determination to help — to ask, even if we cannot save everyone in Congo, can we not save some people in Syria? Obama’s successful turning of that question on its head is nothing to be proud of.

Right Turn

The Syria debacle: Many culprits

by Jennifer Rubin

There is nothing like the spectacle of thousands of refugees pouring into Europe to awaken American politicians and media to the Syrian civil war that has killed more than 200,000 and created millions of refugees, who flooded into Syria’s neighbors before they came to Europe.

As [many have pointed out](#), President Obama bears primary responsibility for refusing to match deeds with his declaration that Bashar al-Assad “must go.” Had Obama acted more than four years ago as [critics](#) and his own national security team urged, in all likelihood thousands would still be alive, millions of refugees would not have fled Syria, jihadists would not have found a base of operations (from whence they swarmed into Iraq, resulting in more deaths and refugees) and [Russian troops would not know be established in Syria](#), a sign of how much influence disagreeable powers have and how little we do.

Now, it’s not often that a president gets a second bite at the apple — the perfect opportunity to self-correct a horrible decision. Obama, however, got his when Assad used chemical weapons on multiple occasions. The president could have built a multi-national force, bombed Assad’s military assets and tipped the balance of power away from the Syrian leader. But Obama in 2013 managed to flub that as well, and in the meantime convinced the Iranians and the Russians he was feckless. (One wonders if Vladimir Putin would have invaded Ukraine had Obama exercised muscle in Syria rather than looking for Russian help to bail him out of a conflict he never had any intention of taking on.)

This might be the sole foreign policy issue on which Hillary Clinton has a claim to have been right, once upon a time. Fellow Cabinet members attest that she tried to convince the president to take action early in the Syrian conflict. Many of us would argue that a disagreement of this magnitude should have prompted her to resign. Moreover, she did have another crack at it when Assad stepped over the red line. Instead she applauded the president’s collapse.

Now a number of GOP presidential candidates, including Sens. Rand Paul (Ky.), Ted Cruz (Tex.) and even the usually hawkish Marco Rubio (Fla.) are not covered in glory on this one. All of them opposed military action on the red line, although Rubio can accurately claim to have been in favor of much more robust action to help anti-Assad forces early on. They will have to explain their actions and votes and tell us what they believe was the result of inaction in Syria.

Let's recall that at the time the far right was dead set against U.S. action, making its current concern about the humanitarian and geopolitical tragedy a bit hard to stomach. There were a few brave souls, including Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), who can claim to have been consistently on the right side of the issue.

Syria was a key testing ground for "leading from behind" and for libertarian reticence to involve the United States in actions abroad. The results are clear. Instead of limited action (e.g. helping rebels, setting up a no fly zone and safe area for civilians) years ago, we now have a full-blown war against the Islamic State, an ongoing bloodbath and a refugee crisis in both the Middle East and Europe. We severely damaged our credibility and lost a great deal of moral authority by shirking our obligations. All the candidates should have to answer for themselves from 2011 onward. This is one of the issues which one cannot delegate to aides. Opinion and facts are conflicting and the president in these instances — and to some extent, Congress — must make these calls, revealing their depth of knowledge and judgment.

No one can accuse a moderator of asking a "gotcha" question if he or she asks a candidate: *What did you say at the time about Syria, and why? What's the lesson of Syria? What's the result of American inactivity?* Candidates who have no adequate answer — or no answer at all — are not ready for the presidency. Making America great entails more than bluster and a hat. One does not make America great by racist slurs against immigrants, misogynistic insults or even rah-rah speeches. One makes America great, in part, by understanding in detail the landscape of a dangerous world and the importance of the U.S. role in providing peace and stability. Most important, it necessitates a rebuilt military and robust action, with allies if possible, and, if not, by relying on the world's finest atrocities prevention board, the U.S. military.

Washington Free Beacon

[An Anti-American White House](#)

Barack Obama's presidency has empowered the adversaries of the United States

by Matthew Continetti.

This week President Obama won the 34th vote in support of his nuclear deal with Iran. The vote, [from Senator Barbara Mikulski](#), guarantees that the deal will survive a rejection by Congress. The fact that the deal will be made despite such opposition—[something a few of us predicted months ago](#)—is, in the words of the AP, a "[landmark Obama victory](#)." It is worth asking how many more of these victories our country can withstand.

The president and his supporters, of course, say their foreign policy has improved the world. "Like George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton," [writes Gideon Rose of Foreign Affairs](#), "Obama will likely pass on to his successor an overall foreign policy agenda and national power position in better shape than when he entered office, ones that the next administration can build on to improve things further."

I'm not convinced. Rather than trying to predict how things will look when Obama leaves office, rather than contemplating abstractions such as our "overall foreign policy agenda" and "national power position," why not examine the actual results of Obama's policies, as they exist now, in the real world before our eyes?

If we do that, we get an outcome different from Gideon's. Subjectively, the president may be trying to peacefully integrate rogue regimes into the liberal international order. Objectively, however, the result of Obama's foreign policy is to empower America's adversaries. This has been, in its conduct and consequences, an anti-American White House.

I am not saying that the president or the Democratic Party is anti-American in ideology or rhetoric or intent. What I am saying is that the net effect of President Obama's actions has been to legitimize, strengthen, and embolden nations whose anti-Americanism is public and vicious and all too serious.

Iran is an obvious example. The anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism of the regime is inescapable. Not even Obama, [who has gone out of his way to defend the Iranians as rational actors](#), can ignore it. How has Iran's "power position" been affected by this White House? In 2009, when the regime faced its most serious challenge in years, the president was silent. In 2011 and 2013, when urged to act against the regime's closest ally in Syria, the president did nothing.

Why? To speak out in favor of protesting students, to support the Syrian rebels, to punish Bashar al-Assad for violating red lines the president himself had drawn—these acts would have jeopardized the nuclear negotiations with Iran.

The outcome of those negotiations was a deal in which the Iranians agree to suspend some elements of their nuclear research for about a decade in exchange for billions of dollars in sanctions relief. So a fundamentalist theocracy whose leaders chant "Death to America" and whose self-identity is based on a revolutionary challenge to the United States and Israel has been endorsed as a quasi-member of the "international community," and will receive an infusion of much needed cash.

The Iranian leadership is strengthened, the Iranian economy is strengthened, the Iranian paramilitaries and terrorist affiliates—active in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and beyond—are strengthened, all in the fissiparous hope that decades from now this deal will result in Iran's liberalization. Oh, and at the end of the decade, Iran retains the capability to build an atom bomb. How powerful, how dangerous, will Iranian anti-Americanism be then?

Cuba is not as important a world power as Iran, but it, too, was forged in anti-American upheaval, its ideology is anti-American, anti-capitalist, and anti-liberal, and its elite bears long-held grievances against the United States. The U.S. trade embargo may not have driven the Castros from power, but it nonetheless expresses American opposition to the nature of Cuba's government, and to the aims and practices of its rulers. President Obama's thawing of relations with Cuba repudiates this traditional, bipartisan, moral stand in return for ... what exactly? The truth is we receive less from the opening of Cuba than we do from our détente with Iran.

The United States, as a superpower, can afford to be magnanimous with nuisances such as Cuba. But that doesn't mean we should indulge in the fantasy that the provision of economic and diplomatic stimulus to a decrepit communist backwater will bring positive consequences for the cause of freedom and democracy, and improve the political status of the Cuban people. Nor should we cling to the idea that engaging and trading with the Cubans will pacify them. America has been trading with China for decades. The Chinese are just as un-free as they were the day Apple built its first factory there—and indeed China is more powerful, its influence greater, its willingness to challenge the United States more robust than before. What will Cuba look like—how well armed and fascistic will it be—after 20 years of trade with America?

Cuba may be unimportant, for now, but Russia is not. It has repeatedly rejected President Obama's desire for a "reset" in relations, and has opted for historical revisionism and territorial expansion. Not only has Vladimir Putin an entire global propaganda network to attack, defame, and inspire hatred of the United States, he has Georgia, Crimea, much of eastern Ukraine, and a nuclear stockpile too.

The Baltic States are terrified of Putin's next move, as he orders Bear Bombers to fly near our shores and [deploys troops to fight alongside the Syrian military](#). The power base from which he launches his ideological and paramilitary attacks on the West has not diminished. It has expanded.

Indeed, the size of territory held or claimed by anti-American forces has increased considerably since President Obama took office. Not only has Russia slowly digested a once-independent nation. China has also built a series of islands to assert its claims in the South China Sea, the Islamic State governs the western provinces of what was once Iraq, Libya has fallen to Islamic militias, and the Taliban have reclaimed the south of Afghanistan. Each enlargement of the anti-American sphere brings new recruits to the various hostile causes, strengthens our adversaries' convictions that they are on the winning side of history, fuels their desire to project power even further, heightens the risk of instability and terror.

There is no more inescapable force than the law of unintended consequences. The president, writes Gideon Rose, is "best understood as an ideological liberal with a conservative temperament—somebody who felt that after a period of reckless overexpansion and belligerent unilateralism, the country's long-term foreign policy goals could best be furthered by short-term retrenchment." However one understands Obama, whatever one thinks he has been doing, the results of his "short term" retrenchment have energized and amplified the global cause of anti-Americanism.

"Human beings," wrote James Burnham in 1941, "as individuals and in groups, try to achieve various goals—food, power, comfort, peace, privilege, security, freedom, and so on. They take steps that, as they see them, will aid in reaching the goal in question."

And yet, "experience teaches us not merely that the goals are often not reached but that the effect of the steps taken is frequently toward a very different result from the goal which was originally held in mind and which motivated the taking of the steps in the first place."

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Contentions

[Kerry's Speech Tops Chamberlain's Remarks](#)

by Rick Richman

In his [speech](#) yesterday on the Iran deal, Secretary of State Kerry mentioned "Israel" or "Israeli" 26 times – protesting a bit too much about his concern for the ally put at existential risk by the Obama administration's cascade of concessions. Even eerier was the similarity of Kerry's words to those of Neville Chamberlain in the British parliamentary debate on the Munich agreement in 1938. Here is Kerry's assertion about Israel, together with his concluding words:

"The people of Israel will be safer with this deal, and the same is true for the people throughout the region. ... [H]istory may judge [the Iran agreement] a turning point, a moment when the builders of stability seized the initiative from the destroyers of hope, and when we were able to show, as have generations before us, that when we demand the best from ourselves and insist that others adhere to a similar high standard – when we do that, we have immense power to shape a safer and a more humane world. That's what this is about and that's what I hope we will do in the days ahead."

In the [debate on the Munich agreement](#), Chamberlain's claims were actually more modest than Kerry's. He acknowledged the criticism he had received for saying that the agreement signaled "peace for our time," and he said he hoped Members of Parliament would not "read into words used in a moment of some emotion, after a long and exhausting day, after I had driven through miles of excited, enthusiastic, cheering people – I hope they will not read into those words more than they were intended to convey." He said he knew "weakness in armed strength means weakness in diplomacy" and he had a program to accelerate Britain's re-armament. Then he described the effect of the agreement on Czechoslovakia and his hopes for the future:

"It is my hope and my belief, that under the new system of guarantees, the new Czechoslovakia will find a greater security than she has ever enjoyed in the past... Ever since I assumed my present office my main purpose has been to work for the pacification of Europe, for the removal of those suspicions and those animosities which have so long poisoned the air. ... The question of Czechoslovakia is the latest and perhaps the most dangerous [obstacle]. Now that we have got past it, I feel that it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity."

At least Chamberlain did not wax on about "the builders of stability" overcoming "the destroyers of hope." At least he did not compliment himself for insisting that Hitler adhere to the best in himself. At least he did not assert that such insistence would "shape a safer and a more humane world." And he had the good grace to admit that his extemporaneous remark about "peace for our time" resulted from a long day and cheering crowds.

There will be no such crowds for President Obama and Secretary Kerry. Chamberlain proceeded with a 369-150 vote in Parliament, while the Iran deal will proceed against bipartisan opposition in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, both the Senate and the House as a whole, and the majority of the American people, as expressed in multiple polls. President Obama will use a partisan minority to make an end run around the Constitutional requirement for treaties – a provision the Founders intended to insure that any significant multi-year foreign commitment would not proceed without a national consensus reflected in a two-thirds Senate vote – as his secretary of state employs rhetoric, in prepared remarks, that would have embarrassed Neville Chamberlain.

Contentions

Hurricane Katrina's Proudest Legacy

by Noah Rothman

For a city as infatuated with its old-world charm as New Orleans, institutional change arrives slowly – if ever. Often, it takes a catalyst, sometimes a horrible one, to create the impetus for shifts and adaptations that appear in retrospect utterly transformative. The disastrous physical and psychological impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans had this catalyzing effect. For all

the shocks and displacements that arose from that tragedy, its destabilizing effects also resulted in sweeping progress. The reforms to the city's education system, which has risen like the phoenix out of the disaster, is the miracle that the left dares not acknowledge. For the nation's entrenched public education unions, its implications are too terrible to contemplate.

The city of New Orleans did not embark on the most radical education reform experiment in generations out of a sense of altruism or adventure. In the wake of the devastation that followed the flooding of nearly 80 percent of the city, education reform was a project of necessity. After the floods, much of New Orleans' educational infrastructure had been damaged beyond repair. The city's tax base had fled. The Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) was [reluctantly compelled](#) to ask some 7,000 teachers and staff – many of them displaced themselves — to find new work. In November of 2005, with flood waters still lingering in disadvantaged parts of the city, the OPSB acquiesced to the surrender of four-fifths of the entire New Orleans public school system to the all-charter Recovery School District (RSD).

The loss of the city's schools to a private firm in the aftermath of Katrina was not widely lamented. Prior to the storm, the city's school system was among the worst in the nation. In 2005, only 56 percent of New Orleans students graduated high school, a rate 10 points below the national average. The majority of the students who did graduate performed below average when tested on fundamental curricula like reading and math. The city's schools were not just underserving students; they were also hopelessly corrupt. In 2003, the city wrote checks to 4,000 people who didn't deserve them and provided health benefits for 2,000 recipients who didn't qualify. A 2004 FBI investigation yielded indictments for 11 people implicated in the criminal mismanagement of the city's school system.

Nearly ten years after the storm, the reversal of fortunes for New Orleans' students is becoming apparent – and it is remarkable.

[By the start of the new school year in 2013](#), 76.5 percent of the city's students were graduating on time – a figure on par with the national average. Graduation rates for the city's black students were outperforming the national average by 16.5 percent. A 2012 study conducted by Tulane's Cowen Institute revealed that ACT scores had improved by an average of 1.2 points, a rate of improvement that was faster than ACT scores on either the state or national level. In 2005, only one-quarter of New Orleans public school graduates qualified for a Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) scholarship. By 2012, 39 percent of high school graduates were qualifying. Graduation and college entry rates had increased by 10 and 14 percent respectively.

Some have claimed that New Orleans became a different city after the storm, and to compare it to the city that existed before Katrina is an apples-to-oranges comparison. The socioeconomic makeup of the city differs too dramatically from pre-Katrina New Orleans, they say, to make an accurate assessment of the effects of the RSD reforms. [A 2015 study](#) conducted by Tulane University Economics Professor Douglas Harris, Director of the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans, sought to address this concern. Harris first looked at only the performance of students who returned to New Orleans after the storm and then compared their performance to that of every student regardless of whether they were displaced. "Between 2005 and 2012, the performance gap between New Orleans and the comparison group closed and eventually reversed, indicating a positive effect of the reforms of about 0.4 standard deviations, enough to improve a typical student's performance by 15 percentile points," Harris observed.

What's more, a culture of accountability has again returned to the school system. This year, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shuttered Lagniappe Academies for

failing to provide adequate services to special-education students and for claiming falsely that it provided services it hadn't.

Few things are as controversial as acknowledging the empirically positive effects of choice-based education reforms. Influential civic leaders in New Orleans are quick to complain about the reforms, but their complaints rarely take into account their beneficial effects for students.

"The vast majority of public schools closed by RSD in the past five years were in poor and working class, African-American neighborhoods," [read a federal civil rights complaint](#) submitted to the Department of Justice in 2014 by an alliance of community groups. "These schools employed teachers and administrators who have taught in our communities for decades — staff who hold community knowledge, understand the hardships that face our students, and pass down our shared values." That complaint contended that, in much the same way post-Katrina neighborhoods are more racially segregated than they were before the storm, so are the schools.

"There's no higher concentration anywhere in the country of education-related nonprofits, philanthropies, and startups," [wrote NPR's Anya Kamenetz](#). The reporter noted that social-justice activists have ratcheted their rhetoric up as the positive effects of New Orleans' reforms have grown harder to deny. The University of Georgia Education Professor Joyce King called the adaptations a "Slave-market-based reform." For a school system in which the student body is 85 percent African-American, this hyperbole is nevertheless resonant.

Though these complaints are of dubious value, not all criticisms of the charter system are so easily dismissed. The charter schools are, in theory, compelled to admit all students that apply and hold lotteries for applicants after the system is over-enrolled. In practice, charter schools have been accused of selective admittances that appear to conspicuously weed out more disenfranchised students. Under Louisiana State Superintendent of Education John White, New Orleans has made it [much harder for charter schools to manipulate their enrollments](#). "Now, some [90 percent](#) of New Orleans students entering kindergarten and high school get one of their top three choices, students receive admission letters without any contact from schools and there's a central hotline for families with enrollment challenges," *US News and World Report's Thomas Toch reported*.

Still, a concerted effort to frame the charter experiment as an unmitigated failure has taken shape. A Google search on the subject of post-Katrina education reforms yields [a deluge of opinion pieces](#) declaring the [project a disgrace, a failure](#), and, of course, [the resurrection of Jim Crow](#). It's no coincidence that professional educators are the principle advocates of this narrative. Complaints that center on "[the loss of union jobs](#)" or reduced "[percentages of teachers with regular certification](#)" betray these critics' true objections: the loss of the education establishment's power and privilege.

The New Orleans experiment is not perfect, but it is an objective improvement over the condition that prevailed before the storm. The louder those who once derived their livelihoods from underserving American students scream the more these reforms are hurting. Make it hurt.

LIFE PRESERVER NEEDED...



ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS
ATTACKED US ON
SEPTEMBER 11.



ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS
BOMBED THE LONDON
TRANSIT SYSTEM.



AN ISLAMIC EXTREMIST
ATTACKED FORT HOOD
AND ANOTHER TRIED TO
CAR BOMB TIMES SQUARE.



ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS
BOMBED A VOLLEYBALL
MATCH IN PAKISTAN.



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GABRIEL

AND ISLAMIC
EXTREMISTS JUST
SLAUGHTERED WORLD
CUP FANS IN UGANDA.



IF ONLY WE COULD
FIND SOME
COMMON DENOMINATOR!



*VACATION REPEAT



GLOBAL WARMING
is the BIGGEST
THREAT to
AMERICA...



So, let me get this straight ...

If I like these black men, but I don't like this one



I'M A RACIST?