

July 9, 2017 – NATIONAL REVIEW

Targeted by the unabomber in 1993, Yale professor [David Gelernter](#) can truly be said to be engaged in the culture wars. In Friday's WSJ he takes conservative intellectuals to task for their disdain for Trump and their unwillingness to take on his execrable predecessor.

*... I'd love for him (**Trump**) to be a more eloquent, elegant speaker. But if I had to choose between deeds and delivery, it wouldn't be hard. Many conservative intellectuals insist that Mr. Trump's wrong policies are what they dislike. So what if he has restarted the large pipeline projects, scrapped many statist regulations, appointed a fine cabinet and a first-rate Supreme Court justice, asked NATO countries to pay what they owe, re-established solid relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia, signaled an inclination to use troops in Afghanistan to win and not merely cover our retreat, led us out of the Paris climate accord, plans to increase military spending (granted, not enough), is trying to get rid of ObamaCare to the extent possible, proposed to lower taxes significantly and revamp immigration policy and enforcement? What has he done lately?*

*Conservative thinkers should recall that they helped create President Trump. They never blasted President Obama as he deserved. Mr. Obama's policies punished the economy and made the country and its international standing worse year by year; his patronizing arrogance drove people crazy. He was the perfect embodiment of a one-term president. The tea-party outbreak of 2009-10 made it clear where he was headed. History will record that the press saved him. Naturally the mainstream press loved him, but too many conservative commentators never felt equal to taking him on. They had every reason to point out repeatedly that Mr. Obama was the worst president since Jimmy Carter, surrounded by a left-wing cabinet and advisers, hostile to Israel, crazed regarding Iran, and even less competent to deal with the issues than Mr. Carter was—which is saying plenty.*

*But they didn't say plenty. They didn't say much at all. The rank and file noticed and got mad. ...*

Conservative intellectuals think that if Trump were asked about the conservative canon, he would ask why anyone is interested in obsolete artillery; missing entirely the point of the collection of thought containing the intellectual basis for the idea of free markets. The magazine National Review has been the center of effort of the conservative "Never Trump" movement. And there has been little change in their negativity since the election. Reagan quoted de Tocqueville and Frederick Hayek so thinkers on the right warmed to him. But there is little chance that will happen with Trump. Consequently writers from National Review have been scarce in our pages for the last year. This post aims to begin to correct that. [John Fund](#), an old friend and *Pickings* reader has written a good piece on London's towering inferno.

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*a board of directors consisting of eight elected tenants, four council members, and three independent members.*

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*It was the council that made the key decisions about the controversial retrofit of the building. ...*

Notable in his absence from the "never Trumpers" at National Review was Victor Davis Hanson. His essay on the never ending ironies of the Trump presidency is worth a read.

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*... So along came the next Republican president, empowered by Obama’s exemptions to do almost anything he wished, albeit without the thin exculpatory veneer of Ivy League pretension, multicultural indemnity, and studied smoothness.*

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*For every too-frequent gala golf outing of a metrosexual Obama decked out in spiffy attire, there is a plumper Trump swinging away, oblivious to the angry pack of reporters that Obama once so carefully courted.*

*For every rapper with an ankle bracelet that went off in the White House, there is now a White House photo-op with Ted Nugent. ...*

*... Even the most die-hard Never Trump conservative has had to make some adjustments.*

*Despite assurances that Trump would not get the nomination, he did.*

*Despite assurances that he could never be elected, he was.*

*Despite prognostications that Trump was a liberal wolf hiding in conservative fleece, Trump’s appointments, his executive orders, his legislation pending before the Congress, his abrupt withdrawal from the Paris global-warming accords, his fierce support for vouchers, his pro-life advocacy, and his immigration normality were so far orthodoxly conservative. ...*

David Harsanyi asks, "What If Donald Trump Doesn't Sink the Republican Party?" *What if Republican voters who don't particularly like President Donald Trump are also able to compartmentalize their votes? What if they dislike Democrats more than they do the president? What if, rather than being punished for Trump's unpopularity, local candidates are rewarded for their moderation? This would be a disaster for Democrats. And Tuesday's runoff election in Georgia's Sixth District shows that it might be possible.*

*Now, had Jon Ossoff come out ahead of Karen Handel, the coverage would have painted this as a game-changing moment: a referendum on conservatism itself, a harbinger of a coming liberal wave, and a rejection of Trump's disastrous presidency. It would have illustrated that Democrats had figured out how to flip those suburban and affluent Republicans who aren't crazy about the president.*

*Perhaps some of that will still play out during the midterms, because one race (or even four) doesn't tell us everything we need to know. Every district is unique. Still, there are definitely ominous signs for Democrats. ...*

For sheer fun, you can't beat Kevin Williamson on the Clintons - "Big Creep, Mrs. Creep, and Little Creep."

*... Chelsea Clinton, most recently lionized on the cover of Variety, is a 37-year-old multi-millionaire who has never uttered an interesting word about any subject at any time during the course of her life. Judging from the evidence of her public statements, she has never had an original thought — it isn't clear that she has had a thought at all. In tribute to her parents, she was given a series of lucrative sinecures, producing a smattering of sophomoric videos for NBC at a salary of \$600,000 a year. She later went more formally into the family business, leaving her fake job at NBC for a fake job in her parents' fake charity. She gave interviews about how she just couldn't get interested in money and bought a \$10 million Manhattan apartment that stretches for the better part of a city block.*

*And, since her mother's most recent foray into ignominious defeat, she has been inescapable: magazine covers, fawning interviews, talk of running her in New York's 17th congressional district. The Democrats are doing their best to make Chelsea happen.*

*And, who knows, it might work. It would be tempting to write her off as a know-nothing rich kid who has made a living off her family connections while operating one of the world's most truly asinine Twitter accounts, but . . . well, you know.*

*But, for Pete's sake, stop it. Have a little self-respect, Democrats. Build Bill Clinton a statue or . . . whatever. Send him your daughters like a bunch of bone-in-the-nose primitives paying tribute to the tribal chieftain. But stop trying to inflict this empty-headed, grasping, sanctimonious, risible, simpering, saccharine little twerp on American public life.*

*It's stupid enough out there.*

**Rich Lowry** writes on the Dem blindspot on culture.  
*How much do Democrats really want to defeat Donald Trump?*

*It's worth asking in the wake of the latest Democratic failure to notch an electoral victory for the resistance, this time in the Georgia special election.*

*There's no doubt that Democrats want to watch TV programs that excoriate the president. They want to give money to candidates opposing him. They want to fantasize about frog-marching him straight from his impeachment proceedings to the nearest federal penitentiary. But do they want to do the one thing that would make it easier to win tough races in marginal areas, namely moderate on the cultural issues? Not so much.*

*In retrospect, Jon Ossoff's loss in Georgia's 6th Congressional District was overdetermined. Youthful to a fault, he didn't live in the district and had no record of public service. Yet it didn't help that he was an orthodox liberal who conceded nothing on cultural issues, even though he was running in a Republican district in the South.*

*In this, Ossoff merely reflected his party's attitude. Stopping Trump is imperative, so long as it doesn't require the party rethinking its uncompromising stance on abortion, guns or immigration.*  
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## Wall Street Journal

### The Conservative 'Resistance' Is Futile

***The right has never made one significant move against the liberal culture machine.***

by David Gelernter

Democrats, in their role as opponents of President Trump, have taken to calling themselves "the resistance." But I was startled a few days ago when a thoughtful, much-admired conservative commentator used the same term on TV—casually, as if "the resistance" was just the obvious term. Everyone is saying it. It's no accident that the left runs American culture. The right is too obsessed with mere mechanics—poll numbers and vote counts—to look up.

"Resistance" is unacceptable in referring to the Trump opposition because, obviously, it suggests the Resistance—against the Nazis in occupied France. Many young people are too ignorant to recognize the term, but that hardly matters. The press uses it constantly. So when a young innocent finally does encounter the genuine French Resistance, he will think, "Aha, just like the resistance to Trump!" And that's all the left wants: a mild but continuous cultural breeze murmuring in every American ear that opposing Trump is noble and glorious. Vive la Résistance!

This abuse of "the resistance" happens everywhere. Many Republicans hate Mr. Trump and love to denounce him—which lets them show their integrity and, sometimes, a less-praiseworthy attribute too.

Many intellectuals think Mr. Trump is vulgar. That includes conservatives. They think he's a peasant and talks like one. Every time he opens his mouth, all they hear is a small-time Queens operator who struck it big but has never had a proper education, and embarrasses the country wherever he goes, whatever he says. It never dawns on them that the president can't stand them any more than they can stand him. Yet they expect him to treat them with respectful courtesy if he ever runs into them—as he should, and on the whole does. Conceivably they should treat him the same way.

Conservatives regret the collapse of authority, dignity and a certain due formality in the way Americans treat each other. They are right to complain when any president diminishes his office. Mr. Trump ought to think more seriously about what he owes the great men among his predecessors, and the office itself. But it's not clear that commentators make things any better when they treat the president himself like a third-rate clown.

I'd love for him to be a more eloquent, elegant speaker. But if I had to choose between deeds and delivery, it wouldn't be hard. Many conservative intellectuals insist that Mr. Trump's wrong policies are what they dislike. So what if he has restarted the large pipeline projects, scrapped many statist regulations, appointed a fine cabinet and a first-rate Supreme Court justice, asked NATO countries to pay what they owe, re-established solid relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia, signaled an inclination to use troops in Afghanistan to win and not merely cover our retreat, led us out of the Paris climate accord, plans to increase military spending (granted, not enough), is trying to get rid of ObamaCare to the extent possible, proposed to lower taxes significantly and revamp immigration policy and enforcement? What has he done lately?

Conservative thinkers should recall that they helped create President Trump. They never blasted President Obama as he deserved. Mr. Obama's policies punished the economy and made the country and its international standing worse year by year; his patronizing arrogance drove people crazy. He was the perfect embodiment of a one-term president. The tea-party outbreak of 2009-10 made it clear where he was headed. History will record that the press saved him. Naturally the mainstream press loved him, but too many conservative commentators never felt equal to taking him on. They had every reason to point out repeatedly that Mr. Obama was the worst president since Jimmy Carter, surrounded by a left-wing cabinet and advisers, hostile to Israel, crazed regarding Iran, and even less competent to deal with the issues than Mr. Carter was—which is saying plenty.

But they didn't say plenty. They didn't say much at all. The rank and file noticed and got mad. Even their supposed champions didn't grasp what life under Mr. Obama was like—a man who was wrecking the economy while preaching little sermons, whose subtext was always how smart he was, how dumb they were, and how America was full of racist clods, dangerous cops and infantile nuts who would go crazy if they even heard the words "Islamic terrorism." So the rank and file was deeply angry and elected Mr. Trump.

Some conservatives have the impression that, by showing off their anti-Trump hostility, they will get the networks and the [New York Times](#) to like them. It doesn't work like that. Although the right reads the left, the left rarely reads the right. Why should it, when the left owns American culture? Nearly every university, newspaper, TV network, Hollywood studio, publisher, education school and museum in the nation. The left wrapped up the culture war two

generations ago. Throughout my own adult lifetime, the right has never made one significant move against the liberal culture machine.

So go ahead, proclaim it from the rooftops: the anti-Trump opposition is a virtual French Resistance! If we're not going to fight anyway, let's surrender and get it over with.

*David Hillel Gelernter is an American artist, writer, and professor of computer science at Yale University. He is a former national fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and senior fellow in Jewish thought at the Shalem Center, and sat on the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1993 he was sent a mail bomb by Ted Kaczynski, known as the Unabomber, which almost killed him and left him with some permanent disabilities: he lost the use of his right hand and his right eye was permanently damaged.*

## National Review

### Assigning Blame for London's Tower Inferno

***Was it corporate greed or bungling bureaucracy that made the building into a fire trap?***  
by John Fund

I was in London last week and woke up to horrifying pictures of the inferno that engulfed the Grenfell Tower public housing project in London. They were among the most unsettling images I've seen since I watched the World Trade Center collapse from my office building just across the street on 9/11.

The fact that the dozens of victims were among the most vulnerable members of society has supercharged the politicization of the tragedy. "I've never seen people and politicians move from shock to anger so quickly," former UKIP leader Nigel Farage told me Friday night before he gave a speech in North Carolina.

Jeremy Corbyn, Britain's Labour-party leader, quickly blamed budget cuts by Conservative governments, saying that they contributed to the tragedy.

The *Daily Mirror* newspaper ran the one-word headline "Criminal" and said that the tragedy is a "diabolical failing" that "shames our nation."

Other critics are thundering about "corporate greed," noting that for only about \$6,400 more, a 2016 refurbishment of the building could have been completed using fire-resistant cladding rather than a cheaper kind that, according to fire-safety expert Arnold Turling, acted as a "wind tunnel" fanning the flames and allowing them to spread to upper floors.

There is certainly enough blame to go around. But before Grenfell Tower becomes etched in the public consciousness as the 21st-century equivalent of New York City's 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, let's highlight some facts that don't fit into the "corporate greed" narrative.

Grenfell Tower was owned by the local council, which in turn had turned over management to the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Company, a not-for-profit that is managed by a board of directors consisting of eight elected tenants, four council members, and three independent members.

“Social housing” in Britain — what we call public housing in the U.S. — has turned into areas of deprivation and neglect. Although many tenants have bought their units under plans initiated by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, many current tenants are poor, recent immigrants without the wherewithal to buy their units.

It was the council that made the key decisions about the controversial retrofit of the building.

The contract to improve insulation and replace heating and water systems in the tower was supposed to be carried out by building firm Leadbitter, but the contractor said it could not do the work for less than £11.27 million (\$14.4 million), £1.6 million (\$2 million) above the council’s budget. So the management company decided to put the contract out for bid again. A firm called Rydon proved willing to do the same work that Leadbitter had been asked to do, for 22 percent less money. Nicholas Paget-Brown, a Conservative member of the local council, said no thought had been given to retrofitting the apartments with sprinklers:

There was not a collective view that all the flats should be fitted with sprinklers because that would have delayed and made the refurbishment of the block more disruptive. . . . Many residents felt that we needed to get on with the installation of new hot water systems, new boilers and that trying to retrofit more would delay the building and that sprinklers aren’t the answer.

The eventual work was done by eight contractors and subcontractors, making oversight difficult. Residents complained about poor workmanship and boilers installed near to fuse boxes. A survey of tenants found 90 percent dissatisfied with the way the retrofit was done.

The retrofit of Grenfell Tower may have included the controversial cladding in part to meet dubious new environmental standards.

Britain’s *Daily Mail* newspaper had an article Friday that asked “three lethal questions” about the fire. Among them was “Were green targets to blame for the fire tragedy?” The article noted:

Stringent government targets to slash greenhouse gas emissions were behind the decision to clad the Grenfell Tower, official documents show.

The local council, Kensington and Chelsea, said “the energy efficiency refurbishment” of the tower last year was a key part of plans to cut carbon emissions.

And the document outlining the rationale for overhauling the building, drawn up in 2012, said that “improving the insulation levels of the walls, roof, and windows is the top priority of this refurbishment.”

Kensington and Chelsea, in common with all local councils in the UK, has been under huge pressure to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide produced in the borough.

Regardless of who or what is to blame for the tragedy, the political repercussions of the tragedy will be enormous. As Nelson Fraser writes in the *Daily Telegraph*:

The Grenfell Tower disaster is a powerful metaphor for the inequality that Mr Corbyn talks about so regularly and it would be tragic if Labour asks the questions while the Tories — panicked and effectively leaderless — hide behind an inquiry.

It was only a decade ago that then–Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith said that his party was the natural ally of the poor, and it should help them battle unresponsive bureaucracy. It was only two years ago that then–education secretary Michael Gove demanded that the Conservative party become “warriors for the dispossessed.” That either hasn’t happened, or, if it has, it’s invisible to the public. Theresa May and the Tories got the shock of their political lives just this month when they barely were returned to power as a minority government. None of this suggests that they should buckle under to the Labour party’s class warfare. But they are going to have to move quickly to show they have plans to clean up the bureaucracy that led to the Grenfell Tower inferno or they risk being cast as the ultimate villain of the tragedy.

## National Review

### The Endless Ironies of Donald J. Trump

*Pandemonium can be a revivifying purgative.*

by Victor Davis Hanson

Here are the ironies of Donald Trump as president.

#### **1) For the Left (both Political and Media)**

The Left was mostly untroubled for eight years about the often unconstitutional abuses of Barack Obama — given that they saw their shared noble aims as justifying almost any means necessary to achieve them.

There was the not uncommon Rice-Gruber-Rhodes-Holder sort of deception (on Benghazi, on the conduct of Bowe Bergdahl, on the Affordable Care Act, the Iran deal, on Fast and Furious, etc.) — a required tactic because so much of the Obama agenda was antithetical to the wishes and preferences of the American electorate and thus had to be disguised and camouflaged to become enacted.

There was the pen-and-phone mockery of established federal law (the suspension of the ACA employer mandate, the Chrysler creditor reversal, the non-enforcement of federal immigration law, the institutionalization of sanctuary-city nullification). There was the constant mythmaking (from faux red lines, deadlines, and step-over lines to the fatuity of the Cairo Speech and Iran-deal harangues).

There were the abuses of presidential power (the surveillance of journalists, the selective release of the bin Laden trove to pet journalists, the likely surveilling, unmasking, and leaking through reversed targeting of political enemies).

No one worried much when Obama promised on a hot mic to Medvedev that he would be more flexible with the Russians after his reelection, as if they were to conform to a desired sort of behavior in service to Obama that would earn them dividends from him later on — the kind of unapologetic partisan “collusion” that would have earned Trump a Comey-induced indictment. No one cared that Obama pulled all peacekeepers out of Iraq and thereby ruined what the surge had saved.

Nor did anyone fret much about the serial scandals at the GSA, the VA, the IRS, and the Secret Service, or his disastrous reset policy with Russia and the implosion of the Middle East or the strange spectacles of Obama's interview with GloZell or polarizing Oval Office guests, such as the rapper whose album cover portrayed celebrations over a dead white judge.

True, none of these were impeachable or even major offenses. But all of them recalibrated the bar of presidential behavior.

So along came the next Republican president, empowered by Obama's exemptions to do almost anything he wished, albeit without the thin exculpatory veneer of Ivy League pretension, multicultural indemnity, and studied smoothness.

In biblical "there is a season" fashion, for every sermon about not building your business, making too much money, or profiting at the wrong time, there was a Trump retort to profit as never before.

For every too-frequent gala golf outing of a metrosexual Obama decked out in spiffy attire, there is a plumper Trump swinging away, oblivious to the angry pack of reporters that Obama once so carefully courted.

For every rapper with an ankle bracelet that went off in the White House, there is now a White House photo-op with Ted Nugent.

For every executive-order suspension of federal immigration enforcement, there is an executive-order corrective.

For every lecture on the crusades, sermons on Western genocidal history, apology tour, or Islamic mythmaking, there is an American Greatness pride in everything.

The progressive ironies continued.

If the media were to be believed when they insisted that Obama was a "god," or that he was the smartest man ever to achieve the presidency, or that the first lady was Jackie Kennedy incarnate, or that Obama was capable of sending electrical shocks down a reporter's leg or was sure to be a brilliant president on the basis of his pants crease or because he talked in the manner of Washington elites, then surely it could *not* be believed when Trump was smeared as a veritable dunce, crook, buffoon, and naïf worthy of impeachment or that his wife (fluent in several languages) was an airhead former escort girl.

By their former unhinged adoration and obsequiousness, progressives and the media undermined all future credibility in their unhinged venom and loathing of Donald Trump. Now they live with the reality that by elevating Obama into a deity, they unleashed their own worst nightmare and have reduced themselves to irrelevance.

In the end, no one believes the current venom of a CNN or a *New York Times* precisely because no one could have believed their prior slavish adulation.

Anderson Cooper has become Keith Olbermann, as Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer meld into Maxine Waters: now malevolent rather than previously sycophantic, but in their extremism still no more credible in 2017 than they were in 2009.

## ***2) For the Orphaned Never Trump Right (as Overrepresented in the Punditocracy as Underrepresented in the Electorate)***

Even the most die-hard Never Trump conservative has had to make some adjustments.

Despite assurances that Trump would not get the nomination, he did.

Despite assurances that he could never be elected, he was.

Despite prognostications that Trump was a liberal wolf hiding in conservative fleece, Trump's appointments, his executive orders, his legislation pending before the Congress, his abrupt withdrawal from the Paris global-warming accords, his fierce support for vouchers, his pro-life advocacy, and his immigration normality were so far orthodoxly conservative.

Despite suspicions that Trump's appeal to the working class was nursed on racism, fanatic nationalism, xenophobia, and nativism, the appeal instead grew from a shared disgust with blue-stocking Republicans who were perceived in word and deed as little different from coastal Democratic look-alikes. Most Never Trumpers now concede that something had gone terribly wrong with their top-down party, although they resent that it was raucous billionaire Donald Trump who administered the diagnosis.

Where Never Trump conservatives worried that Trump was too uninformed or too reckless (e.g., pulling out of an "obsolete" NATO, rejecting Article 5 of the NATO alliance, starting a trade war with China, or erecting tariffs in 1920s style), Trump was forced to separate his past rhetoric from present reality — confirming in a way his transparent art-of-the-deal negotiating style of asking for twice what he could acceptably settle for, or acting unhinged to unsettle negotiators, enemies, and rivals.

Given these surprises, the Never Trump position has now receded to a simpler proposition: The uncouth character of Donald J. Trump is not worth the conservative agenda that he may well enact, as we all will eventually and inevitably learn. Or how can conservative moralists stomach such a supposedly immoral incarnation of their own views?

Such a paradox hinges on four corollaries, many of them dubious.

One: The ideological trajectory of a probable 16 years of Obama–Hillary Clinton progressive transformation of the country was never as dangerous as turning over executive power to someone as purportedly uncouth and unpredictable as Trump.

Two: Trump's character defects were like none other in a previous American president (which would include John Kennedy's pathological and dangerous womanizing, Lyndon Johnson's in-office profiteering and crudity, Richard Nixon's disrespect for truth and the law, Bill Clinton's demonstrable White House sex escapades and lying under oath) and thus would cancel out the entire gamut of renewed energy production, deregulation, tax reform, deterrent foreign policy, Obamacare reform, and the sort of Cabinet appointment that will prune back the deep state.

Three: Ideas matter more than politics and governance. Being 51 (or far more) percent preferable is still either not being preferable at all or at least not enough to warrant pragmatic assent.

Four: Even snarky and "see, how I was right" attacks on Trump from the right keep conservatism honest, rather than implode it in the manner that the Left most assiduously avoids.

(Was there ever a “Never Hillary” movement after the Democratic convention to protest her pollution of the Democratic National Committee?)

For now, the fallback position of “I told you so” hinges on Trump’s proving, in a downward spiral, far more recklessly obstreperous in the future than he has been so far, and on his agenda’s either fossilizing or reverting to his own 1980s liberal outlook.

### **3) *Always Trump***

There are few ironies for Always Trumpers who supported Trump from well before the primaries.

They wished an iron wrecking ball to be thrown into the deep-state glass, and they certainly got what they wished for.

The uncouthness of Trump is not vulgarity for them. It’s the necessary tough antidote to what they see as the polished crudity of the elite class, who are quite indecent in their sanctimonious lectures on amnesties or globalized free but unfair trade — while having the personal means of navigating around the deleterious consequences of their own advocacy.

Trump’s nihilistic and self-destructive tweets are yet again, for the Always Trumpers, the Semtex that helps blow up the entire spectacle of the feeding frenzy Washington press conference, the embarrassment of the White House Correspondents Dinner, the soft-ball televised interview, and the moral preening of television’s talking heads.

Dr. Sawbones Trump smelled a festering wound, ripped off the scab, and proclaimed that the exposure would aerate and cure the gangrenous mass below.

For the Always Trumpers, without the Trump shock, we would never have fully appreciated just how politically crude a Stephen Colbert really was, or just how obscene was a Tom Perez or a Senator Gillibrand, or how rankly partisan was a Chuck Schumer or how incapacitated a Nancy Pelosi. Dr. Sawbones Trump smelled a festering wound, ripped off the scab, and proclaimed that the exposure would aerate and cure the gangrenous mass below — however crudely administered the remedy without analgesics.

In this view, Trump’s ostensibly counterproductive outbursts and Twitter rants are the unpleasant castor oil that was long ago needed to break up and pass on a constipated, corrupt, and incestuous elite.

### **4) *Trump, Better Far Than the Alternative***

Lastly, there are the conservatives and Republicans (well over 90 percent) who voted for Trump on the grounds that, while he may not have been preferable to most of the alternatives in the primary, he most certainly was in the general election. For these pragmatists, there are both pleasant and occasionally worrisome ironies.

On the upside, it seems clear that Trump is not just conservative to his word, but, in the first 100 days, conservative in terms of policy to a degree unlike any other Republican president or presidential nominee since Ronald Reagan. Mitt Romney would not have yanked the U.S. out of the jerry-rigged Paris climate accord.

John McCain would not have appointed a Neal Gorsuch or proposed to radically recalibrate the tax code.

Neither of the two Bushes would have felt politically secure enough to shut down the border to illegal immigration; neither would have pressed to finished the border wall.

None since Reagan would have made the sort of conservative appointments at the cabinet and bureaucratic level as has Trump. If Trump were really a namby-pamby conservative, the sheer hatred of Trump the person by the progressive Left has had the predictable effect of making him against everything his loudest enemies are for.

For the realist Trump supporters, Trump's tweets or outbursts are often regrettable and occasionally bothersome, but not so much because they demonstrate an unprecedented level of presidential indecency. (Cynical realists with knowledge of history accept what FDR or JFK was capable of, and thus what they said in private conversations, and occasionally out loud.) Trump's sin, then, is that he more often says out loud what prior presidents kept to their inner circle.

Rather, their worry is more tactical and strategic: Trump, the bull-in-the-china-shop messenger, breaks up too much of the vital message of Trump. In public, they may cringe at Trump's excesses (though enjoying in private how he forces sanctimonious progressives to melt down), but their worry over Trump's overkill is mostly from the fear that no mortal 70-year-old male, without a traditionally loyal support staff, but with unhealthy sleep and diet habits, and under the stress of historic vituperation, could see through such an ambitious conservative agenda.

They are worried, then, that the 24/7 and extraneous fights that Trump picks will eventually undo him, and with his demise will go his entire conservative resurgence for a generation. They admire enormously Mike Pence but concede that he would have been neither nominated nor elected. And should Trump fall, Pence would be unable amid the nuclear fallout to press the conservative agenda further.

And yet there is some doubt even here as well. Trump's tweets can be as prescient as they are reckless. Take the infamous "Just found out that Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the victory" and substitute "Obama administration" for Obama, and "surveil" for "wires tapped," and Trump's tweet about the former president's intelligence agencies improperly monitoring him may yet prove in a broad sense correct. In other words, cringe-worthy Trump behavior so often is the lubricant that oils his success against cringe-worthy opponents, turning upside down the Heraclitean axiom that character is destiny, or rather redefining it, because Trump's targets so often were hubristic and deserved the nemesis sent their way.

The large minority of conservative Trump supporters who did not join him in the primary are thus confused now. Traditional wisdom declares that Trump's personal behavior is counterproductive and unsustainable, but traditional wisdom has so far been wrong both during the campaign and in the first four months of the Trump's presidency. It may not be that Trump earns hatred for unnecessary provocation and vitriol, but instead that he or any other Republican would have earned such venom anyway; thus his own searing tactics and narcissistic belief in his own destiny are predicated on the assumption that his unhinged enemies will vaporize first. And he may be right. James Comey has underestimated Donald Trump every bit as much as Marco Rubio or Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama did. In the end, the pragmatists apparently believe conservatives will hang together or hang separately.

Never have so many bright people proved so dense. Never have polls and politics proved so unreliable or partisan. Never have unintended consequences so replaced predictable results.

Yes, we are in chaos, but we sense also that the pandemonium is purgative of the worse that prompted it — and it is unpleasant mostly because it has so long been overdue.

## National Review

### [What If Donald Trump Doesn't Sink the Republican Party?](#)

*He appears not to be as much of a problem as the Democrats hoped.*

by David Harsanyi

What if Republican voters who don't particularly like President Donald Trump are also able to compartmentalize their votes? What if they dislike Democrats more than they do the president? What if, rather than being punished for Trump's unpopularity, local candidates are rewarded for their moderation? This would be a disaster for Democrats. And Tuesday's runoff election in Georgia's Sixth District shows that it might be possible.

Now, had Jon Ossoff come out ahead of Karen Handel, the coverage would have painted this as a game-changing moment: a referendum on conservatism itself, a harbinger of a coming liberal wave, and a rejection of Trump's disastrous presidency. It would have illustrated that Democrats had figured out how to flip those suburban and affluent Republicans who aren't crazy about the president.

Perhaps some of that will still play out during the midterms, because one race (or even four) doesn't tell us everything we need to know. Every district is unique. Still, there are definitely ominous signs for Democrats.

You can try and grasp at moral victories, of course, as I saw a number of liberal pundits on cable television trying to do. You can tell yourself that Ossoff had come closer than any Democrat ever in the Sixth District. But there are numerous problems with this optimism. For one, there won't be many red districts where the president is less popular. Democrats are going to have to flip some of these seats to win back a majority. Second, it's difficult to imagine how the environment could be any worse for the GOP (though that, too, is possible). Moreover, Ossoff spent a record \$23.6 million on a House race, yet Handel outran not only him but also Trump.

This last point is mentioned as often as the others, yet it's probably the most important. Trump's approval rating in the Sixth District is equal to the national approval rating of 35 percent, which is to say exceptionally low for a Republican area. He had won the district by less than 2 percentage points back in November. According to a recent *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* poll, the majority of Republicans surveyed (55 percent) said that "expressing their opinion on Trump wasn't a factor in their decision-making" for the special election.

It's true that neither Ossoff nor Handel mentioned the president much during the race — which, in itself, bolsters the theory that Trump might not be as consequential in these races as Dems hope. But the race was nationalized. Its implications were national. The coverage was national. The parties treated the race as one that would have national implications. Certainly, the money

that poured into the race was national. One imagines that every Georgia Republican who went to the polls understood what this race meant for the future of the parties. When you nationalize races, Republicans will take more than the president into account.

We already know that an electorate can be happy with a president and dislike his party. Why can't the reverse be true? President Barack Obama, for example, carried healthy approval ratings for the majority of his presidency, yet voters decisively rejected his party over six years. What if there's a faction of Republican voters who don't like Trump but still don't like Obama's policies?

As low as Trump's popularity ratings remain, and as constant a theme in the media as this is, elections are still a choice. For instance, Congress's low ratings as an institution are a mirage. Despite what you may have heard, it is actually one of the most popular institutions in America. Everyone loves his or her members of Congress; they just hate yours. Handel will likely be in her position as long as she pleases, because incumbents win more than 95 percent of races.

If the average Republican is willing to look past Trump's sins (and, obviously, many GOPers like him outright), they can start weighing many other factors. They may, for instance, understand that voting for Ossoff is not only a vote against Trump but a vote for progressive liberals such as House minority leader Nancy Pelosi, who had a disapproval rating of nearly 60 percent in the Sixth District. This is the choice.

It is also worth noting that, as galvanizing as the anti-Trump movement has been these past months, it is not a movement of persuasion. The default rhetorical disposition of liberals is still to accuse anyone who takes a cultural or economic position to the right of Senator Elizabeth Warren of being a clingy racist. Maybe affluent suburban Republicans don't appreciate the accusation. And maybe bashing the president and getting hysterical over Russia isn't a winning strategy in places such as Georgia because, while the GOP has tons of problems, for what does the Democratic party stand?

## National Review

### Little Creep

#### ***Against Chelsea Clinton***

by Kevin D. Williamson

Hasn't Bill Clinton been fellated thoroughly enough?

Nina Burleigh spoke for a certain variety of 1990s-style feminist when she famously said that "American women should be lining up" — on their knees — in order to express their gratitude to Bill Clinton for "keeping theocracy off our backs."

You all remember how close we were to theocracy back in the 1990s: California banned smoking in all bars, Chris Farley died of a cocaine-and-opiates overdose, Barry Switzer got canned . . . and . . . nothing like a theocracy was anywhere to be seen, heard of, or smelt. As much as the Democrats tried to cast Ken Starr as a modern-day Roger Chillingworth (if not a Torquemada), Bill Clinton wasn't in trouble for making the White House interns strap on their

presidential kneepads: He was in trouble for perjury, an offense for which he was later obliged to surrender his law license. Clinton was guilty of everything he was accused of, and more.

But he beat two Republicans when Democrats thought they were never going to win the presidency again, and he brought the Reagan era to an end. He did not actually do a hell of a lot as president — he just surfed the long wave of prosperity that had kicked off in the early 1980s — and much of what he did do was to enact Republican priorities: NAFTA (Republicans used to believe in free enterprise — look it up, kids!) and, grudgingly, welfare reform. He bitterly complained in private that he had come into office hoping to be Jack Kennedy but had been obliged to become Dwight Eisenhower.

But politics is not about policy. Clinton won, Clinton was slick, and Clinton made fools out of Republicans and high-profile right-wing critics. He provided American progressives with all they really want out of a politician: emotional validation. (Hey, Trump voters!) And so Democrats loved him — deeply, madly, and, in many cases, to the point of abasing themselves.

Miss Burleigh's suggestion was not enough. Not nearly. Rather than send Bill Clinton into his dotage with a generous allowance of Viagra and interns, they gave his wife — his batty, corrupt, inept, corrupt, feckless, corrupt, preening, unbearable, corrupt, condescending, and corrupt wife — the Senate seat being vacated by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the last good Democrat. She was elected to represent the state of New York in the Senate when she did not even live there, leading Moynihan to wryly praise her "Illinois-Arkansas enthusiasm."

She did not do very much in the Senate, though she did manage to acquire a nice real-estate portfolio, including a Chappaqua house with a pool big enough to dock Marco Rubio's boat. The Senate is a perfectly nice place to be. They don't expect much of you there — ask Patty Murray. You can make little speeches, and shunt great roaring streams of federal money into the service of your hobbies and the pockets of your friends.

It's a good gig, being a senator. But that was not a big enough tribute to the Big Creep. And it wasn't enough for Mrs. Creep, either, who had endured so much public humiliation in the cause of making NPR listeners feel good about themselves. She was running for president from the day she was seated in the Senate. But she could not close the deal. First, she got whipped in the primaries by a nobody back-bencher who answered her Illinois-Arkansas enthusiasm with his own Hawaii-Illinois cunning, in effect telling Democratic primary voters: "Okay, I'll see your white woman and raise you a black guy." So Mrs. Clinton became secretary of state. She was not very good at that.

And then, after barely edging out Comrade Muppet in the 2016 primary, she lost to a half-literate game-show host.

But, as the poet said, there ain't no cure for love, and Democrats just can't quit the Big Creep.

So they've turned to the Little Creep.

Chelsea Clinton, most recently lionized on the cover of *Variety*, is a 37-year-old multi-millionaire who has never uttered an interesting word about any subject at any time during the course of her life. Judging from the evidence of her public statements, she has never had an original thought — it isn't clear that she has had a *thought* at all. In tribute to her parents, she was given a series of lucrative sinecures, producing a smattering of sophomoric videos for NBC at a salary of \$600,000 a year. She later went more formally into the family business, leaving her fake job at NBC for a fake job in her parents' fake charity. She gave interviews about how she just

couldn't get interested in money and bought a \$10 million Manhattan apartment that stretches for the better part of a city block.

And, since her mother's most recent foray into ignominious defeat, she has been inescapable: magazine covers, fawning interviews, talk of running her in New York's 17th congressional district. The Democrats are doing their best to make Chelsea happen.

And, who knows, it might work. It would be tempting to write her off as a know-nothing rich kid who has made a living off her family connections while operating one of the world's most truly asinine Twitter accounts, but . . . well, you know.

But, for Pete's sake, stop it. Have a little self-respect, Democrats. Build Bill Clinton a statue or . . . whatever. Send him your daughters like a bunch of bone-in-the-nose primitives paying tribute to the tribal chieftain. But stop trying to inflict this empty-headed, grasping, sanctimonious, risible, simpering, saccharine little twerp on American public life.

It's stupid enough out there.

## National Review

### [A Democratic Blind Spot on Culture](#)

***Democrats continue to ignore the one thing that might help them win tough races.***

by Rich Lowry

How much do Democrats really want to defeat Donald Trump?

It's worth asking in the wake of the latest Democratic failure to notch an electoral victory for the resistance, this time in the Georgia special election.

There's no doubt that Democrats want to watch TV programs that excoriate the president. They want to give money to candidates opposing him. They want to fantasize about frog-marching him straight from his impeachment proceedings to the nearest federal penitentiary. But do they want to do the one thing that would make it easier to win tough races in marginal areas, namely moderate on the cultural issues? Not so much.

In retrospect, Jon Ossoff's loss in Georgia's 6th Congressional District was overdetermined. Youthful to a fault, he didn't live in the district and had no record of public service. Yet it didn't help that he was an orthodox liberal who conceded nothing on cultural issues, even though he was running in a Republican district in the South.

In this, Ossoff merely reflected his party's attitude. Stopping Trump is imperative, so long as it doesn't require the party rethinking its uncompromising stance on abortion, guns or immigration.

The Georgia special election showed the limits of the resistance, a partisan phenomenon with no crossover appeal. Republicans don't share the media's obsession with the Russia investigation and don't particularly care whether or not Michael Flynn should have been more careful about disclosing his lobbying work. What's more, to the extent that the resistance is about literally ousting Trump from office, it courts a backlash to the backlash.

This is why Ossoff was right to downplay his opposition to Trump and try to sound like a fiscal pragmatist. It just wasn't very credible. Tens of millions of progressive dollars didn't flood into the district to elect a polite young fiscal conservative with no strong feelings about Trump. Ossoff was easily attacked as a callow creation of the resistance and a would-be foot soldier for Nancy Pelosi.

A different kind of Democrat wouldn't have been so vulnerable. Republicans never would have been able to use the Pelosi play against Sen. Zell Miller, an old blue-dog Democrat from Georgia, or even moderate former Gov. Roy Barnes.

Ossoff didn't immunize himself at all. He was down-the-line pro-choice on abortion. He didn't dissent from typical liberal views on gun control. He parroted the usual lines about "comprehensive immigration reform."

Departures on these issues are important. They are statements of independence from the national party. They signal a sympathy with culturally conservative voters who might not support Republican economics. They take the edge off the perception of the Democrats as a high-handed coastal party.

It's not just that national Democrats don't believe any give on these issues is necessary — they positively oppose it. A couple of months ago, national activists brought the hammer down on Heath Mello, a candidate for mayor of Omaha (a city in the state of *Nebraska*) for the offense of being personally opposed to abortion and once having supported restrictions.

To his credit, Bernie Sanders stood by his endorsement of Mello (who ended up losing). Such is the fever of the national party on cultural issues that the socialist is the relatively reasonable one. A senator from a small, rural state who cares only about the economy, Sanders wasn't until recently beaten into complete agreement with Democratic orthodoxy on race, guns and immigration.

In a valuable piece in the Atlantic, Peter Beinart notes how the concern that Sanders once expressed about immigrants undercutting U.S. wages used to be a fairly standard Democratic position. Beinart argues that if Hillary Clinton had expressed any such worry about the effects of mass immigration, she probably would have been elected president.

Democrats would do well to think about that a little more than about Russia. But they won't. They oppose Donald Trump fiercely and vociferously. Just not enough to learn anything.

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