

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



July 5, 2014

ANTI-IMMIGRANTEITUS VIRULENTIS

Good Day Class:

By a show of hands, how many of you can honestly trace your American roots back to the *Mayflower* -- or the *Concord*, *Margaret of Bristol*, *Fortune*, *Sparrow*, *Amity* -- or any of the [nearly 210 other vessels](#) which reached the new world between 1602 and 1638? Waiting . . . waiting. None? Congratulations: we're all (I include myself) part of the 99.999% who are the descendants of far more recent immigrants to these shores. And even if any of us were part of that .001% which *can* identify early family members who came over in the first three decades of the



17th century, know of a certainty that we too would be descended from immigrants. Perhaps not terribly recent ones, but immigrants nonetheless. Let's face it, every last one of us is an immigrant to these shores. As the sticker on my old friend Julian Camacho's rear bumper proclaimed: *Columbus didn't discover America; the Indians discovered*

Columbus!

Throughout our history, America has been plagued with cyclical outbreaks of a plague I call -- for lack of a better term -- *anti-immigranteitus virulentis* -- a debilitating, autoimmune contagion that can afflict both individuals and communities, as well as entire regions. The afflicted see immigrants -- both of

the legal and illegal variety -- as conscious larcenists; as malevolent disease-ridden parasites who come to this country in order to live off the largess of the American taxpayer . . . stealing jobs, taking everything in sight, contributing nothing in return. (Yes, I know; "stealing our jobs" and "contributing nothing in return" are contradictory terms . . . many illnesses lead to irrational thoughts and behavior.)

Outbreaks of *anti-immigranteitus virulentis* have generally occurred during times of economic and social unrest:

- In the 1840s, more than [a half-million Irish flooded into America](#) as a result of the potato blight. This influx came on the heels of the "[Panic of 1837](#)" -- early America's most devastating economic downturn -- largely attributable to a real estate bubble and erratic American banking policy. This influx led to a national anti-immigration party (The America or "Know-Nothing" Party), the burning of Catholic churches and draconian changes to immigration laws.
- In the 1850s, tens of thousands of Chinese -- mostly men -- came to the Western United States in order to dig for gold. Another wave came to lay the nation's railroad tracks. At the height of America's "Gilded Age" -- when the disparity between the hyper wealthy few and the impoverished many reached epic proportions -- the nation turned against the Chinese. Finally, in 1882, Congress passed the draconian [Chinese Exclusion Act](#).
- In the 1890s and early 20th century, more than two million Eastern European immigrants -- mostly Jewish -- came to America to escape the horrors of extreme poverty, Tsarist pogroms and forced conscription. This wave was unlike anything America had experienced, for these immigrants were overwhelmingly literate, and carrying with them an organized communal structure that would be quickly recreated on American soil. Reaction to this massive influx would lead to the [Johnson-Reed Act of 1924](#), which limited the annual number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2% of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890 -- a clear slap in the collective face of Eastern Europeans.
- In the spring of 1939, the Roosevelt Administration refused entry to the German trans-Atlantic liner [St. Louis](#), which carried 938 mostly Jewish refugees escaping the Third Reich. The ship was denied entry in both Havana and any American port. Despite a long and loud campaign on the part of many Jewish and non-Jewish Americans -- and the promise to secure a \$500 cash bond for everyone on board -- the ship was forced to return to Europe; just over half survived the Holocaust -- those who found refuge in England, Belgium and Holland. . .

America's most recent, nearly decade-long outbreak of *anti-immigranteitus virulentus*, like its predecessors, has attacked us during a period of economic recession and gross income/wealth inequality, and is largely characterized by:

- increased nativism,
- fears about the changing status-quo,
- a deep-seated belief that those sneaking into the country are little better than malevolent human sponges, and
- an inability to maturely address a truly challenging and difficult situation.

As is well known, Congress and the White House are at an angry impasse over comprehensive immigration reform. One side claims that the president and his party are squishy soft when it comes to illegal immigrants; that they refuse to deport "these people" and are catering to a largely Hispanic migration wave in order to curry both the favor and the votes of a fast-growing Latino community. Unless -- and until -- the administration "secures our southern border," this side loudly argues, comprehensive immigration reform will remain in the deep freeze. (It should be noted that despite what those afflicted with *anti-immigranteitus virulentus* claim, the Obama Administration has been [deporting illegals at a monthly rate](#) far higher than anything seen in the past century.) For its part, the White House has responded by saying that the current wave of illegal immigrants -- largely unaccompanied children making the hazardous journey up from San Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala -- is a humanitarian crisis. Moreover, the president has argued, if Congress won't act, he will . . . via executive orders. (It should be noted that [when questioned](#), the vast majority of these young migrants claim that despite their harrowing experience in reaching America, if deported, they will try again . . . and again . . . until they are successful.)

What many seem to forget -- or simply care about -- is that the reason why most of these Central American children are risking their lives to get to America is *not* because they are in search of free housing, medical care and education; they are coming here largely to escape grinding poverty and, more importantly, the possibility of being murdered.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's [2013 Study on Homicide](#) the world rate for homicide is 6.9 per 100,000. By comparison, here in the United States, the rate (per 100,000) is 1.1 in Vermont, 4.0 in New York and 24 in the District of Columbia. Moving on to Central America -- from whence the majority of these children are fleeing, the rate is:

- 41.4 in Guatemala
- 41.7 in Belize
- 66.0 in El Salvador and

- 82.1 in Honduras

Add to these figures all the human traffickers who are making fortunes by setting themselves up as safe and reliable conduits of travel, and what we have is a humanitarian crisis of epidemic proportions. Those who blame the influx of juvenile illegals on the president's January 2014 DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) order are purposefully misreading and misleading. What the president's executive order did was to halt deportations of those who came to the United States when they were young, those who care for children and those who haven't committed crimes. If this is the cause of all those children coming up from Central America then Ayn Rand was an altruist.

Just the other day, we witnessed the sorry spectacle of the good citizens of Murietta, California protesting the arrival of three busloads of immigrant mothers and children about to undergo processing at a Border Patrol station. The immigrants -- tired, hungry and dazed from their month-long journey were met by protesters carrying American flags and signs proclaiming "return to sender" as they screamed "go home" and chanted "U.S.A."



"What happens when they come here with diseases and can overrun our schools? How much is this costing us?" one resident asked the local mayor. "How do you know they are really families and aren't some kind of gang or drug cartel?" another person asked federal officials. Jeff Stone, the chairman of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, told the assembled protesters that he was concerned about communicable diseases that the migrants could be carrying, such as whooping cough, swine flu or tuberculosis. One protester claimed that four children had been sent to local hospitals this week, two with a fever and two with scabies.

(Speaking as a medical ethicist, one who for the past two decades has reviewed more than 1,000 medical research protocols, I can say of a certainty that we have had outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough) and cases of flu in the US -- due not to immigrants, who overwhelmingly accept vaccination, but rather to the increase in the percentage of American citizens and permanent residents who refuse vaccination.)

How incredibly sad to have to report on this latest outbreak of *anti-immigranteitus virulentis* on the very weekend we are celebrating our nation's independence. Hopefully some day, the best and brightest among us will develop a "vaccine"

which will eradicate this most virulent and inhumane affliction. And more importantly, let us pray that maturity will overtake our senators and representatives so that they can once and for all enact comprehensive immigration reform.

And so I say to you, my fellow immigrants: Let freedom ring!

©2014 Kurt F. Stone

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



July 12, 2014

IN PRAISE OF GLENN BECK (!)

If anyone had told me even 72 hours ago that this week's essay would be entitled *In Praise of Glenn Beck*, I would have thought that either they were out in Colorado munching a few brownies, or that there was someone else out there named Glenn Beck. I mean, what in the world could a progressive find praiseworthy in the old Beckster, a man who writer Steven King called "Satan's mentally challenged young brother? What praiseworthy thought or deed could be ascribed to a man possessing a long record of saying things like:



"[I'm thinking about killing Michael Moore](#), and I'm wondering if I could kill him myself, or if I would need to hire somebody to do it."

"So here you have Barack Obama going in and spending the money on embryonic stem cell research. ... Eugenics. In case you don't know what Eugenics led us to: the Final Solution. A master race! A perfect person. ... The stuff that we are facing is [absolutely frightening](#)."

"The most used phrase in my administration [if I were to be President](#) would be 'What the hell you mean we're out of missiles?'"

That's the Glenn Beck we've all come to know and expect; the man of whom Jon Stewart once [quipped](#), "Finally, a guy who says what people who aren't thinking

are thinking." Well, I'm here to tell you -- and in all seriousness -- that there is good reason for giving Beck an *attaboy*!

Again, I am being serious.

So what's it all about?

This past Tuesday, Beck announced that he will be bringing tractor-trailers full of food, water, teddy bears and soccer balls to McAllen, Texas on July 19 as a way to help care for some of the roughly 60,000 underage refugees who have crossed into America illegally in 2014. Beck said he will be joined by a number of pastors and rabbis. "Through no fault of their own, they are caught in a political crossfire," Beck said of the children. "And while we continue to put pressure on Washington and change its course of lawlessness, we must also help. It is not either, or. It is both. We have to be active in the political game, and we must open our hearts."

While one can certainly disagree with the part of his announcement that speaks of the administration's "course of lawlessness," it's his "we must open our hearts" part of the statement that deserves sincere plaudits. For here, Beck -- and those who join him in this effort -- are acting upon that which is best and most compassionate in their various religious traditions. They are responding like compassionate human beings, not members of the Borg Collective. Beck's response is that of a mature, moral man who is stirred to action by the sight -- let alone the thought -- of thousands of innocent children caught in a perilous maelstrom not of their making.

And for this, he *does* deserve a thumbs up. I for one hope that Beck and his crew bombard those children with more meals, teddy bears and soccer balls than can fit into a convoy of ten dozen trucks.

But sadly . . . there's more.

Shortly after making this announcement, Beck told his listening audience, *"I'm getting violent emails from people who say I've 'betrayed the Republic.' Whatever. I've never taken a position more deadly to my career than this -- and I have never, ever taken a position that is more right than this."*

How's that?

Almost immediately, conservative websites like [Breitbart](#), the [Drudge Report](#) and [The Blaze](#) started blasting away, accusing Beck of being a traitor to the conservative cause -- of capitulating to the devils of the left.

A handful of comments from various conservative websites:

- "Sorry Glenn, you are playing right into their hands. This is EXACTLY the response they want out of the American people. Why do you think they are having CHILDREN sent over."
- "Hook, Line, and Sinker.....following that Obama Script. Well Glenn, are 13 yr olds to 17 yr olds considered Children who play with Teddy Bears, or more at Home Field Stripping an AK-47?"
- "Because Glenn Beck is bringing sandwiches and teddy bears to the border there is gonna be a massive wave of illegal migrants . . ."
- "Why doesnt he go ahead and take them all home like nancy pelosi wants to?"
- "Glenn Beck is nothing more than a Tool of the Obama Admin, CIA & NWO (New World Order) - I NEVER Trusted this CREEP!"

Am I having a junior moment? Am I misremembering the most oft-trumpeted tenets of the conservative/Tea Party wing of American politics? Don't these tenets include extra-heavy doses of what they call "Judeo-Christian values?" Aren't these the folks who call for a return to "family values" and place the highest priority on the sanctity of human life? Yes they are; I am *not* having a junior moment . . . I am *not* misremembering. The problem in this instance isn't with me, or progressives, or even with Glenn Beck. It is with all these low-information citizens who support immature leaders who in turn spout simplistic, immature solutions to truly complex situations. Just yesterday, America's dumbest Congressman, [Louie Gohmert](#), compared the surge of unaccompanied migrant children to soldiers invading France during World War II, and urged Texas Governor Rick Perry to "use whatever means" like troops, ships of war, or taxes to "stop the invasion."

There are simply far too many people out there whose hatred -- yes hatred -- of everything from President Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and Harry Reid to gays, immigrants and healthcare is greater than their love of America. That so many erstwhile Beck partisans should suddenly conclude that their emperor has no clothes simply because he responds to a humanitarian crisis with compassion is beyond belief. To these people, I paraphrase the late great [Joseph Welch](#):

"Until this moment . . . I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness. . . Have you no sense of decency?"

And so, let us give a hand to Glenn Beck, for in this instance he is acting like a *mentsch*. And although we will likely be back to castigating him for his political

pronouncements tomorrow or the day after . . . at least for today, let him bask in the warm sunshine of our approval.

For by his act of compassion -- and the angry catcalls it has inspired -- Beck has shown his flock that although life and the great moral concern for it *may* begin at conception, it definitely *does not* end at birth . . .

©2014 Kurt F. Stone

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



July 20, 2014

ADDICTED TO SIMPLICITY

Those who have studied a bit of philosophy will likely recall the term "Occam's Razor." And, if you're like most, you've likely forgotten what in the heck it is . . . I mean, that final exam *was* a long, long time ago. Well, to refresh our memories, William of Occam (or Ockham) was a 14th century Franciscan friar and logician known to history for a single statement: *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter*

necessitatem -- literally, "Entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity."

To flesh it out just a tad, what Occam's Razor (rule) teaches is that "The simplest explanation is probably correct." Or, as my wife would have it, "Keep it simple, stupid!"



In paying attention to how people respond to such highly complex issues as immigration reform, the prospects for peace in the Middle East, gun control, health care, structural unemployment, America's collapsing infrastructure, income inequality -- among many, many

others -- one hears echoes of Occam: *The simplest explanation is probably correct.* I mean, how often do we hear people in public life proclaim that "In order to solve X, all we have to do is Y?"

Want to solve the problem of health care in America? One side says "Let the market decide." The other, "Make it universal."

Want to end the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians? One side says "Stop building settlements in the occupied territories, end the embargo of Gaza and quit standing in the way of a Palestinian State." The other side says "Disarm, recognize Israel's right to exist and get rid of Hamas."

Want to effect a major overhaul of our failing public school system? One side says "Pay teachers far more than they are currently earning and spend far more per pupil." The other side says "Eliminate teacher tenure and increase choice through creating more charter schools."

Want to cure what ails us politically? Both sides say the same thing: "Elect us . . . then you'll see!"

Let's face it: when it comes to dealing with our era's most complex and challenging problems, we're addicted to simplicity. To my mind, this addiction is a natural outgrowth of living in an age of heightened polarization. We have become so terribly fractionalized that it is all but impossible to work with the "other side" in the search for solutions to what ails us. When even the *idea* of working together becomes a nonstarter, simplicity takes over; our solution is the only one that will work; yours will lead to wreck and ruin. H.L. Mencken well understood this sociopolitical train wreck when he wrote, "*For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.*"

One concomitant byproduct of this addiction for simplicity is gross impatience; if the problem cannot be solved, the challenge not be conquered lickity split, we throw our hands up and begin looking elsewhere. But the repair or rectification of problems and challenges created over years and decades (and in some cases -- like the Middle East -- millennia) is something which occurs over the long haul . . . not the short run. We expect everything to occur instantaneously . . . like online banking and microwaveable meals. Sadly, when one adds gross impatience to an addiction for simplicity what one gets is frustration, stultification and paralyzation.

Frustration, stultification and paralyzation are, historically speaking, distinctly un-American. For most of our history we have been a "can-do" people; folks living, growing and succeeding in a land blessed with a national dream. But over the past generation or so, we have been witness to revolutionary advances in technology, economy and communication. Our human response has yet to catch up to all these changes. To a great extent, we respond to early twenty-first century realities with mid twentieth century sensibilities. Over time, we will

catch up; we will once again learn how to work together to create solutions over the long haul. But until we do, we will likely continue our addiction to simplicity.

When William of Occam promulgated his razor back in the 14th century, he was dealing exclusively in the ether of philosophy and theology, not the hardcore realm of technology, economics, politics or international relations. He would likely have been aghast -- if not utterly perplexed -- by the application of his rule to the more temporal sphere. Complex situations rarely admit of simple solutions. And those who pretend they do -- like people running for office -- are either fools or charlatans.

Perhaps what we need is an update.

How does "Occam's *Laser*" sound . . .?

©2014 Kurt F. Stone

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



July 28, 2014

IT PAYS TO ADMINISTER

We begin with two items which, to a certain extent, are interrelated.

The first item is apocryphal:

Back in 1930, when Babe Ruth was asked to comment about the fact that he had earned more money in the previous year than President Herbert Hoover -- \$80,000 for the Bambino vs \$75,000 for the president -- the Yankee slugger purportedly responded, "Well, I had a better year." (In 1929, Ruth hit .345, with 46 homers, 154 RBIs and a .430 on base percentage. Hoover, on the other hand, presided over the Great Crash . . .)



The second item is a certifiable fact.

In Canada recently, [faculty members teamed up](#) in groups of four to apply for an advertised position as president of the University of Alberta, which pays in the neighborhood of 400,000 Canadian dollars (about \$368,500). The faculty groups claimed that it was a great deal: imagine getting four times the amount of work for the price of one!

Without question, the quartets' stunt had precisely two chances of succeeding: absolutely none and even less than that. Even as tempting as getting four-university-presidents-for-the-price-of-one might seem, it would be akin to academic polygamy.

And yet, behind their dido lay a serious point. As they explained, "by job-sharing this position, we would be able to do a better job than any one person could do—and the salary is certainly ample enough to meet the needs of all four of us." A leader of their collective action told a reporter that it was designed to highlight "the disparity between the recent growth of university administration—both in terms of numbers of administrators and in terms of their salaries—and their rhetoric of austerity, which has resulted in program cuts, loss of tenure-track jobs, increasing numbers of poorly-paid, insecure sessionals [adjuncts], and skyrocketing tuition."

The same thing is happening here in America: universities are crying "austerity," cutting budgets and programs and greatly increasing the number of adjunct instructors while lavishing incredible salaries -- and incredible raises -- on their presidents, chancellors and administrators. Need proof? In 2012-13 nine public university presidents earned more than \$1 million for their services -- more than double the number from the previous year. (The best-paid, Ohio State's E. Gordon Gee, earned a whopping \$6,057,615 . . . plus lavish expenses.) According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, University of Florida President Bernie Machen earned \$834,562 in fiscal year 2012. That number was enough to make Machen the nation's ninth-highest-paid public university president. (On campus, he falls far behind UF men's basketball coach Billy Donovan, whose salary is \$3.3 million, according to [Forbes](#) and football coach [Will Muscamp](#), who last year was paid precisely \$2,928,971.)

Even at Broward College where my wife has been an adjunct instructor for more than half a decade, their president, J. David Armstrong, earns \$454,900 -- at a time when Anna's program is in such dire financial straits that she has to use our home Xerox machine if she wants copies for her students. And, the Broward School System, which is trying to get the public to approve an \$800 million bond referendum for building and repairing schools, broken air conditioners, leaky roofs, etc, just this week announced that it had given three administrators -- the chief human resources officer, the director of employee and labor relations and the director of early learning and school readiness -- whopping 22.5% pay raises. District wide, there are nearly 400 employees -- less than half of whom are principals -- who make salaries well into six figures. By comparison, the [average teacher salary](#) is just \$41,784.

[Nationwide](#), of all college instructors and professors, a whopping 76%, or over 1 million, teach part time. Using adjuncts -- hourly employees who receive no benefits -- is certainly cheaper. A full time professor's salary can average from \$72,000 a year up to \$160,000; adjuncts, on the other hand, average \$25,000 to \$27,000 a year. Together, my wife and I, who between us have 6 degrees and more than 20 years college-level teaching experience, make less in one year than

the president of Broward College makes in a single month and about the same as the president of the University of Florida makes in *two weeks*.

So what precisely is it that these college and university presidents do that makes them worth so much in salary, benefits and perks? The same thing that college and university coaches do . . . bring in the bucks. Running a winning football or basketball program can put tens of millions of dollars into a university's coffers through television contracts and both season ticket and ancillary sales. That translates into enormous salaries for the coach and his or her staff. Likewise, what causes university presidents and their team of high-ranking administrators to be paid so much is that they are fundraisers *par excellence*. According to [Lawrence S. Wittner](#), Professor of History Emeritus at SUNY/Albany, "[University] boards of trustees are often less concerned about education than about money; they are dazzled by administrators who rake in large financial contributions. Against the backdrop of drastically-reduced public funding for universities, attracting donations from the wealthy and their corporations—plus, of course, raising tuition and reducing faculty salaries—is considered particularly desirable behavior in a modern university administrator." (By the way, do yourself a favor and pick up a copy of Professor Wittner's screamingly funny satiric novel [What's Going on at UAardvark?](#))

If we are really, truly concerned about the future of education -- at all levels -- in America -- we have to totally rethink and restructure our priorities. Professors and teachers are the real front-line soldiers; presidents, coaches and administrators are the rear echelon. Unquestionably, they *are* essential to academic institutions . . . but not as much as those who teach, inspire and impart. For a college president or coach to make 20 or 30 times the salary of a full professor is absolutely unconscionable. That some universities have more administrators than professors makes absolutely no sense.

Sadly, the reality is that it pays to administrate.

Over the past few decades, we have become increasingly incapable of distinguishing between accomplishment and accoutrement -- between quality and quantity. Flashy mediocrity often pays far better than steady professionalism.

Oh how the times have changed.

Want proof? Let's go back to item number one . . .

Back in 1930, Babe Ruth, with his .346 average, 46 home runs and 154 RBIs, made \$80,000 -- 6.25% more than the President of the United States. In 2014, San Francisco Giant (and Former Miami Marlin) second baseman Dan Uggla, who as

of today is hitting .152 with 2 homers and a mere 10 RBIs is making \$13,146,942 -- 3,300% more than the current president of the United States. And even for those who *not* are Obama fans, can you honestly say that Dan Uggla is having a better year?

Can you imagine how much the Babe would be making?

©2014 Kurt F. Stone