



The GOP's family values conundrum

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The conservative movement is in crisis. Modern conservatism was born in 1955 with the founding of *National Review*. Its editor, William F. Buckley Jr., said the publication's mission was to "stand athwart history, yelling stop!" But history has kept rolling along, smashing every traditional institution in its path. Family, faith, capitalism, our constitutional republic—they have all been shattered by modern liberalism. In the face of this ideological juggernaut, conservatives have offered sporadic and weak resistance. Their ideas have become stale. Too many prefer power to principles. The movement has become corrupt, lazy and ineffective. Having come to Washington to confront the political rot and moral decay, conservatives have become part of the establishment. In other words, they have become part of the problem.



The mission of *Reflections Magazine* is to launch a conservative moral and intellectual revival. We will bring together the finest minds and writers to defend the eternal principles of God, country and family. We seek to forge a reinvigorated conservative movement for the 21st century—one that champions a new nationalism, rooted in a culture of life, small government, a restoration of federalism and victory over Islamist terrorism. Capitol BuildingThe time has come for a one-nation conservatism that reaches out to minorities and women, the unborn and the poor, workers and students. The movement must go beyond its traditional base or else suffer a slow, agonizing death. Our goal is unabashedly counter-revolutionary: to roll back the forces of progressivism. Since the 1960s, a destructive liberal revolution has swept across our land. Characterized by radical secular humanism, sexual permissiveness and milk-toast socialism, it is transforming America into something our Founding Fathers would not only find unrecognizable but repugnant. We stand for the real America, the historic America, the eternal America—an America based on moral traditionalism, an America of limited government, self-reliance and entrepreneurship, an America that won its independence from imperial British rule, triumphed over Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, and has shed precious blood and treasure to liberate hundreds of millions of people around the world, and an America that champions human rights and freedom, in which every individual—regardless of race, color, gender or religion—possesses innate dignity and equal value in the eyes of our creator. We ask like-minded Americans to join us in this struggle for the heart and soul of America.

Edmund Burke, the great philosopher and godfather of Western conservatism, once said: "All that's necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing." We refuse to do nothing. We will fight for what is right, true and good. This is the rock upon which we take our stand.

Mission:

The Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal was founded in June, 2005 in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. We are a non-partisan, non-profit, education and outreach organization which aspires to engage and mobilize the millions of African Americans, Hispanics, women and other minorities in this country who share conservative values. We will inform conservative leaders about the needs and aspirations of minorities in order to make the latter feel welcome amongst us. Also, we want minorities to appreciate fully how conservatism is congruent with their values and goals. In short, we will build a steadfast alliance between conservative leaders and minority groups. We hope to preserve all those elements in the American republic that render us a strong and vibrant nation. Simultaneously, we are open to new ideas that will allow more citizens to enjoy the blessings of freedom, prosperity and moral renewal.



How We Differ From Other Conservative Organizations:

1. We seek to update conservative thought. We want to find original ideas on how to bolster timeless principles.
2. We are attentive to the needs of women and minorities. These are not peripheral but are a primary focus of our institute. We want the conservative movement to make adjustments in order to accommodate the unique aspirations of previously marginalized groups. We also want minorities to learn how the conservative movement can benefit them.
3. We are devoted to cultural issues, not just politics. The main battle of our time is to seize the initiative in the cultural arena.
4. We hope to foster a broad alliance with those who adhere to traditional moral principles. We seek to build bridges with individuals of all faiths in order to combat assaults on human dignity.
5. We write policy initiatives, opinion articles and monographs as well as organize symposiums and conferences that appeal to our audience. Hence we do not just think and write: we take action!
6. We do not focus exclusively on one group or on one issue. There are excellent minority conservative organizations across the United States that are currently working in isolation from one another. Instead, we bring these groups together on a variety of issues in order to find common ground and, thus, to be effective in achieving political and cultural change.

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The GOP's family values conundrum

By Michelle Laque Johnson

If you survey the media landscape these days, you might conclude that things look grim for conservatives and those who adhere to Christian values, or what are now called family values.

Among other things, we have the “Chosen One,” as President Barack Obama is known to his followers, running around the world claiming that, “We do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation; we consider ourselves a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values.”

The Chosen One, who claims to be a Christian, also had the symbol for Jesus covered up before he deigned to give a speech at Georgetown University.

These actions were followed by other events which might seem unrelated except for the “lessons” which some are drawing from them. I’m talking about the extramarital affairs of Nevada Senator John Ensign and South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, which The Washington Times reported as having many in the Republican Party questioning its focus on family values.

“If you are going to hold up these issues, you have to live by them,” Family Research Council President Tony Perkins told Reporter S.A. Miller in a June 25 article. As noted in the article, “Republicans’ family-values platform often invites charges of hypocrisy.”

So, on the one hand, we have Obama’s speeches, which fueled all sorts of press, including *Newsweek* magazine’s cover story entitled “The End of Christian America.” On the other hand, we have some in the Republican Party arguing that it should abandon its family values platform because some of its members find it hard to live up to those values.

I would like to suggest that there is a danger here, but it’s not what the Chosen One or frightened Republicans think it is. To make my point, I would like to tell you the true story of Dr. Bernard Nathanson. His story is relevant because it reveals the set of tactics used in 1968—tactics being used today—to convince Americans, who were overwhelmingly pro-life at the time, that abortion should be legalized. In only five years, Mr. Nathanson, one of the founders of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), and his colleagues managed to convince the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn hundreds of years of precedent by legalizing abortion in this country. These same tactics are being used today to pressure Christians into believing that they and their family values are in the minority when the exact opposite is true.

So just how did NARAL accomplish its unholy mission? Fortunately, we don’t have to guess. Mr. Nathanson tells us in a chilling testimonial, which can be found in his book, “Aborting America,” on audiotapes, and, in

short form, on the Internet. He cites three key tactics.

The first was capturing the media, which was surprisingly easy. Mr. Nathanson tells us that NARAL fabricated polls saying that 60 percent of Americans were in favor of permissive abortion, when almost none were, and the media published them. Says Mr. Nathanson, “This is the tactic of the self-fulfilling lie. Few people care to be in the minority.”

NARAL also made up polls which convinced Americans that 10,000 women were dying each year as a result of a million abortions— all of which was untrue, Mr. Nathanson said. That’s not all. NARAL also told the media “that legalizing abortion would only mean that the abortions taking place illegally would then be done legally. In fact, abortion is now being used as a primary method of birth control in the U.S. and the number of abortions has increased by 1500 percent since legalization.”

The idea that America is not a Christian nation is another lie, which Christians should not buy. Christians are in the majority—and with margins that any politician, including the Chosen One, would envy. More than three-quarters of Americans (76 percent) identify themselves as Christians, according to the American Religion Identification Survey, part of a report from The Program on Public Values at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

True, we are seeing a rise in those with “no religion,” and that is disturbing. But the Christian majority should see this as a call to evangelize, not to give in to the “inevitable.”

Tactic number two was to play “the

Catholic card.” Says Mr. Nathanson, “We systematically vilified the Catholic Church and its ‘socially backward ideas,’” telling the media that most Catholics favored abortion law reform and that anyone who opposed abortion “must be under the influence of the Catholic hierarchy.”

All of this was, of course, untrue. Think this “divide and conquer” strategy is not happening today? At 25 percent of the population, Catholics make up the largest group of Christians and, like most Christian churches, the Catholic Church remains an ardent foe of abortion, same-sex marriage and euthanasia.

Perhaps that’s why Mr. Obama recently appointed Harry Knox, a gay-rights activist to the Faith-Based Initiative Board, a man who called Pope Benedict XVI and certain Catholic bishops “discredited leaders” because (big shock) they oppose same-sex marriage. This same gay-rights activist called the Knights of Columbus “foot soldiers of a discredited army of oppression.” Mr. Obama’s reaction to the controversy this appointment created? He announced he was “comfortable” with his choice.

Christian sects may have their differences, but if ever there was a time in history for Christians of all persuasions to unite, it is now.

The third tactic used by NARAL was the “denigration and suppression of all scientific evidence that life begins at conception.” Says Mr. Nathanson, “A favorite pro-abortion tactic is to insist that the definition of when life begins is impossible; that the question is a theological or moral or philosophical one; anything but a scientific one. Fetology



become the Party of Death. Republicans, flawed as they are, at least have a platform that affirms life and marriage. As it stands now, it is the only alternative for a committed Christian, many of whom are becoming disenchanted with Mr. Obama's increasingly clear agenda.

To back away from this platform because some members cannot live up to its high ideals is to back away from its strength. There are many reasons the Republican Party lost this past election but its support of traditional family

values was not one of them. The enthusiasm generated by the candidacy of Sarah Palin—and the vehemency of the attacks against her by the left—proved that.

As conservatives have heard from liberals ad nauseum, elections have consequences. So does faith.

If Christians remain committed and do what Christians are called to do—evangelize their brothers and sisters by living their faith—America will remain exactly what Mr. Obama and his liberal supporters don't want you to think it is: a Christian nation that votes its values—family values.

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makes it undeniably evident that life begins at conception and requires all the protections and safeguards that any of us enjoy.”

Mr. Obama used this tactic when he famously said that the question of when life begins was “above his pay grade.” He uses it when he says the one thing we can all agree on is the need to limit abortions, but institutes policies which do the exact opposite.

One by one, Mr. Obama and his liberal supporters have taken Christian values—family values—and tried to make Christians feel they are not just wrong but unChristian for holding them.

The lessons of history are clear. Christians allow this to happen at their own peril. For whatever reason, the Democratic Party, which used to be the party of most Catholics and many other Christians, has largely

United Nations threatens children

By Mary Jo Anderson

While at the United Nations in 2000, a European delegate concluded an interview with the comment that America's refusal to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was an "unenlightened diplomatic decision." We should stick to that decision.

President Bill Clinton signed the invasive treaty in 1995, but the Senate indicated that they would reject it. Now, Senator Barbara Boxer, California Democrat, decries our national "humiliation" as a non-signatory to the treaty. Ms. Boxer, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has urged the Obama administration to push for ratification. If ratified, the CRC would require Congress to make sweeping new domestic laws to comply with the treaty's provisions. Ms. Boxer is willing to submit our families to the power of the U.N. so that no American child is subject to "arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy." And who is it that will interfere with a child's privacy? His own mother and father who may prohibit his association with a gang, or "force" her to attend a private school.

According to the CRC, the child, age 0-17, is the subject of his own rights, including "freedom of expression," "freedom of thought, conscience and religion" and "rights to association." In contrast, U.S. law views a child's rights as held in guardianship by parents until his maturity. The U. N. treaty employs redefined phrases such as "evolving

capacities of the child" to determine when a child can protest parental decisions. But, "evolving" according to whom? The implementation manual is clear: "[The Committee] wishes to recall its view that the rights and prerogatives of the parents may not undermine the rights of the child /as recognized by the Convention..."

Only the United States and Somalia have declined to ratify the CRC treaty. This diplomatic "embarrassment" is dragged across the table in order to prevent a meaningful discussion of the dangers that this treaty poses to American sovereignty and American families. The treaty wedges U.N. committees between parents and children. It subjects our families to unelected, unaccountable foreign investigators without the shield of U.S. law. Provisions in the implementation manual for the CRC direct nations to set up offices in cities so that children may bring complaints to be investigated. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Where a 13-year-old disputes her parent's decisions on education and health care, the CRC can subject that family to the local U.N. committee's review. The treaty directs nations to set up legal structures to monitor compliance and to adjust curriculum for children to reflect the treaty's provisions. In Britain, home-schooling curriculum has been challenged by the CRC monitoring body.

The rub, of course, is that the treaty does address the rights of the world's most oppressed children. Images of 10-year-olds toting rifles or thin ragged girls in sweat shops are the wrenching visions invoked

by politicians who push for passage of the CRC. But grievous abuses such as these cannot be used against U.S. families. (For the record, the United States has signed the separate codicils on child soldiers and child prostitution.) A point rarely made in any discussion of the CRC is that some signatory nations plastered white-out on all CRC provisions that conflicted with Sharia Law. It is still legal to throw acid in the face of a girl who offends a male or to stone a 14-year-old child to death in Afghanistan. Other nations continue to violate child labor laws. There is no expectation that ratification of the treaty by the United States will cause nations in violation to suddenly comply. This raises the question: If U.S. law already protects American children, what reason is there for the United States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

American ratification of the treaty will do nothing to insure that Thai children are not sold into sex-slavery. But U.S. ratification does separate American children from their own culture. The U.N.'s International Baccalaureate program is used in more than 1000 U.S. schools. The director of the Program, George Walker, wrote, "The program remains committed to changing children's values so they think globally, rather than in parochial national terms from their own country's viewpoint." Our children are being conditioned to view the U.N. as an authority superior to their own nation—the child is encouraged to see himself as a free-standing bearer of rights guaranteed by the U.N. In short, the CRC is not needed to protect American children from the ravages of child labor. It is needed to divide children from their parent's moral values and their national culture. Those who yearn for a universal standard of citizenship view the

CRC as early training in the supremacy of a global institution over national sovereignty. Critics of the treaty also point out that it cements government control and socialism in U.S. law, ensuring that a particular vision is sustained regardless of which party enjoys political power.

So dire is the new threat of the U.S. ratification of the CRC that Senator Jim DeMint, South Carolina Republican has introduced Senate Joint Resolution 16, a Parental Rights Amendment. Mr. DeMint explains, "As we look at where this country is going, particularly more association with the United Nations and [in view of] the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, these treaties would supersede all the laws in 50 states." The Joint Resolution is an explicit guard for the rights of parents in the Constitution. The complementary legislation is House Joint Resolution 42, introduced by Republican Congressman Pete Hoekstra of Michigan. The legislation seeks to protect states' rights from international law and treaties.

This is legislation that both sides of the aisle should support.

- Mary Jo Anderson is a journalist and co-author of "Male and Female He Made Them: Questions and Answers on Marriage and Same-Sex Union."

The end of traditional America

By Steve Malzberg



In my little town of Fair Lawn, New Jersey the threat of rain forced the annual July Fourth fireworks celebration to be pushed to the night of July 5th. But this wasn't the delayed start

that would eventually break my celebratory spirit.

This year, instead of attending the event at the town pool, my son, my ex-wife and I accepted an invitation from Vincent and his family to watch the show from their front lawn. Vincent is one of the coaches of the nine-year-old summer baseball travel team. So my son and his teammates had a ball taking it all in. The parents also had a good time. I tried, and for a while, I did enjoy what I was watching and hearing.

As the booming blasts of light exploded to the sounds of "Proud to be an American," "Coming to America" and "God Bless America," it wasn't hard to become transfixed in the moment. It wasn't difficult to go with the flow, to shut out reality and convince myself that we were all going to be alright. But as I watched my son proudly holding his sparkler, I suddenly cringed as a wave of panic swept through my mind and body. You see, I know too much, and the others, most Americans, not enough.

Suddenly, the monologues that I have given each day on my radio show since President Barack Obama was sworn in were beginning to echo in my head. As I looked at my son and his buddies, I couldn't help but fear for

their futures—and my future and the future of our great nation.

This July Fourth was not like the others in my lifetime and maybe it was unlike any other in our country's history. For the first time as America celebrated her birthday, the man sitting in the White House was busy plotting his course to continue in his quest to fundamentally change our nation, our policies—both foreign and domestic—and by doing so, our cherished way of life.

I looked around at the parents of the kids on the baseball team and wondered just how many of them—of us really— may be among the next batch of the half million Americans who are losing their jobs each month. I wondered how many of us would eventually be unable to give our kids the luxury of summer baseball, summer camp, a new bike or a new video game once taxes start to kick in.

The saddest part is that most Americans haven't a clue about what Mr. Obama is plotting. If you think things are tough now, just wait. We are where we are and the "Bush tax cuts" haven't yet expired. That's one tax hike coming. Next, Mr. Obama needs to tax you in order to "lower your health care costs." Along with your newly-rationed care, which is really the most frightening part of it all, comes possible taxes on the benefits themselves: on food, drink and obesity. Did I mention that the mortgage interest deduction along with the charitable deduction will be lowered? Tax hike, tax hike.

The global warming bill passed by the house in June is being called the biggest

tax increase in American history. And to top it all off, look for the European style Value Added Tax (VAT) of as much as 10 percent added on to everything you purchase or use. Did I mention, tax hike?!

If Mr. Obama succeeds, look for the unemployment rate to soar through double digits. This is what he wants. He has already destroyed untold wealth in this country. This will nearly complete the mission. What is the mission? To force as many of us as possible to turn to the government for our very survival. That's what Mr. Obama is advocating and who he is.

As I looked around at the spectators at the July 4th celebration, I wondered how many had a clue that Mr. Obama is also the president who had just told the nation's biggest Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) group that they will be very pleased with his administration by the end of his first term. He then went on to spell out his LGBT agenda. This consists of ending "don't ask don't tell" in the military, eliminating the Defense of Marriage Act and passing legislation which adds LGBT's and

others, including pedophiles, to federal hate crime protections.

Are we prepared to have our children grow up in Mr. Obama's America as described above? Are we prepared to have our children's lives put at risk by a president who no longer sees a "war on terror"? Are we prepared for a president who tours the world assuring one and all that there is nothing special about the United States, that we have a tarnished history and that we are just another one of many nations?

Are we prepared to tell our kids that Mr. Obama was correct when he told the Muslim world that we are not a nation of Christians, Jews and Muslims, but rather a "nation of citizens"? I bet the parents of my little town of Fair Lawn, New Jersey would say, "No," to this and to Mr. Obama's vision of America. If they only knew.

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A third Chechen war?

By Andrei Piontkovsky

Even the best definitions oversimplify living reality. This is no less true of the widely accepted belief that our ruling kleptocracy is divided into a “Big Bucks Party” and a “Party of Blood.”

In reality, there are more groupings, and the divisions between them shift over time. For example, the “Bloodbath Party” has become increasingly visible recently as a third force within the Kremlin, which ever since the days of Ramzan Kadyrov Senior, has stubbornly opposed Russian President Vladimir Putin’s Kadyrov Project for pacifying Chechnya.

This is not the time to debate the various merits and demerits of that project, but merely to note that right now the only alternative to it is a full-scale third Chechen war—and that would be a military, political and moral catastrophe for Russia. It would be the height of folly to embark on that adventure for a third time in a row. This is something even Mr. Putin recognizes, completely mired as he is in the Chechen issue. Until very recently, I had supposed the same to be true of Dmitry Medvedev’s entourage.

That, however, does not deter the Bloodbath Party, which has never reconciled itself to the loss of its feeding grounds in Chechnya or, perhaps even more distressingly for it, to losing a territory where it exercised the intoxicating power of life and death over any of its inhabitants. The Kadyrov Project deprived them of these two visceral satisfactions, and



for that, they wholeheartedly loathe him.

Izvestiya, a government newspaper, recently published extensive compromising material about Mr. Kadyrov which had been supplied to it by the intelligence services. The point at issue is not the veracity or otherwise of this material. We already knew that the Chechen field commanders resolve their disputes by methods far removed from the precepts of bourgeois humanitarian law. It is not for us, with hundreds of writs against the Russian Federation proceeding through the European Court of Human Rights, to lecture them about that. What is significant is that, for the first time, in media under the Kremlin’s control, the taboo on criticizing Mr. Kadyrov has been broken. Shortly afterwards, another highly respectable newspaper decided to make its columns available for a declaration of blood

vengeance against Mr. Kadyrov.

The Bloodbath Party is loudly declaring what it will wager and what its agenda is. To those seeking an alliance with it in the developing conflict within the Kremlin, it is making clear that the price of its support is Mr. Kadyrov.

The usually well-informed weekly *New Times*, which has inside sources in both the Kremlin and the White House, reports:

“The head of state is showing he is capable of coming to terms with the security interests, the siloviki. People in the FSB, for example, are certain that Ramzan Kadyrov is obliged primarily to Medvedev’s entourage both for the international escalation of the criminal case against State Duma Deputy Adam Delimkhanov, accused [by Dubai] of masterminding the assassination of Ruslan Yamadaev, and renewal of the counterterrorist operation in Chechnya which the regime appeared to have terminated. As far as one can tell, the president shares the federal security interests’ mistrust of the Chechen leadership.”

Read, if you will, this paragraph again. It contains extremely important information about the new configuration of forces inside the Kremlin. The Big Bucks Party (Mr. Medvedev’s entourage) has not only entered into a tactical alliance with the Bloodbath Party, showing it is “capable of coming to terms with the security interests,” but we find it is orchestrating media coverage of the anti-Kadyrov campaign.

Like all surprising political coalitions, this alliance has its internal logic. The security interests who fiendishly want to go to work

on Chechnya again are, of course, closer to Mr. Putin and his group than to Mr. Medvedev and his money men, but they have no illusions that Mr. Putin will ever agree to the removal of Mr. Kadyrov.

Putting the kibosh on the Kadyrov Project would be tantamount to an official Russian admission of defeat in the Second Chechen War, and declaration of a third war. It would mark a return to 1999, and from a much worse starting point. It would totally discredit the attempt to legitimize Mr. Putin politically as “the savior of the Fatherland in 1999.”

Our leading political commentators, from Alexander Prokhanov to Leonid Radzikhovsky, have been telling us with great conviction and passion that the schoolchildren of Beslan were burnt alive, and the hostages at the Nord-Ost musical were gassed for the greater glory of Russia and the triumphing of her geopolitical interests. Now what could they say?

Mr. Putin would for sure be one of the first political casualties of a third Chechen war, but the Big Bucks Party is already making it abundantly clear that it would like to pension him off. There is both a coincidence of tactical interests and a complementing of each other’s strengths. One side is capable of organizing any provocative act, while the other can provide a media and political cover-up for it. A first, as yet cautious, phase of this process seems to have been observable for about a month already.

Let us not forget that the leaders of the Big Bucks Party, are the same people who masterminded Operation Successor in 1999 and, allying themselves at that time with the security interests who were smarting from

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defeat in the First Chechen War, unleashed the Second Chechen War by orchestrating Basayev's incursion into Dagestan and blowing up apartment blocks in Moscow, Volgograd, and (unsuccessfully) in Ryazan. Their aim was in order to sweep Mr. Putin, whom they believed they would control, to power on a wave of anti-Chechen hysteria.

Why, 10 years on, should not these musketeers pull off the same stunt again and put in power a more malleable (as they once more suppose) individual?

Needless to say, just as last time, their motive is solely to advance the noble cause of "continuing liberal reforms in Russia."

As another of the masterminds behind

Operation Successor-99, Boris Berezovsky, used to say, "So what if there is a war? Some people will kill other people. Someone is always killing someone else somewhere. And just look at the business opportunities!"

While Mr. Putin's faction is preparing to "finish the job" in Georgia, Mr. Medvedev's entourage is embarking on a dangerous liaison with proponents of a third Chechen war. The both groupings are trying to outbid each other to hold the "patriotic" card. The battle for the Caucasus is always a battle for the Kremlin.

- Andrei Piontkovsky is the executive director of the Strategic Studies Center in Moscow and a well-known political analyst in Russia.

Iran's war on women

By Loredana Vuoto

When it comes to democracy and freedom, Iranian women and voters are null and void. This was most clearly seen in Iran's recent election whereby results were rigged in favor of current President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Iranian authorities arrested hundreds of activists protesting Iran's fraudulent June 12 elections, in which Ahmadinejad—backed by the theocratic regime's hardliners—claimed “victory.” Police used brutal force to quell protests, killing, beating and imprisoning countless pro-democracy demonstrators. Protesters believe the election was fixed and that opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi is the true winner. The street protests have shaken Tehran's mullocracy to its very foundations, calling into question the authority not only of Ahmadinejad but Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini.

But this kind of fascist dictatorship is par for the course in Iran. Most recently, the newly released movie, “The Stoning of Soraya M.,” takes a look at the brutal treatment of women in Iran. Based on a true story and set in Iran in 1986, the film chronicles the life of an Iranian woman stoned to death for being falsely accused by her husband for committing adultery.

Adapted from the French-Iranian journalist Freidoune Sahebjam's 1994 novel of the same name, “The Stoning of Soraya M.,” stars Jim Caviezel (The Passion of the Christ) and Academy Award nominee



Shohreh Aghdashloo (House of Sand and Fog). Because of its highly critical attitude toward the Iranian legal system, the novel was banned in Iran. The movie, however, has received rave reviews in the West, where it was a runner-up for the Audience Choice Award and the second runner-up for the Cadillac People's Choice Award at Toronto's International Film Festival.

In the film, journalist Sahebjam, played by Caviezel, is stranded in a small Iranian

village. He is approached by Zahra, portrayed by Aghdashloo. She has a gripping story about her niece, Soraya, who was stoned to death the previous day. Zahra believes the only way for her niece's death not to be in vain is if this journalist can tell the world her story. Only then will her voice and all of women's voices be heard. Soraya's husband, Ali, is determined to free himself of his wife so that he can marry a 14-year-old girl. Not wanting to be financially responsible for Soraya, he concocts a conspiracy against her, spreading the false rumor that she is cheating on him. In Iran, adultery is punishable by stoning. Although higher officials are aware of Ali's plot, they remain silent throughout the vicious attack on Soraya's reputation and ultimate death. In harrowing scenes, Soraya is placed in a dug hole up until her waist and is stoned to death by her father, husband and two sons. The entire village gleefully joins in the bloody procession. But in the end, despite her niece's death, Zahra heroically helps Sahebjam safely flee from the village with Soraya's story in hand.

But in real life in Iran happy endings are rare. During the election protests, a beautiful Iranian woman, Neda Agha Soltan, was shot dead in the streets of Iran. The video of her death reverberated all around the world. Another instance of injustice in Iran also occurred when Clotilde Reiss, a 23-year-old French female teacher was arrested at

Tehran's airport after five-months of working at Isfahan University. She was detained after taking pictures of Iranian protesters and is being accused of espionage. French President Nicolas Sarkozy is rightly outraged and is demanding her release. She is a victim of a barbaric, totalitarian regime. It has committed massive human rights violations against Iranians—especially, women. The ruling clerics have enslaved women as part of their messianic Shiite autocracy. As Abolhassan Banisadr, the first Iranian president after the 1979 Islamic revolution, said, Iran's leaders are "holding on to power solely by means of violence and terror."

In Iran, for women and voters alike, democracy and the rule of law are but a mirage. They are oppressed by brutal dictators and silenced by force. They must be freed and have their voices heard. In his first national speech since the protests, Ahmadinejad said the election results were valid and that this is "a new beginning" for Iran. This new beginning squashes dissent of any sort and mocks democracy. Only with the help of the United States can a new Iranian era reign where the rights of women and voters can finally flourish.

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The Federal Reserve gains power

By Joseph Beaudoin

President Barack Obama is using the financial crisis to give the Federal Reserve more power. Crises have often provided unscrupulous governments with opportunities to implement bad policies. And, to paraphrase the White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel, the Obama administration will not let this crisis go to waste.

Of course, the Obama administration is assuring Americans that the proposed regulatory changes are designed to protect the people by preventing another financial crisis. But Mr. Obama is not interested in the cause of the crisis. Instead, the administration prefers to round up and punish the usual suspects of populist governments: Wall Street and free markets. The administration's policy is based on socialist rhetoric: When oil prices rise, blame it on Exxon; when the economy falters, blame it on free markets.

Worse for American sovereignty, there is evidence that the Obama administration is thinking of harmonizing U.S. financial regulations with those of other countries, including Russia and China. It seems that Mr. Obama has not forgotten the internationalism in which candidate Obama relished so much during the presidential campaign.

Even if Mr. Obama does not integrate U.S. financial regulations with those of centralist Europe, Putinesque Russia and Leninist China, the administration's approach to the crisis is so woefully myopic that it cannot



lead to constructive reforms. Indeed, the Obama administration continues to disregard the Fed's glaring and catastrophic errors.

For years, and well before the crisis began in earnest, a large number of monetary economists argued that the Fed's mismanagement of interest rates would cause serious misallocations of resources, impact risk assessment and investment behavior, and severely damage the economy. Former Chairman Alan Greenspan retroactively

buttressed that view in his book *The Age of Turbulence*. Describing the attitude of the Federal Open Market Committee towards inflation, Mr. Greenspan wrote, “We were willing to chance that by cutting rates we might foster a bubble, an inflationary boom of some sort, which we would subsequently have to address...”

Mr. Greenspan thus admitted in his memoir, that the Federal Reserve fostered the “bubble” that wrecked financial markets. The Fed knowingly inflated the biggest bubble in history... trillions of dollars of misallocated, and ultimately, wasted capital.

Yet, against this canvas of acknowledged Fed failures, Mr. Obama’s reforms are focused on reigning in Wall Street and on regulating markets. Most significantly, in a dogmatic or delusional policy-making effort, Mr. Obama proposes to reward failures by giving the Fed more power.

Indeed, on the heel of such admission by Mr. Greenspan, once viewed as the best central banker in history, the Obama administration plans to put the Fed in charge of regulating financial markets in addition to conducting monetary policy. That is wrongheaded and irresponsible. It makes a mockery of regulatory reform and, humorously, reduces to insignificant euphemism the expression “putting the fox in charge of the hen house.” By entrusting financial markets to the Fed, Mr. Obama is not just putting the fox in charge of the hen house but he is putting a voracious and unaccountable fox in charge of it.

While economics is often referred to as the dismal science, it is not as dismal as it once was. In fact, when it comes to monetary policies, economics has achieved a quasi-scientific

ability to evaluate policies. In November 2008, Professor John B. Taylor, professor of economics at Stanford University and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, published the only empirical analysis of the financial crisis (<http://www.stanford.edu/~johntayl/FCPR.pdf>). Mr. Taylor demonstrated that the Fed’s interest-rate policy set the stage for the crisis. The other abuses, including poor lending practices encouraged by the U.S. government and extensive securitization of mortgages executed by Wall Street also played a role but their respective impacts were dwarfed by Fed actions.

Federal Reserve monetary policies caused the financial crisis, which has weakened the United States, economically and politically. In addition, the Fed played a key role in the debasement of the U.S. dollar. The Fed, thus, is responsible for the two greatest financial crises in U.S. history: the Great Depression and the current crisis. Clearly, the Fed’s power ought to be curtailed, not expanded. But this is a crisis. It is a time for opportunistic politicians to increase their power by claiming to protect the people from whom they take that power. Mr. Obama is increasing the Fed’s power to hurt Americans while arguing that the changes are made for the protection of Americans.

In 1933, in the midst of a crisis—the Reichstag fire— German President Paul von Hindenburg issued a notorious decree for “the Protection of the People.” As a result, the German state achieved supremacy through the subordination of its citizens. The moral of history is simple: Those who claim to protect the people usually make governments bigger and the people smaller.

If Americans are suspicious of big

governments, they ought to be very weary of Mr. Obama's plans. Perhaps this is what the opinion polls are showing.

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Global warming legislation limits freedom

By Kerry W. McCarthy

The cap-and-trade bill, passed in the House of Representatives, will set industrial policy for the nation if it becomes law. In 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court, in violation of the separation of powers, ordered the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), an agency of the Executive branch, to regulate carbon dioxide as a pollutant. These two actions, in concert, result in governmental control that could assume the power to regulate individuals as emitters of pollution.

Americans cannot believe they will ever lose their freedoms. Those who warn of the ever-increasing size of government have mostly been ignored. Media and politicians have successfully convinced Americans that in time of crisis, the solution is to accept bigger government. It's logical that politicians continually try to convince America that an emergency exists.

Global warming is the latest vehicle by which Americans are being induced to accept bigger government despite the fact that global temperatures rose only about one degree since records have been kept, most of that before 1940. The temperature flat-lined in 1998, and has actually cooled lately.

The cap-and-trade bill was not available to be read by many who cast votes. It also did not undergo adequate public scrutiny because the media focused attention on the health care debate. Democrats' determination to pass this bill is demonstrated by news reports that Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Rhode Island Democrat, was released from rehab to vote. Among other things, the thousand-odd-page document contained a tax on cows as methane-emitters which was later struck out to gain the support of farm-state Democrats. The only farm-state Republican who voted for this bill was Congressman Mark Kirk from Illinois.

The enforcement of this law will require the federal government to exert more authority through its policing agency, the EPA. Eventually, even people who now support government intrusion into health care, pollution control and the economy, may look to the U.S. Supreme Court to check government's expansion beyond the limits of the U.S. Constitution.

The Supreme Court stood by idly while the government deprived legitimate bond-holders of their property and violated bankruptcy laws in taking over GM and Chrysler. It's highly unlikely that the court that ordered the

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EPA to regulate carbon dioxide as a pollutant (a gas exhaled, remember, by every creature on earth as a part of natural respiration) will have the moral constitution to provide a check on our ever-expanding government.

The U.S. Supreme Court handed down the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision that “a black man has no rights a white man is bound to respect.” *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized segregation. *Korematsu v. U.S.* authorized the Roosevelt administration to strip Japanese Americans of their property and forcibly remove them to concentration camps. These decisions are not consistent with the high-minded, apolitical group envisioned by our founding fathers. Rather, they reflect and sustain the prejudices of their times.

William J. Watkins, Jr. proposes in his book, *Reclaiming the American Revolution: The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions and their Legacy*, a constitutional amendment providing for the establishment of a commission which would review the constitutionality of activities of all three branches of the national government. The commission, made up of one member from each state, would have the power to overturn court decisions, executive orders, laws and regulations, and would return power to people and to state legislatures.

Each legislature would nominate two qualified people. Voters would then choose between the candidates, who would serve a limited term. Power would be returned to the states in a regulated manner that avoids the encouragement of frivolous action: initiation of a review would require petition by one-fifth of the states.

Mr. Watkins asserts that “whether the framers intended the Court to exercise such

immense power, or the Court’s power evolved to its present level, is immaterial. Either way, the problem exists and requires correction. Otherwise, we will have reverted to the English view of sovereignty whereby ultimately sovereignty resides in an artificial body, rather than with the people of the several states.”

The mere proposal of such an amendment, if supported, could have a restraining effect on our governing bodies. U.S. Supreme Court confirmation battles could lose their ferocity. The court would no longer have license to act as a ruling council. Wrong decisions might still be reached, but the fact that they would reflect the opinions of “the people of the several states,” as intended by our founders, would encourage citizenship.

Questionable legislation such as cap and trade might be challenged by a Constitutional Commission.

-Kerry W. McCarthy is a writer living in Indiana.

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