

Eye on the World

Dec. 31, 2016

This compilation of material for "Eye on the World" is presented as a service to the Churches of God. The views stated in the material are those of the writers or sources quoted by the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of the Church of God Big Sandy. The following articles were posted at churchofgodbigandy.com for the weekend of Dec. 31, 2016.

Compiled by Dave Havir

Luke 21:34-36—"But take heed to yourselves, lest your souls be weighed down with self-indulgence, and drunkenness, or the anxieties of this life, and that day come on you suddenly, like a falling trap; for it will come on all dwellers on the face of the whole earth. But beware of slumbering; and every moment pray that you may be fully strengthened to escape from all these coming evils, and to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man" (Weymouth New Testament).



An article by Patrick Goodenough titled "Kerry's Speech Reference to 1947 UN Partition Resolution Omits Decades of Palestinian Rejectionism" was posted at cnsnews.com on Dec. 29, 2016. Following is the article.

In his keynote Mideast speech Wednesday, Secretary of State John Kerry said that both Israelis and Palestinians had "incorporated into" their respective "foundational documents" a 1947 U.N. General Assembly resolution that divided the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River into a Jewish state and an Arab one.

While perhaps technically accurate, the bald assertion provides far from the full picture of the two sides' response to UNGA resolution 181, also known as the Partition Plan, nearly seven decades ago.

While Jewish leaders accepted the measure, Arab and Palestinian leaders angrily rejected it.

"Representatives of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen, four of the six Arab member states, announced that they would not be bound by the Assembly's decision and walked determinedly out of the Assembly Hall at Flushing Meadow," the New York Times reported the following day. "The Egyptian and Lebanese delegates were silent but walked out, too."

Immediately after the State of Israel was declared the following spring, five Arab armies attacked it in what head of the Arab League described as "a war of annihilation." The effort failed, but at the cost of the lives of some 4,000 Israeli soldiers and 2,000 civilians, amounting to one percent of the then population.

In Wednesday's speech, Kerry did refer to the fact that the Palestinians and the Arab world did not recognize the newly-declared state of Israel, and that the fledgling state "had to fight for its life." ("Palestinians also suffered terribly in the 1948 war," he added.)

But Kerry did not explicitly say that the Palestinians—backed by the Arab world—had also at that point rejected the UNGA resolution, thereby effectively denying themselves statehood from the outset.

"Both Israel and the PLO referenced resolution 181 in their respective declarations of independence," he said. Later in the address, Kerry added that "resolution 181 is incorporated into the foundational documents of both the Israelis and Palestinians."

Israel in its May 14, 1948 "Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel" did indeed invoke resolution 181: "We . . . by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel."

But it would take another 40 years before the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), in its Nov. 15, 1988 "Palestinian Declaration of Independence," would do the same, saying that UNGA resolution 181 "still provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty."

For decades before then, however, the PLO's actual "foundational document"—the PLO Charter (adopted in 1964, amended in 1968)—not only did not incorporate resolution 181, it explicitly rejected it:

"The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of the state of Israel are entirely illegal, regardless of the passage of time," the document states, "because they were contrary to the will of the Palestinian people and to their natural right in their homeland, and inconsistent with the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations; particularly the right to self-determination."

When the PLO in 1999 launched a bid to revive resolution 181 as a legal basis for statehood in 1999, it won support from the top U.N. human rights body.

Israel's then-ambassador to the U.N., Dore Gold, in a letter to U.N. secretary-general Kofi Annan, argued that the Arab parties had nullified resolution 181 through their actions back in the 1940s.

"The fundamental act of international illegality was the invasion of the nascent State of Israel and the attempt to overturn a resolution of the General

Assembly with armed force," he wrote. "In fact, resolution 181 was made irrelevant by the actions of the Arab states and the Palestinian leadership in 1948, whose refusal to accept the resolution altered the circumstances in the Middle East on which it was originally based."

Gold called the attempt to resurrect 181 "a transparent effort to belatedly derive benefit from a resolution which the Palestinian leadership itself violently rejected 50 years ago."

In 2011, Palestinian Authority and PLO head Mahmoud Abbas finally acknowledged publicly that the Arab states had erred in rejecting resolution 181 in 1947.



An article by Matt Vespa titled "Alan Dershowitz: Obama Will Go Down As One of the Worst Foreign Policy Presidents Ever; He Stabbed Israel in the Back" was posted at townhall.com on Dec. 27, 2016. Following is the article.

American lawyer (and staunch liberal) Alan Dershowitz is not happy with President Obama's foreign policy, especially in the wake of his administration's latest decision to not veto a UN resolution that not only condemned Israeli settlements, but also stated that the Western Wall is in an occupied territory. Dershowitz also said that the Obama White House is going to play dumb, saying that they didn't mean for the resolution to take that meaning.

"Well, read the resolution; you're a lawyer. You went to Harvard Law School," said Dershowitz.

He later said that while he supports Obama's domestic agenda, his foreign policy is a disaster. He declared that Obama will go down as one of the worst presidents on this subject in our history, and that he stabbed Israel in the back with this UN resolution (via Fox News).

- "Many [liberal Democrats] like me who support his domestic policy think he was an appalling. . . president when it came to foreign policy," Dershowitz said.
- He said the president once invited him to the White House and asked personally for his support, promising that he would "always have Israel's back."
- "I didn't realize what [Obama] meant is that he would have their back to stab them."



An article titled "Iran Plans Navy Upgrade, Including Building Aircraft Carrier" was posted at timesofisrael.com on Dec. 27, 2016. Following is the article.

Iran is planning to build an aircraft carrier as part of an upgrade of its maritime warfare capabilities, a senior naval officer said Monday.

“Building an aircraft carrier is also among the goals pursued by the navy and we hope to attain this objective,” Deputy Navy Commander for Coordination Admiral Peiman Jafari Tehrani was quoted as saying by Iran’s semi-official Fars News Agency.

Tehrani also said the Iranian defense ministry and navy are “producing different types of missiles indigenously.”

Iranian Navy Commander Habibollah Sayyari first declared in 2014 that Iran was able to construct aircraft carriers as well as high-tech submarines.

“As we have managed to produce warships and submarines, we also have the capability to build aircraft carriers and heavy submarines,” Fars quoted Sayyari as saying at the time.

Iran often boasts of advances in its military capabilities, although many of these developments cannot be confirmed by sources outside of Iran.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani earlier this month ordered the country’s scientists to start work on nuclear-powered ships, in what was seen as a response to the renewal of sanctions by the United States.

Iranian lawmakers had previously raised the prospect of building nuclear-powered ships and submarines back in 2012 at the height of tensions with the international community over the nuclear program.

International analysts said the announcement was likely just a bluff, since it would be an extremely costly effort for little strategic gain.



An article by Nicholas Kulish and Mark Mazzetti titled “Saudi Royal Family is Still Spending in An Age of Austerity” was posted at nytimes.com on Dec. 27, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Behind a tall perimeter wall, studded with surveillance cameras and guarded by Moroccan soldiers, a sprawling new palace for King Salman of Saudi Arabia rose on the Atlantic coast here last summer.

Even as the Saudi government canceled a quarter of a trillion dollars’ worth of projects back home as part of a fiscal austerity program, workers hustled to finish bright blue landing pads for helicopters at the vacation compound and to erect a tent the size of a circus big-top where the king could feast and entertain his enormous retinue.

The royal family's fortune derives from the reserves of petroleum discovered during the reign of Salman's father, King Abdulaziz ibn Saud, more than 75 years ago. The sale of oil provides billions of dollars in annual allowances, public-sector sinecures and perks for royals, the wealthiest of whom own French chateaus and Saudi palaces, stash money in Swiss bank accounts, wear couture dresses under their abayas and frolic on some of the world's biggest yachts out of sight of commoners.

King Salman serves as chairman of the family business unofficially known as "Al Saud Inc." Sustained low oil prices have strained the economy and forced questions about whether the family—with thousands of members and still growing—can simultaneously maintain its lavish lifestyle and its unchallenged grip on the country.

"The people have less money than before, but the royal family have the same," said Prince Khalid bin Farhan al-Saud, a dissident member of the extended family living in Germany. "There is a lot of state money which is concealed from the budget, which is determined by the king alone."

These are anxious times for the royals, led by an 80-year-old who has already had at least one stroke and is likely to be the last of six sons of the founding monarch to serve as sovereign. He must wrangle a band of relatives, from the merely well-off to billionaires, who are accustomed from birth to privilege and plenty.

In his two-year reign, King Salman has upended the traditions of succession, creating rifts after bypassing several brothers to position the next generation—a nephew and a favorite son—in line for the throne. He has ousted prominent members of other branches of the family from governorships and top ministry jobs, consolidating power but sowing some discontent in a family that demands unity.



An article titled "Egypt Sets Up Government-Picked Council to Oversee Media" was posted at yahoo.com on Dec. 27, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has approved a law to set up a council headed by his appointees that oversees the media and ensures compliance with "national security" requirements.

The law, passed by parliament and published in the official gazette on Monday, mandates the council to investigate media funding and fine or revoke permits of those deemed in violation.

The council will be composed of a head picked by Sisi and 12 members recommended by parliament and other institutions, and also approved by the president.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists has accused Egypt of placing restrictions on media and being a "leading jailer of journalists."

Sisi has dismissed criticisms of media restrictions in Egypt, but he regularly complains of its performance and has suggested it occasionally harms the country with critical coverage.

The Egyptian Journalists Syndicate official Khaled Elbalsby said the law tightens government control on media.

The law came days after police arrested a journalist with the Qatari Al-Jazeera channel on suspicion of fabricating news on the country.

Egypt accuses the channel of backing the Muslim Brotherhood movement, outlawed after the military toppled Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013 and cracked down on his supporters.

Egypt had provoked international condemnation in 2013 when it arrested three Al-Jazeera journalists, including a Canadian and an Australian, and sentenced them to jail on similar accusations.

They were later released.



An article by Mihaela Rodina titled "Romania's First Female, Muslim PM Rejected" was posted at yahoo.com on Dec. 27, 2016. Following is the article.

Romania's president sparked fresh political turmoil Tuesday after blocking a proposal by the leftist party that won elections this month to appoint the EU country's first female and first Muslim prime minister.

Klaus Iohannis gave no reasons for his rejection of Sevil Shhaideh, put forward by the Social Democrats (PSD), but there was speculation that it was due to her Syrian husband's background.

"I have properly analysed the arguments for and against and I have decided not to accept this proposal," the president told reporters, calling on the PSD to "make another proposal."

Shhaideh, 52, who has only five months ministerial experience, is from Romania's small and long-established Turkish minority, but her Muslim faith is not thought to have been the problem.

Instead the focus was likely on her husband, 54, who worked in the Syrian agriculture ministry for 20 years before emigrating to Romania in 2011 and marrying Shhaideh the same year, according to the PSD.

Non-profit investigative journalism group the Rise Project said that he has several times expressed his support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and for Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah.

Website HotNews cited unnamed sources as saying that the security services had “strongly cautioned” against Shhaideh’s nomination because of the closeness of her husband and his two brothers to the Assad regime.

This might have made giving Shhaideh the necessary security clearances to be the NATO member’s prime minister problematic.

“I suppose that his rejection is linked to questions of national security and because the United States would not have been very keen,” political analyst Andrei Taranu said.

The PSD had proposed the previously little-known Shhaideh after its thumping poll victory on December 11 when it won 45 percent of the vote, enough to form a majority coalition with its partners ALDE.

The leader of the PSD, Liviu Dragnea, had withdrawn his own bid to become prime minister because of a conviction that bars him from office.

Shhaideh’s personal closeness to Dragnea—he was a witness at her wedding—has led to accusations that he will remain in charge behind the scenes.

On Tuesday after her rejection, Dragnea said the PSD was considering its options including moving to suspend Iohannis or going to the constitutional court.

“In our opinion the president is determined to set off a political crisis,” Dragnea said. “If our conclusion is that it is in the country’s interest to suspend Mr Iohannis, I won’t hesitate.”

However, Taranu said that any attempt by the PSD to remove the head of state was problematic because Iohannis is entitled to request a second proposal for premier.

The PSD’s election triumph came barely a year since anger over a deadly nightclub fire that killed 64 people forced it from office.

The inferno was blamed on corruption—something Brussels has long complained about since Romania joined the EU in 2007.

But during the campaign Dragnea focused instead on the economy, vowing to boost salaries and pensions in the EU’s second-poorest country.



An editorial by Patrick J. Buchanan titled “Europe’s Future—Merkel or Le Pen?” was posted at cnsnews.com on Dec. 23, 2016. Following is the article.

The terrorist who hijacked a truck in Berlin and ran over and killed 12 people, maiming and wounding 48 more, in that massacre in the Christmas market, has done more damage than he could imagine.

If the perpetrator is the jihadist from Tunisia who had no right to be in Germany, and had been under surveillance, the bell could begin to toll not only for Angela Merkel but for the European Union.

That German lassitude, and the naivete behind it, allowed this outrage validates the grim verdict of geostrategist James Burnham in "Suicide of the West": "Liberalism is the ideology of Western suicide."

Both the transnational elite and populist right sense the stakes involved here. As news of the barbarous atrocity spread across Europe, the reactions were instantaneous and predictable.

Marine Le Pen of France's National Front, leading candidate for the presidency in 2017, declaimed: "How many more people must die at the hands of Islamic extremists before our governments close our porous borders and stop taking in thousands of illegal immigrants?"

Geert Wilders, the Party for Freedom front-runner for prime minister of Holland, echoed Le Pen: "They hate and kill us. And nobody protects us. Our leaders betray us. We need a political revolution.

"Islamic immigration/Is an invasion," he went on, "An existential problem/ That will replace our people/Erase our culture."

"These are Merkel's dead," tweeted Marcus Pretzell of the far-right Alternative for Germany about the victims in the Christmas mart.

Nicholas Farage, who led the campaign for British secession from the EU, called the Christmas massacre "the Merkel legacy."

Europe's populist right is laying this act of Islamist savagery at the feet of Merkel for her having opened Germany in 2015 to a million migrants and refugees from Syria and the Middle East wars.

Before Berlin, she was already on the defensive after mobs of migrants went about molesting and raping German girls in Cologne last New Year's Eve.

Even admirers who share her belief in a Europe of open borders, that welcomes immigrants and refugees from Third World wars and despotisms, sense the gravity of Merkel's crisis.

"Germans should not let the attack on a Christmas market in Berlin undermine liberal values," ran the headline on The Washington Post editorial Dec. 22. Alarmed, the *Post* went on:

"What Germany cannot and must not do is . . . succumb to the siren song of the anti-foreigner right-wing, which has been gaining strength across Europe

and moved immediately to exploit the attack ahead of the September 2017 national elections.”

The New York Times delivered its customary castigation of the European populist right but, in a note of near-desperation, if not of despair, implored Europe’s liberals not to lose faith.

“With each new attack, whether on a Christmas market or a mosque, the challenge to Europe to defend tolerance, inclusion, equality and reason grows more daunting. If Europe is to survive as a beacon of democratic hope in a world rent by violent divisions, it must not cede those values.”

But less and less does Europe appear to be listening.

Indeed, as Europe has been picking up its dead and wounded for over a decade, from terrorist attacks in Madrid, London, Paris, Berlin and Brussels, the peoples of Europe seem less interested in hearing recitals of liberal values than in learning what their governments are going to do to keep the Islamist killers out and make them safe.

Salus populi suprema lex.

Liberals may admonish us that all races, creeds, cultures are equal, that anyone from any continent, country or civilization can come to the West and assimilate. That discrimination against one group of immigrants in favor of another—prefering, say, Lebanese Christians to Syrian Muslims—is illiberal and undemocratic.

But people don’t believe that. Europe and America have moved beyond the verities of 20th-century liberalism.

The cruel experiences of the recent past, and common sense, dictate that open borders are Eurail passes for Islamist terrorists, who are anxious to come and kill us in the West. We have to deal with the world as it is, not as we would wish it to be.

In our time, there has taken place, is taking place, an Islamic awakening. Of 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide, hundreds of millions accept strict sharia law about how to deal with apostasy and infidels.

Scores of millions in the Middle East wish to drive the West out of their world. Thousands are willing to depart and come to Europe to terrorize our societies. They see themselves at war with us, as their ancestors were at war with the Christian world for 1,000 years.

Only liberal ideology calls for America and Europe to bring into their home countries endless numbers of migrants, without being overly concerned about who they are, whence they come or what they believe.

Right-wing and anti-immigrant parties are succeeding in Europe for a simple reason. Mainstream parties are failing in the first duty of government—to protect the safety and security of the people.



An article by George Soros titled “Open Society Needs Defending” was posted at project-syndicate.org on Dec. 28, 2016. Following is the article.

Well before Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, I sent a holiday greeting to my friends that read: “These times are not business as usual. Wishing you the best in a troubled world.” Now I feel the need to share this message with the rest of the world. But before I do, I must tell you who I am and what I stand for.

I am an 86-year-old Hungarian Jew who became a US citizen after the end of World War II. I learned at an early age how important it is what kind of political regime prevails. The formative experience of my life was the occupation of Hungary by Hitler’s Germany in 1944. I probably would have perished had my father not understood the gravity of the situation. He arranged false identities for his family and for many other Jews; with his help, most survived.

In 1947, I escaped from Hungary, by then under Communist rule, to England. As a student at the London School of Economics, I came under the influence of the philosopher Karl Popper, and I developed my own philosophy, built on the twin pillars of fallibility and reflexivity. I distinguished between two kinds of political regimes: those in which people elected their leaders, who were then supposed to look after the interests of the electorate, and others where the rulers sought to manipulate their subjects to serve the rulers’ interests. Under Popper’s influence, I called the first kind of society open, the second, closed.

The classification is too simplistic. There are many degrees and variations throughout history, from well-functioning models to failed states, and many different levels of government in any particular situation. Even so, I find the distinction between the two regime types useful. I became an active promoter of the former and opponent of the latter.

I find the current moment in history very painful. Open societies are in crisis, and various forms of closed societies—from fascist dictatorships to mafia states—are on the rise.

How could this happen?

The only explanation I can find is that elected leaders failed to meet voters’ legitimate expectations and aspirations and that this failure led electorates to become disenchanted with the prevailing versions of democracy and capitalism. Quite simply, many people felt that the elites had stolen their democracy.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US emerged as the sole remaining superpower, equally committed to the principles of democracy and free markets. The major development since then has been the globalization of financial markets, spearheaded by advocates who argued that globalization in-

creases total wealth. After all, if the winners compensated the losers, they would still have something left over.

The argument was misleading, because it ignored the fact that the winners seldom, if ever, compensate the losers. But the potential winners spent enough money promoting the argument that it prevailed. It was a victory for believers in untrammelled free enterprise, or “market fundamentalists,” as I call them.

Because financial capital is an indispensable ingredient of economic development, and few countries in the developing world could generate enough capital on their own, globalization spread like wildfire. Financial capital could move around freely and avoid taxation and regulation.

Globalization has had far-reaching economic and political consequences. It has brought about some economic convergence between poor and rich countries; but it increased inequality within both poor and rich countries. In the developed world, the benefits accrued mainly to large owners of financial capital, who constitute less than 1% of the population.

The lack of redistributive policies is the main source of the dissatisfaction that democracy’s opponents have exploited. But there were other contributing factors as well, particularly in Europe.

I was an avid supporter of the European Union from its inception. I regarded it as the embodiment of the idea of an open society: an association of democratic states willing to sacrifice part of their sovereignty for the common good. It started out as a bold experiment in what Popper called “piecemeal social engineering.”

The leaders set an attainable objective and a fixed timeline and mobilized the political will needed to meet it, knowing full well that each step would necessitate a further step forward. That is how the European Coal and Steel Community developed into the EU.

But then something went woefully wrong. After the Crash of 2008, a voluntary association of equals was transformed into a relationship between creditors and debtors, where the debtors had difficulties in meeting their obligations and the creditors set the conditions the debtors had to obey. That relationship has been neither voluntary nor equal.

Germany emerged as the hegemonic power in Europe, but it failed to live up to the obligations that successful hegemons must fulfill, namely looking beyond their narrow self-interest to the interests of the people who depend on them. Compare the behavior of the US after WWII with Germany’s behavior after the Crash of 2008: the US launched the Marshall Plan, which led to the development of the EU; Germany imposed an austerity program that served its narrow self-interest.

Before its reunification, Germany was the main force driving European integration: it was always willing to contribute a little bit extra to accommodate

those putting up resistance. Remember Germany's contribution to meeting Margaret Thatcher's demands regarding the EU budget?

But reuniting Germany on a 1:1 basis turned out to be very expensive. When Lehman Brothers collapsed, Germany did not feel rich enough to take on any additional obligations. When European finance ministers declared that no other systemically important financial institution would be allowed to fail, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, correctly reading the wishes of her electorate, declared that each member state should look after its own institutions. That was the start of a process of disintegration.

After the Crash of 2008, the EU and the eurozone became increasingly dysfunctional. Prevailing conditions became far removed from those prescribed by the Maastricht Treaty, but treaty change became progressively more difficult, and eventually impossible, because it couldn't be ratified. The eurozone became the victim of antiquated laws; much-needed reforms could be enacted only by finding loopholes in them. That is how institutions became increasingly complicated, and electorates became alienated.

The rise of anti-EU movements further impeded the functioning of institutions. And these forces of disintegration received a powerful boost in 2016, first from Brexit, then from the election of Trump in the US, and on December 4 from Italian voters' rejection, by a wide margin, of constitutional reforms.

Democracy is now in crisis. Even the US, the world's leading democracy, elected a con artist and would-be dictator as its president. Although Trump has toned down his rhetoric since he was elected, he has changed neither his behavior nor his advisers. His cabinet comprises incompetent extremists and retired generals.

What lies ahead?

I am confident that democracy will prove resilient in the US. Its Constitution and institutions, including the fourth estate, are strong enough to resist the excesses of the executive branch, thus preventing a would-be dictator from becoming an actual one.

But the US will be preoccupied with internal struggles in the near future, and targeted minorities will suffer. The US will be unable to protect and promote democracy in the rest of the world. On the contrary, Trump will have greater affinity with dictators. That will allow some of them to reach an accommodation with the US, and others to carry on without interference. Trump will prefer making deals to defending principles. Unfortunately, that will be popular with his core constituency.

I am particularly worried about the fate of the EU, which is in danger of coming under the influence of Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose concept of government is irreconcilable with that of open society. Putin is not a passive beneficiary of recent developments; he worked hard to bring them about. He

recognized his regime's weakness: it can exploit natural resources but cannot generate economic growth.

He felt threatened by "color revolutions" in Georgia, Ukraine, and elsewhere. At first, he tried to control social media. Then, in a brilliant move, he exploited social media companies' business model to spread misinformation and fake news, disorienting electorates and destabilizing democracies. That is how he helped Trump get elected.

The same is likely to happen in the European election season in 2017 in the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy. In France, the two leading contenders are close to Putin and eager to appease him. If either wins, Putin's dominance of Europe will become a *fait accompli*.

I hope that Europe's leaders and citizens alike will realize that this endangers their way of life and the values on which the EU was founded. The trouble is that the method Putin has used to destabilize democracy cannot be used to restore respect for facts and a balanced view of reality.

With economic growth lagging and the refugee crisis out of control, the EU is on the verge of breakdown and is set to undergo an experience similar to that of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Those who believe that the EU needs to be saved in order to be reinvented must do whatever they can to bring about a better outcome.



An article by Matt Vespa titled "The Electoral College Made It Possible for Us to Abolish Slavery" was posted at townhall.com on Dec. 28, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

The Electoral College is a racist system that helped slave states, and that's why it should be abolished. That's one of the many talking points the Left has hurled against our electoral process. In all, it's just the typical antics of a sore loser. The Electoral College has to go because Hillary Clinton lost and California gave her more popular votes (no kidding since it's a left wing cesspool). Even *The New York Times* says the Electoral College has to go because it's racist (with the three-fifths compromise bit), and because Clinton got more popular votes (though she didn't win the majority).

Once again, the Left shows they have no sense of history, despite being obsessed with being on the right side of it.

Well, Allen Guelzo and James Hulme, a Civil War professor at Gettysburg College and attorney, respectively, wrote in *The Washington Post* that the Electoral College was instrumental in destroying slavery, it reinforces the concept of federalism, and it's an overall stabilizing force in our system of government.

■ The electoral college had nothing to do with slavery. Some historians have branded the Electoral College this way because each state's electoral votes are based on that "whole Number of Senators and Representatives" from each State, and in 1787 the number of those representatives was calculated on the basis of the infamous 3/5ths clause. But the Electoral College merely reflected the numbers, not any bias about slavery (and in any case, the 3/5ths clause was not quite as proslavery a compromise as it seems, since Southern slaveholders wanted their slaves counted as 5/5ths for determining representation in Congress, and had to settle for a whittled-down fraction). As much as the abolitionists before the Civil War liked to talk about the "proslavery Constitution," this was more of a rhetorical posture than a serious historical argument. And the simple fact remains, from the record of the Constitutional Convention's proceedings (James Madison's famous Notes), that the discussions of the Electoral College and the method of electing a president never occur in the context of any of the convention's two climactic debates over slavery.

■ If anything, it was the Electoral College that made it possible to end slavery, since Abraham Lincoln earned only 39 percent of the popular vote in the election of 1860, but won a crushing victory in the Electoral College. This, in large measure, was why Southern slaveholders stampeded to secession in 1860-61. They could do the numbers as well as anyone, and realized that the Electoral College would only produce more anti-slavery Northern presidents.

■ The Constitution also makes us a federal union, and the Electoral College is pre-eminently both the symbol and a practical implementation of that federalism.

■ The states of the union existed before the Constitution, and in a practical sense, existed long before the revolution. Nothing guaranteed that, in 1776, the states would all act together, and nothing that guaranteed that after the Revolution they might not go their separate and quarrelsome ways, much like the German states of the 18th century or the South American republics in the 19th century. The genius of the Constitutional Convention was its ability to entice the American states into a "more perfect union." But it was still a union of states, and we probably wouldn't have had a constitution or a country at all unless the route we took was federalism.

■ The Electoral College was an integral part of that federal plan. It made a place for the states as well as the people in electing the president by giving them a say at different points in a federal process and preventing big-city populations from dominating the election of a president.

■ Without the Electoral College, there would be no effective brake on the number of "viable" presidential candidates. Abolish it, and it would not be difficult to imagine a scenario where, in a field of a dozen micro-candidates, the "winner" only needs 10 percent of the vote, and represents less than 5 percent of the electorate. And presidents elected with smaller and smaller pluralities will only aggravate the sense that an elected president is governing without a real electoral mandate.

■ The Electoral College has been a major, even if poorly comprehended, mechanism for stability in a democracy, something which democracies are sometimes too flighty to appreciate.

Guelzo and Hulme also touched upon another fact that's often lost in political discussions, which is that our government was never meant to be efficient; it was meant to be safe.

So, besides the Electoral College, and George Will has touched upon this ad nauseum, we also have three branches of government, two branches of the legislature, veto, veto override, supermajorities, and judicial review. All of these things were meant to slow down government.

Alas, it appears another liberal talking point has been shot down. I don't know about you, but the 13th Amendment was a good thing.



An editorial by Michelle Malkin titled "Thank You, Professor Sowell" was posted at townhall.com on Dec. 28, 2016. Following is the article.

I first read Thomas Sowell in college—no thanks to my college.

At the majority of America's institutions of "higher learning," reading Thomas Sowell was a subversive act in the early 1990s when I was a student. It remains so today. Why? Because the prolific libertarian economist's vast body of work is a clarion rejection of all the liberal intelligentsia hold dear.

Among the left's most corrosive ideas is the concept of perpetual and permanent racial victimhood, which social engineers pretend to rectify through federally mandated, taxpayer-subsidized preferential policies. Sowell's groundbreaking academic analyses of these programs in the U.S. and around the world exposed how elites profit mightily at the expense of the alleged beneficiaries of government-coerced affirmative action.

The grand rhetoric of diversity masks the true intent and actual impact of current racially discriminatory "solutions" to past racial discrimination: solidifying the power of the few over the many.

As Sowell put it succinctly in one of the first pieces of his I came across in the journal "The Public Interest"—"Live people are being sacrificed because of what dead people did."

In that essay and much more deeply in his book, "Preferential Policies: An International Perspective," published that year, Sowell explored the "mismatch" effect in the ivory tower.

While prestigious schools such as the University of California, Berkeley congratulated themselves for manufacturing “wonderfully diverse” student bodies ostensibly to make up for the legacy of American slavery, (which Sowell pointed out was in no way unique to either the American South or blacks), he reported that more than 70 percent of black students at UC Berkeley failed to graduate.

“What they’ve effectively done” in lowering academic standards by race in the name of social justice, Sowell explained in an interview with C-SPAN’s Brian Lamb, “is rented these bodies for window dressing for a few years, and then, when they’re through with them, they’re put aside and a new bunch of bodies are brought in.”

Who benefits? Not the students, but the bean-counting administrators and political correctness marketers at Berkeley—Diversity, Inc.—who exploit minority students for their glossy admissions brochures. The other vested interest? Tenured radicals in what Sowell called the “black studies establishment” who “need students to be in their classrooms” to justify their paychecks.

Sowell, who grew up black and poor in Harlem, worked as a delivery man, served in the U.S. Marines, graduated from Harvard Law School, earned his Ph.D. in economics at the University of Chicago, and fully realized the folly of Marxism during a stint as a federal government intern, spurned identity politics collectivism.

“Fortunately, even during my period of Marxism I had respect for evidence and logic,” Sowell told an interviewer in 2004, “so it was only a matter of time before my Marxism began to unravel as I compared what actually happened in history to what was supposed to happen.”

Chromosomes and skin color and partisan loyalty didn’t dictate his thinking. He embraced time-tested, transcendent principles grounded in the reality of how things really are—as opposed to the fantastical imaginings of what he trenchantly called the “Vision of the Anointed.”

Sowell’s book on that subject (published in 1995, the same year the Anointed One, Barack Obama, emerged on the national scene with his fabrication-filled memoir, “Dreams of My Father”) thoroughly dismantled the tyranny and tactics of self-described “progressives” whose control-freak narcissism is wrapped in good intentions and false narratives.

Sowell’s assessments were rooted not in fear or hatred or fanaticism or moral superiority, but in empirical evidence. He judged outcomes, not oration. He didn’t make excuses. He made sense.

“In the anointed we find a whole class of supposedly ‘thinking people’ who do remarkably little thinking about substance and a great deal of verbal expression,” Sowell observed. “In order that this relatively small group of people can believe themselves wiser and nobler than the common herd, we have adopted policies which impose heavy costs on millions of other human beings, not

only in taxes, but also in lost jobs, social disintegration, and a loss of personal safety. Seldom have so few cost so much to so many.”

In another giant contribution to contemporary political and policy analysis, Sowell’s 1999 tome, “The Quest for Cosmic Justice,” addressed the abject failures of those who seek to cure all inequities, inequalities, disparities and ills through government intervention. He summed up his findings thusly:

1. The impossible is not going to be achieved.
2. It is a waste of precious resources to try to achieve it.
3. The devastating costs and social dangers that go with these attempts to achieve the impossible should be taken into account.

The former leftist playwright David Mamet, in his 2008 manifesto, “Why I Am No Longer a Brain-Dead Liberal,” cited his exposure to Sowell, whom he dubbed “our greatest contemporary philosopher,” as a critical factor in his conversion. Whether tackling the “bait and switch media,” the “organized noisemakers,” or the lawless enablers of “social disintegration, Thomas Sowell’s dozens of academic books and thousands of newspaper columns have sparked generations of his readers across the political spectrum to think independently and challenge imposed visions.

Asked once how he would like to be remembered, Sowell responded: “Oh, heavens, I’m not sure I want to be particularly remembered. I would like the ideas that I’ve put out there to be remembered.” Mission accomplished. Though it has been decades since he taught in a formal classroom, his students are legion.

Thank you, Professor Sowell.



An editorial by Thomas Sowell titled “The ‘Diversity’ Fraud” was posted at jewishworldreview.com on Dec. 20, 2016. Following is the article.

Nothing so epitomizes the politically correct gullibility of our times as the magic word “diversity.” The wonders of diversity are proclaimed from the media, extolled in the academy and confirmed in the august chambers of the Supreme Court of the United States. But have you ever seen one speck of hard evidence to support the lofty claims?

Although diversity has become one of the leading buzzwords of our time, it has a history that goes back several generations. In the early twentieth century, the principle of geographic diversity was used to conceal bias against Jews in the admission of students to Harvard and other leading academic institutions.

Because the Jewish population was concentrated in New York and other east coast communities at that time, quota limits on how many Jewish students would be admitted were concealed by saying that Harvard wanted a diverse student body, consisting of students from around the country.

Therefore some highly qualified Jewish applicants could be passed over, in favor of less qualified applicants from the midwest or other regions of the country.

My own first encounter with the idea of geographic diversity occurred more than half a century ago, when I was an undergraduate at Harvard, and worked as a photographer for the university news office, in order to help pay the bills.

The instructions I was given were to concentrate on taking photos of students from other parts of the country, rather than from the east coast, from which Harvard already received more than enough applicants. The idea was to encourage applications from places that would produce a geographically diverse student body.

It struck me as an odd idea at the time, but I was being paid to take pictures, not make university policy. Moreover, I had no idea how such a policy had originated and, by the 1950s, it might have been continued from inertia, for all I know. Meanwhile, I could enjoy seeing publicity photos I took appearing in newspapers in Chicago and elsewhere beyond the east coast.

Fast forward to today. It is common, at colleges and universities across the country, for the test scores of Asian American students who have been admitted to a given college to be higher than the test scores of whites or of blacks or Hispanics.

That may not seem strange, since that is true of test scores in general. But, at any given institution, applying the same standards to all, the test scores of students at a particular institution would tend to be similar. More Asian Americans would be admitted to higher ranked colleges and universities, however, if the same standards were applied to all.

In short, something very much like the quota limits that were applied to Jews in the past are now being applied to Asian Americans—and, once again, are being justified by diversity.

But what justifies diversity? Nothing but unsupported assertions, repeated endlessly, piously and loudly.

Today, as in the past, diversity is essentially a fancy word for group quotas. It is one of a number of wholly subjective criteria—such as “leadership”—used to admit students to colleges and universities according to their group membership, rather than according to their individual qualifications.

This is not something new. Nor is it something confined to the United States. Very similar patterns were found more than a decade ago, when doing research for my book “Affirmative Action Around the World.”

In India, the courts' attempts to rein in some academic quotas were met by a proliferation of new, and wholly subjective, admissions criteria. Individuals from groups that were not as qualified by objective criteria were simply ranked higher on subjective criteria and admitted.

In the United States, the Supreme Court itself has long been part of such game-playing when it comes to affirmative action. Back in 1978, an opinion by Justice Lewis F. Powell banned racial quotas with one hand and created "diversity" as a criterion with the other. In other words, colleges were told in effect that they can have racial quotas, but they just can't call them racial quotas.

According to the Constitution, "We the People" are supposed to decide what laws and policies we live under. But not if we can be so easily fooled by courts using slippery words like "diversity."



An editorial by Thomas Sowell titled "A Public Service" was posted at jewish-worldreview.com on Dec. 21, 2016. Following is the article.

Sometimes someone inadvertently performs a public service by bringing an unbelievably stupid and dangerous idea to the surface, where it can be exposed for what it is.

The New York Times can be credited—if that is the word—with performing this public service in a recent editorial against proposals to allow law-abiding citizens to carry concealed guns. They refer to what they call the National Rifle Association's "fantasy that citizens can stand up to gunmen by shooting it out."

Nobody has suggested any such thing. Data collected over many years—but almost never seeing the light of day in the *New York Times* or the rest of the mainstream media—show many thousands of examples of people defending themselves with a gun each year, without having to pull the trigger.

If someone comes at you with a knife and you pull out a gun, chances are they will stop. The only time I ever pointed a gun at a human being, it was when someone was sneaking up toward me from behind a shed in the middle of the night. I never fired a shot. I just pointed the gun at him and told him to stop. He stopped.

Actually having to shoot someone is the exception, not the rule. Yet the New York Times conjures up a vision of something like the gunfight at the OK Corral.

Concealed guns protect not only those who carry them but also those who do not. If concealed guns become widespread, then a mugger or a car jacker has no way of knowing who has one and who does not. It makes being a mugger or a car jacker a less safe occupation. Gun control laws are in effect occupational safety laws—OSHA for burglars, muggers, car jackers and others.

The fatal fallacy of gun control laws in general is the assumption that such laws actually control guns. Criminals who disobey other laws are not likely to be stopped by gun control laws. What such laws actually do is increase the number of disarmed and defenseless victims.

Mass shootings are often used as examples of a need for gun control. But what puts a stop to mass shootings? Usually the arrival on the scene of somebody else with a gun.

Mass shooters are often portrayed as “irrational” people engaged in “senseless” acts. But mass shooters are usually rational enough to attack schools, churches and other places where there is far less likelihood of someone being on the scene who is armed.

Seldom do we hear about these “irrational” shooters engaging in “senseless” attacks on meetings of the National Rifle Association or a local gun show or a National Guard armory.

The fallacy of believing that the way to reduce shootings is to disarm peaceful people extends from domestic gun control laws to international disarmament agreements. If disarmament agreements reduced the dangers of war, there would never have been a World War II.

The decades leading up to that war were filled with international disarmament agreements. As with domestic gun control laws, the agreements were followed by peaceful countries and ignored by belligerent countries that built up huge war machines, such as in Nazi Germany and imperial Japan.

The net result was that the belligerent countries had every incentive to start wars, and that they inflicted devastating losses on the peaceful countries that had drastically curtailed their own military forces.

Eventually the Western democracies got their act together and turned things around, after they belatedly beefed up their military forces. But thousands of lives were lost needlessly before that happened. World War II was in its third year before Western forces won a single battle.

Undaunted by history, the same kind of thinking that had cheered international disarmament treaties in the 1920s and 1930s once again cheered Soviet-American disarmament agreements during the Cold War.

Conversely, there was hysteria when President Ronald Reagan began building up American military forces in the 1980s. Cries were heard that he was leading us toward nuclear war. In reality, he led us toward an end of the Cold War, without a shot being fired at the Soviet Union.

But who reads history these days, or checks facts before leading the charge to keep law-abiding people disarmed?



An editorial by Walter Williams titled "Wealth, Poverty and Politics" was posted at jewishworldreview.com on Dec. 27, 2016. Following is the article.

Thomas Sowell has just published a revised and enlarged edition of his classic "Wealth, Poverty and Politics."

At the very beginning, he quotes Alexander Hamilton, who said, "The wealth of nations depends upon an infinite variety of causes." The book's 16 chapters apply Hamilton's notion to domestic, as well as international, differences in wealth. In both academic and popular literature, it is implicitly assumed that economic equality is natural, automatic and common. Thus, people see wealth inequality as a mystery that must be explained. The fact of the matter is precisely the opposite.

The ancient Greeks had geometry, philosophy, architecture and literature at a time when Britain was a land of illiterate tribal people living at a primitive level. Of course, by the end of the 19th century, Britain was far ahead of the Greeks and ultimately controlled one-quarter of the planet's land. Such historic reversals have occurred elsewhere.

The ancient Chinese were far ahead of Europeans, but by the 19th century, the relative positions of the Chinese and Europeans were reversed. Just these two examples prove that the same people are not always on top.

Sowell argues there are many factors that explain wealth differences among nations, as well as people within those nations. One of the more obvious explanations is that some people have greater productive capacity than others. Or they seized more of what others produced or had what they produced taken from them. For example, Spain conquered indigenous people in the Western Hemisphere. Spaniards looted 200 tons of gold and 18,000 tons of silver.

But despite that wealth transfer, Spain is one of the poorer countries in western Europe today, surpassed economically by countries—such as Switzerland and Norway—that never had an empire, so there obviously are many factors at play when it comes to wealth differences.

Sowell discusses the impact of a number of these factors. One is geography. Hardly anyone considers its impact on achievement and wealth. For example, because of soil differences, crop yields per acre in Africa are a tiny fraction of what they are in China and the U.S. The absence of navigable waterways and mountain ranges has isolated people and created differences in their skill sets.

Cultural factors, such as education, have an important impact on wealth, too. Natural resources are of little consequence in explaining wealth differences. Even physical capital is of little or no use without the cultural prerequisites to maintain it, repair it and replace it. Evidence for this lies in the fact that the physical wealth of Germany was destroyed in World War II but in just a few years it was again a wealthy nation.

Some people attribute Germany's resurgence to the Marshall Plan. But that's not right, because massive foreign aid has been provided to Third World countries and has yet to produce the economic results Germany has had. The human capital in Germany, developed over centuries, has not existed on the same scale in Third World countries.

In later chapters, Sowell discusses the impact of political institutions and the welfare state on inequality. One of the more important contributions of "Wealth, Poverty and Politics" is Sowell's discussion of earnings differences. We've all heard statements such as "the income gap between the richest and the poorest members of our society has been growing rapidly."

Studies of actual people over time suggest just the opposite. A University of Michigan study traced people over a 15-year period and found that 95 percent of those in the lowest quintile at the beginning of the study were in a higher quintile by the end. Remarkably, 29 percent had moved to the top quintile. An IRS study of tax filers between 1996 and 2005 found similar results. Sowell says that over time, there are different people in different income categories.

These few snippets here in no way do full justice to Dr. Thomas Sowell's work. To get all the nuts and bolts, you'll just have to purchase a copy of "Wealth, Poverty and Politics."



An editorial by Thomas Sowell titled "Random Thoughts, Looking Back" was posted at jewishworldreview.com on Dec. 27, 2016. Following is the article.

Any honest man, looking back on a very long life, must admit—even if only to himself—being a relic of a bygone era. Having lived long enough to have seen both "the greatest generation" that fought World War II and the gratingest generation that we see all around us today, makes being a relic of the past more of a boast than an admission.

Not everything in the past was admirable. Poet W.H. Auden called the 1930s "a low dishonest decade." So were the 1960s, which launched many of the trends we are experiencing so painfully today. Some of the fashionable notions of the 1930s reappeared in the 1960s, often using the very same discredited words and producing the same disastrous consequences.

The old are not really smarter than the young, in terms of sheer brainpower. It is just that we have already made the kinds of mistakes that the young are about to make, and we have already suffered the consequences that the young are going to suffer, if they disregard the record of the past.

If you want to understand the fatal dangers facing America today, read "The Gathering Storm" by Winston Churchill. The book is not about America, the

Middle East or nuclear missiles. But it shows Europe's attitudes and delusions—aimed at peace in the years before the Second World War—which instead ended up bringing on that most terrible war in all of human history.

Black adults, during the years when I was growing up in Harlem, had far less education than black adults today—but far more common sense. In an age of artificial intelligence, too many of our schools and colleges are producing artificial stupidity, among both blacks and whites.

The first time I traveled across the Atlantic Ocean, as the plane flew into the skies over London I was struck by the thought that, in these skies, a thousand British fighter pilots fought off Hitler's air force and saved both Britain and Western civilization. But how many students today will have any idea of such things, with history being neglected in favor of politically correct rhetoric?

You cannot live a long life without having been forced to change your mind many times about people and things—including in some cases, your whole view of the world. Those who glorify the young today do them a great disservice, when this sends inexperienced young people out into the world cocksure about things on which they have barely scratched the surface.

In my first overseas trip, I was struck by blatantly obvious differences in behavior among different groups, such as the Malays and the Chinese in Malaysia—and wondered why scholars who were far more well-traveled than I was seemed not to have noticed such things, and to have resorted to all sorts of esoteric theories to explain why some groups earned higher incomes than others.

There are words that were once common, but which are seldom heard any more. The phrase "none of your business" is one of these. Today, everything seems to be the government's business or the media's business. And the word "risque" would be almost impossible to explain to young people, in a world where gross vulgarity is widespread and widely accepted.

Back when I taught at UCLA, I was constantly amazed at how little so many students knew. Finally, I could no longer restrain myself from asking a student the question that had long puzzled me: "What were you doing for the last 12 years before you got here?"

Reading about the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, and the widespread retrogressions of Western civilization that followed, was an experience that was sobering, if not crushing. Ancient history in general lets us know how long human beings have been the way they are, and dampens giddy zeal for the latest panaceas, despite how politically correct those panaceas may be.

When I was growing up, we were taught the stories of people whose inventions and scientific discoveries had expanded the lives of millions of other people. Today, students are being taught to admire those who complain, denounce and demand.

The first column I ever wrote, 39 years ago, was titled "The Profits of Doom." This was long before Al Gore made millions of dollars promoting global warming hysteria. Back in 1970, the prevailing hysteria was the threat of a new ice age—promoted by some of the same environmentalists who are promoting global warming hysteria today.



Isaiah 55:6-11—"Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."