

# Eye on the World

## *June 17, 2017*

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 June 17, 2017.

**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).



A Reuters article by Karolina Tagaris titled "Greece, Israel, Cyprus to Speed Up Mediterranean Pipeline Efforts" was posted at reuters.com on June 15, 2017. Following is the article.

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Greece, Israel and Cyprus said on Thursday they would speed up plans for the development of a pipeline channeling gas to Europe from newly discovered east Mediterranean reserves.

European governments and Israel agreed in April to move forward with a Mediterranean pipeline project to carry natural gas from Israel to Europe, setting a target date of 2025 for completion.

Europe is keen to diversify its energy supplies, and Greece wants to promote itself as a hub for the transit of gas from the eastern Mediterranean to the continent.

"We agreed to expedite our joint actions concerning our agreement on the construction of a large project which will offer new prospects of economic cooperation in the eastern Mediterranean," Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras told a news conference in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki.

He was flanked by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Nicos Anastasiades, the president of Cyprus.

The planned 2,000-km (1,250-mile) pipeline aims to link gas fields off the coasts of Israel and Cyprus with Greece and possibly Italy, at a cost of up to 6 billion euros (\$6.7 billion).

Netanyahu said the so-called East-Med Pipeline “would be a revolution.”

“We’ve had preliminary studies of it and it seems promising and we’re going to look further into it. It’s something we’re very excited about,” he said.

Israel and to a lesser extent Cyprus are thought to be sitting on vast quantities of natural gas wealth given the significant finds reported in the past decade.

Israel has discovered more than 900 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas off-shore, with some studies pointing to another 2,200 bcm waiting to be tapped. Along with the European market, it is exploring options to export to Turkey, Egypt and Jordan.

Cyprus’ Aphrodite gas field holds an additional 128 bcm, and Cypriot waters are expected to hold more reserves.

Delivery options have included a pipeline linking the three countries, a pipeline to Turkey, and use of liquefied natural gas (LNG) storage in Egypt for shipment to Europe.

The three leaders said they would also pursue the development of an electricity cable linking their countries.

The EuroAsia Interconnector will carry electricity generated in Israel and sent via Cyprus, the Greek island of Crete and mainland Greece to European grids.

A Greek government official said Greece had proposed adding fiber optic cables estimated to boost the cost by 10 percent. It has secured funding of 1.5 billion euros from the European Union and viability studies have been completed.

“It’s in a mature phase and we must now move on to the establishment of a consortium of investors and its implementation,” the official said.



A Reuters article by Matthew Gault titled “In Qatar and Saudi Arabia’s Fight, Iran’s the Real Winner” was posted at reuters.com on June 15, 2017. Following are excerpts of the article.

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Thanks to a hack allegedly carried out by Russian intelligence, relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia are tense to say the least. The Kingdom has blockaded Qatar ports and several Gulf states have removed envoys and ambassadors. Right now, the Middle East looks a lot like Europe on the eve of World War I.

This week on War College, Oklahoma University professor Joshua Landis runs us through the complicated factions making up the Middle East. According to Landis, Iran is the real winner in the latest dust up between old allies.



An article by Gareth Davies titled "Sentenced to Death for a Blasphemous Facebook Page, Pakistani Man Faces Execution for Insulting the Prophet Mohammad Online" was posted at [dailymail.co.uk](http://dailymail.co.uk) on June 12, 2017. Following are excerpts of the article.

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A Pakistani man has been sentenced to death for making a derogatory remark about the Prophet Mohammad in a Facebook post.

A counter-terrorism court has sentenced Taimoor Raza, 30, to be executed after finding him guilty of committing blasphemy online.

It is the first time anybody has been handed the death penalty for blaspheming on social media and follows a high-profile crackdown by the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Blasphemy is a highly sensitive topic in Muslim-majority Pakistan, where insulting the Prophet Mohammad is a capital crime for which dozens are sitting on death row.

Under Pakistan's harsh laws, anyone accused of insulting God, Islam or other religious personalities can be sentenced to death.

Pakistan last year arrested 15 people, 10 Muslims and five non-Muslims, on blasphemy charges, according to a report issued by the independent rights group Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

The country has never executed anyone convicted of blasphemy, but the mere accusation is enough to ignite mob violence or lynching in the deeply conservative country.

Right groups say the harsh blasphemy laws are often used to settle personal scores.



An article by Tim Graham titled "WashPost, NBC Smear Anti-Sharia Protesters As 'Anti-Muslim' and 'Hate Group' " was posted at [newsbusters.org](http://newsbusters.org) on June 11, 2017. Following is the article.

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The conservative group ACT for America held anti-Sharia rallies across America on Saturday and the liberal media covered them as organized by a hate group—as designated by the radical-left Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC] (but liberals present them as objective!)

*The Washington Post* headline in the Sunday paper was "Anti-Muslim activists fan out in U.S." The story by Abigail Hauslohner and Justin Moyer began: "Anti-Muslim activists hoisted American flags and delivered fiery speeches in

rallies across the country Saturday, facing off against crowds of counter-protesters in several cities and exposing the visceral rage that has come to define America's political extremes."

An NBCNews.com article that the Drudge Report linked to carried the headline "ACT for America Stages Marches Against 'Sharia Law' Nationwide, Arrests Made."

The SPLC made paragraph one:

■ Demonstrations against Islamic law led to arrests, tense confrontations and physical fights in some U.S. cities Saturday amid several rallies sponsored by ACT for America, which the Southern Poverty Law Center designates as an anti-Muslim hate group.

Reporters liked to note there were more counter-protesters than protesters. One Post photo caption noted "Turnout was relatively small, with rally crowds of a few dozen cities outnumbered almost 10 to 1."

That was repeated in the article text:

■ The turnout was relatively small, with rally crowds of a few dozen in many cities outnumbered almost 10 to 1 by counter-demonstrators who tried to drown out their voices with drums, bullhorns and cowbells.

■ ACT, which has drawn condemnation from civil rights groups for its frequent criticism of Islam and its efforts to pass state-level bills targeting Islamic law and refugees, organized the protests as a nationwide "March Against Sharia" and a defense of human rights.

■ "We're here protecting their rights, and they're trying to shut us down!" Pax Hart, the organizer of the New York City rally, told his audience, referring to the gathering of hundreds of leftist activists and masked anarchists across the street. "It's insane!"

■ ACT for America, which the Southern Poverty Law Center recognizes as a hate group, was founded in 2007. Its leaders, who claim a 500,000-strong membership nationally, have labeled Islam a "cancer," propagated theories of a secret plot by Muslims, Democrats, communists and the media to destroy the country from within, and sponsored lectures on how to monitor and oppose U.S. mosques.

"Civil rights groups" are dismayed by anti-Sharia protests, as if Sharia law and "civil rights" match.

Ironically, Hauslohner herself has been "monitoring" mosques as a reporter, and most recently covering a mosque in Falls Church, Virginia where an imam spoke in support of female genital mutilation. That was mentioned nowhere in the "anti-Muslim" story. But the recent stories in Detroit about FGM happening in America underlines what the ACT members are protesting.

Instead, the Post used several tactics they almost never employ at a left-wing march. For example, they plucked out that a "dozen members" of a white supremacist group called Identity Evropa came to the ACT rally in New York,

when they never mention Communists or other extremists handing out literature at leftist protests. They noted “the rallies were laden with many false and exaggerated claims,” and just quoted individual protesters on the street.

Similarly, the NBC News online report stressed “In New York City, about 100 protesters and more than 200 counter-protesters traded words in downtown Manhattan as police officers stood between the groups. While they were speaking, counter-protesters were trying to drown them out using bullhorns and noise makers.” That sounds like the censorious Left.

NBC’s reporters Safia Samee Ali, Ali Gostanian and Daniella Silva just let the SPLC take over the article for paragraphs at a time, like this passage on why ACT is a “hate group” by their leftist standards:

- “ACT demonizes all Muslims as terrorists who want to subvert the political system in this country,” said Heidi Beirich, director of the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center. They disseminate lies and fallacies about Muslims to spread fear about the religion, she added.

- The Islamophobic [sic] organization has gained significant momentum since its founding in 2007 by Brigitte Gabriel, a Lebanese immigrant who has openly called Islam inconsistent with U.S. law.

- “A practicing Muslim who believes the word of the Quran to be the word of Allah . . . who goes to mosque and prays every Friday, who prays five times a day—this practicing Muslim, who believes in the teachings of the Koran, cannot be a loyal citizen of the United States,” said Gabriel during a course at the Department of Defense’s Joint Forces Staff College in 2007.

- ACT for America did not return requests for comment from NBC News.

- “These marches are concerning because of what they will mean to the Muslim community,” Beirich said. “When an organization propagandizes an entire community, it tends to embolden some people to commit hate crimes.”

Conservative protest always should be shut down because it could “embolden hate crimes.” Liberal outlets also smeared the protests before they happened. An Associated Press report by Andrew Selsky mentioned death threats at a mosque in Eugene, Oregon, and the stabbings of two men defending a girl in a hijab in Portland, and then mentioned the rallies:

- Looking ahead, Muslim leaders and others are concerned about anti-Shariah, or Islamic law, marches planned for Saturday in Seattle and about two-dozen other U.S. cities, saying the marches are really anti-Muslim. They consider the Portland and Eugene incidents, and other recent anti-Muslim crimes in America, part of an alarming trend that came to the forefront in last year’s presidential election with far-right activists portraying Islam—and all Muslims—as a threat.

[Disclosure: ACT for America founder Brigitte Gabriel has been a featured speaker on our MRC Cruise.]



An editorial by Walter Williams titled "Rewriting American History" was posted at [jewishworldreview.com](http://jewishworldreview.com) on June 14, 2017. Following is the article.

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George Orwell said, "The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history."

In the former USSR, censorship, rewriting of history and eliminating undesirable people became part of Soviets' effort to ensure that the correct ideological and political spin was put on their history.

Deviation from official propaganda was punished by confinement in labor camps and execution.

Today there are efforts to rewrite history in the U.S., albeit the punishment is not so draconian as that in the Soviet Union.

New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu had a Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee monument removed last month.

Former Memphis Mayor A C Wharton wanted the statue of Confederate Lt. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, as well as the graves of Forrest and his wife, removed from the city park.

In Richmond, Virginia, there have been calls for the removal of the Monument Avenue statues of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Gens. Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson and J.E.B. Stuart.

It's not only Confederate statues that have come under attack. Just by having the name of a Confederate, such as J.E.B. Stuart High School in Falls Church, Virginia, brings up calls for a name change. These history rewriters have enjoyed nearly total success in getting the Confederate flag removed from state capitol grounds and other public places.

Slavery is an undeniable fact of our history. The costly war fought to end it is also a part of the nation's history. Neither will go away through cultural cleansing.

Removing statues of Confederates and renaming buildings are just a small part of the true agenda of America's leftists. Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, and there's a monument that bears his name—the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C.

George Washington also owned slaves, and there's a monument to him, as well—the Washington Monument in Washington.

Will the people who call for removal of statues in New Orleans and Richmond also call for the removal of the Washington, D.C., monuments honoring slaveholders Jefferson and Washington?

Will the people demanding a change in the name of J.E.B. Stuart High School also demand that the name of the nation's capital be changed?



These leftists might demand that the name of my place of work—George Mason University—be changed. Even though Mason was the author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which became a part of our Constitution's Bill of Rights, he owned slaves. Not too far from my university is James Madison University. Will its name be changed? Even though Madison is hailed as the "Father of the Constitution," he did own slaves.

Rewriting American history is going to be challenging. Just imagine the task of purifying the nation's currency. Slave owner George Washington's picture graces the \$1 bill. Slave owner Thomas Jefferson's picture is on the \$2 bill. Slave-owning Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's picture is on our \$50 bill. Benjamin Franklin's picture is on the \$100 bill.

The challenges of rewriting American history are endless, going beyond relatively trivial challenges such as finding new pictures for our currency. At least half of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were slave owners.

Also consider that roughly half of the 55 delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia were slave owners. Do those facts invalidate the U.S. Constitution, and would the history rewriters want us to convene a new convention to purge and purify our Constitution?

The job of tyrants and busybodies is never done. When they accomplish one goal, they move their agenda to something else. If we Americans give them an inch, they'll take a yard. So I say, don't give them an inch in the first place.

The hate-America types use every tool at their disposal to achieve their agenda of discrediting and demeaning our history. Our history of slavery is simply a convenient tool to further their cause.



An article by Michael W. Chapman titled "Rev. Graham: Leftist Progressives 'Want to Destroy the President' " was posted at [cnsnews.com](http://cnsnews.com) on June 15, 2017. Following is the article.

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Commenting on the shooting of Congressman Steve Scalise (R-La.) and three other people by a left-wing Bernie Sanders-supporter on Wednesday, Reverend Franklin Graham said "leftist progressives" will not "let go of losing the election" and "they want to destroy the president."

In a June 15 post on Facebook, Rev. Graham said, "Where did all of this political hatred come from? One party hating the other so badly. No compromising. No cooperation. No camaraderie."

"Some are saying the shooting of GOP House Majority Whip Steve Scalise was caused by 'political rhetorical terrorism,'" said Graham. "Think about it. Plays and music videos said to be depicting the assassination of the president, a comedian holding up the decapitated likeness of the head of the president.

Relentless, hate-filled rhetoric.”

He continued, “Leftist progressives in the Democratic party just won’t let go of losing the election. They are going after President Donald J. Trump tooth and nail.”

“They’re not just being obstructionists, they want to destroy this president,” said Graham.

“Politicians in that category won’t support one thing that the president suggests, even if it is for the good of the country,” he said. “Forget what’s best for America, it’s just about them winning at any cost.”

“Only God can heal this country,” said the reverend, who is the son of pastor Billy Graham. “My prayer is that God will bring healing into the hearts of our leaders and that we could be one nation under God—united.”



An editorial by Ann Coulter titled “The ‘Resistance’ Goes Live-Fire” was posted at [anncoulter.com](http://anncoulter.com) on June 14, 2017. Following is the article.<sup>a</sup>

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The explosion of violence against conservatives across the country is being intentionally ginned up by Democrats, reporters, TV hosts, late-night comedians and celebrities, who compete with one another to come up with the most vile epithets for Trump and his supporters.

They go right up to the line, trying not to cross it, by, for example, vamping with a realistic photo of a decapitated Trump or calling the president a “piece of s—” while hosting a show on CNN.

The media are orchestrating a bloodless coup, but they’re perfectly content to have their low-IQ shock troops pursue a bloody coup.

This week, one of the left’s foot soldiers gunned down Republican members of Congress and their staff while they were playing baseball in Virginia. Democratic Socialist James Hodgkinson was prevented from committing a mass murder only by the happenstance of a member of the Republican leadership being there, along with his 24-hour Capitol Police protection.

Remember when it was frightening for the losing party not to accept the results of an election? During the third debate, Trump refused to pre-emptively agree to the election results, saying he’d “look at it at the time.”

The media responded in their usual laid-back style:

■ A ‘HORRIFYING’ REPUDIATION OF DEMOCRACY—*The Washington Post*, Oct. 20, 2016

■ DENIAL OF DEMOCRACY—*Daily News* (New York), Oct. 20, 2016 DANGER TO DEMOCRACY—*The Dallas Morning News*, Oct. 20, 2016



■ ONE SCARY MOMENT; IT ALL BOILED DOWN TO . . . DEMOCRACY—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Oct. 21, 2016

■ “(Shock) spiked down the nation’s spinal column last night and today when the Republican nominee threatened that this little election thing you got there, this little democratic process you’ve got here, it’s nice, it’s fine, but he doesn’t necessarily plan on abiding by its decision when it comes to the presidency.”—Rachel Maddow, Oct. 20, 2016

■ “Trump’s answer on accepting the outcome of the vote is the most disgraceful statement by a presidential candidate in 160 years.”—Bret Stephens, then-deputy editorial page editor at *The Wall Street Journal*

■ “I guess we’re all going to have to wait until Nov. 9 to find out if we still have a country—if Donald Trump is in the mood for a peaceful transfer of power. Or if he’s going to wipe his fat a— with the Constitution.”—CBS’s Stephen Colbert, Oct. 19, 2016

■ “It’s unprecedented for a nominee of a major party to themselves signal that they would not accept—you know, respect the results of an election. We’ve never had that happen before . . . This really presents a potentially difficult problem for governing . . .”—MSNBC’S Joy Reid, Oct. 22, 2016

■ “This is very dangerous stuff . . . would seriously impair our functioning as a democracy. . . . This is about as serious as it gets in the United States.”—CNN’s Peter Beinart, Oct. 20, 2016

■ “Obviously, it’s despicable for him to pretend that there’s any chance that he would not accept the results of this election; it would be—in 240 years you’ve never had anybody do it . . .”—CNN’s Van Jones, Oct. 20, 2016

Then Trump won, and these very same hysterics refused to accept the results of the election.

Recently, Hillary announced her steadfast opposition to the winning candidate using a military term, saying she’d joined the “Resistance.”

Imagine if Trump lost and then announced that he’d joined the “RESISTANCE.” He’d be accused of trying to activate right-wing militias. Every dyspeptic glance at an immigrant would be reported as fascistic violence.

But the media seem blithely unaware that the anti-Trump “Resistance” has been accompanied by nonstop militaristic violence from liberals.

When Trump ripped up our Constitution and jumped all over it by failing to concede the election three weeks in advance, CNN ran a segment on a single tweet from a random Trump supporter that mentioned the Second Amendment.

Carol Costello: “Still to come in the ‘Newsroom,’ some Trump supporters say they will refuse to accept a loss on Election Day, with one offering a threat of violence. We’ll talk about that next.”

In CNN's most fevered dreams about a violent uprising of Trump supporters, they never could have conceived of the level of actual violence being perpetrated by Americans who refuse to accept Trump's win.

It began with Trump's inauguration, when a leftist group plotted to pump a debilitating gas into one Trump inaugural ball, military families were assaulted upon leaving the Veterans' Inaugural Ball, and attendees of other balls had water thrown on them.

Since then, masked, armed liberals around the country have formed military-style organizations to beat up conservatives. In liberal towns, the police are regularly ordered to stand down to allow the assaults to proceed unimpeded.

The media only declared a crisis when conservatives fought back, smashing the black-clad beta males. ("Battle for Berkeley!")

There is more media coverage for conservatives' "microaggressions" toward powerful minorities—such as using the wrong pronoun—than there is for liberals' physical attacks on conservatives, including mactings, concussions and hospitalizations.

And now some nut Bernie Sanders-supporter confirms that it's Republicans standing on a baseball field, before opening fire.

In the media's strategic reporting of the attempted slaughter, we were quickly told that the mass shooter was white, male and had used a gun. We were even told his name. (Because it was not "Mohammed.")

But the fact that Hodgkinson's Facebook page featured a banner of Sanders and the words "Democratic Socialism explained in 3 words: 'We the People' Since 1776" apparently called for hours of meticulous fact-checking by our media.

Did reporters think they could keep that information from us forever?

The fake news insists that Trump's White House is in "chaos." No, the country is in chaos. But just like Kathy Griffin and her Trump decapitation performance art—the perpetrators turn around in doe-eyed innocence and blame Trump.



An article by Ben Shapiro titled "Trump Didn't Ruin the Media; Obama Did" was posted at townhall.com on June 14, 2017. Following is the article.

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There is a widespread perception among those on the right that President Trump's myriad foibles, vagaries and outright prevarications are somehow justifiable because he is The Great Destroyer of the mainstream media. His fans say he is running the media around in circles—and that is its own reward.

Are you still waiting for extreme vetting?

For the border wall?

For tax cuts, Obamacare repeal and a massive military buildup?

Well, sit down and shut up. Just be grateful that Trump has the media hysterically following his tweets like a hormonal teenage boy frantically searching for internet pornography.

But this is wrong.

Trump isn't destroying the media's credibility. They already destroyed their own credibility, thanks to their allegiance to President Barack Obama.

Trump has the benefit of occupying the presidency after Obama. The media was highly critical of President Bill Clinton—even they couldn't ignore the juicy scandals dripping daily from the White House in the 1990s. They were even more critical of President George W. Bush—they were more than willing to misreport in order to undermine a war and destroy a presidency.

But then came Obama.

Obama was the first indicator that the media would simply refuse to cover stories they didn't like about a politician they did. The media covered Clinton's Chinagate and Travelgate. But they refused to cover the IRS scandal with the same level of vim as they would have under Bush; they downplayed the Obama administration's involvement in the botched "Fast and Furious" gun operation scandal; and members of the mainstream media openly mocked the right's anger over the administration's manipulation of the 2012 Benghazi terror attack. Obama had to be protected at all costs, including the cost of the media's credibility.

Meanwhile, the media savaged 2012 Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney. They dug up a story from his high school days regarding him forcibly cutting a classmate's hair. They uncovered scandalous material about him strapping a dog to the roof of his car. They delved deep into his nefarious practice of investing in failing companies, and then cutting the dead weight to turn them around.

Then came Trump.

Trump didn't do anything aside from failing to comply with media's standards of behavior. He didn't pander to them or treat them with respect. And the media melted down. They treated Trump horribly, of course—but they'd already treated Bush and Romney just as badly.

More importantly, the media lost their ability to pretend having standards of honesty and decency after selling their souls to the Obama White House. It was difficult to take their cries of incipient tyranny seriously after they bent over backward to flatter a White House that cracked down on reporters from Fox News and the Associated Press.

Why does any of this matter?

It matters because conservatives would be wise to understand that Trump didn't destroy the media; he inherited the shell of a media ready to crumble. He

tapped the shell, and it fell apart. But that's not enough. Trump now has a golden opportunity to promulgate an alternative narrative in place of the one pushed by the discredited leftist media—if he can demonstrate credibility himself.

So far, he hasn't. And that means that his credibility will crumble at first contact from someone who hasn't already destroyed his or her credibility. Hence the media's renewed love for former FBI Director James Comey—they believe that they can restore their own credibility by watching him destroy Trump's.

Trump can do significant damage to the media, but only if he tells the truth. Now would be an excellent time to start.



An article by Ashley Parker titled "Pence Hires Outside Counsel to Deal With Russia Probe Inquiries" was posted at [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com) on June 15, 2017. Following are excerpts of the article.

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Vice President Pence has hired outside legal counsel to help with both congressional committee inquiries and the special counsel investigation into possible collusion between President Trump's campaign and Russia.

The vice president's office said Thursday that Pence has retained Richard Cullen, a Richmond-based lawyer and chairman of McGuireWoods who previously served as a U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia.

Pence's decision comes less than a month after Trump hired his own private attorney, Marc E. Kasowitz, to help navigate the investigations related to the Russia probe, and a day after *The Washington Post* reported that special counsel Robert S. Mueller III is widening his investigation to examine whether the president attempted to obstruct justice.



An article by Jonathan V. Last titled "Camille Paglia: On Trump, Democrats, Transgenderism, and Islamist Terror" was posted at [weeklystandard.com](http://weeklystandard.com) on June 15, 2017. Following is the article.

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Camille Paglia is one America's smartest and most fearless writers. Like Elvis, she's the kind of superstar who really needs no introduction—though it is worth pointing out that Pantheon has just published a collection of her essays on sex, gender, and feminism, titled *Free Women, Free Men*. It's fantastic and if you love her work, it's must-reading. (And there's another collection due out in the Fall of 2018, which is more good news.)

Last week I sat down with Paglia over email to talk about Donald Trump, Islamist terrorism, and the transgender crusade. Here's a transcript of our conversation:

**JVL:** Donald Trump has recently feuded with Jim Comey, Bob Mueller, Sadiq Kahn, Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel, NATO—we'll stop the list there. You were one of a very small number of people who understood Trump's populist appeal early on. Looking at his presidency so far, do think he's continuing to deliver on that appeal? What is he doing right? What is he doing wrong?

**Camille Paglia:** Some background is necessary. First of all, I must make my political affiliations crystal clear. I am a registered Democrat who voted for Bernie Sanders in the 2016 primary and for Jill Stein in the general election. Since last Fall, I've had my eye on Kamala Harris, the new senator from California, and I hope to vote for her in the next presidential primary.

Like many others, I initially did not take Donald Trump's candidacy seriously. I dismissed him as a "carnival barker" in my Salon column and assumed his entire political operation was a publicity stunt that he would soon tire of. However, Trump steadily gained momentum because of the startling incompetence and mediocrity of his GOP opponents. What seems forgotten is that everyone, including the Hillary Clinton campaign, thought that Marco Rubio would be the Republican nominee. The moment was ideal for a Latino candidate with national appeal who could challenge the Democratic hold on Florida.

Thus Rubio's primary-run flame-out was a spectacular embarrassment. Under TV's unsparing camera eye, he looked like a shallow, dithering adolescent, utterly unprepared to be commander-in-chief in an era of terrorism. Trump's frankly arrogant self-confidence spooked and crushed Rubio—it was a total fiasco.

Ben Carson, meanwhile, with his professorial deep-think and spiritualistic eye-closing, often seemed to be beaming himself to another galaxy.

With every debate, Ted Cruz, despite his avid national following, accumulated more and more detractors, repelled by his brittle self-dramatizations and lugubrious megalomania.

There were two genial, moderate Mid-Western governors who could have wrested the nomination from Trump and performed strongly versus Hillary in the general—Ohio's John Kasich and Wisconsin's Scott Walker. But they blew it because of their personal limitations: On television, Kasich came across as a clumsy, lumbering blowhard while Walker shrank into a nervous, timid mouse with a frozen Pee-wee Herman smile.

The point here is that Donald Trump won the nomination fair and square against a host of serious, experienced opponents who simply failed to connect with a majority of GOP primary voters. However, there were too many unknowns about Trump, who had never held elective office and whose randy history in the shadowy demimonde of casinos and beauty pageants laid him open to a cascade of feverish accusations and innuendos from the ever-churning gnomes of the cash-propelled Clinton propaganda machine. In actuality, the sexism allegations about Trump were relatively few and minor, compared to the long list of lurid claims about the predatory Bill Clinton.

My position continues to be that Hillary, with her supercilious, Marie Antoinette-style entitlement, was a disastrously wrong candidate for 2016 and that she secured the nomination only through overt chicanery by the Democratic National Committee, assisted by a corrupt national media who, for over a year, imposed a virtual blackout on potential primary rivals.

Bernie Sanders had the populist passion, economic message, government record, and personal warmth to counter Trump. It was Sanders, for example, who addressed the crisis of crippling student debt, an issue that other candidates (including Hillary) then took up. Despite his history of embarrassing gaffes, the affable, plain-spoken Joe Biden, in my view, could also have defeated Trump, but he was blocked from running at literally the last moment by President Barack Obama, for reasons that the major media refused to explore.

After Trump's victory (for which there were abundant signs in the preceding months), both the Democratic party and the big-city media urgently needed to do a scathingly honest self-analysis, because the election results plainly demonstrated that Trump was speaking to vital concerns (jobs, immigration, and terrorism among them) for which the Democrats had few concrete solutions. Indeed, throughout the campaign, too many leading Democratic politicians were preoccupied with domestic issues and acted strangely uninterested in international affairs.

Among the electorate, the most fervid Hillary acolytes (especially young and middle-aged women and assorted show biz celebs) seemed obtusely indifferent to her tepid performance as Secretary of State, during which she doggedly piled up air miles while accomplishing virtually nothing except the destabilization of North Africa.

Had Hillary won, everyone would have expected disappointed Trump voters to show a modicum of respect for the electoral results as well as for the historic ceremony of the inauguration, during which former combatants momentarily unite to pay homage to the peaceful transition of power in our democracy.

But that was not the reaction of a vast cadre of Democrats shocked by Trump's win. In an abject failure of leadership that may be one of the most disgraceful episodes in the history of the modern Democratic party, Chuck Schumer, who had risen to become the Senate Democratic leader after the retirement of Harry Reid, asserted absolutely no moral authority as the party spun out of control in a nationwide orgy of rage and spite.

Nor were there statesmanlike words of caution and restraint from two seasoned politicians whom I have admired for decades and believe should have run for president long ago—Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi. How do Democrats imagine they can ever expand their electoral support if they go on and on in this self-destructive way, impugning half the nation as vile racists and homophobes?

All of which brings us to the issue of Trump's performance to date. The initial conundrum was: could he shift from being the slashing, caustic ex-reality show star of the campaign to a more measured, presidential persona?



Perhaps to the dismay of his diehard critics, Trump did indeed make that transition at the Capitol on inauguration morning, when he appeared grave and focused, palpably conveying a sense of the awesome burdens of the highest office.

As for his particular actions as president, I am no fan of executive orders, which usurp congressional prerogatives and which I was already denouncing when Obama was constantly signing them (with very little protest, one might add, from the mainstream media).

Trump's "travel ban" executive order in late January was obviously bungled—issued way too fast and with woefully insufficient research (pertaining, for example, to green-card holders, who should have been exempted from the start).

The administration bears full responsibility for fanning the flames of an already aroused "Resistance."

However, I fail to see the "chaos" in the White House that the mainstream media (as well as conservative Never Trumpers) keep harping on—or rather, I see no more chaos than was abundantly present during the first six months of both the Clinton and Obama administrations.

Trump seems to be methodically trying to fulfill his campaign promises, notably regarding the economy and deregulation—the approaches to which will always be contested in our two-party system. His progress has thus far been in stops and starts, partly because of the passivity, and sometimes petulance, of the mundane GOP leadership.

There seems to be a huge conceptual gap between Trump and his most implacable critics on the left. Many highly educated, upper-middle-class Democrats regard themselves as exemplars of "compassion" (which they have elevated into a supreme political principle) and yet they routinely assail Trump voters as ignorant, callous hate-mongers.

These elite Democrats occupy an amorphous meta-realm of subjective emotion, theoretical abstractions, and refined language.

But Trump is by trade a builder who deals in the tangible, obdurate, objective world of physical materials, geometry, and construction projects, where communication often reverts to the brusque, coarse, high-impact level of pre-modern working-class life, whose daily locus was the barnyard. It's no accident that bourgeois Victorians of the industrial era tried to purge "barnyard language" out of English.

Last week, that conceptual gap was on prominent display, as the media, consumed with their preposterous Russian fantasies, were fixated on former FBI director James Comey's maudlin testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee. (Comey is an effete charlatan who should have been fired within 48 hours of either Hillary or Trump taking office.)

Meanwhile, Trump was going about his business. The following morning, he made remarks at the Department of Transportation about "regulatory relief," excerpts of which I happened to hear on my car radio that afternoon. His

words about iron, aluminum, and steel seemed to cut like a knife through the airwaves. I later found the entire text on the White House website.

Some key passages:

■ We are here today to focus on solving one of the biggest obstacles to creating this new and desperately needed infrastructure, and that is the painfully slow, costly, and time-consuming process of getting permits and approvals to build. And I also knew that from the private sector. It is a long, slow, unnecessarily burdensome process. My administration is committed to ending these terrible delays once and for all. The excruciating wait time for permitting has inflicted enormous financial pain to cities and states all throughout our nation and has blocked many important projects from ever getting off the ground. . .

■ For too long, America has poured trillions and trillions of dollars into rebuilding foreign countries while allowing our own country—the country that we love—and its infrastructure to fall into a state of total disrepair. We have structurally deficient bridges, clogged roads, crumbling dams and locks. Our rivers are in trouble. Our railways are aging. And chronic traffic that slows commerce and diminishes our citizens' quality of life. Other than that, we're doing very well. Instead of rebuilding our country, Washington has spent decades building a dense thicket of rules, regulations and red tape. It took only four years to build the Golden Gate Bridge and five years to build the Hoover Dam and less than one year to build the Empire State Building. People don't believe that. It took less than one year. But today, it can take 10 years and far more than that just to get the approvals and permits needed to build a major infrastructure project.

■ These charts beside me are actually a simplified version of our highway permitting process. It includes 16 different approvals involving 10 different federal agencies being governed by 26 different statutes. As one example—and this happened just 30 minutes ago—I was sitting with a great group of people responsible for their state's economic development and roadways. All of you are in the room now. And one gentleman from Maryland was talking about an 18-mile road. And he brought with him some of the approvals that they've gotten and paid for. They spent \$29 million for an environmental report, weighing 70 pounds and costing \$24,000 per page . . .

■ I was not elected to continue a failed system. I was elected to change it. All of us in government service were elected to solve the problems that have plagued our nation. We are here to think big, to act boldly, and to rise above the petty partisan squabbling of Washington D.C. We are here to take action. It's time to start building in our country, with American workers and with American iron and aluminum and steel. It's time to put up soaring new infrastructure that inspires pride in our people and our towns.

■ No longer can we allow these rules and regulations to tie down our economy, chain up our prosperity, and sap our great American spirit. That is why we will lift these restrictions and unleash the full potential of the United States of America. We will get rid of the redundancy and duplication that wastes your time and your money. Our goal is to give you one point of con-

tact to deliver one decision—yes or no—for the entire federal government, and to deliver that decision quickly, whether it's a road, whether it's a highway, a bridge, a dam.

■ To do this, we are setting up a new council to help project managers navigate the bureaucratic maze. This council will also improve transparency by creating a new online dashboard allowing everyone to easily track major projects through every stage of the approval process. This council will make sure that every federal agency that is consistently delaying projects by missing deadlines will face tough, new penalties. . .

■ Together, we will build projects to inspire our youth, employ our workers, and create true prosperity for our people. We will pour new concrete, lay new brick, and watch new sparks light our factories as we forge metal from the furnaces of our Rust Belt and our beloved heartland—which has been forgotten. It's not forgotten anymore.

■ We will put new American steel into the spine of our country. American workers will construct gleaming new lanes of commerce across our landscape. They will build these monuments from coast to coast, and from city to city. And with these new roads, bridges, airports and seaports, we will embark on a wonderful new journey into a bright and glorious future. We will build again. We will grow again. We will thrive again. And we will make America great again.

Of course this rousing speech (with its can-do World War Two spirit) got scant coverage in the mainstream media. Drunk with words, spin, and snark, middle-class journalists can't be bothered to notice the complex physical constructions that make modern civilization possible. The laborers who build and maintain these marvels are recognized only if they can be shoehorned into victim status. But if they dare to think for themselves and vote differently from their liberal overlords, they are branded as rubes and pariahs.

In summary: to have any hope of retaking the White House, Democrats must get off their high horse, lose the rabid rhetoric, and reorient themselves toward practical reality and the free country they are damned lucky to live in.

**JVL:** One of the other big news stories for the last few weeks has been terrorism in Great Britain. Everyone goes to great pains to say that this isn't "Islamic" terrorism, but rather "Islamist" ("Islam-ish?") terrorism. Does nomenclature matter here? Does the fact that Western liberalism gets so wrapped up in knots over how to talk about its antagonists mean anything?

**CP:** You've nailed it about Western liberalism's obsession with language, to the exclusion of wide-ranging study of world history or systematic observation of present social conditions. Liberalism of the 1950s and '60s exalted civil liberties, individualism, and dissident thought and speech. "Question authority" was our generational rubric when I was in college.

But today's liberalism has become grotesquely mechanistic and authoritarian: It's all about reducing individuals to a group identity, defining that group in permanent victim terms, and denying others their democratic right to chal-

lunge that group and its ideology. Political correctness represents the fossilized institutionalization of once-vital revolutionary ideas, which have become mere rote formulas. It is repressively Stalinist, dependent on a labyrinthine, parasitic bureaucracy to enforce its empty dictates.

The reluctance or inability of Western liberals to candidly confront jihadism has been catastrophically counterproductive insofar as it has inspired an ongoing upsurge in right-wing politics in Europe and the United States.

Citizens have an absolute right to demand basic security from their government. The contortions to which so many liberals resort to avoid connecting bombings, massacres, persecutions, and cultural vandalism to Islamic jihadism is remarkable, given their usual animosity to religion, above all Christianity.

Some commentators have suggested a link to racial preconceptions: that is, Islam remains beyond criticism because it is largely a religion of non-whites whose two holy cities occupy territory once oppressed by Western imperialism.

For a quarter century, I have been calling for comparative religion to be made the core curriculum of higher education. (I am speaking as an atheist.) Knowledge of the great world religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Judeo-Christianity, Islam—is the true multiculturalism. Everyone should have a general familiarity with the beliefs, texts, rituals, art, and shrines of all the major religions.

Only via a direct encounter with the Qu'ran and Hadith, for example, can anyone know what they say about jihad and how those strikingly numerous passages have been interpreted in different ways over time.

Right now, too many secular Western liberals treat Islam with paternalistic condescension—waving at it vaguely from a benevolent distance but making no effort to engage with its intricate mixed messages, which can inspire toward good or spur acts of devastating impact on the international stage.

**JVL:** I keep waiting for the showdown between feminism and transgenderism, but it always keeps slipping beneath the horizon. I've been looking at how the La Leche League—which stood at the crossroads of feminism once upon a time—has in the last couple years bowed completely to the transgender project. Their central text is (for now) *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, but they've officially changed their stance to include men and fathers who breastfeed. The actual wording of their policy is wonderful: "It is now recognized that some men are able to breastfeed." Left unsaid is the corollary that some women are biologically unable to breastfeed. Though this would go against the League's founding principles, one supposes. What does one make of all of this?

**CP:** Feminists have clashed with transgender activists much more publicly in the United Kingdom than here. For example, two years ago there was an acrimonious organized campaign, including a petition with 3,000 claimed signatures, to cancel a lecture by Germaine Greer at Cardiff University because of her "offensive" views of transgenderism.

Greer, a literary scholar who was one of the great pioneers of second-wave feminism, has always denied that men who have undergone sex-reassignment surgery are actually “women.” Her Cardiff lecture (on “Women and Power” in the twentieth century) eventually went forward, under heavy security.

And in 2014, *Gender Hurts*, a book by radical Australian feminist Sheila Jeffreys, created a heated controversy in the United Kingdom. Jeffreys identifies transsexualism with misogyny and describes it as a form of “mutilation.” She and her feminist allies encountered prolonged difficulties in securing a London speaking venue because of threats and agitation by transgender activists.

Finally, Conway Hall was made available: Jeffrey’s forceful, detailed lecture there in July of last year is fully available on YouTube. In it she argues among other things, that the pharmaceutical industry, having lost income when routine estrogen therapy for menopausal women was abandoned because of its health risks, has been promoting the relatively new idea of transgenderism in order to create a permanent class of customers who will need to take prescribed hormones for life.

Although I describe myself as transgender (I was donning flamboyant male costumes from early childhood on), I am highly skeptical about the current transgender wave, which I think has been produced by far more complicated psychological and sociological factors than current gender discourse allows. Furthermore, I condemn the escalating prescription of puberty blockers (whose long-term effects are unknown) for children. I regard this practice as a criminal violation of human rights.

It is certainly ironic how liberals who posture as defenders of science when it comes to global warming (a sentimental myth unsupported by evidence) flee all reference to biology when it comes to gender. Biology has been programmatically excluded from women’s studies and gender studies programs for almost 50 years now. Thus very few current gender studies professors and theorists, here and abroad, are intellectually or scientifically prepared to teach their subjects.

The cold biological truth is that sex changes are impossible. Every single cell of the human body remains coded with one’s birth gender for life. Intersex ambiguities can occur, but they are developmental anomalies that represent a tiny proportion of all human births.

In a democracy, everyone, no matter how nonconformist or eccentric, should be free from harassment and abuse. But at the same time, no one deserves special rights, protections, or privileges on the basis of their eccentricity. The categories “trans-man” and “trans-woman” are highly accurate and deserving of respect.

But like Germaine Greer and Sheila Jeffreys, I reject state-sponsored coercion to call someone a “woman” or a “man” simply on the basis of his or her subjective feeling about it. We may well take the path of good will and defer to courtesy on such occasions, but it is our choice alone.

As for the La Leche League, they are hardly prepared to take up the cudgels in the bruising culture wars. Awash with the milk of human kindness, they are

probably stuck in nurturance mode. Naturally, they snap to attention at the sound of squalling babies, no matter what their age.

It's up to literature professors and writers to defend the integrity of English, which like all languages changes slowly and organically over time. But with so many humanities departments swallowed up in the poststructuralist tar pit, the glorious medium of English may have to fight the gender commissars on its own.



***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."