Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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June 6, 2019
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At The Washington Post, the inimitable Dana Milbank on President Donald Trump's persistent attempts at gaslighting the American people. Simultaneously hilarious and really scary, this is Milbank at his best.

At the Atlantic, Emma Green on the politics of abortion rights and the push by some abortion rights advocates to push the party to the extremes, thus mirroring the pro-life groups' effects on the GOP. My only criticism of Green's fine article is that, while she points out the fact that polling does not suggest any support for such extremes on either side, the debate is being pushed by special interest groups who first and primary motivation is job preservation and fundraising. There is nothing about the primary season that encourages moderation, but I hope some Democratic candidates are thinking of creative ways to have a Sister Souljah moment at a NARAL Pro-Choice America convention.

Speaking of the shape of the Democratic Party, this essay by Joshua Zeitz makes the case that today's crop of progressive politicians — Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez et al. — would be well advised to read some history of the Progressive Era at the beginning

of the 20th century, and how it worked precisely because it was broad and quite flexible. I think the key reality is that if Democrats are going to draw lines in the sand, it should be on economic, not social, issues as I argued here. Candidates should remember that some of their staff are thinking of taking jobs at NARAL or Emily's List or Human Rights Campaign someday, and this affects their judgment.

Also at Politico, two articles on the Democratic primary contest. The first, by David Siders, argues that Joe Biden is in a race by himself, while all the others are still competing with each other. This is partially true, but it is also important to remember how quickly these races can become binary: Obama-Clinton in 2008 and Clinton-Sanders in 2016. The second, by Alex Thompson, looks at the campaign in Iowa being waged by Sen. Elizabeth Warren who invested heavily at the very beginning of the race. Many a candidate stated that they would not compete in Iowa overmuch so as to concentrate on friendlier terrain in New Hampshire or South Carolina. It doesn't work because the morning after the Iowa caucuses, all the media attention is on the top two or three winners in the Hawkeye state.

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Michael Hiltzik, in the Los Angeles Times, on the new Congressional Research Service report that shows the Trump tax cuts accomplished none of the goals the American people were promised: They had no effect on rising wages, did not pay for themselves, did not create increased investment, etc. And, the average American did not see her taxes go down. Democrats: Here is your issue.

In The Boston Globe, Devra First on coffee and Nazis. Turns out, there are a whole bunch of major food and beverage retailers whose parent company was thick as thieves with the Reich. The article raises interesting questions about the ethical demands of consumerism and, even more interestingly, part of the answer is: Buy local.

At Truthout, a report on the participation of Koch-affiliated individuals with a white nationalist organization. This should not really surprise since the Koch brothers really turbocharged their political ideology after connecting with James Buchanan, as Nancy MacLean demonstrated in her important book *Democracy in Chains*, which I reviewed here and here. Buchanan got his start as an advocate for states' rights during the struggle against segregation. I have no reason to think Charles or David

Koch is a racist, but their severe anti-government ideology plays right into the hands of today's white nationalists, and it is hard to see how that result was not somehow anticipated, even if it was not intended.

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

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