Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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Puerto Rico's plagues continue. A political crisis, brought on by corruption within the governor's administration, has boiled over, adding to the ongoing reconstruction of the island's infrastructure after two hurricanes, and the underlying economic and demographic problems that have beset the island for over a decade. Gov. Ricardo Rosselló announced he will not seek reelection but he will also not resign.

I doubt that will hold. He needs to go. His administration was far too friendly to bondholder interests and has sent out his party's flacks to argue that the island's political status is the essential problem, which it isn't. Trying to capitalize on a crisis to achieve an unrelated objective is the most cynical of political moves. If Puerto Rico had two senators, the island would still be in a bad situation. The island needs a couple decades of corruption-free governance, a huge write-off of its debt, and massive investment in the island's energy production and infrastructure. If those three things happen, Puerto Rico's commonwealth will achieve some common health.

In The New York Times, Leana Wen explains why she resigned as head of Planned Parenthood. Here is the key graph:

> *Perhaps the greatest area of tension [within the organization] was over our work to be inclusive of those with nuanced views about abortion. I reached out to people who wrestle with abortion's moral complexities, but who will speak out against government interference in personal medical decisions. I engaged those who identify as being pro-life, but who support safe, legal abortion access because they don't want women to die from back-alley abortions. I even worked with people who oppose abortion but support Planned Parenthood because of the preventive services we provide — we share the desire to reduce the need for abortion through sex education and birth control.*

That was the "greatest area of tension"? The next time someone denies that Planned Parenthood is run by culture warriors, many of whom go on to staff congressional offices and Democratic administrations, tell them to call Dr. Wen.

In The Kansas City Star, words of wisdom from Melinda Henneberger (and from Mayor Pete Buttigieg) that the correct framing of the election is not moderate versus progressive, but who gets you excited or not . But, I would qualify what Henneberger says: The candidate has to be able to excite the eight or so percent of the electorate that really does swing, not just the Democratic base, and they need to be able to explain themselves in ways that resonate with Americans who are not Democrats.

In The Washington Post, James Downie analyzes the appearance of White House adviser Stephen Miller on the "Fox News Sunday" show, and how Miller laid bare the deep authoritarian foundation of his own and the president's worldview: "To disagree with the president is to disagree with America itself." I also find Miller simply the most unpersuasive and off-putting figure (other than the president) in an administration filled with such figures. Why send him on to a Sunday show? Check the videos for yourself.

Relatedly, in The New York Times, Nate Cohn looks at how the 2020 election could again yield a popular vote win for the Democratic presidential candidate and an Electoral College win for the president. Fascinating to see how each state, and certain counties within each state, differ from national trends, not by much, but by enough that it could determine the election. The largest unknown: Does the

economy stay strong or does it slow down? Even a moderate slowdown could result in a Democratic landslide.

Also at the Times, some lousy advice from Frank Bruni. He is correct that Democrats need to focus on those freshmen House members who beat Republicans to win their seat, not the "Squad" who defeated Democrats to win a seat. But, Bruni thinks that beating Trump is so important Democrats should cool it on any large ideas that might fundamentally change the economic conditions in which millions of Americans still struggle. That reluctance is what brought us Trump. We need bold economic ideas, softened with a pragmatic, non-ideological sense of how to go about implementing them.

At the Catholic Herald, Christopher Altieri asks "Is Viganò overstating his case?" The answer to that would be "yes." But, more significantly, as one wag emailed me this weekend, "When you have lost the Herald. …"

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

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