

The Just Cause: America's Boobocracy

When future scholars seek to understand why Western civilization collapsed, they will point to one of the terminal diseases of our age: the loss of social standards.

The 1960s unleashed destructive, revolutionary forces—sexual liberation, pervasive moral relativism, a new age liberalism with its emphasis on pacifism, hedonism and therapeutic narcissism, and a puerile rebellion against authority leading to an erosion in good manners and high thought.

The result has been a coarsening of American culture. Our society has become obsessed with sex, body image, entertainment, fame and celebrity. We are a nation of tabloid readers, TV watchers, Internet porn junkies, sports fanatics, and compulsive music and movie consumers. All of these activities have one thing in common: they reflect our society's over-riding emphasis on the pursuit of pleasure and entertainment.

In other words, we devote considerable amounts of our precious (and limited) energy and time on matters that are inconsequential, peripheral and ultimately, irrelevant. We have become a nation of boobs—ignorant citizens, who spend much of their days doing vacuous and stupid activities, and preoccupied with the often sordid lives of vacuous and stupid celebrities.

This has led to a general dumbing down of American culture. Giants like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Mark Twain and F. Scott Fitzgerald were once venerated as cultural heroes. Today, it is Oprah Winfrey, Mick Jagger, Angelina Jolie and Jennifer Lopez. Over 100 years ago, the average U.S. college student was taught to read the works of Thucydides, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas in the original Greek and Latin. Today, he or she is taught remedial English.

Nothing illustrates this moral and intellectual decline more clearly than the rise of the politicized entertainment elite. Celebrities receive so much attention and adulation, they now feel that they have the right, nay, the duty, to get on their soapboxes and “speak out” about political issues. This is done even though most of them do not have the qualifications, expertise or requisite education to give an informed opinion on say, Iraq, the war on terrorism or gay rights. Yet the fact that the overwhelming majority of celebrities have the intellectual equivalent of an 11th grade education does not prevent—or shame—them from spouting off.

Obviously, like any American, they have the First Amendment right to say anything they want. But the right to say something does not mean that one should say something— especially, when one is abysmally ignorant about the topic at hand. As the saying goes, it is better to be silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.

The guy behind the counter at your local 7-Eleven has an opinion about Iraq or President Bush. But he doesn't go and set up a press conference to announce his views. Why?

Because he rightly knows that no one cares. He can express his opinion to his friends and family; if he has some literary skills, he may even muster the effort to write a letter to his community newspaper; and of course, he can express his opinion at the ballot box. But he realizes that, if he makes a public spectacle of his political beliefs, people will either ignore him or laugh him off the stage.

The same should apply to celebrities. The problem, however, is that our society is so infatuated with the rich and famous, they have become role models for most Americans. Hence, many believe that celebrities should speak out. And of course, they are more than willing to oblige.

This poses a serious threat to the long-term health of American democracy. It is dangerous for so much cultural power to be in the hands of such an ill-informed, irresponsible and ignorant entertainment elite—an elite that is detached from the interests and needs of ordinary citizens. These liberal elitists have contempt for religious faith, patriotism and bourgeois values, which form the essence not only of a fulfilling and substantial life, but of civilization itself.

They live in a privileged bubble of plenty and security. Most of them are uneducated mediocrities, who are content to spiritually and physically waste away as they squander their talents acting in bad films, singing bad songs, and leading bad lives. Most of them are into drugs, alcohol and promiscuous sex. They are so pathetic they can't even keep a marriage together or take care of their health. Although they gorge at the trough of American capitalism, making millions if not tens of millions of dollars peddling cultural junk, most of them are chic leftists who champion economic collectivism and moral anarchy. Their lives are so empty and degenerate, these liberal elitists feel the need to take up progressive, trendy causes—world peace, AIDS, abortion rights—in the futile hope this will give meaning to their bankrupt existence.

It is deeply troubling that they are the cultural icons most Americans look up to. It is also deeply troubling that the entertainment elite has become a key pillar of the Democratic Party. They are a vital source of money, support and ideas. Bill Clinton, Al Gore and John Kerry have relied heavily on Hollywood fund-raising. The party is now beholden to anti-war leftists such as Michael Moore, Warren Beatty and Barbara Streisand. If Hillary Clinton is to be her party's presidential nominee in 2008, she will have to rub shoulders—often and heavily—with Hollywood liberal luminaries at countless events. It is now par for the course for any serious Democratic candidate.

What is most astonishing is how idiotic and intellectually irresponsible most of these entertainment elitists are. Take Alec Baldwin. He is at best a third-rate actor, who has done little work of consequence in his career—and no, I don't consider "The Hunt for Red October" a particularly impressive film. You would think this would chasten him into trying to work on improving his acting skills, and perhaps, just perhaps try to get a part in a movie of some serious cultural quality. And if that wasn't enough to fill up his obviously very light schedule, he could then move on to working on holding down a stable marriage. And after that, he might even go for the big one: trying to raise a family and being a serious, devoted father to his children. Instead, Mr. Baldwin spends his time making inane comments about the Bush administration and conservative Republicans every chance he gets.

During the Clinton impeachment debate, he publicly called for one of the top House managers leading the impeachment effort, Republican Rep. Henry Hyde, to be stoned to death and for his family to be murdered.

"If we were living in another country, what we, all of us together, would go down to Washington and stone Henry Hyde to death, stone him to death, stone him to death!" he said in a 1998 interview on "Late Night with Conan O'Brien." "Then we would go to their house and we'd kill the family, kill the children."

Recently, he has called Vice President Dick Cheney "a terrorist" and has asked this edifying question: "Why are contemporary Republicans so full of shit?" This is a man who has repeatedly said that he is considering one day running as a Democrat for Congress and even for president of the United States. He is someone who is taken seriously by the media and segments of the general public. He has a popular blog on the widely read liberal news Web site, The Huffington Post, and makes frequent appearances in the media (such as CNN's Larry King) to discuss his views on current events. The fact that he is a vulgar philistine does not seem to bother most liberals—or most Americans for that matter.

Even country music, once known as the cultural bastion of the red state American heartland, has gotten into the Bush-bashing act.

The Dixie Chicks, known for their infamous attack on Mr. Bush in a 2003 concert in London, have come out with a new song, "Not Ready to Make Nice," which defends their actions and takes on their critics. The band caused an outcry among many of their fans when the lead singer shouted out to the crowd: "Just so you know, we're ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas."

Did it ever occur to them that perhaps most of their former supporters are ashamed the Dixie Chicks are from America? It is not just their presumptuous arrogance and utter disrespect for their fans that is most galling. It is that, at a time when American troops were risking their lives to topple a mass murdering, fascist dictator in Iraq, these three airheads don't see anything wrong with denigrating on foreign soil the sacrifices and efforts of U.S. soldiers. This used to be called treason, and in the 19th century people were hanged for such offenses. Today, they brazenly go about making and promoting songs about their pernicious behavior, seeking to cash in on the growing anti-war sentiment.

Or take Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, the supposed reigning King and Queen of country music. Recently, they blasted the Hurricane Katrina cleanup effort, blaming—guess who—Mr. Bush for the debacle. These two hillbillies held a press conference in Nashville to promote their upcoming tour, but turned the event into a stunning display of semi-literate ignorance that even by country music standards was appalling.

"To me, there's a lot of politics being played and a lot of people trying to put people in bad positions in order to further their agendas," Mr. McGraw said. "When you have people dying because they're poor and black or poor and white, or because of whatever they are—if that's a number on a political scale—then that is the most wrong thing. That erases everything that's great about our country."

He went on to specifically criticize Mr. Bush. "There's no reason why someone can't go down there who's supposed to be the leader of the free world ... and say, 'I'm giving you a job to do and I'm not leaving here until it's done. And you're held accountable, and you're held accountable, and you're held accountable. This is what I've given you to do, and if it's not done by the time I get back on my plane, then you're fired and someone else will be in your place.'"

Mr. McGraw is 38-years-old going on 12. If he thinks that there is some kind of political conspiracy to deliberately not help residents of the devastated region, then he has lost all connection with reality. As any person with a brain would (or should) know, hurricane cleanups—especially those on the devastating magnitude of Katrina—take considerable time and effort to complete. Moreover, far from doing nothing, Mr. Bush has authorized one of the largest financial aid efforts in U.S. history to help with the reconstruction of the region. But no, according to Mr. McGraw and Mrs. Hill, the president is not doing enough because he refuses to act as a construction foreman who barks out orders to his underlings.

Well, I have news for the country music duo: the president's job is not to micromanage a disaster site. He has other things on his plate—little things such as Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Russia, China, al Qaeda, Social Security reform, immigration, taxes, judicial appointments—to worry about. But of course, none of that matters to Mr. McGraw and Mrs. Hill. All that is important for these two narcissists are their feelings, and after touring the ravaged areas they were “upset” at what they saw. After a while, celebrities begin to believe their own hype. They begin to believe the world really revolves around them and their “feelings.”

In more normal, civilized times kitsch entertainers like Mr. McGraw knew their place. They were ashamed to speak out on public policy issues because they knew they lacked the erudition or the real-world experience necessary to comment intelligently on such matters. But those days are long gone. Mr. McGraw—a college dropout—told Time magazine in a 2004 interview that "I want to run for the Senate from Tennessee. Not now, but when I'm 50, when the music dies down a little bit. I know lots of artists and actors have those delusions of grandeur, but ever since I was a kid, it's been of interest to me."

“Wouldn't Faith make a great senator's wife?” he added. In fact, on this point he and I agree. She has all the makings of a great senator's wife: she is a blond bimbo, who is pretty much willing to do whatever it takes—even bare her semi-nude body on the screen—to get the job done (take a look at some of her racier videos and you will know what I mean).

But If Mr. McGraw is serious about going into politics, I suggest he try reading a newspaper and, if he's up for it, maybe even a book once in a while. Yet Mr. McGraw possesses the one indispensable quality shared by all of those in the liberal entertainment elite: an intense, almost fanatical devotion to Bill Clinton.

Mr. McGraw calls Mr. Clinton “the best president we ever had.” (Think about how historically ignorant this comment is: He actually believes Mr. Clinton was a superior president to the likes of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt. Even by celebrity standards, this is an asinine statement).

“I love Bill Clinton,” the country music star said in his interview to Time. “I think we should make him king. I’m talking the red robe, the turkey leg—everything.”

Mr. Clinton, for his part, has returned the favor, telling Esquire magazine that Mr. McGraw would make a “great” senator or governor of Tennessee. It is not just Mr. McGraw’s inflated ego that the former president makes a point of stroking.

Mr. Clinton spent a lot of his time in power and the years following his presidency consolidating his alliance with key players in the Hollywood political establishment— Ms. Streisand, Mr. Beatty, Mr. Baldwin, Steven Spielberg, Bill Maher, Jack Nicholson, George Clooney (to name only a few). Mr. Clinton understood that the rise of our celebrity culture could also be harnessed to further his political career; if manipulated and used properly, Americans’ obsession with fame and glamour could provide fertile ground for crafting a public image as a political celebrity. Mr. Clinton hitched his star to the Hollywood elite, and he did everything he could to be seen as being one of them.

The relationship between Mr. Clinton and the entertainment class was mutually parasitical. He needed them to gain entry into the world of “the beautiful people.” They needed him to attain political respectability and access. The strategy worked. Among liberals and Democrats, Mr. Clinton has attained rock star-like status. Entertainers are seen in the public’s eye as legitimate advocates on policy issues. Since they are politically and ideologically joined at the hip, Mr. Clinton and his fellow liberals in Hollywood must see this Faustian bargain through to the end.

This is why liberal elitists refuse to acknowledge what is becoming more painfully obvious with each passing day since the attacks on 9/11: Mr. Clinton’s presidency was a tragic failure. Contrary to Mr. McGraw’s assertion, Mr. Clinton is the worst president of the 20th century—worse than Jimmy Carter, worse than Richard Nixon, worse than Herbert Hoover, and even worse than Warren Harding.

Mr. Clinton presided over the most criminal and scandal-ridden administration in U.S. history. He is not just a reckless philanderer, who transformed the presidency into a moral sewer by having sexual encounters—including oral sex with a young

intern—in the Oval Office. He is a sexual predator, who groped countless women both prior to and during his tenure in office. He is a rapist, who assaulted Juanita Broderick (a charge that is so credible even his staunchest defenders and paid attorneys have refused to even attempt to refute).

Just as he betrayed his wife on countless occasions, Mr. Clinton betrayed his political allies and ultimately, his country. His strongest supporters were African-Americans, so much so that Mr. Clinton was affectionately referred to by many of them as the “first black president.” The common line that came from black Democratic activists such as Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson was that “no one did more for the black community” than Mr. Clinton. In fact, the opposite was true: no one did less for them.

He betrayed the African-American community on numerous issues. He signed into law welfare reform—an issue most blacks had opposed for decades; he approved the passage of NAFTA, which resulted in millions of low-wage, blue-collar minorities to lose their jobs to Mexico; he oversaw an artificial economic boom, which we now know was rife with corporate corruption—Enron, Tyco International, WorldCom—and only further widened the income gap between white and black America; he neglected to improve the failing public schools in the inner cities, leaving blacks further behind in an increasingly high-tech, high-skilled global economy; he ordered U.S. troops into Haiti to restore the corrupt and brutal regime of Jean Bertrand Aristide, consigning millions of Haitians to another decade of misery; and most unforgivable of all, he did nothing—absolutely nothing—to stop the genocidal slaughter of nearly one million blacks in Rwanda—despite the urgent pleas from many in the media and the international community.

In other foreign policy issues, Mr. Clinton’s record was even worse. He refused to lift a finger to oppose Russia’s criminal war in Chechnya. This caused the volatile Caucasus to become fertile breeding grounds for Pan-Islamic extremists. In exchange for illegal foreign campaign contributions, his administration sold sensitive weapons technology and missile systems to Beijing. The technology transfers helped to transform communist China into a rising military power—a power that threatens U.S. security interests in the region and that one day in the near future will confront American forces in the Taiwan Strait.

But it was Mr. Clinton’s ineffectual and half-hearted response to Islamic fascism, which will be his most lasting and destructive legacy. Even though Osama bin Laden had declared jihad on the United States; the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993; 19 American soldiers were murdered and dragged through the

streets of Mogadishu; U.S. military personnel were killed in 1996 by terrorist attacks on the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia; U.S. embassies in east Africa were savagely bombed in 1998; and the USS Cole was the victim of a suicide terrorist bombing by al Qaeda operatives that took the lives of 17 sailors—Mr. Clinton refused to treat these atrocities for what they were: acts of war.

Instead, he insisted on treating them as a law enforcement matter. His only actions were to authorize the arrests of a handful of al Qaeda agents and order several pinprick air strikes against a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan and an empty terrorist camp in Afghanistan. Otherwise, he did nothing. This only served to embolden Osama bin Laden's army of hate. Mr. Clinton's inability to recognize the gathering storm of radical Islam and to act boldly to nip it in the bud was a colossal strategic blunder, one which will haunt the United States for decades to come.

Just like the 1920s, the 1990s was a long holiday from history. Like the Roaring Twenties, the Clinton Nineties was a selfish and self-indulgent period in American life. The two decades share numerous parallels. Both were marked by rampant political corruption, abrupt technological change, pervasive sexual hedonism, inept presidential leadership, a superficial economic renaissance and reckless drift in international affairs. The price for the Roaring Twenties was the Great Depression and a long war against German and Japanese fascism. The price for the Clinton Nineties is continued social and economic turbulence and a long war against Islamic fascism. Will the West again emerge triumphant? Only time will tell.

But there is one major difference between the two decades, and it is a difference that does not give me optimism for the future of the West. The celebrity culture was only in its infancy during the 1920s. America still possessed deep moral and spiritual reservoirs of Judeo-Christian self-sacrifice, flinty patriotism and genuine commitment to the civic good.

Those values are now, for the most part, gone, swept away by the hurricane force winds of the revolutionary 1960s. The celebrity culture has now evolved and matured into the dominant force in the United States. Our current cultural, media and increasingly, political elites are unable to break free from its tempting, all-consuming grip. Ominously, more and more ordinary Americans are becoming enchanted with its alluring but ultimately false promises of a sexual and consumerist utopia. Increasing numbers of Americans are tiring of the war on terrorism; they are tiring of the war in Iraq; and they are tiring of Mr. Bush's presidency, especially his noble project to defeat Islamic fascism and bring democracy to the Middle East.

In other words, there is a growing longing among many Americans for a return to the Clinton years, for a return to the illusionary security and cheap individualism of the 1990s. The harsh realities and challenging demands of the post-9/11 world are simply too much for many, and maybe even a majority of Americans. They believe they can turn the clock back, treat global terrorism as a law enforcement problem and avert their eyes from the advancing fury of radical Islamism.

In short, they are hoping for the full restoration of America's boobocracy, where swanky simpletons like Mr. Clinton, Al Gore and their allies in the entertainment elite will be able to regurgitate their vacuous arguments for "multilateral" diplomacy, their clever rationalizations for ineffective policies and their clarion call for Americans to return to the strenuous life of sex, fame and celebrity.

They are wrong—tragically, wrong. But do conservatives and more importantly, the Bush administration have the courage to stand up to the celebrity culture head on, and expose the moral and intellectual bankruptcy at its core? That is, or rather, that should be the question that needs to be answered.

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