

Editorials



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Michelle Malkin



State of our borders, 2008

If you think the bad economy has "solved" America's immigration problems, welcome to your reality check. It's certainly true illegal crossings from the south are down and that many foreign workers are returning to their native lands as work dries up. But border chaos, haphazard enforcement, massive backlogs and deportation negligence remain the order of the day.

A half-million citizenship applications have been pending for more than nine months. Some 700,000 illegal alien absconders — fugitives from deportation like Barack Obama's aunt Zeituni Onyango — are free. An estimated 4 million to 5 million illegal visa overstayers from around the world remain in the country. Both Big Business and left-wing ethnic groups have colluded to prevent an employer verification program for workers' citizenship status from getting implemented nationwide. And the borders are still largely borders in name only.

In June, the White House pushed through a \$1.6-billion border security spending plan ... for Mexico and Central America. While our own border fence remains incomplete, taxpayers shelled out for helicopters, surveillance equipment, computer infrastructure, expansion of intelligence databases, anti-corruption initiatives, human rights education and training, and anti-money laundering programs for our southern neighbors. So, how's the so-called Merida Initiative working out?

As terrorized citizens of Mexico will tell you, all hell has broken loose. Corrupt police officials and narco-insurgents have left a horrific trail of beheaded and bullet-ridden bodies in their wake on both sides of the border. Mexican Army incursions into U.S. territory are a regular occurrence. In Monterrey, bandits opened fire and threw a grenade at the U.S. consulate in the fall. A top Mexican immigration official was arrested in October carrying about 77 kilos of pot in Arizona. On a single weekend in Tijuana, 40 people were murdered, including nine victims who were decapitated. Two weeks ago, famed American anti-kidnapping negotiator Felix Bautista disappeared from the "relatively safe" northern industrial city of Saltillo in Coahuila state. No word on his whereabouts.

The apocalyptic conditions have prompted some Mexican lawmakers to revisit the country's ban on capital punishment. That's right. Members of the same foreign government that took America to court over our death penalty laws — and tried to block the state of Texas from executing illegal alien Death Row murderers — are now open to the idea of imposing the death penalty on the thugs on their own soil. And after years of vehement protests against the United States for its meager attempts at immigration enforcement, Mexico is cracking down hard on illegal Cuban immigrants caught trying to enter the country from the south. They forged an agreement with Cuba to immediately send back illegal aliens — none of that "undocumented worker" mushiness for them — and punish human smugglers.

Such lawlessness, Mexico has apparently realized, is a grave threat to its people. Without order, there can be no peace. And chaos, as I've argued endlessly since Sept. 11, is an invitation for those with far more nefarious intentions. Perhaps this is why Mexico slapped a 60-year prison term on a human smuggler who helped some 200 illegal aliens cross into the United States from Mexico — including Hezbollah supporters. In a little-noticed announcement last month, Mexican prosecutors reported the stiff sentence against Salim Boughader Mucharraraffe, a Mexican of Lebanese descent who operated a cafe in Tijuana and smuggled terrorist sympathizers into San Diego. Mucharraraffe's accomplice was Imelda Ortiz Abdala, a Mexican foreign service official who helmed the Mexican consulate in Beirut.

No illegal alien demonstrations ensued following the sentencing. No cries of racism and xenophobia clouded the news. No demands for amnesty and open borders arose. One hopes the incoming Obama administration can learn from our neighbors to the south the hard lesson Washington has abandoned since 9/11: Immigration control is a national security issue. Blood-stained reality clarifies the mind.

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Letters

Soccer fields

Just wanted to drop a short note to thank Micky Tower and the rest of the Parks & Recreation Department personnel for the excellent support they provided to local soccer players during the fall season. We had many compliments on both the condition of the fields and the soccer complex in general from out-of-town coaches and parents. Thanks.

Clay Harrington
President
Lampasas Soccer Association

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Linda Chavez



Pres. Bush's reading list

Karl Rove's recent revelation of President George W. Bush's passion for books wasn't a surprise to me. In a Wall Street Journal column last week, Rove explained that for the last three years, he and the president have had a friendly rivalry to see who could finish more books during the year. Rove won each year — but the president was no piker. In the three years of the competition, the president read 186 books to Rove's 250.

Much of the intelligentsia no doubt will be shocked to learn George W. Bush is an avid reader of serious books, but it simply confirms something I already suspected. During the first real discussion I ever had with then-Gov. Bush in 1998, he brought up a book written by a former colleague of mine at the Manhattan Institute.

Myron Magnet's "The Dream and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass" isn't the sort of book you come across if your taste goes to light reading. A scathing dissection of good intentions gone awry, Magnet's book lays bare the folly of liberal interventions on behalf of the poor and the devastating role of the counterculture in creating the underclass. But it's no red-meat screed of the sort that has propelled many well-known pundits to the top of the best-seller list either. Magnet is not a polemicist, but a serious scholar and elegant writer. Bush's reference to the book spoke worlds to me.

Liberals have always believed they have a monopoly on intelligence. Of all the Republican presidents in my lifetime, I can recall only one who was given high marks for raw intellect: Richard M. Nixon. But he was considered by many liberals as a Machiavellian exception that proved the rule that conservatives are dopes. In liberals' telling, Eisenhower and Ford were middle-brow Midwesterners who preferred the golf links to books; Reagan was a B-film actor capable of giving a good speech that someone else wrote; and the two Bushes were Yale graduates by way of money and pedigree, not merit.

Of course we now know — thanks to the publication of "Reagan, In His Own Hand," a reproduction of Reagan's early handwritten speeches — that Ronald Reagan was often his own best wordsmith and that his ideas were original, not borrowed. And perhaps liberals will grudgingly acknowledge that Dwight D. Eisenhower must have had something on the ball, if not for his role in defeating the uber-smart Germans during World War II, at least for contributing to the gene pool of granddaughter Susan Eisenhower, who proved how smart she was by endorsing the brainy Barack Obama.

Contrary to the stereotype that all conservatives are narrow-minded dummies, I've found conservatives are far more likely to be familiar with liberal intellectual thought than liberals are with the views of conservative intellectuals.

Bush's reading list was instructive not just because it was so long but because it included authors whose political orientation was different from the president's own. Included on the list provided by Rove were works by authors David Halberstam, Doris Kearns Goodwin, and James M. McPherson, all liberals, as well as the novel "The Stranger" by Albert Camus, generally regarded as an existentialist, though he eschewed the label.

It would be a little like learning that Bill Clinton's reading list in office included works by James Q. Wilson, Stephan Thernstrom, and Harvey Klehr, as well as Ayn Rand's "The Fountainhead." But what we know of his reading habits reveal Clinton to be predictable. A list of his 21 favorite books, compiled for his presidential library, included authors Maya Angelou, Ralph Ellison, Taylor Branch, Reinhold Niebuhr and, naturally, Hillary Clinton — all well to the left on the political spectrum.

Bush's book list isn't likely to convince his critics that the president's intellect is equal to their exalted own. And I can even imagine some complaining that the number of books the president read proves he was ignoring his job. But perhaps Rove's article will at least dispel a favorite caricature: Bush the Dummy.

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From the Bible

"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

...And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed."

2 Corinthians 9:6,8

Bush and the firing squad

So in a matter of days it's bye-bye, Bush. Then it's bye-bye, gradually, to the cottage industry dedicated to ridiculing, castigating, smearing and trashing the 43rd president of the United States who couldn't have pleased this surly gang save by expiring in office (even if his expiry would have vaulted Dick Cheney to the White House).

One of the gang, indeed, worked out his obvious frustrations by making a movie depicting Bush as victim of an assassin's bullet. Not a few have proclaimed "W" the worst president in American history, in spite of Jimmy Carter's longstanding and tenacious claim to that honor.

What are such folks going to do without Bush to kick around? Maybe cultivate nasturtiums, watch Mark Phelps exercise tapes, or learn to play the contra bassoon. I wouldn't give long odds on the survival rate for nasturtiums whose color or progress displeases the gang. Bush-despisers (think Joy Behar, Keith Olbermann, Frank Rich, etc.) aren't famous for patience with viewpoints different from their own.

A popular cliché has it that "history will judge" whatever at a given moment requires judging. On that expectation the whole flap about Bush and his merits may impress the next generation as just plain weird. Bush hasn't by any means been the greatest chief executive since Washington, but then Keith Olbermann isn't the most astute commentator since Socrates.

In assessing the Bush stewardship we need to calm down — get a grip. As president, as commander in

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chief, Bush might have performed better. So might Ronald Reagan. So might John Kennedy. *Errare humanum est.*

Where did Bush err? Well, clearly, in the weighting of causes to invade Iraq. There weren't any "weapons of mass destruction." On the other hand, 1) nearly everyone else thought there were, and that Saddam was willing to use them, 2) Saddam sealed his own doom by refusing cooperation with inspectors, and 3) Saddamite Iraq was a moral and political cesspool urgently requiring cleanup by someone some time.

Then anger over Iraq led to the silly but oft-repeated

William Murchison



charge that Bush's anti-terror policies amounted somehow to a secret war on civil liberties.

Federal confusion when Katrina inundated New Orleans further diminished Bush's popularity ratings. Just why it did is hard to say in objective terms. America hadn't seen such a storm since Galveston, 1900. Both city and state officials behaved incompetently. The federal response might have been more immediate and energetic but hindsight, as we know, is always perfect. More over, Bush directed to New Orleans vast amounts of money and supplies. The worst I can see he deserves, on Katrina, is a B minus.

So what is the deal with the Bush-despisers? Here's my own theory, preliminary in the way theories ought to be: All the malice and unforgiveness directed Bush's way grew from the Florida vote count, and from the persistent feeling among liberals and Gore partisans that "We wuz robbed," on account of which larcenous act the Bush administration was somehow illegitimate.

Defeat (adjudicated in the end by five conservative Supreme Court justices) stuck in the losers' craws, and they hadn't the desire to dislodge it. Revenge was what they wanted. They were the political equivalent of the baleful Confederate veteran on the cigarette lighter of some decades ago: "Forget Hell."

I don't say the lynch party set out to take down the president. I say they cut him no slack when stuff happened, demanded of him a perfection to which no politician could rise or aspire. On such terms the Bush presidency was doomed from the start: not least because the talking heads and writing hands of today belong largely to Democrats and other nonconservatives.

Maybe "W" wasn't the right man to start with, even for the GOP nomination. Still, he wasn't half as bad as his enemies seem to think. Question: How many terrorist attacks has America sustained since September 2001? Right, and yet there's more to offer in extenuation of "W" — more that will be offered when the tumult and shouting die, as in time they always do.

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