LIKE generations of hopeful young people before them, twenty-somethings still arrive in Southern California in droves every day, not sure what they want to do but suspecting there might be something for them out here on the Cutting Edge. Most fail in the quest for the new self Los Angeles is historically presumed to provide, but others find a niche. One who found a niche within a niche was Matt Drudge.

Eight years ago Drudge, then a 22-year-old, headed west from Takoma Park, Maryland. He hadn’t been a good student; he hated school and logged a D average. On the plus side, he did have a nose for the news. While his friends were thinking about grunge rock, Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, Drudge looked to Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan and New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd. He wanted to write but hadn’t gone to journalism school and without the credentials valued by news gathering organizations these days, saw little prospect of making a career through conventional channels. “Who would hire me?” he says today as he looks back at what is already a career. “I don’t fit into groupthought.” This, unlike much of what Drudge writes, is an understatement.

While toiling in the gift shop at CBS he bought a computer and discovered the world of the Internet. Unlike the closed community of the newsroom, where connections and credentials and affirmative action determined who got hired, cyberspace was a world without clearly defined rules and without a bureaucracy to enforce them. It was how the world of journalism used to be—open-ended, arranged to reward the entrepreneurial and the clever. It was an environment in which Drudge felt at home.

“One day, I pull out a book on the Access Point Network and I say ‘one of the reasons I’m here is that the Access Point Network is going to make me into a journalist.’” Drudge says. “It came along just at the right time.” With no college education, no formal training, no high-profile connections, and no relationship with big-time media outlets, Drudge set out to make himself into a journalist.

His apprenticeship was as eccentric. He eventually became manager of the gift shop at CBS, where he fished items out of the trash and posted them on the Internet news groups. He never had an idea where he was headed until a reader asked to be “signed up.” It was at this moment that the Drudge Report was born. Operating out of a one-bedroom Hollywood apartment, he began to report, but not in a way that would win him fans on the editorial board of the New York Times. It was unabashedly gossipy and lively—the sort of reporting sometimes dismissed as “tabloid,” which has nonetheless remade the pages of those who mock it.

Drudge understood the cardinal rule in the game whose rules he was helping to write: if you snooze, you lose. The upstart info-man scoured Web pages for items and posted them in the Drudge Report with lightning speed, often scooping the newsrooms. The technology magazine Wired offered to pick up his dispatches on line. He agreed, on the condition that they could neither tell him what to write nor edit his copy. America On Line noticed his material, offered to carry his work and Drudge made the jump and proceeded to make a name for himself by breaking stories such as CBS’ firing of Connie Chung and Bob Dole’s selection of Jack Kemp as his running mate.

Continued on page 8
SECOND CLASS CITIZENS

As a Black faculty member now in my mid-forties, I recall an incident that helped immeasurably to set me on the path toward two advanced degrees, despite the fact that I was as well prepared for college as others.

In the late 1960s I enrolled in a small Catholic college in upstate New York. Like any college freshman I was extremely intimidated by this new academic environment. My math professor, an old Jesuit with a gruff and surly demeanor, was perhaps the most frightening teacher I had ever known. At least once a week he would unabashedly announce to the class, “Gentlemen, I will flunk you with a smile.” Sure enough, by the middle of the semester, despite what I thought to be my best effort, I and several others were flunking his course in grand fashion.

One afternoon I went to his office to get extra help to prepare for the midterm, and to my surprise he was very gracious and glad to see that I was concerned about my education. However, he was even more emphatic in his insistence that I study harder than I was to pass his course and made it clear that he didn’t pander to any student’s racial identity. In retrospect, he in effect was committing an unforgivable sin in the eyes of the liberal “Difference Theory” advocates: treating and challenging every student equally. (“I will, Mr. Hall, flunk you with a smile,” he reiterated.) But yet this professor was the only one who cared. On the few Black students on campus. He was simply saying, in effect, that people like me had to learn despite the bad cards society and some whites had dealt our race. We worked and we learned.

I cite this anecdote because over the past twenty-five years this lesson has been lost on many of our institutions of higher learning. Pressure from the well-advertised cultural diversity and “politics of difference” crowd has too often dominated the discussion on how best to affect Black students’ success on our campuses. Despite a myriad of special programs now in place at most major universities meant to enhance ability of our schools, teachers, and most importantly from our students. But in regards to Black students, we can no longer continue to flirt with the latest trendy pedagogy because we are afraid to demand standardized skills, objectives, and basic competencies from everyone regardless of their socio-economic background. Black students more than ever before need to be challenged, not pandered to. Despite the indignities we as people have suffered, our second-class citizenship will be assured if we don’t upgrade our abilities to compete in an increasingly global job market.

We need more educators like the old Jesuit who kicked me in my butt over twenty-five years ago and challenged me to achieve. He was hard and very direct, but I now know he probably cared more for me as a human being than all the liberal educators have done with their paternalistic pandering to Black students in recent decades.

Patrick Hall
South Bend, IN

DISMAYED AND REPULSED

I’m dismayed and repulsed by the article on S&M and wonder if your editorial taste has evaporated into the L.A. smog. What purpose other than to disgust or offend, does this ‘expose’ serve? Are you so bereft of topics? May I suggest a few?

• movie reviews —there’s a hot battlefield in the cultural wars; what’s the prognosis?
• interviews with conservatives in Southern California-Republican or celebrity-types
• general pre-election analysis of the California political scene
• a survey/analysis of Los Angeles today—is it still a fascinating melting-pot, or a bizarre collection of barrios and self-satisfied enclaves?
• anything relating to Diane Feinstein that would help knock this formidable politico off her goody-goody perch.

Jim Sharp
Lafayette, CA

Several years ago, in an issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, a feature story appeared dealing with a branch campus within the Washington state system. The article dealt with the implementation of Afrocentric pedagogy at this campus and how it had obtained a 90% graduation rate. I actually taught research instruction at this campus for two years, and I know that what went on there academically hardly affirmed Black academic achievement. Students who had major writing and reading difficulties were being granted degrees. There also existed a soli-darity movement inside the liberal administration that made any criticism of the program anathema.

Now this is not to say that the problems of this campus were unique. Indeed, our nation as a whole is at risk because of our failure to demand competence and account-
Livan shines, his 28 year old brother Orlando, perhaps an even better athlete, is ininternal exile as a player. Unable to escape to the U.S.,he is also banned from playing baseball (he has been the star of the Cuban national team for years) merely for having accused of meeting with a sports agent from the U.S. It is a story that gives a different twist to Che’screepy slogan, Hasta la victoria siempre.

DO NO HARM: The editors of the Journal of the American Medical Association apparently didn’t read—or heed—the last issue of this magazine.

OLD GIRL NETWORK: Around the world, victims are still trying to dig out from the rubble of socialism, but in a recent page-one story in the Los Angeles Times, writer Robin Wright pines for the old days. “Open societies, it turns out, haven’t been as generous as socialists and communists to women who want to serve in public office,” she laments. More specifically, “From Albania to Yemen, the number of women in power plummeted after the transition from socialist governments, which sought to develop female as well as male proletariats. As those governments died, so went the socialist ideals of equality and the subsidies of social programs that aided women. In most countries, traditional patriarchal cultures resurfaced,” including “the strongly patriarchal practices of Confucianism” in Vietnam. But the biggest setbacks have been in the former Soviet states. When they were elected in greater numbers, the communist women promoted the policies of two Dead White European Males, Marx and Lenin, that led to famines and labor camps where millions of women died, but Robin Wright doesn’t get into that.

RECTOR AD ABSURDUM

WHITE HOUSE RACE: The Rev. Imagene Stewart came to the capital for the famous 1963 March on Washington and stayed on to run homes for battered women. The Clinton White House recently tapped the well-known black clergywoman to work with the White House Conference Against Hate Crimes. Trouble was, the Rev. Stewart’s approach to hate crimes didn’t fit the liberal mind-set. “During the meeting I stated that there were a lot of blacks who promote hate and I feel that black racists should be included in the agenda,” she said. “All that point, I was immediately denounced by two or three persons of the NAACP. They were aghast. Their mouths dropped open. One member of the NAACP came up to me later and said I was not helping our cause as a race. I don’t believe until we admit there are problems on both sides we will ever solve the problem. There are black racists out there. The conference, she said, is turning out to be a ‘White Center for the conference against white people.’

But theblack clergywoman senses that her politically incorrect stand has consequences. “I don’t know if I’ll ever be invited back.”

IMPLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY: The Michigan Mandate was a phrase originally coined by University of Michigan President James Duderstadt to describe the school’s hard-charging diversity plan, but if a pair of white students have their way it will take on a different meaning. Represented by the Center for Individual Rights, students Jennifer Gratz and Patrick Hamacher, both of whom were denied admission at Ann Arbor despite strong academic credentials, are suing on grounds that the school’s admission policies discriminate against whites. This discrimination has been the dirty little secret of the University of Michigan for years, hidden away in the academic fog of implausible deniability until Philosophy Professor Carl Cohen obtained admissions policy guidelines under the Freedom of Information Act. These guidelines showed a policy that was separate with a 3.8 average and 1000 showsthat was separate from that which was used for whites. This discrimination of implausible deniability is what has cost the university millions of dollars in lawsuits. These guidelines under the Freedom of Information Act. These guidelines showed a policy that was separate and unequal, in which a white student with a 3.8 average and 1000 SAT score would be rejected and a black or Hispanic applicant with the same scores would be admitted. The University’s line of defense against the suit was based on the 1978 Baake case in which the Supreme Court said that race could be a “factor.” The line of attack for the Center of Individual Rights is the Hopwood decision in which the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals told the University of Texas that it could not discriminate in the interests of “diversity.”

THREE STRIKES AND YOU’RE IN: While a few thousand Cubans were attending the rebural of Che Guevara, a battle was raging in the opening game of the World Series over the Voice of America’s Radio Marti. Their hero, Florida Marlins’ 22 year old rookie pitcher Livan Hernandez, had acquired the highest profile among the Cleveland Indians. Despite the fact that Fidel has attempted to make himself a non-person for having defected to the U.S. where he can practice his art among the best, Hernandez has become the only opponent of the high quality of Cuban baseball, and of the financial (over $1 million a year) and philosophical rewards of freedom. The subject lesson about the island’s deteriorating tyranny was made clear by the situation inside the Hernandez family. While Heterodoxy reported on the depressing odyssey of Patrick Chavis, an affirmative action admit at the University of California Davis in the mid-70s who became a poster boy for affirmative action enthusiasts as a result of allegedly serving the black community with good black medicine. In fact, although Chavis was caged rapturously by figures such as Ted Kennedy and Tom Hayden trying to make the case for affirmative racism, he was actually the target of malpractice suits by his black patients and had gotten his license yanked following a botched liposuction procedure on one of his patients. Now JAMA has printed an article by U.C. Davis Med. School profs Robert Davidson and Ernest Lewis which claims that a study of 20 years of racial preferences at their school suggests that those students admitted under racial preferences do as well as those admitted on academic merit alone. The problem with the study is that these students in their desire to say something good about affirmative action, played fast and loose with the facts. Instead of really considering the beneficiaries of racial preferences, they simply dumped them into a larger category of “special admissions” students which typically makes up 20% of the entering class at the medical school. And of this category, fewer than half are racially preferred students, the rest being students who had been boosted in the admissions process by “life experiences” such as service in the Peace Corps. And in point of fact, according to attorney Gail Heriot, who helped chair the campaign to pass Proposition 209, this special admissions group did not do as well as the regular admits, being three times more likely to flunk out and three times less likely to qualify for medical honors society and eight times more likely to not pass the National Board of Medical Examiners test. Naturally none of these facts were reported by the New York Times, which trumpeted the JAMA story on its front page.

STAND AND DELIVER: An initiative called “English for the Children,” which is likely to be the next big ballot measure in California, has the support of famed math teacher Jaime Escalante whose work in teaching calculus to minority students was the subject of the film Stand and Deliver. The anti-bilingualism measure would mandate instruction in English unless the parents of Hispanic children explicitly requested “native” language instruction. It is aimed specifically at the warehousing of Hispanic students in bilingual classes without the knowledge or approval of their parents. In agreeing to become Honorary Chairman of the campaign, Escalante said, “My views on this important educational issue are based on personal experience. As an immigrant from Latin America who arrived to the U.S. at 32 not knowing English, I struggled for several years in menial jobs until I could learn enough English to begin a professional career...” But the biggest setbacks have been in the former Soviet states. When they were elected in greater numbers, the communist women promoted the policies of two Dead White European Males, Marx and Lenin, that led to famines and labor camps where millions of women died, but Robin Wright doesn’t get into that.

LUNA BEACH By Carl Moore

TO APPOINT AN INDEPENDENT COUNSEL OR TO APPOINT AN INDEPENDENT COUNSEL, THAT’S THE QUESTION.

THOSE SLIMY COFFEE, ALL THOSE TAPES! THERE’S GOT TO BE A WAY OUT.

BETTER PUT ON THE OL’ THINKING CAP, GIRL.

TO BE CONTINUED...
How I Wrote About Puerto Rico and Lost My Job

PC Firing at the Post

By Scott McConnell

S
ome people are astonished to hear that an editor could get sacked over an editorial urging the U.S. Congress to exercise caution before admitting Puerto Rico to the Union as the 51st state. For starters, few non-Puerto Ricans have given much thought to the “status question” (commonwealth, statehood, or independence) which has impassioned the island’s political and cultural leaders most of this century. As the dismissed editorial page editor, I am a bit astounded myself at the turn of events.

But increasingly, I think the collision between me and my bosses (Post publisher Martin Singerman and editor Ken Chandler and—at a great distance—Republican Don Young) who believed in Puerto Rican independence, one from a commonwealth supporter, and began seeking leading specialists who could analyze the issue from intra-American and Caribbean perspectives. What better way to fill the summer news doldrums than opening a debate on a consequential subject that no other newspaper was covering?

Carlos Romero-Barcelo, Puerto Rico’s non-voting representative to the U.S. Congress and a prominent statehood supporter came in for an editorial board meeting. We had cited his book Statehood Is for the Poor in the editorial and now there was a spirited session of give and take. A white-haired graduate of Exeter and Yale, Romero-Barcelo argued that Puerto Ricans were being denied their fundamental civil rights by not being residents of a state. Though unpersuaded, most of my staff thought his argument would be effective in a political environment where an appeal to “rights” usually wins.

My first indication that something other than an intense political debate was at hand came a few days later, when Romero-Barcelo wrote me a long heated letter, saying, “You certainly gave us a clear idea of the existing prejudice against Puerto Ricans.” This statement was an egregious mischaracterization of what seemed to me and my staff (I had been at the Post page editorial for more than eight years, though at its best it only six). I had been the polite and fairly typical discussion with the editorial board. Meanwhile, through another channel, Romero-Barcelo informed Marty Singerman about our alleged “prejudice” and his public relations flack wrote a similar letter, with a copy to Singerman.

But within weeks, the uproar, limited as it was to the Puerto Rican political activists in the city, seemed to have subsided. (The only comment I heard about—a non-political Puerto Rican—was from a waitress who had seen me on Spanish TV; she told me to write more about Puerto Ricans’ scandals and the welfare system.) Then came the lunch.

As publisher, Martin Singerman periodically called for a discussion of various subjects and various black and Latino leaders, designed in part to diffuse the charge that the Post’s generally conservative stands are anti-minority. These lunches are sometimes fun, often informative, but occasionally simply business. But the one on August 15 was something else altogether. Singerman apparently gave Fernando Ferrer, Bronx Borough pres- ident and a future aspirant, a free hand to put together the guest list. Ferrer then set about organizing a lunch that was not a discussion of city affairs or of the Puerto Rican issue, but a kind of trial of the Post’s Puerto Rican editorial.

Initially about a dozen people—all prominent—were scheduled to come. Upon seeing the guest list, I initially hoped for a nuanced discussion touching on whether Puerto Ricans had a distinct national consciousness. The day before the meeting, the list was revised: another half a dozen names were added, a kind of trial of the Post’s Puerto Rican editorial.

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I knew it would be a controversial piece, if for no other reason than that almost no one without blood ties to the island ever discussed the status question, and here was an Anglo newspaper wading right in with a strong argument. But I also felt that an editorial page should take controversial stands—and indeed if we put out (as my staff did) about fifteen editorials a week without saying anything bold or unexpected, we would hardly be earning our salaries.

Editorial page editor Ken Chandler read the editorial after I put it to bed on Friday evening and excised a sentence saying that Puerto Rican statehood—because it fostered bilingualism—wouldn’t strengthen national unity and might dilute it. The next thing I heard about the matter was on Monday afternoon, when Post editor Marty Singerman came to my office, as he regularly did. I told him I expected some fallout from the editorial, published that morning, but thus far hadn’t heard a word. He then read the piece with care,

SCOTT MCCONNELL

told me it was very well argued, adding that his only concern was that someone might miscon- strue the initial sentence: “Few mainland Americans think very much about Puerto Rico.”

Save from some supportive comments from non-Puerto Ricans, we heard very little for a day or two. One highly regarded Post columnist of moderate views called to tell me that the edit was, if anything, too one-handed: a Manhattan Institute staffer told me the editorial was an important revelation; a New York lawyer with close links to the state Democratic Party later told me that he had sent out thirty copies of the editorial to friends around the country. These were all good signs, but by comparison with the instantaneously reaction an editorial can generate, the response was subdued.

On Tuesday things heated up. A columnist for El Diario (a Spanish language New York daily) raised against the editorial, asserting that it “insulted” all Puerto Ricans residing in the United States. He rashed some of the stats and quotes from the piece, concluding that the editorial failed to note that most Puerto Rico’s social problems were the “result of the invasion of 1898.” Then members of Congress Jose Serrano, Nydia Velasquez, and Luis Gutierrez faxed in letters to the editor—Serrano saying Puerto Rico was a “colony” deprived of basic civil rights, and Velasquez and Gutierrez charging that the editorial had “stereotyped” the people of Puerto Rico. Spanish-language TV sent a camera crew to interview me. We made plans for a series of op-ed pieces, from different perspectives: one from a statehood advocate, one from a commonwealth supporter, and another from a小吃-Caribbean perspective.

The scene—a crowd milling about the hallway, visibly nervous secretaries, and some talk about whether we needed to call building security—was more like the Prelude to a sit-in than an editorial lunch. Singerman did in fact call security, then told them they weren’t needed after
the camera crew withdrew voluntarily. One Post editor informed us that his wife—a prominent TV correspondent—had told him several days earlier that she was going to resign from the "New York Post." Plainly, a searching and honest exchange of ideas was not in the cards.

In the end, about thirty Puerto Ricans squeezed into the Post’s largest lunchroom with Singerman, Chandler, myself, and two other Post editors. The guests included most of city’s Puerto Rican elected officials—state senators, city council members, state assembly members—and a show of strength by Chandler—as well as several men prominent in the city university system and private foundations. Guests, of course, had to talk, and none could afford to be less vehem- dent in denouncing the editorial than his prede- cessor. So they went around the table—lambast- ing Singerman with a kind of adversarial "stereotypes" of the past, and as an incitement to racism.

When they had finished, I said, as calmly as I could, that I took full responsibility for the editorial, that its purpose was to expand the debate about Puerto Rican statehood which I felt consequential for the country as a whole, and that it was simply written to provoke Puerto Ricans. I rejected the charge of fomenting a stereotype, which I described as a process of exagger- using a trait to give a maliciously false impres- sion. “We are not so much people of the Third World as a Cenus Census,” I said, “not and could not lead to stereotyping. I said— provocatively perhaps—that perhaps some of the angry speakers would be more interested in the editorial as in the fact that the edit broke the monopoly held by Puerto Ricans on discussion of the status of the island’s future.

What I did not do—and this was probably my big mistake—was apologize for the editorial, or say that it was ill-conceived or unfortunate. When Luis Miranda, a former Giuliani commis- sioner, said that there were other statistics about Puerto Rico as well as the ones cited in the editor- ial, pointing to the island’s recent economic growth, I readily concurred and said that subse- quent editorial would discuss the island’s eco- nomic advances.

Ferrer was annoyed by my response, ask- ing, “Is that all?” Singerman said something more conciliatory. It was at that moment that I realized that our society had developed an expected script of white Anglo contrition and apology (President Clinton’s apology for slavery was exemplary) and that I had failed to follow it.

The lunch then took a bizarre turn. One guest started yelling, thin lips, somewhat disheveled hair—but all in all not total- ly ugly despite those traits. Olga Mendez, a state sena- tor and one of the few women present, said that she did not come to the Post. The guests included most of city’s Puerto Rican elected officials—state senators, city council members, state assembly members—and a show of strength by Chandler—as well as several men prominent in the city university system and private foundations. Between the narrowly targeted political journals and a mass media filled with happy talk about multi- culturalism, America might muddle through alright. Still, many signs point to the troubling conclusion that greater diversity will actually mean less freedom. The generally conservative New York Post’s reluctance to mix it up in a modest way on the question of Puerto Rican statehood is, I think, one of them. Scott McConnell is currently writing a book on immigration.

As it happened, the matter was decided in- formally or candid airing of all political ques- tions by mass circulation newspapers. Between the narrowly targeted political journals and a mass media filled with happy talk about multi- culturalism, America might muddle through alright. Still, many signs point to the troubling conclusion that greater diversity will actually mean less freedom. The generally conservative New York Post’s reluctance to mix it up in a modest way on the question of Puerto Rican statehood is, I think, one of them. Scott McConnell is currently writing a book on immigration.
tled his study of the Western Canon The Books and School of the Ages. The real school resided in the books and when the institution dedicates itself to keeping reality at bay then, of course, the books must go. The behavior of contemporary academics resembles what Voegelin calls “Gnostic denial.” Such a denial is at work, for example, in the writing program at California Institute of Technology. The prevailing method of “teaching literacy” in freshman courses now makes stigmata out of grammatical correctness and the possession of a rich vocabulary and formal design. It is spiked up with political slogans. It is no surprise, therefore, that Barton and Lapointe’s recent survey of the literacy of four-year college graduates showed that only four per cent of those surveyed had the highest level of literacy in a five-level hierarchy.

Since the people who have imposed these disastrous methods do exhibit the traits of language competence, one can hardly avoid the inference that they deny the same competence to their students by design. But under what motive? It can only be the desire, on the part of members of a resentful (because mediocre) bureaucracy, to prevent others from surpassing them intellectually. As Bloom claims, real thinking stems from the very Great Books. The great tradition of “culture studies” professors have expelled from the curriculum. The pattern of change in higher education since the 1960s thus follows a predictable course: institutional statism, inflated egos must suppress standards to survive.

Back to the question of how smart people can be made stupid by such petty, intellectually non- nourishing stuff as obsessively preoccupies the minds of contemporary academics. I think this is partly a question of generations. The first generation of authoritative intellectuals in the late 1960s and early 1970s engaged in conscious duality. They fully grasped the value of the traditional curriculum and they recognized the cause of its intrinsic merit. (Because it offered no arena in which to preen their radical individualism, it made them feel paltry.) Their attempt to bury the canon was really an attempt to segregate themselves as a post-revolutionary tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations. Literature, in this argument, is ideology, and critical analysis is the unmasking of hidden agendas.

Sometimes, the itch to be “transgressive” can be master that of the very book of Derrida. De Man’s posthumously revealed Nazi pedigree. More commonly, it is merely silly or vulgarly offensive. This example is one of the many cases of what certain Women’s Studies presentation given last February at the annual meeting of the Michigan Academy, the in-state counterpart of the MLA. (I write of Michigan because it’s where I live.) With the title “Licking Each Other: Theorizing Ethnographic Writing Through Lesbian Language and Desire,” the author provided the following definition:

Lesbian literature illustrates a definite connection between language, food, and sexuality. Beginning with a look at writings by authors such as Jeanette Winterson, Rita Mae Brown, and Gertrude Stein, and moving to such authors as Mary Fallon and Monique Wittig, this paper presents the “membrane-reading” model as the characteristic of lesbian literature which provides a written, sensual evocation of lesbian culture. This paper concludes by suggesting that the connection between these themes and food can be used to theorize an ethnographic writing which seeks to evoke a sense of culture and meaning of the years of the Iyi.” The author uses this model in her argument of the importance of food in culture and meaning of the years of the Iyi.

The usual response to this, when people read it, is to make fun of the “postmodern” discussion. What is the truth behind this discussion? To begin with, the social groupings and identity constructions that are the focus of this discussion are not very imaginative personalities which resent the achievement. The higher the achievement, the greater the resentment. This is the case with any “meme,” that is, the groupings to-be-worshipped. The specter of the homosexual movement, “to theorize,” “ethnographic,” “subject,” “postmodern” and “Other,” which as always is capitalized.

“Licking Each Other,” with its author’s plural references to other academic non-entities, is about the “meme” concept, developing a new Homoconservative movement, one of the more prominent entries in the academic list of groups-to-be-worshipped. The specter of the Dead White Male, of course, haunts every syllable of the abstract. It is the Dead White Male, still posthumously in control of society, who is supposed to be shocked into cultivation by the witchcraft of “transgressive” categories, just as it is the Dead White Male who is supposed to have thought up until the liberating present, the “theorizing” of [of] ethnographic writing through lesbian language and identity. Never mind that the use of “Licking Each Other” could also be the running caption for a layout in”/enthusiasm. That is an irony just too rich.”

In this sense, theory converses itself around a scrap-heap filled to whose expansion or immolation solidifies the threatened, because tenuously established, group-consciousness. Another name for this sort of group-consciousness is mob mentality. Everyone in the academy now pretends to be “doing theory” as the phrase goes. The writer of “Licking Each Other” is “doing theory” and therefore participating in the mandatory consensus, the astute observer concludes. The spectator who exhibits this characteristic in every one of its manifestations from Marxist doctrine in the Soviet Union, China, and Cambodia, to the dredging up of “representative of the voiceless” in child-psychology, to multicultural policies in the contemporary university. All postmodern theory takes its roots from the basic political slogan of the Calliclesian rebels, to whom the group-consciousness of the homosexual movement, “to theorize,” “ethnographic,” “subject,” “postmodern” and “Other,” which as always is capitalized.

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HETERODOXY PAGE 7
Free Matt Drudge. Continued from page 1

"I started reading it and I didn't know what he was talking about. He was good at what he was doing and making money--guys," says Andrew Breitbart of UCLA. "When I met him I was flabbergasted. He's an anarchocrmie, he doesn't fit into his generation's archetype and he's not part of this movement. He's using the Internet the way it should be used and getting the information out there. He broke the Diana story five minutes before the networks."

Drudge soon found himself being referred to as the "Walter Winchell of the Web," with his site getting 40,000 hits a day. Often he changed the newswire several times. His key: for breaching the prestige press to the punch got him profiled in Time, Newsweek, People, USA Today and the Washington Post. His vaguely conservative views caused rumblings in liberal circles, but Drudge's star was rising as the preeminent Internet reporter. He turned down six-figure offers in order to maintain his independence. Drudge was setting the curve in a new medium. Book offers were coming in. Then trouble hit.

On August 10 item, "GOP: The Blumenthal Option?" Drudge wrote about a recent story in Mother Jones on Republican consultant Don Sipple, who had been abusing his wife. Sipple would be an obvious target for Democrats but some Republicans had a comeback. An unnamed source told Drudge that "There are court records [of [Clinton aide] Sidney Blumenthal's violence against his wife. If they begin to use Sipple and his problems against us, the Republicans can turn the carpet on us." "I think Blumenthal would be fair game," Drudge said that Blumenthal has a "spousal abuse past that has been effectively covered up" but also tried to balance his item by citing an unnamed White House source that the story was "pure fiction." "The item got Blumenthal's attention; it also got the attention of his wife, Jacqueline, who also works for the White House.

Blumenthal called his lawyer, William McDaniel, who demanded to know Drudge's sources for the "outrageous falsehoods." When Drudge said he would not give up his source, Blumenthal threatened to sue. Drudge was braced with a grudge against Drudge, decided to sue. The case is being billed as a landmark battle over expression on the Internet, but Blumenthal made it an affair of state.

"Sidney Blumenthal, as Assistant to the President, occupies one of the highest positions in the Bush administation. His duties include policy, issues and political matters," said the massive, 1,36-page complaint. "In publishing false information about plaintiff Sidney Blumenthal and plaintiff Jacqueline Jordan Blumenthal, defendant Drudge intended that, or acted with reckless disregard whether, such publication would harm President William J. Clinton and impede the operation of the Clinton Administration.

Drudge quickly retracted the piece and apologized. "This is a case of using me to broadcast dirty laundry," he told reporters. "I think I've been had." But Blumenthal proceeded with the suit, seeking $10 million in compensatory damages and $20 million in punitive damages. It struck some observers of legal affairs as interesting that the same grand total, $30 million, had been awarded to relatives of murder in the O.J. Simpson civil trial.

And in a C-SPAN interview, former New Republic editor Michael Kinsley, now with the online Slate magazine, said Blumenthal should not have sued. James Glassman, who worked as publisher of Blumenthal's tenure, sees no evidence of marital trouble with his former colleague but agrees with Kinsley: "Whether he had reason to file or not, he shouldn't have," Glassman said. "At the White House." Glassman says, "Sid is more after the source than Drudge." Maybe Blumenthal's boss is too.

"I can also tell you that Mr. Blumenthal did talk to the President and the Vice President about this, who told him they support him if he wanted to proceed along these lines," said White House spokesman Joe Lockhart. That executive backing led some observers to charge that the administration was using its lawsuit to quash critics on the Internet. The Clinton administration, after all, had struck back at these critics during the past three years by releasing labyrinthine graphs purporting to show how anti-Clinton stories such as the reporting on the Vince Foster death and the Whitewater affair had moved from the Internet to British tabloids to conservative think tanks and finally into the mainstream press. The Clinton-backed suit targets America On Line, the obvious deep pocket, as the publisher of Drudge's material. Media critics find the suit disturbing.

"I worry about the suit against AOL," says James Glassman. "It's potentially very damaging to free speech on the Internet. A real chilling effect." Village Voice free-speech advocate Nat Hentoff says that since Drudge apologized and retracted the story, "The only rationale for it [the law suit] is either vengeance or a desire to chill a group's speech." Drudge is being represented by the Individual Rights Foundation and his attorney, Manny Klausner, says, "What we see here is a grotesque abuse of power by the Clinton administration in trying to silence views that are considered unflattering to the White House. The motive is to bludgeon Drudge into submission. They want to drive out Drudge and his sources and make life difficult for companies like AOL that provide a forum.

As for Blumenthal, he was taking the high road. The suit wasn't about money or quashing speech, he said, but an issue of chivalry. "First and foremost, I'm defending my family," he told the New York Times. "I also think that there's such a thing as integrity in journalism."

Those familiar with Sidney Blumenthal's pre-White House career as a savage hatchet-man for left-leaning causes would be forgiven a smile upon hearing this last sentence.

Blumenthal hails from Chicago and graduated from Brandeis in 1969, during the heyday of student rebellion. He was a radical himself, but he was the left with me I was flabbergasted. He's an anarchocrmie, he doesn't fit into his generation's archetype and he's not part of this movement. He's using the Internet the way it should be used and getting the information out there. He broke the Diana story five minutes before the networks."
mentality of the citizens." One Russian writer Blumenthal apparently did not read was Victor Suwarov who noted that the Soviets had a term for Westerners eager to accept their hospitality and handouts: gosnood, literally "shit eaters." Blumenthal blasted neo-conservatives for what he saw as their ad hominem attacks but his own approach often proved distinctly anatomical. Arms negotiator Richard Perle, for example, was a "familiar short spherical figure, often topped by a Greek Fisherman's cap." He was a "self-indulgent prisoner of his own man for all desserts." whose "hard line took precedence over his waistline." Blumenthal also wrote in the Washington Post that on the night before his wedding, Greg Fosseal had gone to meet with his book agent, an interesting charge given his own recent conversion to family values.

Blumenthal might find another version of anti-communism in Decter's work was "an unintentional parody of the Communist enforcer Mike Gold, who led the inquisition of the Communist Party's "artists in uniform" and "power counter his predecessors . . . the apparent strengths of his presidency, his ability to surmount power, and learn from difficulties." and this gem: "But, beginning in this slough of despond, his Presidential power will begin to flourish. Such power has not come from interest on his sparse capital but from internal reserves of his own." The piece proved so craven that Washington Post magazine columnist William Powers responded that "New Yorkers" not "New York". Blumenthal blasted neo-conservatives for dismissive quotes, a "Heterodoxy" PAGE 9
recently remarried Ted Kennedy, whom he thought might at long last be politically vulnera-
ble, when he got a call from New York about an internal memo. Blumenthal sent to Tina Brown
attacking Boyer not just for this piece but for all of
his stories. “It was really vicious,” Boyer says. “It
wasn’t just ‘I disagree,’ it was a ‘Peter Boyer
should die’ kind of thing. He put a lot of energy
into it.”

Boyer was furious at this backstabbing
and stormed into Blumenthal’s office. “I didn’t
shove him against the wall but I got in his face,”
he says, telling him that if they were to work
 together, Blumenthal would have to be up-front
with him. Blumenthal pushed the two-job neatly
but still favored the back-door play.

In the spring of 1995 Boyer was working
on a story about Travelgate and, while wading
through documents, noted on the calendar of
“first pal” Harry Thomason that he had lunched
with Sidney Blumenthal before he met with the
President and First Lady. When Boyer asked
Blumenthal about this he said he had “no recol-
lection,” so Boyer pursued it further by talking
to the Thomasons. “One of them told me that their
friend Sidney had warned them about me,” Boyer
says. Then the Thomasons’ lawyer Bob Bennett
complained about the impending “hatchet job”
and threatened to sue before Boyer’s story had
even been published.

Blumenthal also made a preemptive strike
in behalf of his friends, the First Couple, when he
told New Yorker fact checkers not to trust James Stewart, the Pulitzer Prize-winning
author of Blood Sport.

Tina Brown eventually gave the “Letter
from Washington” column to Michael Kelly, for-
merly of the New York Times and a critic of both
Drudge, whom he says he finds “reprehensible,”
and Blumenthal. (Kelly left to become editor of
the New Republic and was recently fired for being
too hard on Al Gore.) By this time, the
New Yorker editorial hierarchy had insisted that
Blumenthal not be allowed to write about the
Clinton White House unless it was done with
irony. The magazine had come to regard his writing on Clinton as too problematic.
He was manifestly shilling for the
White House in what is supposed to be a report-
ed column.

Kelly says that with writers such as
Elizabeth Drew the Washington letter had tradi-
tionally possessed a sense of urgency that did not come through with Blumenthal. “I
did not think he was intellectually honest,” Kelly
says. “I wanted him to look at the White
House more openly partisan.” Blumenthal was kept on as a contract writer and Kelly, who as Washington edi-
tor read all political copy, insisted that
Blumenthal stay out of the Washington office.

When rumors began flying this spring that
Blumenthal was hitting up Clinton for a speechwrit-
ing job, the applicant flew to New
York to personally deny it in front of Tina
Brown. But his job-hunting was so open that it
had become a subject of amusement.

“Why should we hire Sidney?” said Clinton aide Dee Dee Myers. “He’s practically a
member of the administration already.” When Blumenthal did start working out of the
White House, the New Republic quipped that he should “get back pay.” The “longtime cheerleader
for Bill Clinton,” said Lorne Manly in the
New York Times, will “now get paid by the White
House for his boosterism.” He can also lunch with his
wife Jacqueline, who directs the President’s
Commission on the White House Fellows.

“Will this be a new phase of the Clinton
presidency,” Blumenthal told the Brandeis
Review. “He doesn’t have to run for office for
many years. He can now fit his job to the new era,
not to overstate it. And to the surprise of
many people, the policies that were
enacted in the early Clinton years have worked,
which gives enormous room, despite right-wing
opposition, to move forward. So I’m very excited
about the opportunity to contribute to that.”

“It’s a more appropriate role for him,” says James Glassman. “Bill Clinton and Sidney
Blumenthal are made for each other.”

If Sidney Blumenthal’s job in the White House
was to figure out ways to punish the Clintons’
conservative opponents, as many think it is, then
Matt Drudge was the perfect first-case scenario.
He was not in the same structure; he was part of
an emerging journalistic technology; he had com-
mitted a blunder that allowed someone who had
walked the low road all his journalistic life to
stand suddenly on high ground and find others
who would bring their hands over the vulgariza-
tion of the profession.

Blumenthal overreached the suit to
reporters, including Todd Purdum of the
New York Times, who is married to former Clinton
press secretary Dee Dee Myers. In his piece,
Purdum described Drudge as a “geeky guy” who
lacked integrity and included critical quotes from
writers Drudge had scooped. The Washington
Post’s Howard Kurtz slammed him as an
“intellectual poseur” and Margaret Carlson of Time used Drudge as her “outrage of the
week” on CNN’s Capital Gang. The Columbia
Journalism Review said he wasn’t a real reporter,
only someone gossiping over the electronic
fence.

There was an immediate identification of
the press with Blumenthal that resembled the
gathering around Janet Malcolm when Jeffrey
Masson sued her for libel after she became in his
view to excel. Malcolm’s quotes. Except that
in that case, the media’s defense of Malcolm
had appealed to free-speech issues, and none of
that was in evidence with Drudge. Indeed, the
rule seemed to be hostility to the reporter and
laziness toward White House aide Blumenthal,
more evidence that his brand of politics have also
gone mainstream. Some of the mainstream jour-
nalists even seemed to try to help the White
House aide with his case.

Newsweek’s Karen Breslau, for instance,
asked Barbara Leden, wife of one of
Blumenthal’s favorite targets, if she considered
Drudge a journalist, if he was a conservative, if
she knew anything about his source for stories.
Breslau’s piece describes Drudge as a “right-wing
Clinton Crazy,” assumes that his article was a
“false report,” and concludes that “Blumenthal’s
libel claim stands a good chance of winning.”
The accompanying photo shows the Blumenthalss
posing as the ideal and happy couple.

The accused sees an irony in the attitude
of the glosses. “If I’m not a reporter, why are
reporters on my list looking for news?” asks
Drudge, who notes that on October 6 the
New York Times had run an article about CBS news
offering a finder’s fee for stories. Drudge com-
plains that the same media outlets going after
him were issuing retractions of their own about
accused Olympic bomber Richard Jewell that
bothers him even more than White House approval of Blumenthal’s suit.

Now I have to defend myself against a
lawsuit that has the support of the President
and Vice President of the United States,” he says. “It’s
the first time I’m aware of that a sitting president
has endorsed a suit against a reporter. I’m
a Clinton reporter and Clinton endorses a
suit against me. What did they discuss? The dollar
value? Putting me out of business?”

Drudge says, “Everyone is concerned about free speech.”

They should be concerned about what
will now be a new vindictive tone against Clinton
critics, particularly conservatives, now that
Sidney Blumenthal is helping Bill and Hillary
make policy. Interestingly, the Clinton IRS audit
list includes Western Journalism Center; The
National Center for Public Policy, the Heritage
Foundation; the National Rifle Association,
Citizens Against Government Waste, Fortress
America, Freedom Alliance, National Review,
The American Spectator, the live-in boyfriend of
IRS whistleblower Shelley Davis; Kent
Mastenbrook, the lawyer who sued to force
Hillary Clinton to reveal the names of her secret
health-care task force; Billy Dale, director of the
White House Travel Office and a target of
Patrick Medoza, who yelled “you suck!” at
Clinton during a rally, and Paula Jones, a
woman Blumenthal has savaged in print.

It is not a stretch to ask if Drudge does not
surprise him if the IRS paid him a visit. “This
White House has shown a capacity to cast the
dynamics of our democracy in terms that are pure evil and
good, us versus them, all-out war,” Boyer
says. “Sidney is perfectly and congenitally suited to
such an environment. That is a scary thought.”

Matt Drudge makes a careless error, apol-
logizes for it, and gets hit with a $30 million law
suit. Sidney Blumenthal has a career marked by
savage attacks, obsequious politics, and goes to the
White House. Go figure.

LITERATURE LOST

BY JOHN ELLIS

“A thorough and masterfully rational study of the issues behind the
conflict . . . . done . . . . with considerable brilliance.”

—John Aldridge in The Wall Street Journal

“A grave and minatory book . . . . [Ellis] is not the first commentator
to express dismay at what is happening; what distinguishes him is the
interest in the new trends but . . . to subject them to a disinterested inquiry.”

—Frank Kermode in The Atlantic Monthly

“Lively and telling . . . . Another fusillade in the Culture Wars . . . . but one of
higher than usual calibre.”

—Kirkus Reviews
The President’s Pastor. Continued from page 1

he perfected while teaching social ethics in Washington’s Wesley Seminary for three decades. Wogaman punctuates his sermons with occasional smiles and wry humor.

Hillary Clinton’s Methodist roots are life-long, with her husband first attending church as a baby in the Northeast Arkansas church group that helps United Methodist and other mainline denominations to give religious justification to the abortion rights movement.

Nor was this an isolated instance. The Rev. Wogaman has been more outspoken in his politics and more committed in his ideology than most who are vilified as the Religious Right. In response to the Contract with America, Wogaman warned in 1995 that “it would be reprehensible for American society to abandon the poor.” Behind this denuncia-

A though accustomed to staking out highly controversial positions in defense of statist economics, abortion rights, and lifestyle radicalism, Phil Wogaman has always couched his stances in the language of dialogue and accommodation and thus criticism is a fairly new and unwelcome experience for him. On the Sunday previous to Elizabeth Dole’s last Sunday at Foundry, former Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun died, whose death had been scheduled to speak from the pulpit. Pro-life demonstrators outside the church persuaded him to cancel. (The Clintons also chose to worship elsewhere for the Roe vs Wade abortion rights decision, had been scheduled to speak from the pulpit. Pro-life demonstrators outside the church persuaded him to cancel. (The Clintons also chose to worship elsewhere for the Roe vs Wade abortion rights decision, had been scheduled to speak from the pulpit. Pro-life demonstrators outside the church persuaded him to cancel. 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Religious Fright Over Promise Keepers

Earlier this month, hundreds of thousands of explicitly Christian men descended on Washington for a day of prayer and hymn singing which sent left wing religious groups and their feminist allies into a paroxysm of rage and anxiety. They speak about “taking back America” for Christ, when they really mean men taking charge,” warns NOW’s Patricia Ireland. “Their targets are women, lesbians, and gay men, and anyone who supports abortion rights or opposes an authoritarian, religiously-based government.” She and her coalition of feminism, homosexual, and old-line religious groups announced a “No Surrender” campaign to “take the mask off” the “hidden” political agenda of the men’s movement.

Ireland and her allies were the only ones who saw the hidden features of proto-fascism. In fact, Promise Keepers is ostentatiously apolitical. Its main themes are spiritual and not hidden at all, but openly avowed discipline and marital fidelity. It never endorses legislation. The Washington assembly was originally scheduled for 1996 but was postponed so as to avoid any connection with an election year. A few words of welcome at an Indianapolis rally last year by Indiana Senator Dan Coats aroused so much concern inside the organization that all politicians have since been prohibited from the podiums of Promise Keeper events. None were recognized at the meeting in Washington.

But Ireland declares that feminists will “not be fooled by the many recent public disclaimers about this feel-good form of male supremacy with its dangerous political potential.”

Ireland says that Promise Keepers, with an annual to be a credible “self-help group,” a strange position for someone to take who lives in a nation where “self-help,” is a multi-billion dollar industry.

Ireland and NOW staged two press conferences to denounce Promise Keepers for its supposedly toxic masculinity. Both conferences were convened in the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill, which functions as the headquarters for Religious Left activism in Washington. Joining NOW at the press conferences were other feminist groups, homosexual organizations, and the representatives of declining “mainline” church conferences were other feminist groups, homosexual organizations, and the representatives of declining “mainline” church denominations whose leaders are more renowned for their political stridency than for their evangelistic fervor.

One of the groups, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, condemned Promise Keepers’ disapproval of homosexual practices as evidence of “bigotry.” But nearly every major Christian denomination in this country, including the United Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians who work in the Methodist Building, has official teachings (even if often ignored by church officials) that agree with Promise Keepers on this point. At the second press conference Ireland showed a video “expose” of Promise Keepers called “The Third Wave of the Religious Right.” The “waves” were ostensibly the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition.) Here evidence for the movement’s “hidden political agenda” is adduced from the endorsement its founder, Bill McCartney, gave personally to a Colorado state referendum withholding recognition of homosexuals. Some leaders in the 8.6 million member United Methodist Church have criticized Promise Keepers. Its lobby office in Washington provided space for NOW press conferences. But the largest Methodist church in the Washington area, a 3,000 member Virginia congregation, hosted over 300 visiting Promise Keepers.

It will not be the last schism between church leaders whose interests are mainly political and church leaders whose leaders have formed an “Equal Partners in Faith” to help battle the men’s movement. But the religious “parties” are often united in their assertion that the religio-political Left: the Interfaith Alliance, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Catholic Call to Action, and Catholic Charities.

In fact, Promise Keepers has proven surprisingly popular among men in liberal-controlled mainline churches, where theology is often emasculated and the deity frequently is neutered or feminized. Some leaders in the 8.6 million member United Methodist Church have criticized Promise Keepers. Its lobby office in Washington provided space for NOW press conferences. But the largest Methodist church in the Washington area, a 3,000 member Virginia congregation, hosted over 300 visiting Promise Keepers.

Here is the crux of the dispute. Promise Keepers believes in a transcendent moral authority. The Religious Left and its allies think ethics are fluid and adaptable. Promise Keepers believes in submission to God by both men and women to a personal God and to each other. The NOW crowd prefer a Church centered on self-empowerment. Promise Keepers looks to eternity. NOW and the Religious Left cares only about today, except of course, when they are nursing the grievances of yesterday.

—Mark Tooley
Washington Post that a ban on the late-term abortion
method would be “unfleece.” Said Wogaman,
“These are matters where the law needs to proceed
with sensitivity and compassion.”

Outspokenly pro-homosexual, Wogaman
told the Washington Blade, a gay newspaper, in
1995, “I want to emphasize that I honor the num-
ber of people in our congregation who are gay
who are in deeply committed relationships. I have
found many examples of love which I find deeply
moving.” A year later he repeated this message to
the church’s General Conference in 1996. Only
hours before he addressed the meeting, Wogaman
had shared the podium with Hillary Clinton, who
asked United Methodists, during her speech, to
“throw open the doors of our churches.” The
Reverend was undoubtedly proud of his star
parishioner and pleased by her support. Despite
more than 2 years at active campaigning by
Wogaman for joining the “Reconciling” pro-
homosexuality movement, Foundry’s Church
administrative board had approved the idea by
only a 52-46 margin in 1995.

Wogaman found another kindred spirit in the
eccentric Episcopal bishop John Shelby Spong
of London, who predictably speculated in a speech
at Foundry that St. Paul was homosexual and then
charged that “our primary understanding of God’s
grace came from a self-hating gay man.” After
these typically weird comments, Wogaman then
said, “Bishop Spong’s remarks this morning were
so stimulating.” Asked about the possibility of
these typically weird comments, Wogaman then
said, “Bishop Spong’s remarks this morning were
so stimulating.” Asked about the possibility of
Jesus Christ being depicted as a “drag queen,” he
responded: “I don’t condemn. I just don’t know. I’ll
have to think about it some more.”

Theologically, as well as politically, Wogaman
is considerably more liberal than most of his fel-
low United Methodists, 69 percent of whom have
told a church pollster that they are “conservative.”
In a recent article, he reported that pastors do not
tell their parishioners the “truth,” based upon the
latest Biblical “scholarship,” for fear of upsetting
their faith. He approvingly quoted a layperson who
said, “It took me almost 50 years to free myself up
from what I was taught in Sunday school by honest,
good people who were Bible teachers but not Bible
students.” Wogaman expressed concern about peo-
ple who have been “injured” by “literalistic inter-
pretations of scriptural passages.” Women and
blacks have been particularly harmed by such
readings of the Bible, he wrote. The Scriptures are
a “human document,” he believes, that reflect the
deep convictions of faith and moral life that we
are parts of the Bible no longer consistent with
human limitations” in the Bible have kept
good people out of the church, Wogaman
believes. He described a “morally sensitive politi-
cal leader from another country,” who left the
church because he could not accept the Virgin
create stumbling blocks for people who are
thoughtful enough to see moral and factual errors
in those Scriptures for themselves.”

To judge from two recent sermons, Wogaman
is trying to remove such “stumbling
blocks.” He told his congregation one Sunday:
“There are inconsistencies in the Bible. . . . There
are parts of the Bible no longer consistent with
deep convictions of faith and moral life that we
now share.” Frequently drawing laughter, he cited
Scriptural passages that called for rebellious chil-
dren to be stoned, slaves to obey masters, women
to wear veils, and which condemned homosexu-
ality. “This is the type of thing that has hurt people,”
said Wogaman. He asked that the Bible be seen as
containing truth, like the New York Times or the
Washington Post, but, like those newspapers, hav-
ing errors.

In another sermon, he rejected the Virgin
Birth as a required belief for Christians, saying,
“The Gospel contains many stories that probably
are true. But we should be concerned about the
overall picture.”

He led the 11 a.m. services (which the
Clintons attend), Wogaman preaches to a full
house. In a 1994 interview with Newsweek, he
trumpeted Foundry Church’s diversity. In a typical
service, he said, young singles and married peo-
ple sit up front, gays prefer the far right, African-
Americans congregate in the center, while older
whites are in the back. Yet a glance at the church
audience over numerous Sundays shows a less
rosy picture. There are male homosexuals seated
together, but very few non-whites are in evidence,
although Foundry’s neighborhood is racially
mixed. Many blacks and Hispanics are seen in the
street outside on Sunday morning, but only a
handful stop at Foundry.

A glance at Foundry’s directory shows
most members living in upscale Northwest
Washington neighborhoods or in the suburbs.
Judging by appearances is often unfair, but
Wogaman’s members give the impression of afflu-
ence and education. They do not represent a cross
section of the city’s population, more than 70 per-
cent of whom are black and one-eighth of whom
receive public welfare. It makes sense: people who
are not upper middle class or highly educated are
not a likely following for theological leftist.
Working-class people with more traditionalist reli-
gious views—and needs—may be more inclined to
want the “crutch” of Bible against which
Wogaman has preached.

Philip Wogaman claims that he represents
the mainstream of the United Methodist clerical
leadership. Perhaps so. But with a 1,000 member
loss every week of every year for the last 30 years,
United Methodism is among the fastest declining
churches in America, as parishioners vote with
their feet—and their hearts—for varieties of other
religious experience. Despite Foundry’s strenuous
efforts at “inclusion” and “diversity,” and despite
the draw of the President and First Lady every
Sunday, the church has followed the national
Methodist trend of decline. Membership and atten-
dance have fallen more than ten percent since
Wogaman became pastor and the Clintons became
regular congregants. Old members uncomfortable
with Foundry’s new regime have left. Most of
Wogaman’s liberal neighbors are more inclined
to attend the Broadway services, where the sermons
offer a message so smoothly tolerant as to be inconsequential.

None of this is likely to cause a crisis of
conscience in the President’s preacher, who is
almost as smooth as the President himself. But
while Foundry may appeal to Bill Clinton, one
must wonder what Abraham Lincoln and Harry
Truman would think if they were to attend
Foundry today. They would probably be even
more disgusted than before that Foundry Church
has slipped from over-confidence, to obsequious-
ness, and now, under Philip Wogaman, to political
correctness and growing irrelevancy.

Mark Tooley works at the Institute on Religion and
Democracy in Washington, D.C.
Counting By Race
Ethnomathematics: Challenging Eurocentrism in Mathematics Education
Edited by Arthur B. Powell and Marilyn Frankenstein

Reviewed by Anthony J. Tromba

Several years ago a complaint was lodged with the office of the Dean of Natural Sciences at the University of California at Santa Cruz concerning my “racist” conduct as an instructor in a course on vector calculus. In part, the complaint alleged that my course was biased, since in the discussions of its historical roots I mentioned only the white male mathematicians Isaac Newton, Leonhard Euler, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, thus omitting minority or black scientists who may have contributed to the foundation of the subject.

The charge caught me quite by surprise, since the issue of the skin color of these great scientists never arose. The complainer, a young black woman, added that if, in fact, there had been no black founders, I was obligated to state this explicitly and to devote lecture time explaining their absence as a consequence of the ravaging effects of European colonialism of the African continent and the subsequent repression of African scientific and cultural development.

Having never encountered such a complaint before in my thirty-year teaching career, I passed off as an aberration that one would probably never encounter again. I never imagined that there could be an established and growing discipline whose “research” promoted and encouraged such attitudes, but Ethnomathematics: Challenging Eurocentrism in Mathematics Education is in fact a collection of essays by some leading figures in that field.

In these essays the authors critique “the imperialism of academic mathematics” and challenge the Eurocentric view of the accepted history of mathematics, a view which according to one author has been “disgustingly manipulated.” The “distorted” historical approach to the contemporary teaching of mathematics only serves to perpetuate a “barrier to social access” and as a “re-enforcement of a ‘ Western,’ ‘Eastern,’ and ‘African’ knowledge” distorts the human process of creating knowledge which results from interactions among humans and with the world.

Throughout this book, we emphasize that underlying all these false dichotomies is the split between practical, everyday knowledge and abstract, theoretical knowledge. Besides these claims of both the authors and editors, the academic mathematician will find plenty of others that are difficult to digest. A small sampling: “The choice of axioms, the types of theorems, the style of proofs (in mathematics) ... can be shaped by factors such as views about the nature of social reality.” Or “Mathematicians have institutionalized a set of beliefs about the ways to proceed with the symbols they work with. These institutionalized beliefs are rather like rules in a game: they must be adhered to ... Mathematics deals not with physical reality but with social conventions and creations.” Ethnomathematicians, it is said, “also examine the ways in which mathematical reasoning is socially negotiated.” (By contrast, in the recently released film Contact, astronomers agree that the only language through which intelligent life could communicate its “mathematics” could be a symbolic one.)

What is this Eurocentric bias that is so abhorrent to ethnomathematicians? It is general- ly accepted (among academic scholars) that mathematics originated in ancient Greece, and that Europe, in the middle ages, borrowed from the Greeks, and, hence, their ideas to go on to become the creative center of science, mathematics, technology and culture. But ethnomathematicians think that much of Greek science and mathematical ideas were actually African in origin, making Africa and other pre-Greek civilizations the creative center of mathematics. Paul Dirac, one of the Nobel-prize-winning founders of quantum mechanics, put the matter as follows:

“...the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity, between action and reflection, between teaching of mathematics is attacked as a process of ‘indoctrinating an elite with the metaphysical and cultural development. . . . For D’Ambrosio (1987) this means breaking down the dichotomy between subjective and objective, between action and reflection, between teaching of mathematics proper and its applications . . . For D’Ambrosio (1987) this means breaking down the dichotomy between subjective and objective, between action and reflection, between teaching of mathematics proper and its applications.” (language through which intelligent life could communicate its “mathematics” could be a symbolic one.)

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European tradition.”

So the question is: What did the Greeks know and when did they know it? Who, if anyone, in the ancient world had knowledge about the concentric spheres of Plato? Did the Pythagoreans give birth to mathematics? We do know that many fundamental ideas in science and mathematics were conceived in antiquity; however, our knowledge about the science of this time is by no means complete. The earliest sources for our knowledge about the Sumerian-Babylonian mathematics do not exist, and events were recorded only long after they had actually occurred. Even the scientists of antiquity had no sure knowledge of the first mathematics, and no sure knowledge of the."
**Court to Rule on New York Ebonics Vote**

By Judith Schumann Weizner

Just when the issue of Ebonics appeared to be disappearing as a social hot-button topic, it was announced today that a three-judge panel in New York’s Second District Court will hear arguments in a case which will ultimately determine whether Ebonics will become an official language in New York State.

Ebonics, which caused a national furor last year when the Oakland School Board briefly decided to grant it equal status with “proper” English, has had an equally spectacular, if until now less newsworthy, impact on New York politics. Bestowing official status on Ebonics has been proposed in the legislature during each of the past three sessions, although until now the proposal has never before come to a vote.

Under the Federal Voting Responsibility Act of 1997, however, the legislature was forced to vote on the proposition in order to preserve the state from losing tens of millions of dollars in highway funding. It passed by one vote, less than the three-fifths majority necessary to keep the Justice Department from instituting charges of institutional racism against the legislature. This opened the way for a suit under Paragraph 19.R of the Voting Responsibility Act, which provides that in the event of a less-than-three-fifths vote on matters covered by the Act, a state legislature shall repeat its vote until the required majority is met. The New York legislature has refused to repeat the vote, and will be using the case to challenge the constitutionality of Paragraph 19.R. No matter which way the court rules, both sides have promised to appeal.

This case holds special meaning for Nkume Nkume, the young attorney who will represent the federal government. Formerly a city clerk in the Bronx, now an attorney specializing in civil rights cases for the Justice Department, Nkume quietly began to lobby for the legitimization of Ebonics, then called Black English, nine years ago after being reprimanded by the Bronx Chief Clerk for having conducted a wedding ceremony in Ebonics for an Ugandan couple. The couple complained that although they had rehearsed in standard English, Nkume insisted on doing the ceremony in Ebonics because it was closer to their African linguistic roots. Then, at the actual ceremony, they had been unable to ascertain when they should pronounce their vows, with the result that Mr. Nkume had to postpone the wedding of two lesbians who were told they must return the following day. That midnight trek to Second Savings headquarters, chanting rhythmically in Ebonic rhyme, “Muh’ Fuh’ Dis Bank Suck,” appeared on the screen. Recalling Mr. Dunkle’s public statements, Mr. Nkume was able to understand perfectly the Ugandans’ ceremonies in an unofficial language, her own would have taken place as scheduled and she would have been on her partner’s medical insurance at the time of her accident. Mr. Nkume was held responsible for the accident and ordered to pay her medical bills as well as a judgment for pain and suffering. His attorney got the verdict overturned on appeal when he argued that the state, by not having recognized Ebonics as an official language, had caused the scheduling change that had resulted in the lesbian’s being thrown into the path of danger.

Formerly president of the Third World Plaza Tenants’ Association, Mr. Nkume founded the Bronx Education Committee for the Acceptance of African Cultural and Historical Teachings (BECAACHT) after noticing that the ATM machine at his bank, the Second Savings Bank of New York, gave prompts only in English and Spanish. He wrote to the bank’s president, Thomas Dunkle, asking that the machines be reprogrammed to include Ebonics. In answer he received a note of apology suggesting that he send a taped request or ask someone to help him with his correspondence, as Mr. Dunkle’s secretary had found the letter unlegible.

Frustrated by the institution’s unwillingness to accommodate him, Mr. Nkume summoned several hundred members of BECAACHT who descended on Second Savings chanted rhythmically in Ebonic rhyme, “Muh’ Fuh’ Dis Bank Suck.” Acting quickly to avoid a public relations fiasco, Mr. Dunkle ordered employees to volunteer to serve the demonstrators a hot lunch in the employee cafeteria each noon. But after a week, with polls showing public opinion running 81-against the bank, Mr. Dunkle agreed to meet with Mr. Nkume.

As soon as Mr. Nkume had explained that the lack of Ebonics on the ATM machines had made it difficult for him to complete his transactions within the allotted time, Mr. Dunkle agreed to have the ATMs reconfigured and told Mr. Nkume that the next time he needed to see him he would attend to bank policy the door to his office would be open.

With the commands reconfigured, Mr. Nkume was able to understand perfectly when, as he attempted late one night to withdraw the hundred dollars he needed to hold him until morning, the words “No mo’, sucka,” appeared on the screen. Recalling Mr. Dunkle’s public comments, Mr. Nkume was able to understand perfectly the Ugandans’ ceremonies in an unofficial language, her own would have taken place as scheduled and she would have been on her partner’s medical insurance at the time of her accident. Mr. Nkume was able to understand perfectly when, as he attempted late one night to withdraw the hundred dollars he needed to hold him until morning, the words “No mo’, sucka,” appeared on the screen. Recalling Mr. Dunkle’s public comments, Mr. Nkume was able to understand perfectly when, as he attempted late one night to withdraw the hundred dollars he needed to hold him until morning, the words “No mo’, sucka,” appeared on the screen.

Talking about his life today, Nkume recalls the difficulty he faced in convincing the admissions committee of his ability to communicate in the courtroom. “It be no good if you be talkin’ lak somebody el’. I be talkin’ lak myse’. You be talkin’ lak youse’. Who be you kno’? A man got’ be r’

At last, after leading a demonstration in which nearly 90 percent of the school’s student body supported him, Mr. Nkume won admission, making Law Review in his second year and graduating first in his class. Bronx Law administrators are quick to praise him for leaving an indelible mark on the school’s five student publications.

Mr. Nkume explains that once Ebonics gains official recognition, everyone will be the better for it, and such incidents as the recent suspension of a white Brooklyn teacher who used the expression “pay the powers that be” in the classroom, will become a thing of the past.