

[MEMORIAM]

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Humans harbor an instinctual need to make sense of the senseless, as if tragedy will be diminished by explanation. So it was that in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings—ruthless as they were random—partisans engaged in an unseemly scramble to make the massacre a political thing.

Liberals renewed the tired argument that guns are too easy to get. Apparently a hellbent soul driven to chain students inside his horror shop and execute 32 would be deterred by increased paperwork. Others speculated about the shooter's alienation, wondering whether a more inclusive society might have better tended his self-esteem.

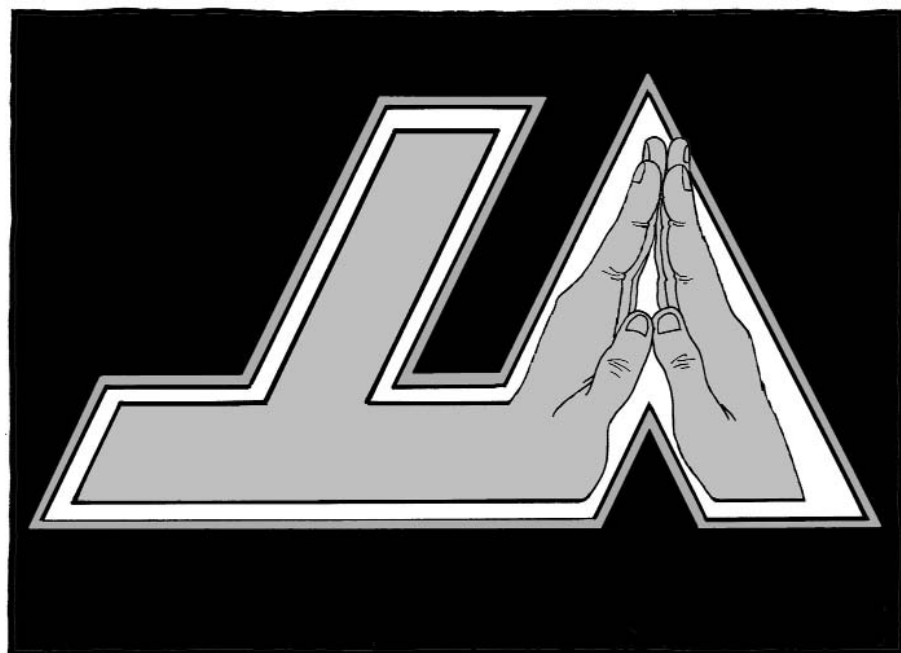
Conservatives, too, sought an object lesson, noting that like the Nigerian shooter at the Appalachian School of Law and the Jamaican-born D.C. sniper, Cho Seung-Hui was a violent import. There are better ways to make the case for immigration reform. The Virginia Tech student, whose parents run a dry-cleaning business, had lived in the U.S. since he was eight.

Evil stalks a fallen world. And much as it disappoints Washington—which in its infinite wisdom seeks to redeem the world one joint resolution at a time—ugliness can't be quarantined by federal initiatives. Better to bind up the broken-hearted than to score political points off their pain.

[MEDIA]

TALE OF TWO TEAMS

It's doubtful that any internal media story has approached the frenzy level of the Don Imus saga. The three-word insult he leveled at the Rutgers women's basketball team was of course undeserved and once widely broadcast robbed the young players of what could have been a sweet lifelong memory. Imus apologized sincerely, knowing he



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had done a bad thing, but his myriad of attackers had no intention of accepting the confession they demanded.

The Imus show has long been laced with ribald mimicry and insults—often mixed with insight. The vulgarism he used for the Rutgers team was the same he uses in referring to his wife, the “green ho.” That hardly excuses his depiction of the basketball players, but it likely shows that Imus was more interested in asserting his own coolness by flinging around hip-hop talk than in practicing racism.

Of course nothing could save his job once half the country commenced a status competition to assert its moral purity by denouncing the radio titan. That Al Sharpton, perpetrator of the Tawana Brawley hoax—for which he has never apologized—emerged as one of the judges in this contest is simply beyond parody.

Around that time, it came to light that another sports team had also been injured by powerful media figures—a group of young men every bit as innocent and undeserving of insult as the Rutgers women. But the Duke men's lacrosse team was not slighted by an over-the-top shock jock. It endured a year-long assault by rogue District Attor-

ney Michael Nifong, who ignored exculpatory evidence in order to push what he hoped would be a career-boosting prosecution. In the wake of the charges, the young men were vilified on their campus and subjected to a lynching atmosphere egged on by much of the press.

The Duke case raises deeper questions about race in America than anyone could plausibly wring from the Imus episode.

The nation's paper of record twisted itself in knots to excuse blatant prosecutorial misconduct; *New York Times* columnist Harvey Araton mocked the members of Duke's women's lacrosse team for proclaiming the innocence of their schoolmates. “Sanctimony by sweatband” Araton labeled the young women's protest, while hinting at the need for criminal investigation to find out “what do they know?”

But don't single out the *Times*; the *Washington Post* and *USA Today* were similarly reckless. The crime for which the three players were falsely accused—white men sexually assaulting a black woman—was apparently one that much of liberal America desperately wanted to believe in.

It has now been established that no rape or anything like one took place. DA

Nifong is subject to disbarment, if not worse. Don Imus has apologized, is still apologizing, to the young women whom he gratuitously insulted—as he should. But who is going to apologize to the Duke lacrosse players, who faced not three words of nastiness but had their lives turned upside down by a full year of defamation?

[WHITE HOUSE]

SCAPEGOAT WANTED

Looking for a career change? The White House is hiring a new war czar. Benefits include high-profile appearances on the Sunday talk shows, access to the president and Cabinet, “tasking authority” over the State and Defense Departments, and occasional rides on Air Force One. Responsibilities include sparing the president difficult questions, bumping up approval ratings, managing a sprawling bureaucracy at home and two wars abroad, and repeating the words “we’re making progress” until you are fired for incompetence. Compensation: you will never be able to hold public office again.

Surprising no one but the White House, Army Gen. Jack Keane and retired Air Force Gen. Joseph W. Ralston sent regrets. Former NATO Commander Gen. John J. Sheehan declined with the candor expected of a 35-year veteran of the Marine Corps: “The very fundamental issue is they don’t know where the hell they’re going.”

Thus the field is open, with National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley widening the search to civilian candidates—which seems only fair, since military experience never impressed the neocons anyway. Just bring a sword to fall on.

[EDUCATION]

JUST ASK DERSH

A reasonable person might conclude that nothing in academic life, and perhaps nothing at all, is beyond the

purview of Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz. Hardly drawing breath from his campaign to discredit former President Jimmy Carter, Dershowitz has now involved himself in the tenure decisions of De Paul University in Chicago.

Norman Finklestein, whose criticism of Israel is as fierce as Dershowitz’s attachment to the country, is up for promotion in the political-science department. We offer no judgement on Finklestein’s qualifications except to note that his recent lectures in the country’s leading universities have been wildly popular and controversial and that the relevant De Paul tenure-review committees have been impressed and were in the process of recommending his promotion.

Then Dershowitz struck with a blizzard of e-mails, letters, and accusations. And bizarrely, De Paul seems to have stopped the process in its tracks.

We don’t know how this will end, but since the Harvard buttinski seems to believe everything in the world is his business, we may have to start seeking his views on unsolicited manuscripts sent to *TAC* for publication.

[CULTURE]

HUMAN ERROR

Apparently the grammar program built into Microsoft Word comes equipped with ideology. Not content to arbitrate split infinitives and misplaced modifiers, the virtual schoolmarm scanned our cover piece and spat out a political judgement. Our author wrote, “The logic carries all the way down to toddlers and perhaps even fetuses, who can be treated as shoppers in potentia.” Microsoft chided, “Use who or whom to refer to people. Use that or which to refer to anything non-human.” Unable to query the grinning icon about its nettlesome non-human designation, we politely declined the advice and proudly acknowledge our “error.” ■

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The Good Neocon

In writing a book on the new era America is entering after the Iraqi debacle, I revisited the various contributions to a post-Cold War symposium organized by

Owen Harries of *The National Interest*.

Then, before the crack-up of conservatism, the most respected foreign-policy voice of neoconservatism was that of Jeane Kirkpatrick. A Humphrey Democrat who had moved rightward since school days at Stephens and Barnard, Kirkpatrick had been Reagan's ambassador to the UN. The Gipper was deeply fond of her. At the Republican Convention of 1984, Jeane had coined two phrases that have lived on: "San Francisco Democrats" and "They always blame America first!"

Her essay, "A Normal Country in a Normal Time," was published in the fall 1990 issue of *TNI*. Jeane likely finished it after the Berlin Wall fell but before Saddam's August invasion of Kuwait.

Though her specialty was foreign policy, she began by declaring, "America's purposes are mainly domestic."

"A good society is defined not by its foreign policy but by its internal qualities. ... Foreign policy becomes a major aspect of a society only if its government is expansionist, imperial, aggressive, or when it is threatened by aggression. One of the most important consequences of the half century of war and Cold War has been to give foreign affairs an unnatural importance."

Kirkpatrick believed that foreign policy must now take a backseat: "The end of the Cold War frees time, attention and resources to American ends."

In a frontal assault on today's neoconservative dogmas about America having an historic mission to democratize mankind, Jeane noted that the only men-

tion of foreign policy in the preamble to the Constitution is "provide for the common defense."

"There is no mystical American 'mission,' or purpose to be 'found' independently of the U.S. Constitution. ... There is no inherent or historical 'imperative' for the U.S. government to seek to achieve any other goal—however great—except as it is mandated by the Constitution or adopted by the people through elected officials."

Bush's doctrine of "world democratic revolution" and "ending tyranny on earth," as it has not been ratified by an elected Congress, is without constitutional sanction. When Bush goes, it goes.

In those days, Charles Krauthammer was already burling on about surrendering U.S. sovereignty to merge with Europe and Japan in a "super-sovereign" entity that would be "hegemonic in the world." Jeane brought him up short: "[I]t is not America's purpose to establish 'universal dominance'... not even the universal dominance of democracy. ... It is not within the United States' power to democratize the world."

Beware of elites who behave like some priestly class that alone has the knowledge, experience, and wisdom to guide foreign policy, she warned. "It has become more important than ever that the experts who conduct foreign policy on our behalf be subject to the direction and control of the people."

Beware, too, of an "internationalism" that "looks at the world and asks what needs to be done—with little explicit concern for the national interest."

America "should assume no new obligations in remote places," she admonished. The United States "should negotiate rules which give U.S. products fair access to foreign markets and give foreign businesses no better than fair access to U.S. markets ... to ensure that the patterns of trade competition do not undermine the United States' technological and industrial base."

"This is a government responsibility which cannot be ignored because of anxieties about an 'industrial' policy."

Kirkpatrick was no *Wall Street Journal* free-trade fundamentalist. She was an economic nationalist.

As for the U.S. role in NATO, she wrote, "Neither can the U.S. be expected to sustain an expensive role in an alliance whose chief role is to diminish European fear of a resurgent Germany."

"We should not spend American money protecting an affluent Japan ..."

"Most of the international military obligations that we assumed were once important are now outdated. ... It is time to give up the dubious benefits of superpower status and become again an usually successful, open American republic." A republic, not an empire, the lady said.

In closing, she wrote, "The United States preformed heroically in a time when heroism was required; altruistically during the long years when freedom was endangered."

"The time when America should bear such unusual burdens is past. With the return of 'normal' times we can again become a normal nation."

Had Bush II heeded her wise counsel, America would not be in the hellish mess it is in today. Jeane Kirkpatrick died in December at 80 years of age. *Requiescat in pace.* ■