



Sympathy For The Devil

BY BILL O'REILLY
Creator Syndicate

As this column has been reporting, there is a growing movement in America to “reform” the nation’s tough laws against drug dealing. The pressure is coming primarily from liberal and libertarian groups who see the use of narcotics as a personal choice, something that freedom should allow.

That opinion is fallacious in the extreme because of the public safety issue involved.

In 2010, more than 38,000 people died in the USA from drug overdoses — far more than have been killed in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined. If you combine two years’ worth of drug overdoses, you get more deaths than occurred during the Vietnam War.

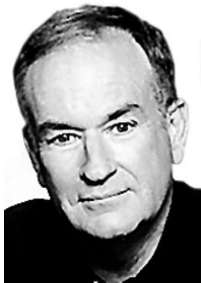
The Department of Health estimates that an astounding 22 million Americans, ages 12 and older, currently need rehabilitation for substance abuse.

Also, a variety of studies say that up to 70 percent of all child abuse and neglect cases are caused by parents who are involved with drugs. Still think drug abuse is a victimless crime?

The pro-drug people often point to alcohol to make their legalization case. Why should one intoxicating agent be legal while another is not? But everybody knows you can have a beer or a glass of wine without losing sobriety, right?

The sole reason for ingesting narcotics is to alter consciousness. It is the apple compared to the booze orange. Comparing drugs to alcohol is an invalid comparison.

People who sell drugs such as cocaine, meth, heroin and other opiates are certainly committing a violent act. They are delivering an agent of destruction to another person. Not everyone who uses hard



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drugs becomes addicted, but millions do. There is a reason certain substances are categorized as “dangerous drugs.”

But to hear the pro-drug people tell it, the pushers are victims because some of them are drug addicted themselves. I guess when you become an addict you get a get-out-of-jail-free card. Don’t blame drug users for stealing, dealing or mugging. They shouldn’t be held accountable for criminal behavior, because they have a disease!

In one of the most absurd things I’ve seen in a long time, celebrities including Will Smith, Cameron Diaz, Jamie Foxx, Kim Kardashian and Jim Carrey signed a letter to President Obama asking him to “address the increased incarceration rates for nonviolent crimes.”

Nonviolent crimes? Are you kidding me? Ask a parent whose son or daughter is in the cemetery because of an overdose whether drug pushers are committing “non-violent” crimes.

Since the U.S. began sentencing drug dealers to major prison time (circa 1979), the country’s violent crime rate has fallen more than 32 percent. Once vicious crack cocaine traffickers began being sentenced to decades in the slammer, cocaine use dropped 71 percent.

But now the Hollywood pinheads and many other Americans want those tough mandatory sentences repealed.

That is sympathy for the devil. But we are living in strange times. Let’s hope Kim Kardashian isn’t appointed attorney general.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama."

Assessing The ‘Accidental Racist’

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

There are many things to say about Brad Paisley’s new song.

The country music giant is under fire for “Accidental Racist,” about a Starbucks employee who objects to Paisley’s Confederate battle flag shirt. The song, Paisley’s attempt to metabolize his conflicted feelings as “a white man comin’ to you from the southland” trying to pick his way through the minefield of race, has generated, well ... feedback.

Rolling Stone dubbed it “questionable.” *Gawker* called it “horrible.” CMT News said it was “clumsily written” and singled out guest performer LL Cool J for an “inept” rap.

They are being kind. As several observers have noted, “Accidental Racist” brings to this difficult subject all the emotional and intellectual depth of a fifth-grader’s social studies essay. And let’s not even get started on LL’s rap, which inexplicably finds moral equivalence between a do-rag and that American swastika, the Confederate battle flag, an act of stupendous stupidity for which somebody ought to pull his black card.

But the song also fails in a more subtle, yet substantive way. Twice, Paisley speaks of the impossibility of imagining life from the African-American perspective: “I try to put myself in your shoes,” he sings, “and that’s a good place to begin, but it ain’t like I can walk a mile in someone else’s skin.” As if African-American life is so mysterious and exotic, so alien to all other streams of American life, that unless you were born to it, you cannot hope to comprehend it.

That’s a copout — and a disappointment. Say what you will about his song, but also say this: Paisley is in earnest. His heart — this is neither boilerplate nor faint praise — is in the right place. Credit him for the courage, rare in music, almost unheard of in country music, to confront this most thankless of topics. But courage and earnestness will net him nothing without honesty.

Every day, we imagine the lives of people who aren’t like us. Those who care to try seem to have no



Leonard PITTS

trouble empathizing with, say, Cuban exiles separated from family, or Muslims shunned by Islamophobes. For a songwriter, inhabiting other people’s lives is practically the job description. Bruce Springsteen was not a Vietnam vet when he sang “Born in the USA.”

But where African-American life is concerned, one frequently hears Paisley’s lament: how a white man is locked into his own perspective. That’s baloney. Both history and the present day are replete with white people — Clifford Durr, Thaddeus Stevens, Eleanor Roosevelt, Leon Litwack, Tim Wise — who seemed to have no great difficulty accessing black life.

One suspects one difference is that they refused to be hobbled by white guilt, the reflexive need to deny the undeniable, defend the indefensible, explain the inexplicable. They declined to be paralyzed by the baggage of history. One suspects they felt not guilt, but simple human obligation.

One suspects the other difference is that people like Wise and Litwack rejected the conspiracy of blindness that afflicts too many white people, allowing them to see a 13.3 percent black unemployment rate and as 90 percent black and call it justice.

These people were honest enough to see what was there and call America on it.

If Paisley wants to “walk a mile in someone else’s skin,” it’s not that hard. You do it with black folks the same way you do it with anyone else. You drop your presumptions, embrace your ignorance and listen to somebody — preferably multiple somebodies — who is living what you seek to understand. You visit the museums and read the books.

It is vaguely insulting, this idea that there’s something about African-American life that makes it more impenetrable than others. There is not. If Paisley finds this skin impossible to walk in, the reason is doubtless simple:

He’s never truly tried.

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not merely customers. My friends and I always felt more like guests invited to dinner or even friends invited into a home. I no longer live in Yankton, but I often brag about the gems contained in my former hometown. I’ve never had better pizza than at Charlie’s, I’ve never had better coffee than at Sunrise, I’ve never had a better sub than at Muggsy’s, and I’ve never had better Chinese than at King Dragon.

Fellow Yanktonites, please don’t take for granted the people that make your community great. Pay attention to those lamps that burn brightly through the blackouts, because those people are souls to be treasured, and they make the world turn more smoothly.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Native Am. Foster Care Needs Work

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls (April 2): Federal law says Native American children belong in Native American foster homes, except in the most extreme circumstances. Despite that law, the number of children in South Dakota who are pulled out of their culture and kept in white homes hasn’t changed much since the law was passed almost 35 years ago.

There are lots of reasons given for why Native children — at a high rate — are sent to white foster homes. There are not enough approved and available Native American foster homes on the list, for starters.

It’s often difficult to find family members to care for children placed into foster care.

It’s hard to solve the complex problem of finding suitable foster care homes, no matter what race the child is, particularly for Native children. But we have to, and we have to look at all possible options.

No one’s hands are clean. The state needs to work even harder to place children in safe Native American foster homes. That responsibility can’t be taken lightly. Tribes need to help to encourage Native families to provide safe, suitable foster care. Relatives and other families need to come forward to care of the children.

Numbers don’t lie. If 80 percent to 90 percent of Native children are being placed in white homes, clearly the spirit of the law isn’t being followed. And we’re falling short of our duty as a state to children who deserve safe care and should remain in a home where they can share their culture.

It’s good to talk about the issue with all involved at the table and to find ways to improve foster care. Progress is important.

Everyone who works with Native foster children has work to do to make that number move.

Same Old, Same Old From NRA

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (April 5): The saying goes that to a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

That saying seems to fit the National Rifle Association, which says the solution to school shootings is more guns.

The School Shield Task Force working for the NRA proposed last week that at least one armed guard be stationed at every school campus.

A glimpse of the society that the group apparently favors was on display at the news conference at the National Press Club.

News outlets reported that more than a dozen NRA-hired armed guards were positioned in the press club, some in uniform, displaying guns in holsters.

“In a spectacle that officials at the National Press Club said they had never seen before, the NRA gunmen directed some photographers not to take pictures, ordered reporters out of the lobby when NRA officials passed and inspected reporters’ briefcases before granting them access to the news conference,” Washington Post columnist Dana Milbank wrote.

The task force topped its 225-page report with cases in which an armed person was able to stop school shooters, although some of them already had killed before they were stopped.

But the recommendation from a task force working for the National Rifle Association gives short shrift to the lack of success that armed personnel had in stopping shooters in other incidents, like slaying of an assistant principal at Millard South High School.

The task forces unconvincingly dismisses the ineffectiveness of the armed guard at Columbine High School in Colorado by opining he would be more effective now with new training and new guidelines that make neutralizing the shooter the highest priority.

It’s notable that none of the 12 members of the task force is an educator, but all have ties to the security industry.

The NRA formerly was shaped by the values of people who hunted. Now it has too many members who derive their excitement from massive firepower that has no place in the great outdoors. The organization has become a tool of the firearms industry.

Armed guards and school resource officers for some schools may be part of the solution for making America’s schools safer.

But when the NRA leadership uses its political clout to spike proposals for expanded background checks — which numerous polls show are supported by about nine of 10 Americans — its relentless push for more guns is exposed as too narrow and self-serving. The task force report adds little to the important national discussion on school security.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, April 15, the 105th day of 2013. There are 260 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On April 15, 1912, the British luxury liner RMS Titanic sank in the North Atlantic off Newfoundland at 2:20 a.m. ship’s time, more than 2 1/2 hours after striking an iceberg; 1,514 people died, while less than half as many survived.

On this date: In 1850, the city of San Francisco was incorporated.

In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln died, nine hours after being shot the night before by John Wilkes Booth at Ford’s Theater in Washington. Andrew Johnson became the nation’s 17th president.

In 1874, an exhibition of paintings by 30 artists, including Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Paul Cezanne, opened in Paris. (A critic derisively referred to the painters as “Impressionists,” a name which stuck.)

In 1942, Britain’s King George VI awarded the George Cross to Malta for its heroism in the early days of World War II.

In 1943, the Ayn Rand novel “The Fountainhead” was first published by Bobbs-Merrill Co.

In 1945, during World War II, British and Canadian troops liberated the Nazi concentration camp Bergen-Belsen.

In 1947, Jackie Robinson, baseball’s first black major league player, made his official debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers on opening day. (The Dodgers defeated the Boston Braves, 5-3.)

In 1959, Cuban leader Fidel Castro arrived in Washington to begin a goodwill tour of the United States. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles resigned for health reasons (he was succeeded by Christian A. Herter).

In 1960, a three-day conference to form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) began at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C. (The group’s first chairman was Marion Barry.)

In 1986, the United States launched an air raid against Libya in response to the bombing of a discotheque in Berlin on April 5; Libya said 37 people, mostly civilians, were killed.

In 1989, 96 people died in a crush of soccer fans at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield, England. Students in Beijing launched a series of pro-democracy protests; the demonstrations culminated in a government crackdown at Tiananmen Square.

In 1998, Pol Pot, the notorious leader of the Khmer Rouge, died at age 73, evad-

ing prosecution for the deaths of two million Cambodians.

Ten years ago: Looters and arsonists ransacked Iraq’s National Library, as well as Iraq’s principal Islamic library. In the Netherlands, Volkert van der Graaf, the killer of politician Pim Fortuyn, was sentenced to 18 years in prison. Umpire Laz Diaz was attacked by a fan during a game between the Kansas City Royals and Chicago White Sox; the fan, Eric Dybas, was later sentenced to six months in jail and 30 months’ probation.

Five years ago: Pope Benedict XVI stepped onto U.S. soil for the first time as pontiff as he was greeted at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington by President George W. Bush, first lady Laura Bush and their daughter Jenna. Bombings blamed on al-Qaida in Iraq tore through market areas in Baghdad and outside the capital, killing nearly 60 people. Actress Hazel Court, who’d costarred with Boris Karloff and Vincent Price in horror movies of the 1950s and ‘60s, died near Lake Tahoe, Calif., at age 82.

One year ago: Five people were killed by a tornado in Woodward, Okla. Taliban insurgents struck the heart of the Afghan capital and three eastern cities. North Korea’s new leader, Kim Jong Un, gave his first public speech since taking power, portraying himself as a strong military chief unafraid of foreign powers. Passengers and crew of the cruise ship MS Balmoral said prayers at the spot in the North Atlantic where the Titanic had sunk 100 years earlier.

Today’s Birthdays: Actor Michael Ansara is 91. Country singer Roy Clark is 80. Author and politician Jeffrey Archer is 73. Rock singer-guitarist Dave Edmunds is 69. Actor Michael Tucci is 67. Actress Lois Chiles is 66. Writer-producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason is 66. Actress Amy Wright is 63. Columnist Heloise is 62. Actress-screenwriter Emma Thompson is 54. Bluegrass musician Jeff Parker is 52. Singer Samantha Fox is 47. Olympic gold, silver and bronze medal swimmer Dara Torres is 46. Rock musician Ed O’Brien (Radiohead) is 45. Actor Flex Alexander is 43. Actor Danny Pino is 39. Actor Douglas Spain is 39. Rock musician Patrick Carney (The Black Keys) is 33. Actor-writer Seth Rogen is 31. Actress Alice Braga is 30. Rock musician DeMar Hamilton (Plain White T’s) is 29. Actress Emma Watson is 23.

Thought for Today: “History would be an excellent thing if only it were true.” — Leo Tolstoy, Russian author (1828-1910).

FROM THE BIBLE

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:25. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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YOUR LETTERS

The Light Of Appreciation

Alex Heying, San Francisco
Former Yankton Resident

There are certain people in the world who enrich the lives of everyone around them. Upon seeing them, your brow unfurls, the room brightens, and even the most thunderous ice storms melt into muted peripherals.

I was saddened this week by the passing of Camtu Tran, known by many as the woman from King Dragon, for she was one of those people. Not threatened by boundaries or expectations, she took genuine interest in her customers’ lives so that they were