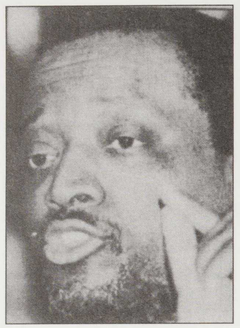


We stand now to choose

by Alan Keyes

What is the 1996 election going to be about? I think it's going to be about America. I think it's going to be about the American people. Now, of course, the press never treats it that way. They treat our elections as if they're about this one running and that one winning and that one raising money, and it ain't so. When we go to the polls every two years and four years, we as a people are doing what very few people in the history of the world have been privileged to do. We are taking the fate of our land in our hands, and deciding what we shall do with it.

When we consider what we are going to do in those elections, we shouldn't be treating them like they were the Preakness or the Belmont Stakes, and that what matters is who wins and who loses. No. What matters is: Who stands where and whether we can stand for them; who stands for what and whether the future of this country can stand with their principles. And I say that it's about time that we have some candidates for president who would talk about that future and talk about that vision and talk about the character of his people and what is happening to it—because we know the truth.

I've been out there in the last several years championing all the causes of limited government. I've been fighting against government waste and fighting for lower taxes and organizing people at the grassroots to march in the street to demand their rightful place in this system.

But every time I spoke to them, I madeit clear that I didn't think what we were fighting for was, in fact, about the taxes, and I didn't think it was about the budgets. I don't even think it's about limited government. Because the reason that I favor limited government is not because it's some end in itself. It's because limited government is the foundation and paradigm of all our freedom.

But if we're going sustain that vision, if we are going to win the battle for limited government, then we had better remember what our founders understood when they framed the Constitution to set up this United government of the people, by the people, for the people. They shared the belief of John Adams when he said, "Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

We cannot fight for limited government, we cannot expect that limited government will be a blessing and not a curse, unless we join to that battle the same battle that the founders fought every time they opened their mouths—and that was a battle to guarantee the strong, the decent, the good character of the American people. If we are a people who can no longer tell right from wrong and stand for right, if we are a people who can no longer tell justice from injustice and stand for justice, then we will be a people no longer capable or fit to govern ourselves.

I believe that after 30 and 40 and 50 years of misrule by Democrat liberals who made government into God and the people into slaves, we have come to a great crisis of self-government in America. We have come to a parting of the ways. Down one road lies a totalitarian, utopian vision of freedom lost. Down the other lies the founders' vision of self-government regained—and we stand now to choose.

But do you know what the issues shall be that determine our choice? They shall not be the issues of whether the budget is big or small; they will not be the issue of whether the taxes are cut or raised, though those issues are important. They shall be the issues of how we understand our freedom. Is it something we can abuse in any way we choose even at the expense of our dearest principles? Or is it something we must wield with respect for what the founders laid down at the beginning and what no one likes to talk about any more: the laws of nature and of nature's God?

They did not set this country on a course that said, "We worship our freedom." They set it on a course that said, "We worship our God and He gives us our freedom."

It's time that we remembered that.

Difficult as it may be, divisive as it may seem to some, the vision that will unite this people across every line of race and color and creed is not a vision we have to make up out of whole cloth or some book that somebody wrote yesterday. It's a vision that was laid down. In the beginning: a vision of inalienable rights that come from God, a vision of a people strong enough, a vision of a people self disciplined enough, to wield that freedom with respect for themselves. And it was a vision as well of a people who knew that the burden was on them in the end to sustain that freedom in their choices and in their moral lives.

Though some of the leaders of this Republican party would like us to run toward some undefined middle and away from the issues that have, in fact, given us our victories for a decade and more, I would suggest that we stand where we have stood up 'til now—on a platform that tells our children what we know ourselves: that we do not have the right to do what is wrong, that we cannot stand on the unprincipled platform that does not defend the rights of the unborn and the obligation of every mother and every father to their unborn and living children.

And that is not one issue over there in the corner somewhere, my friends....That issue of whether we're going to enforce the obligations that God's law says we all have toward each other and our children . . . runs through every problem that we have. It's the welfare problem, it's the crime problem, it's the health problem. It's the problem of a people gone out of control who will lose their freedom if they do not respect the principles that will bring that control back to them again.

I want to see power returned to the people of this country—you bet—and I have fought for it for years and been vilified by some when I did. But more than that, and more than anything, I want us to become once again a people worthy of that power because we have within ourselves the fear of God and the respect for His laws of justice that have made this nation great and strong and free.

So I say that my mission will be to restore this country's values, to rebuild this country's character, to renew in this nation the moral identity on which we can truly unite as an American people . . . that in our successful quest for real self government, we would sustain the last, best hope of earth. ■

Alan Keyes is a former Reagan Administration appointee, a talk-show host, and, now, a Republican presidential candidate. This was a speech given shortly before he announced his candidacy.

Root causes

by Joseph Sobran

Anyone who wonders why so many Americans distrust the news media should study the coverage of John Salvi, the young man who shot up a pair of Massachusetts abortion clinics, killing two employees thereof. You could have gotten the impression that this was the only crime committed in the country over the holiday season. Certainly the media saw it as the worst.

The implicit theme of the coverage was that those religious fanatics had struck again, an extreme but typical case of their lust to Impose Their Views. Just imagine! Killings in abortion clinics, of all places! But why do the fanatics strike there, and not at other things they undoubtedly disapprove of? Catholics don't shoot up drug stores that sell contraceptives; Baptists don't shoot up liquor stores; Orthodox Jews don't vandalize non-kosher butcher shops.

Could it be that abortion is more than merely immoral, in the sense that adultery is immoral? The whole issue is whether it constitutes violence against the innocent. The public position of the abortion advocates, who regard photos of what they favor as inadmissible evidence (and dirty pool), is that the question is unanswerable. But if it is answerable, a strong response of some kind is in order, and it shouldn't surprise us that a few people go all the way to violence against the killers and their accomplices.

In the Sixties, the liberal attitude toward protest-related violence was just the opposite. Riots in ghettos and on campuses proved the need for "change," validating rather than discrediting the causes they were associated with. We were told that it wasn't enough to punish the rioters: we had a duty to address the Root Causes. Not this time. Not only is John Salvi held responsible; the entire anti-abortion movement is being held responsible for him.

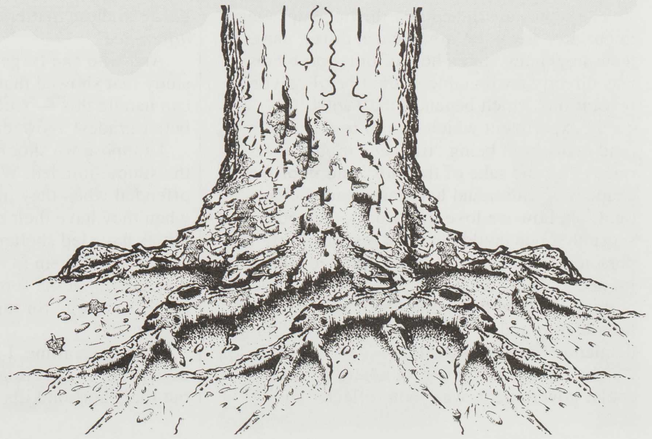
Contrast Lee Harvey Oswald. He was tagged a "lone gunman," and the murder of John Kennedy was not treated as a reflection on others who shared his Marxist, pro-Soviet, pro Castro views; conspiracy theories were roundly ridiculed. Today, on the other hand, the media aren't calling Salvi a "lone gunman," and they are hospitable to abortion advocates who profess to see a "nationwide conspiracy" behind him.

Salvi not only acted on his own, but wasn't wrapped too tight: as he pled not guilty, he announced that if acquitted he hopes to become a priest. Yet it was breathlessly reported that he kept pro-life literature at home, in the manner of the news stories of another era reporting that a suspected rapist owned a stash of pornography. The truth is that the gory pictures he kept are the pictures the media have been refusing to show for two decades.

The media try to discredit criticism of themselves as "blaming the messenger." But the criticism arises precisely from our sense that the messenger is tampering with the message. We don't argue with the mailman, even when he delivers bills; we may want to argue with the anchorman.

The news media, especially television, are usually discussed on the wrong model. If you want raw data, buy an almanac. What the news media provide is not just neutral "information," but emotionally colored dramaturgy—often liberal moral fables, nudging our responses with ample cues as to who are the progressive heroes and reactionary villains. The major media, moreover, have adopted the entire vocabulary of the pro-abortion movement: "termination," "fetus," "pro-choice," and "abortion providers." The word "kill" is studiously avoided, though it's hard to see why: after all, we speak readily of killing cockroaches, bacteria, even weeds. Is there any reason to be squeamish in describing the killing of a living, growing human embryo?

A few years ago it transpired that Josef Mengele, Hitler's surgeon general, had made ends meet during his latter years in Argentina by performing abortions. What shall we say of him? That he was making the best use he could of his ghoulish skills? Or that he was an "abortion provider," dedicated to giving Argentine women "choice"? Whatever the reason, we've heard a lot less about old Doc Mengele, a man who doesn't get nearly enough credit for being ahead of his time. He'd be right at home in Bill Clinton's America. ■



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