
Bill Clinton's Transformation of American Politics

Patrick M. Garry

Patrick Garry is the author of *A Nation of Adversaries: How the Litigation Explosion Is Reshaping America* (1997), *An American Paradox: Censorship in a Nation of Free Speech* (1993), and *Scrambling for Protection: The New Media and the First Amendment* (1995). A lawyer and constitutional scholar, he holds a Ph.D. in constitutional history from the University of Minnesota. He has been a visiting scholar at the Columbia University School of Law and is a contributor to *The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States*.

Bill Clinton wanted to change America. During his 1992 campaign for the presidency, he promised to be “an agent of change.” It is a promise he has kept.

Just as Andrew Jackson ushered in a more democratic age for the young nation, and Theodore Roosevelt turned the presidency into a bully pulpit, and Franklin Roosevelt greatly expanded the role of government, so too has Bill Clinton injected revolutionary changes into the nation's politics. In Clinton's case, however, his changes may not receive the same kind of historical judgment as those of his predecessors.

Bill Clinton's transformation of

American politics began during his 1992 campaign, but it had its greatest impact during his impeachment battle. And it is through the lens of impeachment that the Clinton political revolution can be seen most succinctly.

Most likely, the details of the Clinton impeachment will fade with time. History books will devote little text to the substance of the impeachment articles, and the name Monica Lewinsky will be relegated to the most obscure of footnotes. This is not to say, however, that the impeachment will leave no lasting legacy. But this legacy will involve more the way in which Clinton combated the impeachment charges than the substance of those

charges, for it was his battle against impeachment in particular, and his style of practicing politics in general, that cemented into the public's mind-set an array of attitudes and perceptions that differed drastically from the American political tradition.

Impeachment and the Politics of Therapy

Throughout his presidency, Bill Clinton has practiced the politics of therapy. He has spoken fluently the language of self-esteem. He campaigned on his therapeutic mantra "I feel your pain." Once elected, he took his cabinet to Camp David for a sensitivity session, complete with "facilitators" to encourage the sharing of feelings. He has sparkled during moments of national and individual tragedy, when he has become the nation's First Mourner and Sympathizer. But never has Clinton practiced the politics of therapy as fervently as he did during his impeachment.

Even though impeachment is a constitutional process, relatively little of the president's rhetoric came from constitutional texts, such as *The Federalist Papers*. Instead, the source of much of Clinton's defense came from the field of popular psychology. To listen to Bill Clinton defend himself was to hear the same kind of dialogue that so often occurs on afternoon television talk shows. He explained that he had spent so much time taking care of the health of the nation that he had forgotten about attending to the health of his own personal life. He described how, once he came out of the denial phase,

he had sat down with counselors to conduct a personal inventory. He talked of the crisis as a personal journey, which could only lead to much personal growth. He called for a time of healing. He stood at his lectern, biting his lower lip and giving a painful apology, just as Jerry Springer's onstage guests do once they've been confronted by the audience. Indeed, the therapization of the impeachment process became so pervasive that a newspaper headline asked if America had become "A Nation of Clinton Enablers?"¹

Clinton's counterattack to the impeachment charges relied less on a rebuttal of the specific allegations than on a repetition of therapeutic clichés. (The divisiveness of impeachment had to stop so that the healing could begin, and so on.) Republicans were portrayed as therapeutic villains—harsh, uptight, mean-spirited, judgmental, and unforgiving. They were said to be "more focused on retribution [and] more uncaring about the future."²

The president, meanwhile, wrapped himself in the cloak of emotional vulnerability. He so exploited the victimization proclivities in American culture that he was able to convince the public that he, the most powerful man in the world, was a victim too—just like all those poor souls who parade their hurts on the afternoon talk shows. And as the rule goes, victims are to be pitied, not punished.

Throughout his impeachment, as throughout his entire presidency, Bill Clinton sought to transform the presidency into a kind of national therapist. In doing so, he has remade America's

political culture in the likeness of its therapeutic culture—a culture of ubiquitous symptoms.

In contemporary America, pop psychology books are perennial best-sellers, and therapy is practically as commonplace as flu shots. Support groups aimed at boosting self-esteem claim tens of millions of Americans as members.³ As Ellen Herman states in *The Romance of American Psychology*, “Psychological insight is the creed of our time.”⁴

Under the guidance of books like *I’m Not My Fault*, people are now assumed to be emotional victims. But perhaps the most blatant sign of America’s therapy culture is the plethora of television talk shows—Oprah, Sally Jessy, Leeza, Ricki Lake. Serving as public confessionals in which nothing is left unsaid, these shows have been instrumental in promoting the language of a therapeutic culture.

The overriding concern of a therapeutic culture is emotional contentment. It views the individual not through the lens of law or morality or political theory or social class, but through the scope of psychology. It is a culture in which every crime can be explained through some psychological dysfunction and in which there are no moral dilemmas, only emotional blockages that cry out for counseling. It is a culture in which low self-esteem replaces hunger and poverty as the social blight. It is a culture whose creed demands an emotional correctness: an unquestioning acceptance of self-expression of any form, and an intolerance of judgmentalism that might in

any way damage self-esteem.

During the Clinton years, the language of politics has adopted the language of therapy. As states’ rights were in the mid-nineteenth century and economic security was in the 1930s, psychology has become the commodity of politics in the 1990s. Social programs are aimed at improving the self-esteem of their beneficiaries. Affirmative action programs are needed to raise the self-image of minority groups. Even political campaigns take on the language of a therapist’s office. Issues are cast in a simplistic, emotional dichotomy of love and hate, with opponents of welfare, affirmative action, and nationalized health care branded as practitioners of the politics of hate. But always, with the end of every political campaign, it is time “for the healing to begin.”

Victimization has become a valuable political strategy. In a culture of victims, the politics of joy—as Hubert Humphrey once termed it—has been replaced by the politics of sorrow. While Theodore Roosevelt never spoke of the death of his first wife and Franklin Roosevelt did everything possible to camouflage his disability, candidates now openly boast of their sufferings.

The extent to which the victim mind-set has come to dominate American politics was on display at the 1996 Democratic National Convention. Delivering one of the convention’s most highlighted prime-time speeches was actor Christopher Reeves, the paralyzed victim of a horse-riding accident. Though Mr. Reeves held no political office, his appearance was aimed at portraying the Democrats as

in step with the nation's victim-oriented attitudes. Indeed, the entire convention was one huge sympathy-fest. Tales of sufferings were abundant: the president shared a story of his brother's cocaine addiction; the first lady revealed the trauma of Chelsea's night at the hospital after a tonsillectomy; keynote speaker Evan Bayh talked about the loss he felt from his mother's death; and the vice president, with a deliberate tearfulness, reenacted his grief over his sister's death of lung cancer. All in all, it was a convention of victim politics, devoted more to eliciting sympathy than to debating public policy. Jeff Greenfield, the ABC political commentator, suggested that Ricki Lake, the television talk show host, "should have been the chair of the convention."⁵

But even more than being a victim, the therapeutic politician has to show sympathy for the sufferings of other victims. For this task, Bill Clinton has mastered the use of the presidential apology—an act for which he needs no congressional approval nor any budget authority. Yet while President Clinton has readily apologized for acts of his predecessors for which he bears no personal responsibility—nuclear testing, the African slave trade, dropping the atomic bomb on Japan, American support of Guatemalan dictators—he was astonishingly slow to apologize for his own behavior in the Lewinsky scandal.

The Dangers Posed by a Politics of Therapy

As exemplified by the impeachment process, a politics of therapy is

contradictory to democratic processes and to the rule of law. It not only discourages the act of judging (which is both the privilege and the duty of a democratic society toward its elected leaders), but also denies and dismisses two essential tenets of a democracy: debate and partisan conflict.

Never once during the impeachment process, which was recognized by all members of Congress as the most important matter on which they would ever vote, did the president personally attempt to engage the country in a debate on the case against him. Never once did he hold a press conference on the subject or speak meaningfully to the American people about the matter. (In fact, during all of 1998, Clinton held a total of only two formal press conferences.) To the contrary, the White House made every attempt to cut off all debate on the issue. It gagged its opponents with labels like *hatemonger* and *hypocrite*. Its repetitive refrain was that the Congress should just drop the matter and "move on to the people's business." (This refrain had a striking familiarity—at a 1994 press conference in which he tried to put the Whitewater controversy to rest, Clinton said he just wanted to "get on with the business of the country.")

Bill Clinton used therapeutic politics to remove the impeachment issue from the realm of public debate and to make the public feel as if it should simply accept his apology and move on. Debate, after all, is both useless and nonexistent in a therapeutic culture. Being completely subjective, feelings can't be debated or questioned; they

can only be accepted. And although therapy is ever tolerant of any and all feelings, it is stringently intolerant of debate, for debate implies disagreement and judgment.

(This Clintonesque reluctance to have public debate on troublesome issues continued to repeat itself in the months following the Senate impeachment vote. The Clinton administration aggressively resisted public release of a bipartisan congressional report on China's acquisition of U.S. atomic secrets. And it embarked upon the bombing campaign in Kosovo without ever engaging the public in a debate over that action, hoping that the bombs would bring Slobodan Milosevic to his knees before the public realized that America had gone to war—in fact, Clinton waited until the last moment even to inform the country that a military campaign was about to be waged. Then, once the bombing started, the Clinton administration, full of veterans of the free speech generation that condemned government secrecy during the Vietnam War, admitted that it was adopting a more restrictive information policy regarding military operations in Yugoslavia.)

If the Clinton White House was dismissive of debate during the impeachment proceedings, it was absolutely demagogic against partisanship. Again, in a therapeutic environment, any sign of divisiveness is seen as unhealthy. Consequently, Clinton used the partisan wrangling in Congress as a pretext for waging a counterattack that completely changed the subject. He argued that the impeachment vote in

the House of Representatives was illegitimate because it was partisan, and that Republicans were being mean-spirited because they were choosing conflict over healing and judgmentalism over tolerance.

During the Clinton presidency, and contrary to the American experience, partisanship has become a political crime. Historically, however, partisanship has been a sign of a healthy democracy. Periods of intense partisanship have coincided with periods of robust political participation.⁶ All throughout the nineteenth century, the partisanship in Congress was far more heated than was the recent partisanship of the impeachment process. Yet Bill Clinton was able to convince the public that partisanship was something vile, that debate over his impeachment was just petty bickering. (Although even as he was deriding partisanship, he was actively encouraging it, so as to exploit it in his argument that his impeachment was “illegitimate”; then, when he was given a chance to embrace bipartisanship just weeks after his impeachment trial ended, Clinton sided with the most partisan Democrats and rejected the reform plan of the bipartisan Breaux Medicare Commission.) This assault on partisanship, however, revealed an intolerance of the Clinton White House—intolerance of democratic opposition. And it was an intolerance that had shown itself on prior occasions.

During the Clinton health care campaign, for instance, there was not even a recognition of the opposition. Hillary Clinton's health care task force refused

even to open its meetings to the public or to allow opponents access to its proceedings. Then the plan was delivered to Congress on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. According to Democratic senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the “whole Clinton health-care project [was] a sort of New Age affectation.”⁷ Clinton, in Moynihan’s view, approached the health-care debate “with a rhetoric of crisis, deprivation [and] suffering” designed more to scare Americans than to reason with them. It was an approach that played more to emotions than to facts; consequently, debate was dismissed and opposition ignored.

This same approach was taken during the impeachment. Even though the process provided the country a valuable opportunity to debate such topics as sexuality in the workplace, the scope of sexual harassment laws, and the behavioral standards expected of the nation’s leaders—opportunities previously seized in the cases of John Tower, Clarence Thomas, and Bob Packwood—all that was heard from the White House was the persistent demand to “put this all behind us.” The country should not be put through the nightmare of impeachment, the president’s lawyers argued. The country was too fragile, its sensitivities too offended, went the implicit message. Unlike FDR, who in 1932 tried to calm the nation’s fears, Bill Clinton in 1998 tried to stoke them by threatening the agony that would ensue if the impeachment process continued. (In describing a prospective Senate trial, Clinton defenders used such terms as “horror,” “doom,”

“wholesale disruption,” and “irreparable damage.”)⁸

The Sogginess of a Therapeutic Politics

During his impeachment, as well as his entire presidency, Bill Clinton has squelched opposition by creating an undefined, slippery third way—a way in between yes and no, right and left. It was a triangulation strategy in touch with the nonjudgmentalism of a therapeutic age. Clinton’s “truthful but misleading” defense was a perfect example of this third way. It admitted that Clinton hadn’t told the truth, but denied that he had uttered any lies; and it provided an escape route for a public wishing to avoid judgment. Yet to ask the public to “move on” under such circumstances was to encourage it to retreat from politics and to shirk the duty of holding public officials accountable.

This noncommittal, third-way approach has been described by Michael Barone as Clinton’s preference for “sogginess”—meaning comfortable uncertainty, the deferral of tough choices for as long as possible, and reliance on emotion rather than logic.⁹ Throughout his presidency, Clinton has used this sogginess to cloud the truth, avoid accountability, and substitute emotional rhetoric for decisive action. His foreign policy particularly illustrates this propensity to sogginess.

Though he came to office decrying human rights violations in China, Clinton has done nothing to challenge the strong-willed Chinese leadership. Though he criticized President Bush’s

reluctance to use force to stop the killing in Bosnia, Clinton did not commit troops until he was in office more than two and a half years, and then only after a peace agreement was already reached. Though he has talked on and on about limiting weapons of mass destruction, he has done nothing to stem North Korea's accelerating missile program, not even after North Korea violated its nuclear freeze agreement by firing a missile over Japan. Nor has Clinton done anything to prevent Chinese spies from procuring America's most sensitive nuclear weapons secrets and using them in the development of new and more powerful warheads.¹⁰

Though Clinton called for "a new government in Iraq that is committed to peace in the region," he has done nothing to achieve that, other than fire an occasional missile Iraq's way. Moreover, Clinton consistently refused to heed the warnings of UNSCOM inspectors that Saddam Hussein was hiding biological weapons. He instead preferred the soggy approach of creating and extending more and more vague deadlines. Only when he had no other choice did Clinton launch more missiles. Once the bombing ended, however, the United States was in a worse position than before, since the inspectors were now no longer in Iraq.

Even Clinton's military operations have been soggy, tending toward the safe and noncommittal. In this regard, Clinton has preferred the convenience of remote-control warfare—bombs and missiles sent streaming against defenseless targets from the safety of planes

and ships miles away. Yet though it is relatively risk-free, this type of warfare is often ineffective, as it was when in response to the embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya, Clinton launched missiles against a vacant terrorist camp and a pharmaceutical factory.

A president who once wrote that he "loathed" the military has launched missiles into more provinces in one year than his Republican predecessors did in their twelve years in office. Between summer 1998 and summer 1999, Clinton bombed Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Serbia, and Kosovo. He has used combat-by-technology as a way of waging war without casualties, either in the military or in his poll ratings. He has been seduced by the lure of air power, which, according to military expert Eliot Cohen, "like modern courtship appears to offer gratification without commitment."¹¹

This safe but soggy military style, however, proved disastrous in Kosovo. After eight weeks of bombing, the situation in the Balkans was worse than ever. The bombs (as of the writing of this article) had done exactly what Clinton sought to prevent: a unified Serbia behind the defiant Milosevic; an igniting of the worst European refugee crisis in half a century; the presence of more Serb forces inside Kosovo than when the bombing began; a spread of the conflict into Yugoslavia's neighbors; and a Kosovo, reduced to rubble by the bombs, unfit for habitation by any ethnic group. (Kosovo and Serbia together have a smaller land area than the state of Indiana. Imagine the condition of Indiana

after eight weeks of steady bombing.) Meanwhile, Russian-American relations sank to cold war levels; and anti-American sentiment in China, after the bombing of its embassy in Belgrade, reached new heights. Yet despite all this, Milosevic remained in power.

There have been no grand or coherent theories governing the Clinton foreign policy. Instead, according to Robert Zoellick, head of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, it has been a foreign policy “designed more to neutralize certain political threats at home” than to implement a clear set of priority values.¹² (Credible evidence now exists that the Sudan factory Clinton bombed following his grand jury testimony really was a pharmaceutical factory; and the present trouble in Kosovo stems largely from Clinton’s soggy 1995 Bosnia accord, which did not include a Milosevic pledge to lay off Kosovo and was intended more to throw the whole Balkans issue past the 1996 presidential election than to reach any long-term solution.)

Aside from the advance weather reports, the operation in Kosovo “never had more vision than the next day,” according to Democratic senator Robert Torricelli.¹³ Within days of the bombing’s outset, Clinton’s already fuzzy goal was downgraded to “diminishing Milosevic’s capacity to conduct war”—a subjective goal that would permit him to declare victory at any time. When Clinton tried to garner public support for the bombing, he used the dramatic emotional arguments that the Serbian army was “hooded thugs,” that Milosevic was another Adolf Hitler,

and that the refugee crisis was another Holocaust. In dramatic rhetoric, Clinton described the Kosovo intervention as a climactic struggle between good and evil. Yet he never built up the courage to use the word war. Nor did he ever specifically lay out the goals of the military campaign—such as the removal of Milosevic from power, the future transformation of Kosovo into a U.N. protectorate or into an autonomous province or an independent nation, or the future rebuilding of Kosovo and Serbia.

Nor did Clinton explain why, if another Holocaust was occurring, ground troops were not being sent in to stop it. (The answer, according to George Edwards, director of the Center for Presidential Studies, was Clinton’s reluctance to state the truth: “He believes if he rules out ground troops, people won’t believe we’re going to war.”)¹⁴ When Clinton so adamantly refused to commit ground troops, and when it took him so long to be goaded into taking any action at all in Kosovo, the world cannot help but see all his moral arguments as just more spin and bluster.

Not surprisingly, Clinton’s best moment in the first eight weeks of the air campaign came during a meeting with Kosovar refugees when he showed them how much he felt their pain.

The Self-Focus of a Therapeutic Politics

Not only does a therapeutic politics tend to foster vague and nonconfrontational decisions, it also tends to look at government not through the wide

angle of national and international interests, but through the narrow angle of the self.

Just as therapy is geared to the emotional makeup of the individual, so too has Clinton's politics been geared more to the needs and interests of the self than to the interests of a nation. Senator Moynihan has noted that, under Bill Clinton, there has been a "miniaturization of the presidency."¹⁵ It has been a presidency more concerned with the minivan schedules of soccer moms than with the global financial crisis or a Social Security system that still hasn't been touched even though Clinton promised seven years ago to fix it. In effect, it has been a presidency that has elevated the slogan "the personal is political" to its supreme governing philosophy.

What has resulted from the Clinton era has been a politics of minutiae—education programs focusing on school uniforms, crime programs proposing the provision of free walkie-talkies to neighborhood watch groups, and anti-violence programs aimed at movie advertisements and rating systems. Instead of attempting anything big, such as Social Security reform, Clinton has curried favor by proposing programs that amount to low-cost, low-impact expressions of concern. He hasn't just downsized government, he has downsized the political vision of a nation to fit within his politics-of-the-self—a politics devoid of any larger meaning.

During his presidency, Clinton has triangulated himself away from the institutions of government and put himself at the center of the nation's

politics, which in the past six years has become all about Bill Clinton. When he is interviewed about legislative issues before Congress, Clinton doesn't say "we" or "what the majority decides," but instead uses phrases like "I feel good about this" and "I'm defending America's values." When the federal building in Oklahoma City was blown up in 1995 and TWA flight 800 crashed in 1996, it was Clinton's facial expressions of pain that flooded television screens. And in an April 1999 interview with Dan Rather, Clinton compared himself to FDR and Nelson Mandela; then, in self-adulatory words, he described his impeachment not as a trial of his misdeeds but as a historic opportunity for him to defend the Constitution. According to *The New Republic's* Leon Wieseltier, "Bill Clinton's place in history will be as the president who worried about his place in history."¹⁶

The Clinton miniaturization has also shown itself in the propensity to cast practically every political issue in a child framework. Clinton's 1996 campaign platform was dubbed "Kinderpolitics."¹⁷ Policies were continually formulated in terms of children: pollution doesn't hurt just people, it poisons playgrounds; crime doesn't threaten society, it shatters the lives of children; health care doesn't benefit the sick, it permits children to live fulfilling lives. The message was that politics is not a matter of national and international relations, but rather simply a parent-child relationship, with government as the nurturing parent and the president as the therapeutic father. Indeed, after

his 1996 Democratic National Convention speech, President Clinton played peekaboo on stage with his young nephew.

Not only has the Clinton era seen the political elevation of miniature issues, but it has seen small crises imbued with the drama of great events. In the impeachment debate, for instance, the president's supporters likened Bill Clinton to Rosa Parks, seeing him as a pioneer against the social repression of sexual liberty. Others equated the Starr inquiry with the Spanish Inquisition. And feminist Betty Friedan called the investigation "sexual McCarthyism" and said that unless Clinton prevailed, "sex was going to take the place of the Cold War."¹⁸ The most dangerous conflict in the history of the world was now being equated with Clinton's perjury in a sexual harassment lawsuit.

Being so focused on the minutia-of-the-self, the Clinton administration has never found a "politics of meaning," to use that New Age term with which the first lady was once so enamored. (Michael Lerner, the author of "a politics of meaning," developed his political philosophy during encounters with his psychotherapy patients—a philosophy proclaiming that every person has been crippled by an unfeeling world.)¹⁹ Consequently, Bill Clinton has wasted a historic opportunity. Never before in the twentieth century had America been blessed with the peace and prosperity that it has enjoyed since 1992. And yet, besides continually gauging his own popularity, Clinton has done relatively little.

Like someone who inherits a stable full of Thoroughbreds yet never takes them out for a race, Bill Clinton has never done anything with the Thoroughbred economy he inherited. Other than to indulge America during its economic binge, he has done very little to prepare America for less prosperous times in the future. Other than assisting oppressed constituencies like soccer moms, he has done nothing to use the American economic engine to assist those developing countries struggling with debilitating poverty. Even on the issue of race, an issue on which he claims great insight, he has done nothing more than talk—nothing more than act as a national therapist narrating the emotional hurts of racism.

With his vision confined to the self, Clinton has conducted a presidency empty of political vision. It has been an intellectually decaf presidency—one that looks and smells like a presidency, but without any lasting effect. It has been a presidency that substitutes therapeutic "national conversations" for bold, decisive action. (As Hillary Rodham Clinton suggested in the wake of the Littleton shootings, "I believe we should have a national conversation about what kind of a nation we are, what kind of people we want to be.")²⁰

Without a politics of meaning, Bill Clinton is left with not so much a political philosophy as a narcissistic lifestyle attitude. He is a pop-culture president, and his philosophy resembles the messages of Nike advertisements—all about self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction and rebellion against outside authority. Likewise, the issues

about which the White House has been most passionate are “lifestyle” issues—abortion, sexual expression, public-funded art.

Clinton’s therapeutic politics never talks about self-sacrifice, only self-pain. From his draft card controversy to his adamant refusal to cooperate with the independent counsel to his brazen ruffling off of the Lincoln Bedroom, Clinton has never shown a sense of duty or a willingness to set aside his own self-interests for some higher authority. He is a guilt-free president: like no-fat ice cream, he doesn’t make us feel bad about our indulgences, but neither does he provide any nourishment.

Clinton’s narcissism and his rebellion against outside authority were illustrated by his 1992 response to questions about his use of marijuana. Though he had once tried it, he said, he never used it again because he didn’t like it—not because it was wrong or self-destructive or an unwise self-indulgence; he didn’t try it again simply because he “didn’t like it.”

But never has Clinton’s politics-of-the-self been more evident than during the impeachment process. By forcing the country to go through seven months of the Starr investigation rather than simply tell the truth, and by refusing to let the Senate judge him without all the dissembling and smoke screens, Clinton made his “journey” into the country’s burden. His defenders kept saying that the country shouldn’t be “put through this,” but it was really only the president who was being put through anything. Under the Clinton spin, impeachment wasn’t

about whether he had committed a felony and tried to cover it up, or whether his actions had jeopardized the integrity of the judicial oath. Instead, it was all about Bill Clinton’s personal sex life, all about the sincerity of his apologies and about his being a martyr. By carving out an “all-about-sex” exception to perjury, Clinton turned the impeachment case into a personal matter; and once it was a personal matter, a therapeutic culture had no choice but to accept and forgive.

Politicians as Celebrities in a Culture-of-the-Self

During the Clinton tenure, the presidency in particular and politics in general have been immersed in America’s celebrity culture. Over the past six years, Bill Clinton has become the most ubiquitous figure not only in American politics but in American culture as well. And for the past year, as if caught in a real-life Truman Show, the nation has been forced to live in Bill’s world. Like the weekly reports of box-office earnings, the only news out of the White House has been Clinton’s poll ratings; and like film stars, the president has become a front-page favorite of the trashiest and trendiest tabloids.

Yet this celebrity culture is not one in which Clinton is uncomfortable. To the contrary, he actively sought it. Celebrities have always wanted to be president, but it is said that Bill Clinton “wanted to be president to become a celebrity.”²¹ Indeed, he has followed the strategy that to succeed in politics he had to succeed in being a celebrity.

From playing his saxophone on late-night television, to his Hollywood-produced video biography, *Man from Hope*, to his vacations with movie stars, to the celebrities who get invited to sleepovers in the Lincoln Bedroom, to revelations of personal tidbits like the kind of underwear he prefers, to all his Hollywood fund-raising, Bill Clinton has encouraged the celebrification of politics. And like all contemporary celebrities, he's talked openly about the emotional pain of his youth.

Nor has the first lady let her "brainy/policy-wonk" reputation keep her from embracing the celebrity culture. She has written a book about the First Pets, posed for a *Vogue* glamour cover, appeared on television to reveal lovable little aspects of her personal life (going on Martha Stewart to talk about baking cookies, and on Oprah to talk about breast-feeding Chelsea), and will soon produce a book on the joys of entertaining and decorating as First Hostess. She has also resorted to the world of Hollywood to analyze the complexities of the real world, such as the six-hundred-year-old ethnic conflict in the Balkans, when, for instance, she said that the plight of the Kosovo refugees reminded her of scenes in the film *Schindler's List*. (The first lady had previously praised an earlier Steven Spielberg film, *E.T.*, for its contribution to interstellar bonding.)

Like any cultural celebrity, Bill Clinton seeks public approval by publicizing his private side, although this willingness is decidedly one-sided. When it comes to whether he has

engaged in improper financial deals or whether he tried to cover up a sexual relationship with an intern, he suddenly clams up. He asserts the celebrity rule: that the public is entitled to know only what he wants them to know about his personal life. Bristling under press scrutiny, Clinton has adopted the *National Enquirer* mentality of Hollywood celebrities, attributing any criticism of himself to the work of scandalmongering journalists. The personal is political when Bill Clinton says it is; otherwise, what he does in the Oval Office is no one's business but his own.

During the Clinton presidency, politics has become just another stage for the celebrity culture to express itself. It has become just another script for Harry Thomason and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason to produce. Just as Hollywood holds sneak previews before cutting and editing its films, Clinton takes polls and convenes focus groups before developing his policies. Whereas celebrities have always appeared on television hawking products as corporate "spokespersons," now they appear on television to spew out their political insights and policy advice. Where presidents and prime ministers and ambassadors once appeared, Barbra Streisand now speaks to the students of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Commentary on political issues is now made by Alec Baldwin. Indeed, it is a sign of the weakness of our political culture that celebrities are now needed to make it appealing. It's hardly surprising, then,

that the Clinton antidrug campaign consists almost entirely of television advertising.

During the Clinton presidency, Hollywood and Washington have become merged. They are both all about image and star power and self-indulgence. Politics has been swallowed up by the celebrity culture. But this also means that politicians will be treated like celebrities—and just as the public eavesdrops on Brad Pitt's sex life, it will likewise eavesdrop on Bill Clinton's.

A Therapeutic Politics and the Rule of Law

In Bill Clinton's therapeutic mindset, his apology was supposed to put an end to the whole impeachment affair. Once he had recognized his wrongdoing and sought counseling, he was supposed to be congratulated for confronting himself and embarking on a journey toward personal growth. Clinton's lawyers became public therapists, leading a twelve-step program through which Americans became increasingly receptive to the president's claims of emotional victimization and prescriptions for healing. It was as if the apology and the request for healing immediately and completely trumped the dictates of law.

The danger, of course, is that this murky, therapeutic attitude toward the law will creep down into American society. And sure enough, within weeks of Clinton's acquittal, in a case in which a minister was charged with embezzling church funds, the minister argued that his parish had "accepted his apology" and that it was time for

the prosecutor to "move on."²² In a striking similarity to Clinton's "truthful but misleading" defense, the accused minister admitted to being a "sinner but not a criminal."

The Clinton impeachment defense demonstrated how incompatible a therapeutic politics is with a rule-of-law government. Law ensures equality and justice by removing emotion and subjectivity from its workings. But in a therapeutic culture, each person's subjective psychological makeup and emotional condition must be considered. Consequently, no general rules can apply. No two people have to be treated equally, because every person's psychological makeup is different.

Not surprisingly, Bill Clinton, the most powerful person in the nation, was not treated the same as were other people in high positions. He was not removed from office, as federal judges charged with perjury had been. And he received no criminal punishment, unlike all those prison inmates who were serving time for perjury.

The rule of law was also damaged by the hypocrisy of Clinton's impeachment defense. His supporters branded Clinton's sexual behavior with Monica Lewinsky private, even though they have advocated sweeping sexual regulation of the workplace on the theory that the "personal is political." They criticized Ken Starr for the volumes of evidence he sent to the House, yet they continually called the accusations against the president "unsubstantiated." They accepted Clinton's grope of Kathleen Willey, even though they were outraged at Clarence Thomas's

Coke-can remark to Anita Hill. They dismissed Juanita Broaddrick's rape accusation as uncorroborated, even though they've previously argued that such accusations need not be corroborated to be taken seriously. They admitted that the president had acted wrongly, yet said that the investigation of him was unjustified. In a parade of speakers, they characterized his acts as "reprehensible" and "disgracing," yet after the House impeached him they rushed to his side and enveloped him with applause.

Although the president and his supporters frequently invoke the ideal of justice in advocating their political agenda, they continually labeled the impeachment debate a distraction from the urgent business of a great nation, as if the pursuit of justice were some trivial sideline hobby (and as if Clinton was just waiting for impeachment to end so that he could submit a Social Security reform bill). Yet if hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue, then Clinton's supporters during impeachment were paying the supreme tribute to the opposition.

Just as they were complaining that Clinton shouldn't have been subjected to Paula Jones's sexual harassment case, the Clinton administration was arguing to the Supreme Court (in *Davis v. Monroe Board of Education*) that the reach of sexual harassment laws should be extended to harassment committed in schools by children against other children. Furthermore, although Clinton claimed that he should never have been asked by Jones's lawyers about his sexual history, it was he who signed the 1994

law that allowed harassment lawyers to investigate the sexual histories of defendants. And finally, if, as Clinton's defenders so often said, the perjury case against him was unfounded, and one that no prosecutor would ever take, then why were his lawyers so consumed with protecting him from such a prosecution that they continually advanced legalistic defenses that even the president's supporters called "maddening"?

Clinton's Assault Against His Accusers

Bill Clinton's defense, in the end, turned out to be worse than the crimes for which he was impeached. In the way he flaunted a cult of rebellion and antiauthority, he, the nation's chief law enforcement officer, gravely undercut the rule of law. The pep rally he held on the White House lawn, standing before the camera with a proudly defiant look, showed the country that he felt nothing but contempt for the House's impeachment vote conducted pursuant to the nation's highest law—the Constitution. His refusal to answer the ten questions posed to him by senators during the trial demonstrated a refusal to even minimally cooperate with a court of impeachment presided over by the chief justice of the United States Supreme Court. But even more destructive were the blistering attacks he waged on his accusers.

As he has shown throughout the numerous scandals that have plagued his presidency, Clinton's first response is to destroy his accusers. At the first hint of opposition, he unleashes his arsenal of threats and finger-pointing.

Instead of submitting to the deliberative processes of the law, he launches the missiles of slander. This is the same kind of vengeful behavior he has shown toward his political opponents—those who are not accusing him of any crimes, but who just disagree with him politically. As Jacob Weisberg wrote in the *New York Times Magazine*, Bill Clinton has “dug deeper for dirt on his opponents, devised more effective 30-second attack ads and showed great ingenuity in exploiting loopholes in the campaign finance law.”²³ And as Peggy Noonan has observed, “I don’t recall anyone who works for [Clinton] ever granting any decency to the other side. Instead, it was all the smirking snarl, the snarling smirk, all ‘You’re partisan!,’ ‘You’re far-right haters leading a right-wing putsch.’”²⁴

When the news of the Monica Lewinsky scandal first broke, Clinton told interviewer Jim Lehrer that he would make every effort to cooperate with the investigation. That was like Joseph Stalin telling dissidents that he would entertain their complaints. And sure enough, within hours of this promise of cooperation, an all-out war on Kenneth Starr was declared by the president’s foot soldiers.

Bill Clinton’s response to an investigation ordered by his own appointed attorney general was to unleash a blistering barrage of slander against the independent counsel’s office. One White House official described it as “our continuing campaign to destroy Ken Starr.”²⁵ The president’s investigators even began digging into the sexual histories of Ken Starr and his staff.²⁶

(This use of investigators mirrored the 1992 campaign strategy of hiring private detectives to investigate the personal lives of Clinton’s former sexual partners and to coerce them into keeping silent.)

Starr was portrayed as a thug, a sex-obsessed prosecutor using gestapo-like tactics, and a pawn of a vast right-wing conspiracy out to get the president. (Similar words were later used to describe Slobodan Milosevic.) Yet this portrait contrasted dramatically with what had been previously said about Ken Starr. For instance, in 1993, when Senate Democrats asked Starr to assist in the ethics investigation of Robert Packwood, the *Washington Post* observed: “Even those who regularly crossed swords with him credited him with being fair. . . . He was not seen as ideologically driven.”²⁷ Indeed, it was not until after a dramatic affront from the White House in 1996 that Starr became so aggressive in his investigation. A secretary had discovered, lying open on a table in the Clintons’ private residence, Whitewater documents that had been under subpoena for two years; and yet no one in the White House could offer a clear explanation for why they had not been previously produced. This was the event, brought on by the Clintons themselves, that was to harden Starr and his prosecutors.

In the way the White House viciously attacked Ken Starr for his audacity in investigating yet another incident involving an apparent obstruction of justice, Bill Clinton proclaimed that the law is simply a contest of power and intimidation—you can escape its

dictates if you can sufficiently batter its agents, just as Joseph McCarthy and Richard Nixon tried to do during their own moments of disgrace.

To Clinton, law enforcement officers are not people to be respected, but enemies to be pummeled. In this age of in-your-face aggression, he has fed the cult of rebellion that characterizes the contemporary pop culture of which he is a celebrity: respect and obedience are out, dissing is in. (So is it any great mystery that in a country whose president has been cited for contempt of court for his “contumacious conduct” [or, as the dictionary defines it, “obstinately resisting authority”] and who tells Dan Rather that he feels no shame over his impeachment, one of the Columbine High School killers, Eric Harris, wrote, “I am the law. . . . Feel no remorse, no sense of shame”?)

A standard Clinton defense has been to attribute accusations against him to the evil motives of his accusers—like the thief who always thinks someone is trying to steal from him. While complaining about the “politics of personal destruction,” he simultaneously pursued a “scorched earth” policy against his critics. Republicans were likened to Ku Klux Klansmen, “missing only the white sheets.”²⁸ Monica Lewinsky was accused of being a stalker; her memory was said to have been impaired by prescription drugs.²⁹ Kathleen Willey was called emotionally unstable. Paula Jones was called trailer trash. A twenty-year-old affair was dug up from Henry Hyde’s past. Speaker-select Bob Livingston’s marital infidelities were exposed. Tom DeLay

was called the meanest man in Congress. Stories were passed around on how chief House Judiciary Committee majority counsel David Schippers once represented a porn star named Seka.³⁰ James Carville declared war on the Republicans. Actor Alec Baldwin appeared on David Letterman’s Late Show and suggested getting a gang together and “going down to Washington to stone Henry Hyde to death.”

Throughout all this, Clinton pleaded that an end be put to “the politics of personal destruction.”³¹ (He pleaded for healing and reconciliation, even though once the Senate impeachment vote had been taken, he was reported by the New York Times to have vowed revenge on the House managers who prosecuted the case against him.) Curiously, however, the facts gathered by Starr were rarely challenged. Hannah Arendt may have been right when she said that one of the great tactical advantages of the totalitarian elites was to turn any statement of fact into a question of motive.

With his dissembling, lawyerly evasions and counterattacks, Clinton provided a blueprint for anyone with enough resources to avoid prosecution. Why, for instance, should polluters voluntarily comply with environmental laws when they could escape those laws by intimidating their enforcers? Why should companies seek to accommodate those who complain of sexual and racial harassment when instead they could just beat those complainers into silence?

The fallout of Clinton’s impeachment will be felt the next time a leader is sought to be made accountable for

any legal or ethical transgressions. (In fact, this fallout is already occurring as Clinton remains untouched by the escalating revelations of the Chinese-spying and campaign-finance scandals.) Because of Clinton's impeachment defense, the moral authority of anyone seeking accountability has been greatly weakened. All throughout the impeachment process, presidential defenders accused the House managers of hypocrisy. Even though there was no evidence that the managers had ever committed perjury or obstruction of justice, Clinton was able to convince Americans that, in effect, anyone who makes a moral argument is a hypocrite. He created a one-or-the-other option: only saints can insist on moral standards; otherwise, there is to be no judging. But since there are no saints, America will be left with no one to vindicate the injustices of the powerful and to hold them accountable.

Impeachment and the Decline of Civic Morality

During the impeachment process, there was endless commentary about Bill Clinton's morality, or lack thereof. But the president was right about one thing: personal sins are not a subject for public inquiry, and particularly not a justification for impeachment. Unfortunately, the president did not stop there. He instead went on to wage a defense that in the future may prove to have devastating effects on the civic morality of America.

This civic morality is not a set of behavioral dictates handed down by any religious denomination or sect. It is

a set of shared values that stems from America's civil religion, embodying the character virtues that make democracy work, according to the most famous of American observers, the nineteenth-century philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville.³² From George Washington to Abraham Lincoln to Franklin Roosevelt, American presidents have reiterated their belief that a just and enlightened democracy has to rest on a virtuous citizenry practicing a civic religion of honesty, self-restraint, and responsibility. Only through such virtue can individuals set aside self-interest and make decisions for the sake of the common good. And only can an enduring body of civic virtue make law possible by infusing it with a higher duty.

If there has been a unique national trait to America's history, it has been its moral vigor—a vigor that has produced the country's finest moments. It was this moral vigor that inspired the Declaration of Independence, the movement to abolish slavery, the determination to beat back totalitarianism in World War II, and the civil rights crusade of the 1960s. And it is a vigor that Bill Clinton has tried to harness at various times during his presidency—for example, when he called health care reform and his antismoking program moral issues, when he labeled military intervention in Kosovo a moral imperative, and when the first lady described women's rights as a moral imperative.

It is only this sense of civic morality, and not Bill Clinton's personal moral beliefs, that should be of concern to Americans. Unfortunately, because

of the way the president conducted his impeachment defense, and the way the public accepted that defense, there is much reason for concern.

Without a strong civic morality, government and politics will surely cower from the big issues that require moral commitment and self-sacrifice. For when future presidents attempt to tap into the American moral vein, just as reformers have done throughout history, they may find that it is not the rich vein it once was. Instead, it will have been depleted by the constant hammering of Clinton's attempts to downgrade America's moral sense.

Such was the case when Clinton discovered that even after eight weeks of bombing in Kosovo, an indifferent American public was still not committed to the campaign as a moral cause. Under the guidance of a therapeutic president, the public had already traded in its commonly held moral sensibilities for the short-term comforts provided by an indulgence of the now-sacrosanct individual emotions. Therapeutic sentimentalism had shoved aside moral principles. Not even Congress has been able to produce a moral spokesperson on the issue of Kosovo (with the sole exception of Senator John McCain). After six years of moral compromise required by the endless Clinton scandals, Congress itself has been morally bankrupted. It is hardly surprising, then, that Clinton was unable to ignite any moral outrage over Kosovo.

In 1996, Bill Clinton proclaimed his dedication to the kind of individual character values that historically have been supported by Americans. In a

proclamation signed during National Character Counts Week, he put the power of the presidency behind promotion of values like honesty, virtue, responsibility and "the difference between right and wrong." These were values he had previously recognized when he promised during his first presidential campaign to maintain the most ethical administration in history, and later when he proposed an array of programs aimed at children (V-chips, curfews, campaigns against teenage pregnancy), and then when he urged Americans to adopt a less tolerant attitude toward illegitimacy, abortion, and single parenthood.³³ Clinton also returned to an advocacy of such values several months after his impeachment acquittal when, in the wake of the Littleton shootings, he held a White House summit titled "Children, Violence and Responsibility." ("I hate it when people blame someone else and don't take responsibility for what they did," he told high school students after the shootings.)³⁴

Throughout the impeachment process, Bill Clinton continued to concede the importance of character—however, he redefined it in a way that essentially nullified it. He equated character with politics. Contrary to his proclamation announcing National Character Counts Week, Clinton took the position that character could be measured only by political agendas. His supporters argued that the president's character was determined not by the legality or morality of his own behavior, but rather by the "correctness" of his political positions—by his commit-

ment to education and his advocacy of a patients' bill of rights.

Under this definition, however, political issue statements drafted by a committee of aides are the epitome of character. It is a definition that makes moral character as easy as showing up at a fund-raiser for a homeless shelter and writing a check. It is a dehumanizing definition that deprives individuals of moral character, viewing them only as political mouthpieces. But if moral character is not centered on the individual, then the justification for centering freedom on the individual is likewise weakened. If individuals aren't the holder of moral character, why should they be the holder of civil and political rights? If individuals have no moral character, how can a democracy ruled by individuals possess any moral legitimacy? Individual morality is the flip side of individual self-esteem: without the obligation of one, there can't be the expectation of the other.

The shift of moral character from the individual to the group incorporates utilitarian tenets that America has long rejected—that the good of the group trumps the good of the individual, and that the ends justify the means. This tenet was a Leninist rationale for communism: that justice depended on the needs of the group and not on any intrinsic rights of the individual. It was also a component of Nietzsche's theory of the Superman, who by virtue of his creative intelligence is exempt from ordinary standards of right and wrong. (This utilitarianism was particularly evident in Susan Faludi's condemnation of the

women accusing Bill Clinton of inappropriate behavior as acting against "the advancement of their sex [and violating] sisterhood.")³⁵

The inherent problem of utilitarianism was even revealed in the well of the Senate by Clinton's own lawyers. In response to the accusation that the president had tried to deny Paula Jones her civil rights when he gave "misleading" testimony in her lawsuit, his lawyers argued that what really counted was his political record on civil rights. This was not a record that had anything to do with Paula Jones. Nor did the lawyers attempt to factually rebut the accusation that the president did give "misleading" testimony in the hopes of defeating Ms. Jones's civil rights lawsuit. Instead, they used a general statement of public interest (Clinton's political record) to negate a specific individual grievance (Clinton's falsities). But this approach makes Clinton's individual behavior irrelevant as long as his political agenda is popular. It uses a for-the-good-of-the-group argument to justify an individual injustice. The problem with this utilitarian approach, of course, is deciding on behalf of which political agenda certain illegal behavior will be tolerated.

An example of the Clintonesque belief that "good" politics provides immunity to personal accountability was poignantly revealed by James Stewart in *Blood Sport*, his book about the Clintons' Whitewater dealings. In describing Hillary Clinton's belief that she should not be criticized for "personal" financial behavior, Stewart writes that "she didn't understand how, after

all she'd given up for a life of public service, the media could question her ethics." Despite her cavalier behavior toward legal obligations, she couldn't understand how, after she had so assiduously pursued the greater good, anyone could suspect her of individual wrongs. Immunity on the part of political rulers, however, was rejected by the American constitutional system long ago.

The equation of character with the "correct" political positions is a definition laden with hypocrisy. It is a position that allowed Bill Clinton to proclaim his righteous support for women's civil rights by signing a sexual harassment law, and yet later violate that law in a lawsuit against himself. It is a position that permits him to order into combat a military whose members get prosecuted if they conduct affairs with subordinates, and yet label his own affair with a White House intern strictly personal. It is a position that allowed Clinton to ridicule the impeachment articles on the ground that "everybody does it," and yet earlier in *U.S. v. Battalino* prosecute a person who had lied in a civil lawsuit about having sex. It is a position that allowed Hillary Clinton to tolerate the assertion that working mothers learn to "cheat in their workplace" so that they could save energy for their children.³⁶ It is a position that allowed the president to shamelessly proclaim during the pope's visit in the midst of the Senate impeachment trial that "the United States was striving to be an example of justice and civic virtues."³⁷ It is a definition that treats health care and welfare rights as moral issues, but not

teenage pregnancy and drug use. And it is a definition that turns the liberal belief in "the personal is political" to absurdity: personal grievances can automatically become political issues, yet personal wrongs are outside the purview of the political world.

Clinton's attempt to redefine character marks a revolutionary cultural change insofar as it seeks the wholesale removal of civic virtue from the political underpinnings of American democracy. It is also ultimately self-defeating, because moral consciousness can only begin at the individual level. Children learn to be moral by first applying it to their own behavior. They learn not to lie and not to steal. Only after this individual morality is solidified can they apply moral standards to more complex social levels. Only after they learn that lying is immoral can they, as corporate employees, refuse to engage in corporate deceit. Only after they learn that stealing is immoral can they, as investment advisers, refuse to bilk unsuspecting clients out of their savings. It is morality on the individual level that enables morality at the social level. By weakening the former, however, Clinton jeopardizes the latter. He is proof of what social critic Christopher Lasch argued in *The Revolt of the Elites*, that social elites have abandoned the values that shaped American history.³⁸

Conclusion

Because of the way Bill Clinton has practiced politics, and particularly because of the way he conducted his impeachment defense, the nation may

long feel the effects of his presidency. When it is forced at some future time to hold its president accountable, at a time when the stock market isn't sitting at such lofty levels, it will have to confront the Clinton legacy. Just as the reckless Buchanans of *The Great Gatsby* left behind them a path of destruction, Bill Clinton threatens to leave behind a weakened democracy and an indifferent society.

Of all the casualties of the Clinton years, perhaps truth (the most vital commodity in a democracy) has been the biggest. Besieged by endless scandal in the White House, the country has become morally desensitized to falsehoods and increasingly tolerant of hypocrisy. Well before the Lewinsky scandal broke, an "atmosphere of lawyerly evasion suffused [the Clinton] Administration," according to *Time*.³⁹ A headline proclaimed the administration a "Culture of Deception."⁴⁰ Perhaps it should be remembered how Václav Havel once described communist rule in Eastern Europe—a regime thoroughly permeated with hypocrisy and lies, requiring citizens to live within those lies.

In the final analysis, the most telling sign of Clinton's moral numbing of America is that when Juanita Broadrick made her corroborated accusation of rape, no one cared, not even the vice president, who proclaimed in voting against Clarence Thomas in 1991 that to dismiss Anita Hill would be to dismiss "every woman who has ever struggled to be heard over a society that too often ignores even their most painful calls for justice."

Notes

1. Joe Sharkey, "Enabling Is Now a Political Disease," *New York Times*, September 27, 1998, p. W5.
2. "From the Defense: 'Preserve That Which the Founders Gave Us,'" *New York Times*, February 9, 1999, p. A19.
3. Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community* (New York: Free Press, 1992), p. 9.
4. Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 5.
5. Adam Nagourney, "So the Personal Does Turn Out to Be Political," *New York Times*, September 1, 1996, p. E1.
6. See Thomas Leonard, *The Power of the Press: The Birth of American Political Reporting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
7. Jeffrey Toobin, "Pat 'n' Bill," *New Yorker*, February 8, 1999, p. 31.
8. William Bennett, "A Day of Justice," *Wall Street Journal*, December 18, 1998, p. A14.
9. Michael Barone, "Clinton's Soggy Mess," *U.S. News & World Report*, January 11, 1999, p. 35.
10. James Risen, "China Is Installing a Warhead Said to Be Based on U.S. Secrets," *New York Times*, May 14, 1999, p. A1.
11. Maureen Dowd, "Yuppie Foxhole," *New York Times*, April 4, 1999, p. WK11.
12. David Sanger, "So Much for Grand Theories," *New York Times*, March 7, 1999, p. W11.
13. John Broder, "From Baptism of Fire to Kosovo," *New York Times*, April 8, 1999, p. A14.

-
14. Ibid.
 15. John Leo, "Feeling Your Pain," U.S. News & World Report, February 15, 1999, p. 14.
 16. Maureen Dowd, "There's Something About Bill," New York Times, October 24, 1998, p. WK15.
 17. "Kinderpolitics '96," U.S. News & World Report, September 16, 1996, p. 51.
 18. Jonah Goldberg, "Sexual Addiction," National Review, November 13, 1998, p. 22.
 19. See Michael Lerner, *The Politics of Meaning* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1996).
 20. Maureen Dowd, "Dissolves on Contact," New York Times, May 2, 1999, p. WK17.
 21. Holman Jenkins, "Life Inside the Gilded Bunker," Wall Street Journal, March 4, 1998, p. A19.
 22. Rick Bragg, "Jury Will Decide if Preacher Chose Profit over His Pulpit," New York Times, February 25, 1999, p. A16.
 23. Jacob Weisberg, "The Governor-President," New York Times Magazine, January 17, 1999, p. 34.
 24. Peggy Noonan, "The Good Guys Finally Won," Wall Street Journal, December 21, 1998, p. A18.
 25. William Bennett, *The Death of Outrage* (New York: Free Press, 1998), p. 89.
 26. Ibid., p. 61.
 27. Quoted by Jeffrey Toobin in "Starr Can't Help It," New Yorker, May 18, 1998, p. 33.
 28. Jay Nordlinger, "The Race Ace," National Review, March 8, 1999, p. 20.
 29. Maureen Dowd, "Honour in a Shallow Cup," New York Times, December 13, 1998, p. W15.
 30. Ibid.
 31. John Miller, "Celebrity Squares," National Review, January 25, 1999, p. 27.
 32. See Russell Richey and Donald Jones, eds., *American Civil Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).
 33. The speech was printed in the New York Times, September 10, 1994, p. 9A.
 34. Gloria Berger, "Captains Courageous," U.S. News & World Report, May 10, 1999, p. 31.
 35. Bennett, *The Death of Outrage*, p. 54.
 36. "First Lady Endears Herself to Oprah's Talk-Show Audience," [Minneapolis] Star Tribune, May 17, 1995, p. 18A.
 37. James Bennet, "Again, Clinton Creates His Own Political Aura," New York Times, January 27, 1999, p. A14.
 38. See Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites: And the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: Norton, 1994).
 39. Time, March 21, 1994, p. 32.
 40. Michael Duffy, "Culture of Deception," Time, August 15, 1994. n