Patrick Buchanan Launches the "Culture War" (August 17, 1992)

Since the 1960s, the expansion of freedoms for minorities, women, and other disadvantaged groups consistently had been met with anger and resistance from significant numbers of Americans. At the Republican national convention of 1992, Patrick Buchanan galvanized a political movement around the Republican Party by declaring a "culture war." Buchanan claimed that liberals would control the country if a Democratic candidate was elected. Specifically, he suggested that a Clinton/Gore administration would violate the core value of America—freedom—and replace it with a radical agenda of unrestricted abortion rights, tolerance for homosexuals, and far-reaching environmental activism.

Well, we took the long way home, but we finally got here.

And I want to congratulate President Bush, and remove any doubt about where we stand: The primaries are over, the heart is strong again, and the Buchanan brigades are enlisted—all the way to a great comeback victory in November.

Like many of you last month, I watched that giant masquerade ball at Madison Square Garden—where 20,000 radicals and liberals came dressed up as moderates and centrist—in the greatest single exhibition of cross-dressing in American political history.

One by one, the prophets of doom appeared at the podium. The Reagan decade, they moaned, was a terrible time in America; and the only way to prevent even worse times, they said, is to entrust our nation's fate and future to the party that gave us McGovern, Mondale, Carter and Michael Dukakis.

No way, my friends. The American people are not going to buy back into the failed liberalism of the 1960s and '70s—no matter how slick the package in 1992.

The malcontents of Madison Square Garden notwithstanding, the 1980s were not terrible years. They were great years. You know it. I know it. And the only people who don't know it are the carping critics who sat on the sidelines of history, jeering at one of the great statesmen of modern time.

Out of Jimmy Carter's days of malaise, Ronald Reagan crafted the longest peacetime recovery in US history—3 million new businesses created, and 20 million new jobs.

Under the Reagan Doctrine, one by one, the communist dominos began to fall. First, Grenada was liberated, by US troops. Then, the Red Army was run out of Afghanistan, by US weapons. In Nicaragua, the Marxist regime was forced to hold free elections—by Ronald Reagan's contra army—and the communists were thrown out of power.

Have they forgotten? It was under our party that the Berlin Wall came down, and Europe was reunited. It was under our party that the Soviet Empire collapsed, and the captive nations broke free.

It is said that each president will be recalled by posterity—with but a single sentence. George Washington was the father of our country. Abraham Lincoln preserved the Union. And Ronald
Reagan won the Cold War. And it is time my old colleagues, the columnists and commentators, looking down on us tonight from their anchor booths and sky boxes, gave Ronald Reagan the credit he deserves--for leading America to victory in the Cold War.

Most of all, Ronald Reagan made us proud to be Americans again. We never felt better about our country; and we never stood taller in the eyes of the world.

But we are here, not only to celebrate, but to nominate. And an American president has many, many roles.

He is our first diplomat, the architect of American foreign policy. And which of these two men is more qualified for that role? George Bush has been UN ambassador, CIA director, envoy to China. As vice president, he co-authored the policies that won the Cold War. As president, George Bush presided over the liberation of Eastern Europe and the termination of the Warsaw Pact. And Mr. Clinton? Well, Bill Clinton couldn't find 150 words to discuss foreign policy in an acceptance speech that lasted an hour. As was said of an earlier Democratic candidate, Bill Clinton's foreign policy experience is pretty much confined to having had breakfast once at the Intl. House of Pancakes.

The presidency is also America's bully pulpit, what Mr. Truman called, "preeminently a place of moral leadership." George Bush is a defender of right-to-life, and lifelong champion of the Judeo-Christian values and beliefs upon which this nation was built.

Mr. Clinton, however, has a different agenda.

At its top is unrestricted abortion on demand. When the Irish-Catholic governor of Pennsylvania, Robert Casey, asked to say a few words on behalf of the 25 million unborn children destroyed since Roe v Wade, he was told there was no place for him at the podium of Bill Clinton's convention, no room at the inn.

Yet a militant leader of the homosexual rights movement could rise at that convention and exult: "Bill Clinton and Al Gore represent the most pro-lesbian and pro-gay ticket in history." And so they do.

Bill Clinton supports school choice--but only for state-run schools. Parents who send their children to Christian schools, or Catholic schools, need not apply.

Elect me, and you get two for the price of one, Mr. Clinton says of his lawyer-spouse. And what does Hillary believe? Well, Hillary believes that 12-year-olds should have a right to sue their parents, and she has compared marriage as an institution to slavery--and life on an Indian reservation.

Well, speak for yourself, Hillary.

Friends, this is radical feminism. The agenda Clinton & Clinton would impose on America--abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat--that's change, all right. But it is not the kind of
change America wants. It is not the kind of change America needs. And it is not the kind of change we can tolerate in a nation that we still call God's country.

A president is also commander in chief, the man we empower to send sons and brothers, fathers and friends, to war.

George Bush was 17 when they bombed Pearl Harbor. He left his high school class, walked down to the recruiting office, and signed up to become the youngest fighter pilot in the Pacific war. And Mr. Clinton? When Bill Clinton's turn came in Vietnam, he sat up in a dormitory in Oxford, England, and figured out how to dodge the draft.

Which of these two men has won the moral authority to call on Americans to put their lives at risk? I suggest, respectfully, it is the patriot and war hero, Navy Lieutenant J. G. George Herbert Walker Bush.

My friends, this campaign is about philosophy, and it is about character; and George Bush wins on both counts--going away; and it is time all of us came home and stood beside him.

As running mate, Mr. Clinton chose Albert Gore. And just how moderate is Prince Albert? Well, according to the Taxpayers Union, Al Gore beat out Teddy Kennedy, two straight years, for the title of biggest spender in the Senate.

And Teddy Kennedy isn't moderate about anything.

In New York, Mr. Gore made a startling declaration. Henceforth, he said, the "central organizing principle" of all governments must be: the environment.

Wrong, Albert!

The central organizing principle of this republic is freedom. And from the ancient forests of Oregon, to the Inland Empire of California, America's great middle class has got to start standing up to the environmental extremists who put insects, rats and birds ahead of families, workers and jobs.

One year ago, my friends, I could not have dreamt I would be here. I was then still just one of many panelists on what President Bush calls "those crazy Sunday talk shows."

But I disagreed with the president; and so we challenged the president in the Republican primaries and fought as best we could. From February to June, he won 33 primaries. I can't recall exactly how many we won.

But tonight I want to talk to the 3 million Americans who voted for me. I will never forget you, nor the great honor you have done me. But I do believe, deep in my heart, that the right place for us to be now--in this presidential campaign--is right beside George Bush. The party is our home; this party is where we belong. And don't let anyone tell you any different.
Yes, we disagreed with President Bush, but we stand with him for freedom to choice religious schools, and we stand with him against the amoral idea that gay and lesbian couples should have the same standing in law as married men and women.

We stand with President Bush for right-to-life, and for voluntary prayer in the public schools, and against putting American women in combat. And we stand with President Bush in favor of the right of small towns and communities to control the raw sewage of pornography that pollutes our popular culture.

We stand with President Bush in favor of federal judges who interpret the law as written, and against Supreme Court justices who think they have a mandate to rewrite our Constitution.

My friends, this election is about much more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe. It is about what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton & Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side. And so, we have to come home, and stand beside him.

My friends, in those 6 months, from Concord to California, I came to know our country better than ever before in my life, and I collected memories that will be with me always.

There was that day long ride through the great state of Georgia in a bus Vice President Bush himself had used in 1988--a bus they called Asphalt One. The ride ended with a 9:00 PM speech in front of a magnificent southern mansion, in a town called Fitzgerald.

There were the workers at the James River Paper Mill, in the frozen North Country of New Hampshire--hard, tough men, one of whom was silent, until I shook his hand. Then he looked up in my eyes and said, "Save our jobs!" There was the legal secretary at the Manchester airport on Christmas Day who told me she was going to vote for me, then broke down crying, saying, "I've lost my job, I don't have any money; they're going to take away my daughter. What am I going to do?"

My friends, even in tough times, these people are with us. They don't read Adam Smith or Edmund Burke, but they came from the same schoolyards and playgrounds and towns as we did. They share our beliefs and convictions, our hopes and our dreams. They are the conservatives of the heart.

They are our people. And we need to reconnect with them. We need to let them know we know they're hurting. They don't expect miracles, but they need to know we care.

There were the people of Hayfork, the tiny town high up in California's Trinity Alps, a town that is now under a sentence of death because a federal judge has set aside 9 million acres for the habitat of the spotted owl--forgetting about the habitat of the men and women who live and work in Hay fork. And there were the brave people of Koreatown who took the worst of the LA riots, but still live the family values we treasure, and who still believe deeply in the American dream.
Friends, in those wonderful 25 weeks, the saddest days were the days of the bloody riot in LA, the worst in our history. But even out of that awful tragedy can come a message of hope.

Hours after the violence ended I visited the Army compound in south LA, where an officer of the 18th Cavalry, that had come to rescue the city, introduced me to two of his troopers. They could not have been 20 years old. He told them to recount their story.

They had come into LA late on the 2nd day, and they walked up a dark street, where the mob had looted and burned every building but one, a convalescent home for the aged. The mob was heading in, to ransack and loot the apartments of the terrified old men and women. When the troopers arrived, M-16s at the ready, the mob threatened and cursed, but the mob retreated. It had met the one thing that could stop it: force, rooted in justice, backed by courage.

Greater love than this hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend. Here were 19-year-old boys ready to lay down their lives to stop a mob from molesting old people they did not even know. And as they took back the streets of LA, block by block, so we must take back our cities, and take back our culture, and take back our country.

God bless you, and God bless America.

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