



# OpinionJournal

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# The Silence of the Lemmings

Reagan dies. Harvard shrugs.

**BY ALAN BROMLEY**

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CAMBRIDGE, Mass.--My family drove here from New York last weekend to celebrate our elder daughter's graduation from Harvard's Graduate School of Education. It was a time to rejoice in her accomplishments, and I couldn't help but feel a kindred pride with the other assembled parents and siblings.



**Ronald Reagan**  
1911-2004

But for me, at least, the weekend was bittersweet. President Reagan had died, and I felt both tremendous sorrow and thankfulness. While I anxiously awaited the commencement speeches, I wasn't overly optimistic that there would be glowing reviews of Reagan's rather obvious accomplishments. After all, I was in the epicenter of liberalism, surrounded by as many as 35,000 people, almost all to the left of Chris Rock.

But, foolishly, I expected *something*. What I got was silence, the silence of the lemmings, ready to jump off yet another cliff, into another abyss of America-bashing, of shantytown pluralism. Not a mention of President Reagan, who along with FDR dramatically changed the country--and the world--in this last century.

The dean of the School of Education talked about our country's isolation and "our need to learn more about" Islam and Muslims--not their need to learn about multicultural capitalism that embraces and allows so many avenues of expression and growth.

And when the rain stopped, Kofi Annan started. Distinguished and eloquent as ever, he first disparaged President Bush (to cheers), then asked: "What kind of world would it be, and who would want to live in it, if every country was allowed to use force, without collective agreement, simply because it thought there might be a threat?"

I raised my hand, and above a whisper and below a shout (so my daughter wouldn't be embarrassed), I said, "Me!"

A few people looked at me, disdainfully, and one apparent father asked me, "How could you not agree with that?"

"Simple," I replied, "the United States, while not perfect, has perhaps the world's best checks and balances of liberties and legalities in the world. And when we've gone wrong, we try to address the

wrongs."

I continued: "Would you rather we hand over our autonomy to the French, Germans and Russians, all of whom promised to protect Saddam Hussein for illegal business transactions and payoffs? Or to the nations that comprise the U.N.'s Human Rights Committee--the Libyans, the Sudanese? To whom would you entrust our fate other than to your neighbors? To the Arab nations, for whom *Judenfrei*--and Christian-frei--amounts to a national anthem?"

Without reply, they walked away from me, a leper in the colony of the pure, as I glanced towards my family, hoping they hadn't witnessed my latest provocation.

In the shadows of the magnificent red-bricked and domed buildings of Harvard, I wished I had a huge sign, asking Kofi whether he was stonewalling on the Oil for Food program, and why his son's firm had been given the contract to oversee the corrupt mess that dwarfed Enron and Global Crossing. The lemmings in Harvard Square cheered as Kofi brought up corporate scandals, but had he been a CEO of an American corporation and let \$10 billion pass through in payoffs, he'd have been pilloried before uttering a sentence. These "enlightened" students would have shouted him down.

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Even before Mr. Annan, Harvard's president, Larry Summers, warmed up the crowd of 15,000 by talking about the growing disparity of our society, the "haves and have-nots," pledging that Harvard would be accessible to more underprivileged students.

*Great*, I thought before quickly calculating the cost to my family. We put our two daughters through private school in New York City at tremendous cost: over \$25,000 a year for high school for our younger one last year. We spent about \$300,000 on our daughters on primary education, largely because public schools have failed. "Underprivileged" students get scholarships, which means at least 25% of our tuition costs, or \$75,000, went to subsidize them. That's before taxes, meaning we had to earn \$150,000--plus pay another \$50,000 or so in school taxes over the years--to contribute to the utopian dream. We don't mind it, but now Mr. Summers is asking for more of a sacrifice, and I can't help but wonder what is his sacrifice? Will he give up his post for someone who has had less opportunity? I don't think so.

Don't get me wrong, I recognize the benefits of scholarship and diversity, and believe they accrue to my daughters--and society. But who is calculating the cost?

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Eager to talk about President Reagan, I engaged a friend of my daughter--a brilliant and likeable high-tech engineer, who ultimately conceded that Reagan changed the world for the better, but only because he was "lucky" to have run into a concessionary Mikhail Gorbachev. A mild victory, I concluded, and left it at that.

By 2:30 p.m., my daughter and her in-laws want to detox by taking a walk in the forest. I hate forests. I prefer Manhattan, hiking on Madison Avenue, the Lower East Side or anywhere on the West Side, where I can engage, or at least look at, a diversity of people. My only engagements with trees seem to be tripping over their roots.

So I pulled a "sciatica" and retired to my endearing converted firehouse hotel, where I turned on the TV to watch the solemnity of burying President Reagan, thankful that his spirit, his vision and his courage endure, if not for the *crème-de-la-crème* in Cambridge, at least for the millions of people of Eastern Europe and beyond who lost generations, but never hope, to a singular utopian dream driven by despots and their faithful liberal lemmings in the cathedrals of American higher education.

*Mr. Bromley lives and writes in New York City.*

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