

Gregg L. Cunningham, Executive Director

May 2018

Dear Pro-Life Supporter,

Obama insider says CBR protests at Notre Dame helped defeat Hillary Clinton!

A few months ago, a man named Michael Wear, who worked for Barack Obama's White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, published a book titled *Reclaiming Hope: Lessons Learned in the Obama White House about the Future of Faith in America*, Thomas Nelson (2017). The Amazon publisher's note says "Learn how the seeds of the Trump presidency were sown in the Obama White House" including "the president's failure to find 'common ground' on abortion"

The book makes the stunning claim that President Obama foolishly abandoned his "common ground" abortion outreach to pro-life Democrats, pro-life Catholics, and left-leaning evangelicals (meaning they should forgive the president for supporting access to abortion as long as he worked to "reduce the need" for abortion). Wear explains that Obama's political about-face was largely because of the ferocity of the anti-abortion protests he unexpectedly encountered when he traveled to Notre Dame University to deliver the school's 2009 commencement address.

Wear believes that the abandonment of this disingenuous attempt to finesse the abortion issue was a grave electoral miscalculation. He thinks the scam was working and would have continued to deceive gullible voters had he stayed his crooked course. CBR supporters will, no doubt, recall that CBR both led and dominated those protests. Mr. Obama mistakenly believed that nearly the entire pro-life movement had descended on Notre Dame to protest his presence at this flagship Catholic school, but it was largely CBR. He couldn't have known that most of the pro-life movement actually objected to our presence with the huge, horrifying abortion photo signs we displayed. Notre Dame Right to Life students actually demanded that we stay away from campus with our abortion imagery.

As a consequence of this CBR push-back (accompanied by pro-life stalwarts from a few other excellent groups), Obama abruptly suspended his "compromise" language when addressing the abortion issue. He imagined that Democrats could win with minorities, millennials, and single women. He was wrong, of course, but he therefore decided there was no point in reaching out to people who had humiliated him with repeated political punches in the face. He instead lashed out with the extreme rhetoric of his friends at Planned Parenthood.

This strategic blunder immediately began to push pro-life Democrats, Catholics and evangelicals out of the Democrat Party. The president thereby lost much of this vital element of the Democrat coalition. When he ran for reelection, many pro-life Democrats rejected him as he had rejected them. By the time of Hillary Clinton's candidacy (which also abandoned all overtures to pro-life Democrats, Catholics and evangelicals), that demographic was entirely gone. Wear and many other commentators argue that Clinton lost by essentially the same number of voters as had fled her radical, pro-abortion rhetoric (which candidly reflected her radical, pro-abortion policies). Wear says this fatal erosion in political support began with Obama's over-reaction to the CBR-dominated protests at Notre Dame.

The December 2016 issue of *Atlantic* magazine contained an interview with Wear headlined “The Democrats Have a Religion Problem.” It noted that “[Wear] watched battles over abortion funding and contraception requirements in the Affordable Care Act with chagrin: The administration was unnecessarily antagonistic toward religious conservatives in both of those fights. The reporter then said, “Many people have noted that 81 percent of white evangelicals voted for Donald Trump in this election. Why do you think that was?” Wear answered, “It shows not just ineptitude, but the ignorance of Democrats in not even pretending to give these voters a reason to vote for them.” He added that “Reaching out to evangelicals doesn’t mean you have to become pro-life. It just means you have to not be so in love with how pro-choice you are, and so opposed to how pro-life we are.”

Wear also observed, cynically, that “Barack Obama was the perfect transitional president from the old party to the new. He could speak in religious terms in a way that most white, secular liberals were not willing to confront him on. He ‘got away with’ religious language and outreach that would get other Democratic politicians more robust critiques from the left.” But he didn’t “get away” with it after CBR took him on. “He was able to paper over a lot of the religious tensions in the party that other, less skilled politicians will not be able to paper over.” His vaunted “skills” seemed, however, to have deserted him at Notre Dame.

The *Atlantic* writer next remarked that “I’ve written before about the rare breed that is the pro-life Democrat. Some portion of voters would likely identify as both pro-life and Democrat, but from a party point of view, it’s basically impossible to be a pro-life Democrat.” She then asked, “Why do you think it is that the party has moved in that direction, and what, if anything, do you think it should do differently?”

Wear explained that “We’re seeing party disaffiliation as a way of signaling moral discomfort. A lot of pro-life Democrats were formerly saying, ‘My presence here doesn’t mean I agree with everything—I’m going to be an internal force that acts as a constraint or a voice of opposition on abortion.’ Those people have mostly left the party.”

Then Wear delivers his punchline, referring to CBR without speaking our name: “I think Democrats felt like their outreach wouldn’t be rewarded. For example: The president went to Notre Dame in May of 2009 and gave a speech about reducing the number of women seeking abortions. ***It was literally met by protests from the pro-life community*** [emphasis added].” Thank Heaven the president thought CBR was the “pro-life community.” He then laments, “I think there was an expectation by Obama and the White House team that there would be more eagerness to find common ground.” **CBR was only eager to prove that it is no more possible to find “common ground” on abortion than it was on slavery.** That futile effort also ended badly.

Hillary Clinton also drank the Obama Kool-Aid, according to Wear. “There were a lot of things that were surprising about Hillary’s answer [to a question about abortion] in the third debate. She didn’t advance moral reservations she had in the past about abortion. She also made the exact kind of positive moral argument for abortion that women’s groups—who have been calling on people to tell their abortion stories—had been demanding.”

Wear also wrote on this subject for *Politico*, January 15, 2017, in an essay titled, “Obama’s Forgotten Plan to Reduce Abortions”:

In the early days of his presidency, and in keeping with this spirit of collaboration, Obama also pursued an initiative across ideological lines to reduce abortions. This effort at bi-partnership failed. The story of that failure is a window into some of our ugliest partisan tendencies...

This history of abortion politics, national and personal, made what the president did five months into his first term—near the height of his political capital—both surprising and risky. Obama went to Notre Dame University to deliver a commencement address to try to build a bridge. The run-up to the address was tense. I had the sense that many members of the president’s staff viewed the effort as futile at best, and a solicitation of distraction and division at worst.

Notre Dame’s decision to grant Obama an honorary degree (a conventional thing to do for any commencement speaker) was met with criticism and protest from conservative Catholics and anti-abortion activists.

The president was asking anti-abortion Americans to give him a chance.

I have no doubt that with the White House’s focused leadership, and a willingness to spend political capital on the effort, the president’s vision could have been realized.

Our initial goal had been to ruin Notre Dame’s graduation ceremony so thoroughly that no other Catholic school would dare to invite Obama to campus. Imagine the bogus legitimacy Obama might have garnered among Catholic voters had he been the graduation speaker every year for eight straight years at Notre Dame, DePaul, St. John’s, Georgetown, St. Louis, Loyola, Fordham, and Boston College. But by God’s grace, we managed to dissuade every other Catholic university from risking the chaos we created at Notre Dame.

The *Washington Times*, December 5, 2016 (“Notre Dame waffles on Donald Trump invitation after Obama caused ‘circus’”) reported that university president Fr. John Jenkins, when asked by the campus newspaper if he would invite President Trump to deliver a commencement talk, was still so traumatized by CBR’s earlier assault that he admitted, “The 2009 Commencement was a bit of a political circus, and I think I’m conscious that that day is for graduates and their parents – and I don’t want to make the focus something else.” “Something else” like dead babies.

And Obama’s irritation at our presence at Notre Dame was greatly abetted by endless, embarrassing news stories. You may remember some of them. This was very bad press, in sharp contrast to the puff-pieces his dishonest public relations flacks were trying to orchestrate:

The *South Bend Tribune*, on April 28, 2009, ran a story headlined “Anti-Obama protesters splash graphic abortion images by plane, truck around South Bend.” It read that “A group opposed to President Barack Obama’s upcoming commencement speech protested high above the Notre Dame campus Tuesday. The group, The Center For Bio-Ethical Reform (CBR), had a ... plane circle the campus starting about 5:30 p.m. with a 50-by-100 foot banner of a dead 10-week-old fetus behind it.”

Chicago Tribune, March 25, 2009, “Abortion debate dogs Obama’s plan to deliver commencement address.”

The Los Angeles Times, March 25, 2009, had earlier published a story titled “Obama’s scheduled Notre Dame speech draws criticism.” Referring impliedly to CBR, it reported that Mr. Obama’s use of Notre Dame as a vehicle through which to deceive the Catholic faithful (our words, not theirs) regarding abortion resulted in the “triggering [of] protests by national anti-abortion groups.”

Wonkette.com, May 5, 2009, “A fringe Catholic group’s protest of Obama’s Notre Dame invitation is so nutty even conservative commentators disapprove.”

The Wonkette blogger then observed that “Conservative opponents are ramping up their outrage” but added that “Nothing can hold a candle to the cuckoo ‘abortion plane’ which has been circling the campus for

weeks now.” She reported that the plane was “hired by the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform” (we actually owned it and four others before selling them off to a CBR supporter and our chief pilot, who still flies for us) and “trails a banner with a picture of a dead fetus and the words ‘10 Week Abortion.’” The story also describes “The group’s other banner [which] read, ‘Abortion is Terror’” [and includes another aborted baby photo].

The New York Times, May 18, 2009, published a story headlined “At Notre Dame, Obama Calls for Civil Tone in Abortion Debate.” The article reported that “A plane overhead pulled a banner with a picture of the feet of an aborted fetus.” The article also noted that our protests “were amplified on national airwaves,” and that visitors “approaching campus for the [commencement] ceremony were likewise greeted by photographs of mangled fetuses.”

NPR (National Public Radio) posted a similar story May 14, 2009, headlined “Obama’s Notre Dame Visit Stirs Passions,” with a photo of a CBR tow-plane pulling an aerial billboard above a caption which read “A banner towed by a ... plane is seen flying past the Golden Dome and statue of the Virgin Mary at the University of Notre Dame campus in South Bend, Indiana, on April 29. Anti-abortion activists [read CBR] have stepped up such displays in the weeks leading up to President Obama’s planned address on campus Sunday.” The article also referred to “[CBR] Trucks imprinted with similar photos [which] ply the streets of the surrounding City of South Bend.”

WND.com, May 6, 2009, headlined “Turbulence Surrounds Notre Dame ‘Abortion Plane.’” The story was described as an “Exclusive” report “... on success of [an aborted] fetus banner protesting Obama speech.”

The Los Angeles Times, May 18, 2009, headlined a story, “At Notre Dame, Obama tackles abortion debate.” The article reported that “... cargo trucks with pictures of bloodied fetuses circled campus.”

The *Washington Post*, “Anti-abortion Protesters Converge on Notre Dame Before Obama’s Visit.” Wednesday, May 13, 2009. It reported that “As some students kicked a soccer ball and others stretched out on the bountiful lawns of the University of Notre Dame, the peace of a sunny graduation-week afternoon was broken by the incessant buzz of an airplane engine overhead.” Annoying, eh? “Churning in circles above the slate rooftops and the famous golden statue of the Virgin Mary, a small plane towed a banner depicting the remains of an aborted fetus and the words “10 Week Abortion.”

Then it explained that “The graphic message is directed at President Obama, who will arrive Sunday to a campus that has been jolted by abortion opponents who object to the pro-abortion-rights Democrat delivering a commencement address at the nation’s largest Catholic university.” This is not the sort of coverage the president was accustomed to suffering.

The *Washington Post*, May 18, 2009, ran a story titled “Obama Addresses Abortion Protests in Commencement Speech at Notre Dame.” CNN also ran a story describing those protests headlined “Obama faces Notre Dame speech backlash,” May 15, 2009.

A November 9, 2016 press release issued by *Democrats For Life of America* asserted that “Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party decisively lost Tuesday’s election, thanks in large part to the party’s extreme abortion position, which alienated would-be Clinton voters.”

CatholicNewsAgency.com, November 11, 2016, “In the wake of Hillary Clinton’s electoral defeat in Tuesday’s presidential election, pro-life Democrats and faith voters criticized the party’s pro-abortion support and lack of religious outreach.”

In conclusion, The *Washington Examiner* carried a story September 11, 2017, headlined, “Hillary Clinton urges Democratic Party to adopt litmus test on abortion in new book.” The article says that in her new book,

What Happened, “Hillary Clinton advises the Democratic Party not to support pro-life candidates, endorsing the use of abortion as a litmus test for Democratic hopefuls.” It adds that “The hardline position Clinton stakes out in the book is popular among progressives, but controversial with more moderate Democrats who believe such extreme stances have alienated voters in states the failed candidate lost last November.”

All of which proves that she remains in deep denial regarding the causes of her defeat. Clinton blames the Russians, James Comey, and weak-minded women, whose misogynistic husbands, brothers, and sons bullied them into supporting Donald Trump. When you don’t understand the problem, you’re unlikely to find the solution. Praise God!

Michael Wear ends his *Atlantic* interview with this: “I cannot help but think about what could have been if the Notre Dame vision had become reality.” A terrifying thought indeed.

In the coming year, CBR will increasingly refocus our campus outreach projects, with the emphasis shifting less toward secular schools and more toward Christian colleges and seminaries. Our pastors are sitting out the abortion wars. Most refuse to mobilize their fellowships against this latter day child sacrifice, and many actively inhibit the efforts of others to recruit the faithful. Much of their spiritual confusion derives from the incoherence of Christian higher education regarding abortion. With God’s help, and yours, we pray we can begin to change that destructive dynamic.

If you are giving all you can, as often as you can, God bless you. Please also consider hosting a fundraising coffee at which I might speak to your friends and family in your home or church. Pro-abortion pagans stage these kinds of events all the time, but for reasons which remain a mystery to us, pro-life Christians are disinclined to organize similar events. This is seriously compromising our effectiveness. Please help.

CBR is not a political organization but we hope to deploy our fleet of ten mobile billboard trucks to conduct abortion education campaigns in swing states in which closely decided mid-term congressional races are likely to be contested and which therefore provide us a unique opportunity for our educational mission. Please consider a special donation to enable us to buy diesel fuel and provide lodging for our volunteer drivers. We don’t express support for, or opposition to any named candidates, but voters need to know what abortion looks like in races in which it is an issue.

Our immediate objective had been to intimidate self-aggrandizing Catholic college presidents who would have betrayed babies to bask in the celebrity of America’s most self-aggrandizing president. That important goal was achieved. But God had even bigger ideas.

My wife Lois reminds me that I need to trust God to magnify the sometimes apparently modest results produced with our often meagre resources. I didn’t give Him enough credit for what He was doing behind the scenes at Notre Dame in 2009. What an encouraging surprise He revealed to us in 2017! As usual, she is right. Thanks for supplying those resources. Please never grow weary, and neither will we.

Lord bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregg Cunningham', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gregg Cunningham
Executive Director