

Opinions

Political victory in the culture wars

By Leo Chappelle

I am taking a break this week from trying to correct our misguided (or maybe it's actually the misguidance of the) Police jury over its definition of "fees" and "taxes" and moving to something of wider significance: abortion in Mississippi.

Margaret "Maggie" Gallagher is a syndicated columnist and social conservative. Four years ago, she wrote an insightful piece for a magazine of religious and cultural commentary, First Things. Her article encouraged a different perspective on our approach to the culture wars that conservatives have been losing infamously and for decades.

Gallagher rejected the notion that "politics is downstream from culture". She contended that there is much more to this than our inevitable "social evolution". Gallagher's view is that, at least to some degree, winning at the ballot box shapes the culture as well. No doubt the Left would like to frame the situation as if the politics follows the people, but, according to Gallagher, it simply isn't so.

Christianity has always gone against the grain of human nature. In a 2019 speech to the John Paul II New Evangelization Award Dinner, Rob-

ert P. George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University, made the point that the Left's political success has created in them the sense of entitlement to the spoils of the "Culture War" and they have not been in a charitable frame of mind when it comes to making the peace (my phrasing).

I think the point here is that we will not just preach our way back to a Christian America. In a society that rejects traditional understandings of marriage as well as what it means actually to be a man or a woman, these are not only social issues revolving around questions of personal preference. They are, in a sense, political issues. The very definition of our most distinctive of human qualities, sex, and the most fundamental of our social institutions, marriage, are much more than merely matters of taste.

Unfortunately, however, most mainline Protestant denominations and a significant faction of the Roman Catholic Church have all been informed by the culture more than they have themselves informed the culture on these matters. Gallagher thinks that losing in politics and the shifts of power that follow along are what is encouraging cultural change.

Gallagher blames conservatives for their political naivete. She points to the attack by tech billionaire Tim Gill on the re-election campaign of socially conservative Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave in Colorado. Tim Gill eventually spent \$400 million of his own money to support the legalization of same sex marriage before the Supreme Court's Obergefell decision imposed its redefinition of marriage. The anti-Musgrave ads Gill helped buy never mentioned gay marriage. They attacked her on every other thing imaginable, including not being conservative enough! But Gill's and the gay Left's real target was her sexual politics.

Conservatives who wish to change the direction of our politics must be much more sophisticated about it than we have been so far. If the U.S. Supreme Court in the Mississippi case of Dobbs versus Jackson Women's Health upholds the law that bans abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, it will be not just a change in the direction of the culture wars, but a revolution in our politics. But, according to what I interpret Gallagher to have said, that victory can be exploited only if conservatives learn how to win at the ballot box.



THE RICH LOWRY COLUMN

The Failure of 'Latinx'

What the progressive culture elite wants, it usually gets. Single-sex bathrooms changing overnight to all-gender or non-gender bathrooms? Done. Illegal immigrants becoming known as undocumented persons? But of course.

So, when it was decided in the precincts of fashionable opinion that the term "Latino" would be retired in favor of "Latinx," one could have been forgiven for thinking that this hideous neologism would, like so much else in American life, go from a fringe cause to mainstream soon enough.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the Latinx ascendancy -- Latinos have rejected the term, at the same time that a big swing toward the GOP among these voters has highlighted the perils of high-handed cultural politics for the Democrats.

Latinx may end up being a woke experiment that failed, showing the vast gap between the identity-politics-obsessed progressives earnestly talking to one another in seminar rooms and on social media and the Hispanics in whose name they presume to speak.

Latinx is a project cut from the same cloth as the endless extension of LGBTQ, which, as of this writing, is now more properly and comprehensively rendered as LGBTQIP2SAA.

The alleged problem that Latinx was invented to fix is that Spanish has gendered nouns. This means that using the male Latino as an adjective to describe men and women of Latin American ancestry, let alone transgender and non-binary people, is supposedly exclusionary, hateful and downright dangerous. As a handbook on the

terminology by a Princeton scholar explains, "To default to the masculine gender promotes interpersonal violence against women and non-binary individuals."

Latinx rose from the ashes of its predecessor neologism Latin@, an attempted amalgamation of the -o at the end of the Latino and the -a at the end of Latina. But no one knew how to pronounce the word. It was deemed insufficiently woke because the "o" was supposedly graphically dominating the "a" (yes, this is how some people think). And it caused confusion on social media where the at sign is used to tag someone.

Enter Latinx, which is only slightly less ridiculous.

As Giancarlo Sopo of The Daily Wire, who has been on a one-man crusade against the rise of the term, points out, Latinx is incomprehensible to any Spanish speaker without some knowledge of English. Most Spanish-speakers don't think there is something desperately flawed about their language, or that Spanish grammar is a proto-hate crime. The Real Academia Espanola, Spain's official institution charged with maintaining the integrity of the language, has ruled against the -x appendage.

Out in the real world, "Latinx" polls even more poorly than Joe Biden does. A Politico poll found that only 2% of Hispanics prefer the term, while 68% opt for Hispanic and 21% favor Latino or Latina. The term is considered offensive to 40% of respondents and 30% said that they are less likely to support a politician or group using it.

Rep. Ruben Gallego, an Arizona Democrat, tweeted in reaction to the poll that he forbids

his staff from using Latinx in official communications. "When Latino politicians use the term, it is largely to appease white rich progressives who think that is the term we use," he wrote. "It is a vicious circle of confirmation bias."

Still, elite media outlets and other institutions susceptible to progressive influence, as well as many elected Democrats, have dutifully defaulted to the term. It's one thing if an individual prefers to be called Latinx (or, the even more cutting-edge Latina/o/x or Xicanx), it's another thing to apply the term to a large group of people who have no interest in being called a name that makes no sense to them.

The pushback is a heartening sign of the limits of elite cultural power, and of the lack of interest of most Latinos in being pawns in the ever more strained and obscure progressive politics of perpetual victimology.

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Catahoula News Booster

The Catahoula News Booster is the Official Journal of the Town of Jonesville, Village of Harrisonburg, Village of Sicily Island, Catahoula Parish School Board, Catahoula Parish Police Jury, and Tensas Basin Levee Board. POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 to Box 188, Jonesville, Louisiana, 71343. Periodical class postage paid at Jonesville, Louisiana. Kim Cloessner, Publisher Identification Number is SECDUSPS556-720. Published every Wednesday. Subscription rates: By mail in Catahoula Parish-\$35.00 annually, elsewhere in Louisiana-\$45.00 annually, out-of-state-\$55.00 annually Catahoula News-Booster, 103 3rd Street, P.O. BOX 188, Jonesville, LA 71343. 318-339-7242



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