

NEW YORK TIMES LIES ABOUT ST. SERRA AGAIN

On September 23, 2015, Pope Francis canonized Junípero Serra, the 18th century Spanish priest who courageously defended the human rights of Indians in North America.

A week later the *New York Times* maligned St. Serra in a front-page story by Laura M. Holson, "Sainthood of Serra Reopens Wounds in Colonialism in California." She said that "Historians agree that he [Serra] forced Native Americans to abandon their tribal culture and convert to Christianity, and that he had them whipped and imprisoned and sometimes worked or tortured to death."

This was a bald-face lie. As we will show, the newspaper's response to Bill Donohue's criticism was astoundingly unconvincing. Now this same accusation appears in a *New York Times* online opinion column by Elizabeth Bruenig, "American Catholics and Black Lives Matter."

Bruenig writes that Serra's "eager participation in the conquest of North America" included "torture, enslavement and murder of some of the Native Americans he intended to convert." Note that she embellishes the lies that Holson told.

On the same day that Holson's news story was published in the newspaper, September 30, 2015, Donohue emailed her the following: "You said that 'Historians agree' that Fr. Serra had Indians 'tortured to death.' I have done research on Serra and written about him, yet I know of no historian who makes such a claim. Please name them. I can name many who never made such a claim."

When Holson did not respond, Donohue contacted the "Corrections" section on October 1 asking for a correction; He also contacted the public editor.

"This is a serious issue: when a reporter blithely says that 'Historians agree,' readers take it that there is at least a consensus among historians about the subject. But such is not the case on this issue. The only persons given to such an accusation are radical activists, not professional scholars." Donohue even emailed a list of "the most authoritative books on Fr. Serra" and pointed out that not one of the authors whom he cited ever accused Serra of torture.

After a week went by, with no response, Donohue wrote the newspaper again and asked if someone could "name the historians who say Fr. Serra tortured Indians." Finally, he received a response from Gregory E. Brock, Senior Editor for Standards at the *New York Times*.

Brock said the editors had discussed Donohue's complaint but were waiting for Holson to return from Oregon (she was doing a story about a shooting) before contacting him. Fine. Then Brock got specific. His response is a gem.

"Certainly you have very strong views on this issue and have written extensively about it. But after many discussions, a review of past Times coverage and other resources, I agree with Ms. Holson's editors that 'historians' is accurate, and therefore no correction is required.

"At one point you sent us a list of books you considered to be 'the authoritative books on Fr. Serra.' Ms. Holson had already reviewed the writings of some of the historians you cited in that list.

"If I thought having an extended conversation on this would help, I would be happy to. But after re-reading your correspondence, I cannot think of anything we could do or say that would convince you that our coverage was fair and complete—or that the reference to 'historians' is accurate."

Brock ended by saying, "rest assured that your points have been thoroughly reviewed and a great deal of time has been put

into making this decision.”

Here is how Donohue responded.

“Thank you for taking my complaint seriously. I have just one question: Who are the ‘historians’ who claim that Fr. Serra tortured Indians?”

This was the end of the correspondence. They were caught in a lie and did not have the courage to admit it. And now they are smearing St. Serra again.

To read Donohue’s account of the saintly priest, “The Noble Legacy of Fr. Serra,” and the exchange that he had with the *Times* in 2015 visit our website, catholicleague.org.

We sent this news release to the paper’s news and opinion editors.

WE TOUCHED A NERVE AT THE NEW YORK TIMES

In the August 17 edition of the *New York Times*, Elizabeth Bruenig revisited the Serra controversy. Here is how she opened her piece.

“Last week, a few hours after publishing an essay about American Catholics’ reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement, I received a flood of ill tidings via email. My correspondents’ anger was unrelated to the subject of my article, but was instead inflamed by a mention of Junipero Serra, a canonized Franciscan friar who founded Spanish missions throughout California in the 18th century.”

Bruenig cited the sentence where she accused Serra of torture, but nowhere in her 1754-word article did she even attempt to disprove what Bill Donohue said. In other words, she provided zero evidence that Serra tortured the Indians. While her piece this time was much more balanced than her initial one, her failure—and the failure of the newspaper—to come to grips with Donohue's single complaint is as revealing as it is disturbing.

Father Serra never tortured the Indians. It is a lie. And even now, the *New York Times* cannot admit it was wrong in 2015 when it first made this charge, and is twice wrong in 2020 for repeating it.

It is a tribute to our email subscribers who contacted the paper that it was forced to run another article trying to wiggle their way out of the jam they created.

KAMALA HARRIS' CATHOLIC PROBLEM

Once Catholic voters learn more about Kamala Harris' positions on an array of moral issues, Joe Biden's vice presidential pick will have a hard time winning them over.

To begin with, Harris has tainted herself with the brush of anti-Catholicism. In 2018, she sought to stop a Trump nominee for a seat on the federal bench simply because he was Catholic. In doing so, she invoked a religious test for the bench, a patently unconstitutional act.

Here is how Bill Donohue characterized the Catholic League's effort to help the nominee for a federal district job; his

remarks were published in the Catholic League's "2019 Year in Review." We were among the first to come to bat for [Brian] Buescher, and our effort paid off. After much haggling, he was seated on the court in August [2019]."

The day after Christmas, 2018, Donohue unloaded on Harris for questioning the suitability of Buescher for the job. His offense? His affiliation with the Knights of Columbus. She objected to his membership in the Knights because it is pro-life. Of course it is—it is a Catholic entity. In short, her real target was the Catholic Church.

Her craving for abortion rights is so strong that in 2019 she bludgeoned pro-life activist David Daleiden for his undercover video work showing how abortion operatives harvest and sell aborted fetal organs. Unlike the American people, the vast majority of whom want restrictions on abortion, Harris insists there should be none. She led the fight against a 20-week abortion ban.

Last September, following a Democratic presidential candidate debate, Harris criticized ABC panelists for not asking about abortion. The debate, she said, "was three hours long and not one question about abortion or reproductive rights." She is so pro-abortion that in 2015, in her capacity as California's Attorney General, she sought to cripple crisis pregnancy centers with draconian regulations. She was sued and lost in the Supreme Court three years later.

Catholics will be delighted to know that Harris is a co-sponsor of "The Equality Act," legislation that would effectively gut Catholic hospitals. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops said, it would put freedom of speech, belief, and thought "at risk," thus vitiating conscience rights. It would also disable the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, making mince meat out of religious liberty.

Harris' passion for gay rights led her to become the keynote speaker at the 2017 Human Rights Campaign dinner, the prominent homosexual entity. She thrilled the crowd, saying, "Together we'll fight when Planned Parenthood clinics are being threatened to shut down." The audience was ecstatic when she boasted that she "felt patriotic when on Valentine's weekend in 2004, I performed marriages of gay couples at San Francisco Hall."

What about men who think they are women, and vice versa? She's fine with that. Do they belong in the military? Sure. What about biological males who think they are girls competing against real girls in girls' sports? She loves it.

Harris' persona is something to keep an eye on. She will fight to the end of the earth to keep black kids trapped in public schools, denying them the same school choice options she has exercised. Yet her stepchildren attended an elite private school in Los Angeles, Wildwood School, that costs about \$44,000 a year. She made sure not to stick them in a public school.

If this shows her classist streak, her penchant for believing any sexual allegation made against men shows her sexist side. When Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Harris said about Christine Blasey Ford's accusations, "I believe her." That was *before* Kavanaugh testified. A year later, after Ford's tale was blown wide open, Harris tweeted that Kavanaugh "lied."

Virginia Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax is another man whom Harris smeared. When he was charged with sexual assault, she immediately labeled it a "credible account." The accusation died on the vine. He still has his job.

More seriously, when her running mate was charged with sexual assault last year, Harris said of his accusers, "I believe them and I respect them being able to tell their story and

having the courage to do it.” She has never taken that back. Does she still believe Biden is a predator? If she hasn’t changed her mind, what does that make her?

Finally, Harris supports reparations for African Americans. That would not include her: her father is Jamaican and her mother was born in India. So she wouldn’t get a dime. But she would have to fork up lots of cash. Why? As her father disclosed—he is a Stanford University professor—one of her ancestors, Hamilton Brown, was a slave owner.

In fairness, then, if the average American has to pay X amount for slavery, Harris should at least have to pay 10X. Isn’t this what redistributive justice is all about? Catholics need to know.

SCORING BIDEN AND TRUMP ON RELIGION

On August 6, President Trump accused Joe Biden of being “against God.” When Bill Donohue read this on August 7, he released the following tweet: “Trump has no business smearing Biden’s personal faith. What he said is indefensible. He should stick to policy matters, not personal ones.”

In a Politico/Morning Consult survey released in June, only 27% of registered voters said they believed Trump to be religious. That should have given Trump pause when he slammed Biden for being “against God.” The question for voters, however, is not whether a candidate is personally religious; rather, it is whether his policies are religion-friendly. On this score, Trump wins hands down.

The Biden camp knows this to be true, which is why they are rolling out his personal faith credentials. It's all they have. Biden's surrogates, such as E.J. Dionne, are praising his devoutness, citing his remark that his faith is the "bedrock foundation of my life." That may be true. It is also true that Biden's lust for abortion rights—he is more extreme now than ever before—has led priests to deny him Communion.

"I think his own faith and values narrative allows us to have inroads into these [faith] communities in ways that Democrats might previously not have been able to do," says John McCarthy of the Biden team. Similarly, John K. White, a Catholic University professor, is impressed that Biden "carries a rosary with him."

Up to a point, symbolic speech matters, but the race for the White House is not a piety parade. If that were the case, there would be few candidates from either party. The race, for the faithful, is about who has the best record defending religious liberty. This is where Biden is in deep trouble. What specific legislation has he sponsored that would advance this end?

It won't do, as some have argued, to say that climate change is a pro-life issue (one that is embraced by Biden). This gambit—trying to jam matters unrelated to traditional life issues into the pro-life portfolio—has not worked in the past, and it is not going to work this time, either. Automobile safety is also a life issue, but no one seriously thinks it is a pro-life issue the way abortion, euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide are.

Still, Trump's critics say that because his personal life is marred with moral failings, people of faith cannot be taken seriously when they say they will vote for him. This common refrain deserves a serious response.

Let's say that in a presidential race, the Republican

candidate is very generous in his charitable giving. He gives to organizations that help needy children, hospitals, and the like. He also has a good record hiring minorities. But his voting record on government assistance to the poor and affirmative action is almost non-existent.

Let's say the Democrat is extraordinarily stingy, giving practically nothing to charity. He also sports a lousy hiring record—his employees are almost exclusively white. But his voting record on government assistance to the poor and affirmative action is excellent.

Would it not be rational for Democrats to vote for the Democrat, in spite of the superior personal record of the Republican?

Al Gore is known to the public as a champion of the poor. But in 1997, the vice president and his wife Tipper contributed a whopping total of \$353 to charity. Their salary was \$197,729. To put it differently, their charitable giving was less than one-tenth the typical contribution for someone with their adjusted gross income.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is known to the public as a champion of affirmative action. But in 1993, when being considered for a seat on the Supreme Court, she was asked by Sen. Orrin Hatch to explain why, in 13 years as a judge, not one of her 57 law clerks was black. "If you confirm me to this job," she said, "my attractiveness to black candidates is going to improve."

Would it make sense if someone supported government assistance to the poor not to vote for Gore because he is a miser? Would it make sense for someone who supports affirmative action not to support Ginsburg because she is a hypocrite?

Voting involves making tough decisions, weighing all sorts of contrary variables, the conclusion of which is not always neat. But the mature voter will select the candidate who is best for the nation, notwithstanding his own personal

shortcomings. It's the policies that should matter, not the persona.