

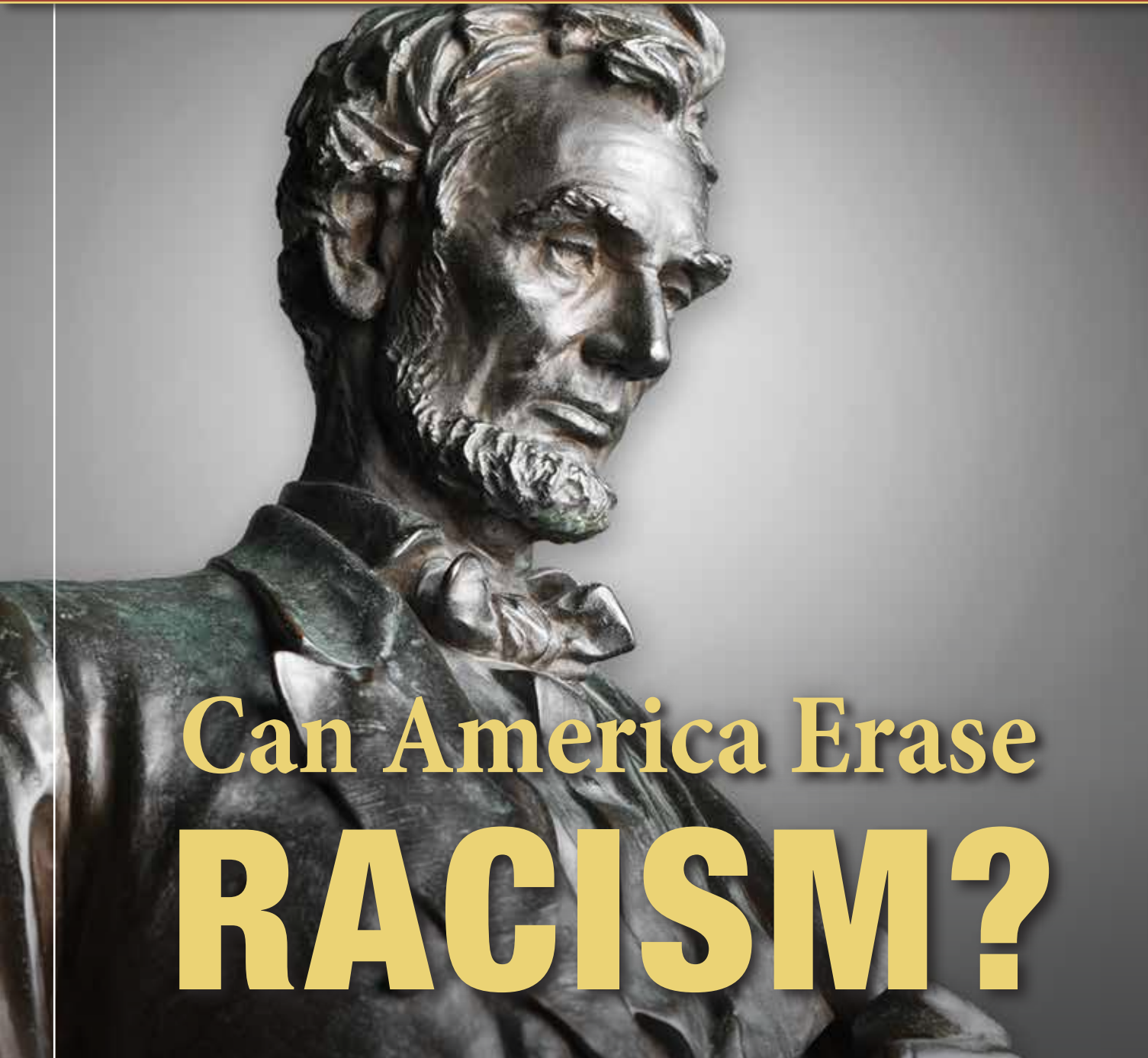
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2017

THE

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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



Can America Erase **RACISM?**

**Has Uganda Solved the
Refugee Problem?**

Las Vegas Reopens Old Wounds
for Other Mass Shooting Victims

After the Storms

Stuck in the Sand: Will the U.S.
Ever Get Out of Afghanistan?

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VOL. XV | NO. 6 | NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2017

A R T I C L E S

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■ **REBUILDING:** A family rebuilds their house destroyed by Hurricane Maria in Toa Alto, Puerto Rico (Sept. 26, 2017).

PHOTO: HECTOR RETAMAL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After the Storms

The United States, its territory Puerto Rico, as well as several islands in the Caribbean are still reeling from a string of record-toppling natural disasters—from the third-worst Atlantic hurricane season to wildfires in the western U.S. spiraling out of control.

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Puerto Rico in Survival Mode Following Maria

The aftermath of the Category 4 hurricane has tested Puerto Rico's national character.

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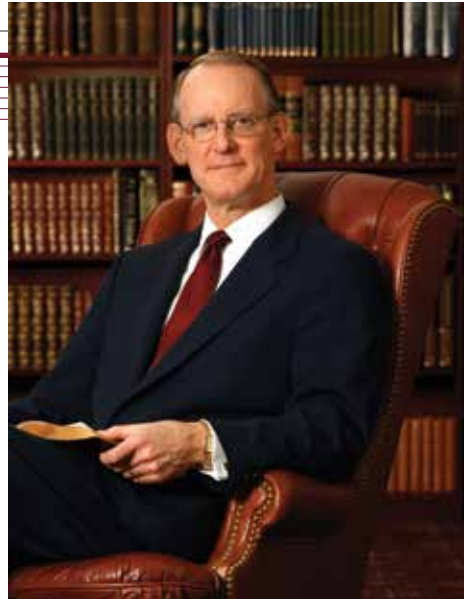
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Good News— Just Ahead!

IN A WORLD of nonstop crises, uncertainty, fear—and ever-worsening *bad news*—people long for good news. I do have good news—in fact, the very best news you could ever hear! No one is telling you about it, nor could you discover it on your own.

The truth of the gospel—God’s astonishing purpose for man—has been withheld from the world. It explains *why* you were born. The *real* gospel involves incredible knowledge that will leave you dumbfounded. This amazing understanding has been revealed—along with the cover-up to suppress it.

Billions are now deceived. Previous billions have been. Even you have been lied to. A complete seduction has taken place, and all the world’s religions have played a part in it. Knowledge of your *incredible future*—your awesome potential—has been kept from you!

Many wonder and worry about the unknown—and what their future holds. Others fear they do not even have a future. Still others fear that civilization has no future. You need never again be in doubt about *your* future—or of mankind’s.

If only humanity knew what God has in store for it! Yet a deliberate suppression of the truth has withheld this knowledge from all but a few. You can be an exception—one of the few who is *not* deceived.

Widespread Deception

The world has believed a *false* gospel for 2,000 years. It has generally supposed that Jesus Christ *is* the gospel rather than the Messenger *of* it. The message—the centerpiece—of the gospel is *not* Christ. By focusing on Him—the Messenger—religious deceivers have been able to successfully suppress and cover up the message He brought!

The vital knowledge of how man could have solved his problems and understood God’s Supreme Purpose has been withheld from the world, keeping it in darkness. Man does not know *what* he is or his *reason* for being. He does not know the way to abundance, peace, happiness and all the good things of life. The gospel would have shown mankind the solution to its most insoluble problems.

And yet, except for the apostle John, all the original apostles were *martyred* for teaching the truth of God’s incredible purpose. Jesus was *crucified* because people did not want to hear His message!

A correct understanding of the true gospel reveals crucial knowledge. It contains a dimension that cannot be discovered by scientific inquiry. Again, every supposed “great religion” of the world has helped suppress it. Their theologians neither comprehend nor are willing to teach it.

Both Jesus Christ and the apostles preached the gospel! Jesus commanded in Mark 1:15, “Repent you, and believe the gospel.” But exactly what is it that we—YOU—are supposed to believe? Just what is the true gospel? Do you know? Are you certain? Be careful of assumptions. For instance, did Jesus teach the same gospel that Paul preached to the gentiles? And what does the word “gospel” mean?

The vast majority of professing Christians do not know the vital—all-important—answers to these most basic questions, and many others related to the true gospel of the Bible!

Jesus, at His First Coming, came as a first-century *newscaster*, bringing advance *good news* of staggering events to occur just beyond the horizon, and all the *bad news* occurring throughout today’s world. This climactic news involves *you*—and eventually every human being on Earth.

Six new books on religion are published every day in America, and there are over 2,000 separate religions in the United States. Yet there has never been more confusion and disagreement about the answers to humanity’s problems! Troubles, woes, evils and human difficulties of every kind are multiplying. World peace is more elusive than ever. Why?

Why is there so much knowledge available to mankind, yet so much ignorance of the truth of the answers to life’s BIG questions?

All of this has everything to do with the gospel!

Revelation 12:9 reveals this: “Satan...deceives the whole world.” This is a staggering statement! Do you believe it? If this verse is true, then it would certainly apply to the truth of a matter so crucial as the meaning and

correct understanding of the gospel message Jesus brought!

Many False Gospels

Almost everyone believes that the gospel is about the *Person* of Jesus Christ. Certainly, Christ plays an extremely important and central role to Christianity, but He is *not* the gospel. The Bible shows that Jesus is preached in conjunction *with* the gospel. Again, His role is enormous. But He is *not* the gospel.

Some proclaim a “gospel of salvation,” others a “gospel of grace.” Still others believe a “gospel of miracles” or a “social gospel.” Yet others think of the “gospel of foods,” “healing,” “faith” or of “tongues.” And there are some who merely think of “gospel music” when they hear this word. These manmade ideas all ignore the truth of the Bible!

Here is more of Mark’s account: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the *kingdom of God*” (1:14). *This* is the gospel Jesus preached. It was in this very same context that He said, “Repent you, and *believe the gospel*” (vs. 15). Which gospel? Of the “Kingdom of God.”

Verse 1 in Mark 1 refers to this message when it states, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The gospel of Jesus Christ is about the Kingdom of God—not something else! One must believe *that* gospel—not a humanly devised counterfeit or substitute.

Strong Warning

This subject is so important that God inspired the apostle Paul to warn the Galatians then and us now: “I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. [Understand. The gospel—Christ’s message—can be perverted!] But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we

have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, *let him be accursed*” (1:6-9).

This is a blunt statement—and a strong warning to all who will heed! Tragically, almost all have *not* heeded.

A little later, in chapter 2, verse 5, Paul stressed his hope that the “*truth* of the gospel might continue with you.” So there is one *true* gospel—with all others *false*! I did not say that—God did, through Jesus and Paul.

Although some assert that Paul taught a different or additional gospel, it is plain that he never did. Ironically, God used Paul to *warn against* ever allowing such false teaching by pronouncing a *curse* on any man or angel who violates this command. Remember, “But though *we* [apostles]...preach any other gospel...let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

What a powerful scripture—and warning!

Paul explained that the apostles were entrusted by God to preserve the true gospel. Notice I Thessalonians 2:4: “But as we [apostles] were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which tries our hearts.”

This is a responsibility not to be taken lightly. *True* ministers must always teach what *God* commands—not what pleases men (including Bible “scholars”). Any claim that Paul taught a different or second gospel (usually thought to be *about Christ* or some separate idea about “peace” or “grace”) is impossible. Had he done this, he would literally have been pronouncing a curse on himself!

Did you know that Jesus was foretold to bring the gospel? In the Old Testament, Jesus was prophesied to come as a *messenger*. Notice Malachi 3:1: “Behold, I will send My messenger [typed by John the Baptist in the first century], and he shall prepare the

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Should You Celebrate Thanksgiving?

For many in North America, the yearly celebration of giving thanks is reduced to gorging on a big meal, excessive drinking the night before, or snoozing in front of a football game. For others, Black Friday—a day of frenzied shopping to capture the best market deals of the year—overshadows the holiday altogether.

Given all of the media hype, excess and sensational commercialism surrounding it, the original meaning of Thanksgiving can easily be

lost for Americans and Canadians. Yet citizens of these prosperous nations should have every reason to keep the day as it was intended.

Although the national holiday was not instituted in the Bible, the scriptures have much to say about thankfulness. The article “Should You Celebrate Thanksgiving Day?” provides historical and biblical insight into this holiday that can help you better appreciate everything that you have.

Read the article today at rcg.org/syctd.



Can America Erase **RACISM?**

We tried to remove it in the years following the Civil War. We dreamed it would go away during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Yet we still grapple with racism today.

BY NESTOR A. TORO

MUSICIAN BOBBY Horton, 66, has an unusual vantage point on the debates that have roiled American cities in recent months. He has spent a lifetime studying and playing historically significant music and was among the contributors to director Ken Burns' landmark 1990 miniseries "The Civil War."

Both the Yankees and Confederates had their favorite tunes during the war, Mr. Horton said, and that division continued with post-war songs such as "Oh, I'm a Good Ole Rebel..."

Yet a new type of music also emerged after the war, Mr. Horton said. Songs that talked about reconciliation and coming together after years of fighting. One, titled "The Dawn of Peace," included the verse: "No more,

no more shall war and strife be heard throughout the land."

More than a century and a half after those lyrics were first sung, chants at civil rights rallies hardly evoke the utopian sentiment of "The Dawn of Peace." Much less do protesters beating each other with clubs and sticks on the streets, hurling bottles of frozen water like bricks at one another's skulls, or using makeshift aerosol-can flamethrowers, as hap-



■ **DEEP-ROOTED PROBLEM:** Left, black Union soldiers stand in front of a wagon and wood structures in Bermuda Hundred, Virginia (1864). Center, Martin Luther King Jr. marches with other demonstrators during the “March on Washington” in the nation’s capital (Aug. 28, 1963). Right, protesters hold up cellphones outside of the St. Louis city jail following the acquittal of a former St. Louis police officer who shot a black man (Sept. 18, 2017).

PHOTOS: HIRST D. MILHOLLEN AND DONALD H. MUGRIDGE/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS (LEFT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES (CENTER); SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT)

pened in Charlottesville, Virginia, over the summer.

The event turned deadly when a man rammed a Dodge Charger through demonstrators, hurting several and killing a woman.

Meanwhile, calls for removal of Confederate memorials, the reason protesters gathered in Charlottesville in the first place, have grown louder. Those in favor of keeping them defend the monuments, saying they serve as historical reminders. Their counterparts argue they stand as a testimony to hatred.

A poll by *MSN* accentuated the deep political divide on the subject: “Seventy-one percent of Democrats surveyed in the poll said they supported the removal of Confederate monuments, while 87% of Republican respondents disagreed... In the poll, Republicans and Democrats also disagreed over how to handle the flying of the Confederate flag in public spaces. Seventeen percent of Democrats said they believe Confederate flags are ‘too symbolic of hate’ and should be taken down, but 78% of Republicans

said they supported leaving them up to respect their historical significance,” *Business Insider* reported.

The ongoing debate over race equality, however, has resulted in more violent protests and statues removed.

Pressure Cooker

Over the last few years, individuals, groups and corporations have joined the effort to shun anything that can be seen as racially offensive.

In Memphis, Tennessee, the Orpheum Theatre canceled a long-running screening of “Gone with the Wind” because of what is considered racially insensitive content in the classic 1939 film. Theater president Brett Batterson said in a statement that “the Orpheum cannot show a film that is insensitive to a large segment of its local population.”

At Fenway Park in Boston, Massachusetts, four fans were removed after draping a huge sign that read: “Racism is as American as Baseball” over the left-field wall.

Earlier in the season, Orioles center fielder Adam Jones reported hearing racial slurs and having peanuts thrown at him during a game. Mr. Jones received a personal apology from Boston team president Sam Kennedy a day later on behalf of the club. When he stepped up for his first at-bat of the game, he was given extended applause from the Fenway crowd.

Tech companies are also putting forth efforts to banish extremism. Facebook removed several groups and individuals from its service and Instagram for what it calls violations of its terms that ban hate speech. Google removed Gab, a social network favored by extremists, for “hate speech,” Gab tweeted. Music streaming service Spotify banned music it said “favors hatred or incites violence against race, religion, sexuality or the like.”

Even online payment service PayPal removed payment accounts linked to known hate groups.

Historians and political scientists have been warning that American politics could once again become a pressure cooker, full of racial tension and building to the point of a deadly clash.

More and more voices say something must change, and soon.

“In 1861 they came to the point they could no longer talk about their differences. It came to bloodshed,” said long-haul trucker R.J. Yong, 37, of York, South Carolina. “I fear that we are coming to that point again.”

In a *Guardian* piece titled “‘The Civil War lies on us like a sleeping dragon’: America’s deadly divide—and why it has returned,” historian David Blight remarked: “Lincoln did not fear foreign enemies. If ‘danger’ would ‘ever reach us’, he said, ‘it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher...’ Those words were prescient in

Lincoln’s own century. But they have a frightful clarity even today. Where are we now?”

The same question looms in the minds of American leaders, who are at a loss for an answer. If you are reading this, perhaps you have wondered too. Why does eradicating racism seem such an unapproachable goal?

Failed Reconstructions

Ever since the end of the Civil War, the U.S. has tried and failed to eradicate racism. Following the surrender at Appomattox in 1865 came the period known as The Reconstruction.

“Under the First Military Reconstruction Act of March 1867, a Republican-controlled Congress, having become justifiably concerned about profound legal and extra-legal threats to the statutory civil rights of black Southerners, gave the U.S. Army an administrative deadline of September 1

to directly register all black and white adult males in 10 of the 11 ex-Confederate states (Tennessee, the 11th, already had a biracial electorate),” progressive magazine *The American Prospect* stated.

At best, the publication continued, the new system was “flawed”: “Americans have been arguing about Reconstruction ever since...The ratification of the 14th Amendment expressly kept all women from voting. Native Americans and Chinese Americans in California soon discovered that the new constitutional amendments—the 13th, 14th, and 15th—did not quite include them (at least not without arduous litigation in the federal courts).”

About a century later: “The broad period from the end of World War II until the late 1960s, often referred to as the ‘Second Reconstruction, consisted of a grass-roots civil rights movement coupled with gradual but progressive actions by the Presidents, the federal courts, and Congress to provide full political rights for African Americans and to begin to redress longstanding economic and social inequities” (*history.house.gov*).

There are some who feel a Third Reconstruction is happening today. Yet, if every single thing that could be considered offensive were removed, would it be enough? Is there real hope that America’s race struggles will one day be resolved once and for all?

What Is to Blame?

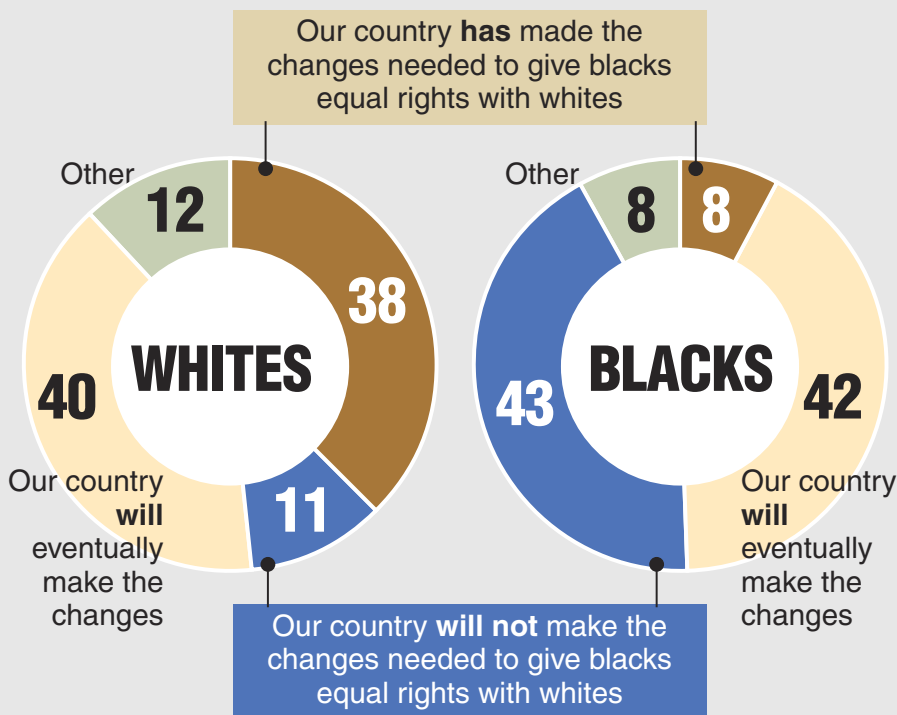
Two previous “reconstructions” suggest a deeper, foundational root *cause*—a cause left completely unaddressed.

Each time racially motivated violence takes place, leaders, organizations and opinion writers scramble to identify a cause, and sometimes propose what they view as a lasting solution. Racial problems, however, are an *effect*. A fourth, fifth, or sixth “reconstruction” are guaranteed should we never address this core *cause*.

Back in 2015, the *Washington Post* raised concerns about the deep-rooted nature of racial division.

Race and Inequality

Percent of Americans saying...



Source: Pew Research Center
Graphic: Staff, Tribune News Service



■ **CONTINUING DIVISION:** Demonstrators hold signs while standing in front of a Confederate statue in Washington, D.C. (Aug. 13, 2017).

PHOTO: ZACH GIBSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“The United States has been treating evidence of racism, and not the causes, since the Civil War,” the newspaper stated.

“Slavery; ‘separate but equal’; segregated pools, buses, trains and water fountains; workplace and housing discrimination; and other forms of bias and animus have served as painful barometers of the nation’s racial health. They have been, however, treated like the pain that accompanies a broken leg. The effort was to treat or reduce the agonizing symptoms of the break rather than fix it.

“The 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution extended civil and legal protections to former slaves. They eased the pain, but the leg was still broken. Anti-lynching laws scattered the lynch mobs. But the pain flared up again with beatings, bombings and assassinations.”

The article concluded: “Until we get at the root cause, the problem lives on.”

Again, what is the root cause? Can someone define it? Who or what is to blame in today’s worsening racial struggles?

Force of Human Nature

In a letter to his mother, a young officer during the Civil War wrote: “I have learned a great many things, a great deal of *human nature*” (*Forged in Battle – The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*).

War certainly does test the mettle of men. It can reveal courage and selflessness, but it also exposes the horrors of human nature.

Take an honest look at mankind. Human nature is not exclusive to the battlefield. It is ever with us—as is the tendency toward bigotry and hatred.

Recall Lincoln’s words about America—that our downfall “must spring up *amongst* us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must *ourselves* be its author and finisher...”

In this statement, Lincoln was drawing from principles found in

an ancient book with which he knew well: the Bible.

This book has much to say about human nature. In Matthew 15:19, it warns that evil thoughts, murder and the like proceed “out of the heart.” They come *from within*.

Understand what this means. Human nature is the force behind all racial divisions! Address human nature, and you will address all forms of racism. The natural state of mankind is the ultimate culprit for a discriminatory society.

Yet to eradicate racism in America, we must understand exactly what is human nature, and how to fight it. Only then will the words in “The Dawn of Peace” become a reality: “No more, no more shall war and strife be heard throughout the land.”

For more on the natural state of mankind—what it is, why it exists, and where it comes from—read *Did God Create Human Nature?* □



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rcg.org/dgchn

What Are Smartphones Doing to Our Kids?



Mobile technology in the hands of children and teens provides convenience, but we are beginning to discover it comes at a cost.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

S EVEN-YEAR-OLDS are doing what once was impossible. They can measure the height of the Burj Khalifa, calculate the average weight of a blue whale, snap studio-quality portraits, and stay in real-time communication with their friends—all without leaving their bedrooms.

Smartphones, which each have more computing power than all of NASA when it started sending astro-

nauts to the moon, have landed in the hands of kids, and it did not take long.

The technology so quickly became a part of everyday life—the iPhone recently turned 10 years old—that even well-adjusted adults barely had time to pause and ask, “Will this be good for me?” Even more, for a parent, “Should I be handing such vast capability to my child?”

According to a 2016 study by Influence Central, 10.3 is now the average age children receive their first

cellphone. Parents are also relaxing online restrictions as nearly 25 percent of kids have private access to the internet from their bedrooms compared to 15 percent in 2012.

The study also revealed that 39 percent get their first social media account between ages 10 and 12, and another 11 percent before age 10.

Many parents are willing to give their adolescent and teenage children smartphones, but we are just beginning to understand the lasting impact of the decision.

Yes, cellphone use is universal. And kids remaining a phone call away does give parents peace of mind. And, fair enough, more and more teachers are integrating mobile devices into the classroom. These tiny bundles of wires, aluminum and glass can even be a welcome distraction for youth when “mommy needs some quiet time.”

But once you hand a shiny new mobile device to a child, there is no taking it back—at least not easily.

Smartphone usage by children has matured to the point where experts can confidently associate their use to a myriad of problems including cyber-bullying, access to pornography, poor judgment with online privacy, and increased difficulty with face-to-face social interactions.

Yet the most significant cost of kids being connected 24/7 may be that kids are connected, well—24/7.

A four-year study of Australian teens between ages 13 and 16 found that late-night texting or calling was linked to a lack of quality sleep. This was subsequently connected to an increase in depressed moods and declines in self-esteem and coping ability (*The Guardian*). The study indicated that few teenagers stopped using their phones after lights out, with some admitting to “constantly texting into the night” and staying up as late as 3:00 a.m.

Lead researcher of the study, Lynette Vernon of Murdoch University in Perth, pointed to international research showing that 80 percent of young people have access to a mobile phone, many with unrestricted use. She said these devices are entrenched in the lives of young people and impacting their sleep.

“If you’re finding your son or daughter is more moody and not coping at school, you often put that down to adolescence,” Dr. Vernon said, “but it could be as simple as them not sleeping at night.”

In another article titled “‘I’ll Go to School on Two and a Half Hours’ Sleep’: Why British Children Aren’t Sleeping,” *The Guardian* pointed to a 2011 study identifying English

students as the most sleep-deprived in Europe. It also reported how one United Kingdom hospital saw a tenfold increase in referrals over the lack of sleep during the last decade.

Britain’s National Health Service learned that hospital attendance for children under 14 with sleep disorders has tripled over the last 10 years.

The article tied these sharp increases in sleep problems for kids to the increased use of mobile devices. Two other factors underlining the issue, according to the article, are moms and dads constantly checking their own phones and “a more child-centered style of parenting.”

Phone Problems

A 2011 poll by the National Sleep Foundation found that mobile phone use, specifically texting and talking on the phone before bed, revealed a significant age gap. Fifty-six percent of Generation Z (ages 13 to 18) say they send, read or receive text messages every night or almost every night in the hour before bed. This is compared to 42 percent of those ages 19 to 29 and 15 percent among older age brackets.

About half of Generation Z, according to the poll, watches TV directly before going to bed, after which many of them use mobile phones to text and make or receive calls directly before closing their eyes.

The Guardian article on British children not getting enough sleep referenced a young girl who “covers the bags under her eyes with thick makeup before heading off to school.” Owner of a phone and two iPads, she said she rarely gets to sleep before 2:30 in the morning despite going to bed at 9:00 p.m. the previous evening. She was the one who admitted to sometimes going to school on only two and a half hours of sleep.

Dr. Jean Twenge, Professor of Psychology at San Diego State University, examined the impact that social media is having on kids and sleep in the *Atlantic* magazine article “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?”

In the piece, she described a 13-year-old Texas girl waking up to the smell of burning sheets due to her overheating cellphone. Surprised by the notion of someone sleeping in bed with a phone, Dr. Twenge queried her undergraduate students to determine if this behavior was unusual.

The professor learned that practically her entire class slept with their phones, many placing them under their pillows, on the mattress next to them, or within arm’s reach of the bed.

Students said that their phones were the last thing they saw before going to bed and the first thing they saw in the morning. Some felt guilty about their obsession with looking at their phones while in bed, with one female student saying, “I know I shouldn’t, but I just can’t help it.” Others said their phones were an extension of their body, adding, “Having my phone closer to me while I’m sleeping is a comfort.”

Though Dr. Twenge does not state a direct causation, she says smartphones are cutting into teen’s sleep and makes a case for the negative impact these devices have on the overall health of young people.

The psychologist and author explained that many teens sleep less than seven hours per night, well under the nine hours recommended by experts. She defines adolescents getting less than seven hours of sleep per night as being “significantly sleep deprived” and points to findings that 57 percent more youths were sleep deprived in 2015 than in 1991. There was a 22 percent spike in teens getting less than seven hours of sleep between 2012 and 2015, an increase “suspiciously timed,” said Dr. Twenge, around the time smartphones began making their way into the majority of teenagers’ hands.

Dr. Twenge’s research pointed to two national surveys that showed youths who spend three or more hours a day on electronic devices are 28 percent more likely to get less than seven hours of sleep compared with those who spend fewer than three hours on

devices. Those who visit social media sites every day are 19 percent more likely to be sleep deprived.

Sleep deprivation brings on several associated health problems including compromised thinking and reasoning, susceptibility to illness, weight gain, and high blood pressure. Those who do not get enough sleep are also prone to depression and anxiety.

Between the daytime-mimicking blue light emitted from electronic devices and the pull of staying connected via social media throughout the night, mobile devices have a strong ability to disrupt sleep and cause overall health problems.

No parent would knowingly subject their child to such perils. So, how did we get here?

Train Your Child

As with anytime our children are struggling, we as parents must be willing to look in the mirror and ask a tough question: What could I be doing (or not doing), that is causing this?

Children do not have the means to acquire \$600 cellphones with hefty data plans. They get them from their parents. So, when it becomes clear that these devices pose a danger to our sons and daughters, we must stop and consider.

An argument against advances in technology is pointless. Civilization always progresses. There was a time before the printing press, light bulbs, cars and computers.

Society's integration of mobile devices and the internet have fundamentally changed how we live. These modern niceties are how we do business, how we get our news, how we are entertained, and how we communicate. It is hard to imagine our world without this capability, and there is no turning back.

Yet just because something exists does not mean we—or our children—must be at the full mercy of society. Adults must decide for themselves and for the little people in their care what to do regarding smartphone usage.

There are undeniable benefits to kids having access to mobile devices and the internet. But going to bed with a cellphone is a long way from using

it for homework. The technology has gone beyond practical uses and virtually mutated the DNA of our youth.

The degree to which many young people are incorporating smartphones into their lives is eroding legitimate benefits.

Let's be frank. What is often framed as a "must have" with mobile devices and internet access is really just a *want*. Children feel *they* should decide how much this technology is in their lives and child-centered parenting is pressuring adults to comply.

Yet, not long ago, boys and girls had to "suffer" through going to

"...Fathers and mothers can increase their own happiness and the future happiness of their children by teaching them to be content with their circumstances."

the library to complete their homework. They had to wait *all night* to talk with their friends the following day at school. It is good to remind your son or daughter of these and other "ancient" practices from time to time.

In his book, *Train Your Children God's Way*, David C. Pack spoke to how often parents cave under the pressure to please their kids.

"Millions of parents now routinely cater to their children. The ways in which they do this are practically endless. It is as though parents feel they must satisfy their child's every whim—and do this on an almost minute-to-minute basis."

This tendency by parents teaches children to grow up expecting to be catered to, which sets them up for a rude awakening later in life.

Parents have a natural tendency to run a popularity contest with their kids and take the easy path of smothering them with the best of everything. This is seen with children, some of them very young, being given the latest gadgets and expensive items they never truly earned.

When it comes to pampering kids, Mr. Pack is clear: "Parents, above all, do not spoil your children. Avoid this trap at all costs! If you do not, you are literally sentencing them to be stubborn, selfish, self-focused, ego-driven, rude and demanding, and almost entirely materialistic."

The book states that "spoiling usually equals ruining" because these children are powerless to deny themselves their every want. It also means they grow up believing that life should always be fair and that they are entitled to what they have.

Children, Mr. Pack continues, must be taught that, fair or not, there are some things in life they simply cannot have. They cannot always get what they want and life does not always deal them the hand they expect or feel they deserve.

Fathers and mothers who routinely give in to the demands of children subject themselves to bouts of frustration and ongoing arguments from whining children who do not get their way. This can leave some parents wanting to give up.

But fathers and mothers can increase their own happiness and the future happiness of their children by teaching them to be content with their circumstances.

Instead of being less involved and leaving kids to navigate social media and the web, Mr. Pack says parental control and involvement are crucial to their child's success and "children tend to thrive in a more tightly managed routine."

Parents, Mr. Pack said, must instill in their kids a set of core principles: "Repeat often to your children that they are no better than anybody else, and that the measure of their value and success is solely tied to regular contact with God, strength of character, pursuit of the right goals, willingness to overcome obsta-

cles in their path, real achievement, how much they give versus get, the amount of honor extended to generations that have gone before them, and the volume of effort and sweat expended to earn what they have.”

The book summarizes the role of those seeking to raise their sons and daughters effectively: “All parents want their children to lead happy, abundant, successful lives. But this will not be achieved by accident. Children need SPECIFIC GUIDANCE. Everyone recognizes that people are most influenced when they are young. This is why it is so important for parents to instill, beginning from a very early age, the proper focus and framework on which to base their lives.”

What Can Parents Do?

Parents must take a proactive role in raising their children including a deep consideration of smartphone and social media use.

A strong case can be made for teens and younger kids to have no phone at all, with their use of the internet wholly regulated and supervised. This may seem drastic, but many are choosing this path despite strange looks from other parents and objections from their children. For those taking such measures, avoiding the problems mobile devices can cause for their children is worth it.

Some parents are opting for a middle ground, choosing a phone for their kids with far fewer features and less access to the web. This trend toward “dumb phones,” those only allowing phone calls and simple texting, is having a positive impact on those willing to make the switch. It reemphasizes the use of a cellphone as a device for making phone calls, instead of a handheld computer with an assortment of flashy features.

A 22-year old university student expressed freedom after giving up his smartphone for a much simpler version: “When you’ve got a simpler phone you become more liberated by the fact you don’t have something consuming you

all the time. You kind of forget about your phone sometimes” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*).

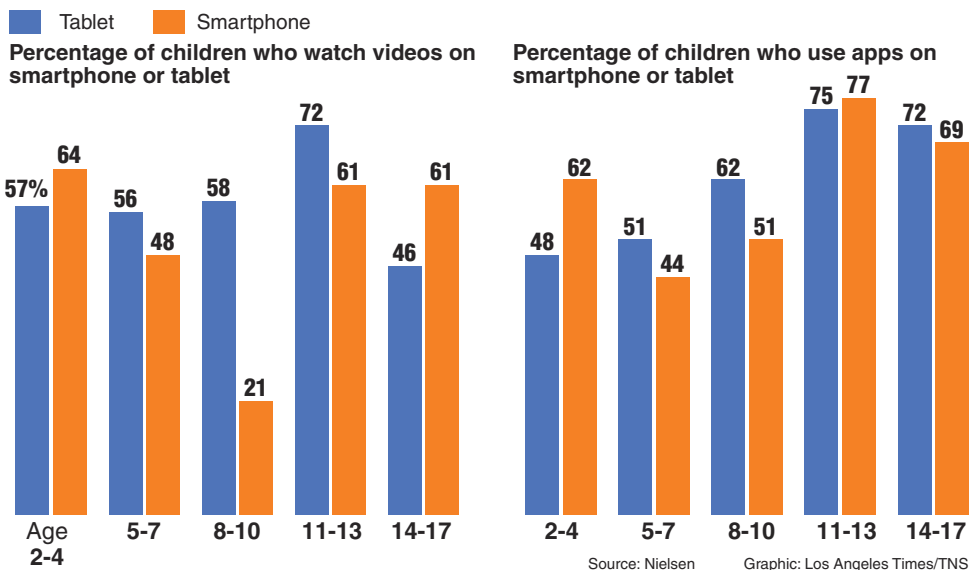
For those who see taking away their child’s phone or downgrading as an impossibility, there are still steps they can take to help their kids cope—and get a better night’s sleep.

The following are a few tips from various easy-to-find online sources:

- Have a common smartphone charging station *outside* the child’s bedroom.
- Replace mobile phone alarms with traditional alarm clocks in the bedroom.
- Have a set wake-up time for your child, even on weekends.
- If you choose to allow the use of a cellphone in the bedroom, establish certain rules such as a usage curfew.

Companies Target Kids for Streaming Entertainment

Tablet and smartphone use has grown among young children as streaming services expand their programming to a younger demographic.



■ Remind your child that having a smartphone is a privilege, not a right.

■ Implement appropriate controls and filters on devices.

■ Talk to your child about social media and its use.

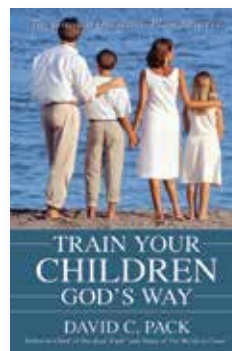
■ Enforce no screen activity in the hour before bed; no TVs, computers, phones or tablets.

■ Have a consistent routine that your child follows every evening in the hour before bedtime.

■ Have your child engage in activities involving hand-eye coordination to help the brain wind down before bed such as coloring in a book for young kids or working on a model or puzzle for older ones. Reading a physical book is another good option.

These are just a few recommendations. More are appearing as the problem of kids and smartphone use becomes more well-known. But, in the end, tips are only as good as the willingness for parents to implement them. Rearing children is difficult and no parent does it perfectly, but you can do it successfully if you have a strong desire to succeed and are armed with the right information.

For more on how to be an effective parent, read *Train Your Children God’s Way* in its entirety. It will provide practical advice on how to become the best parent possible. □



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HAS UGANDA SOLVED THE REFUGEE PROBLEM?

Millions fleeing political oppression and violence in South Sudan are finding relief, healthcare, education and employment in their southern neighbor's refugee camps.

BY ANDREW J. HOLCOMBE

IMAGINE WAR breaking out in Los Angeles, Athens, Montreal or Rome—causing the entire population of just *one* of these cities (nearly 4 million each) to leave their homes to find refuge. If such an event took place, it would make headlines for months.

In South Sudan, there is no need to imagine—this is the grim reality. In less than four years, 4 million South Sudanese natives have been displaced from their homes and families are being torn apart by the nation's civil war.

Salva Kiir, South Sudan's president, and rebel leader Riek Machar stand in political opposition, both vying for absolute power over the

nation. The violent struggle between these two leaders has forced nearly 2 million people to flee their homes and resettle within the nation, and caused another 2 million to flee the country.

An August 2017 United Nations Human Rights Commission statement expressed reports of “barbaric violence, with armed groups burning down houses with civilians inside, people being killed in front of family members, sexual assaults of women and girls, and kidnapping of boys for forced conscription.”

Over the last year, 1 million of these refugees have found safety in bordering Uganda. Led by President Yoweri Museveni, this nation is seen as a beacon of hope for those fleeing war-torn South Sudan.

Uganda's open-door policy makes it easy for refugees and asylum-

seekers to cross the border. Once refugees enter the nation, they are placed into some of the most hospitable and welcoming refugee camps in the world. Unlike most other nations, Uganda has established settlements where individuals and families can have a place to live and plots of land to farm.

Furthermore, Uganda helps refugees enter the workforce and educational system. The UNHCR reported: “Uganda has one of the most favorable protection environments for refugees, including freedom of movement, the right to work, own business and property, and access to public education and health services.”

These conditions and policies stand in stark contrast to the cruelty shown by Uganda's previous government.





■ **DISPLACED:** A South Sudanese woman carries a child on her knees as she sits inside a makeshift camp in Uganda (July 16, 2016).
PHOTO: ISAAC KASAMANI/AFP/Getty Images

A Look Back

In 1971, General Idi Amin of the Ugandan military led a successful coup against President Milton Obote. This hostile transfer of power began Amin's eight-year reign of terror.

Alongside violations of human rights, oppression, extrajudicial murders, and rampant greed and corruption, one of Idi Amin's most cruel actions was the blatant persecution of those of other races and political ideologies.

At the time, a great number of Asian migrants were living in the country, having established careers and started families. Many of these were entre-

preneurs who helped strengthen and make viable the Ugandan economy through building infrastructure and running businesses.

In 1972, Amin forced all 60,000 Asians who were not Ugandan citizens out of the country. His stated reason: "The Asians were brought by the British here to Uganda. Therefore, the British are responsible to look after those Asians" (*Discovery Civilization*).

This abrupt expulsion of a middle-class workforce required Ugandan workers with virtually no entrepreneurial knowledge or background to run businesses. As a result, the economy quickly collapsed.

Uganda Today

Bucking the trends of the Amin regime, current President Museveni's govern-

ment is working hard to revitalize Uganda. In addition, it has opened wide its doors, offering hope to those in need.

According to the State House website, Mr. Museveni explained that the principle of helping people who are fleeing a corrupt government to resettle was an African "concept of managing refugees before the colonialists came."

"When there was a bad ruler or chief, there was withdrawing of allegiance from the bad ruler which in my language is called *okwimuura*," he stated. "People would then pledge allegiance to a new kind of ruler which we call *kwohengyera* and would become permanent people of the new area."

Please see **UGANDA**, page 31



LAS VEGAS

Reopens Old Wounds for
Other Mass Shooting Victims



CHICAGO (AP) — Every time there is a mass shooting, Adrian Littlefield relives the one that nearly killed him half a century ago when a sniper perched high in a tower fired down on a Texas college campus. There have been dozens of rampages since then, each one a reminder of how his life was forever changed by a stranger bent on mayhem.

“I still get frightened when those things happen,” said Mr. Littlefield, 70 years old and living in East Texas. “It stirs something inside me, a hurt that just never goes away.”

Survivors of mass shootings like the one in Las Vegas in October that killed 59 say what got them through was leaning on family, friends and counselors.

For Angel Colon, the pain is fresh. He was shot six times last year during the Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando, Florida, and says he is grappling with post-traumatic stress.

“Ambulances, police, even glass, as well, is a trigger. Little specific things, sometimes you forget about, and when you see it, you remember,” Mr. Colon said. That shooting killed 49 people and injured dozens of others.

Recovery took a long dark turn for Austin Eubanks, just 17 when two classmates went on a rampage at Columbine High School. Mr. Eubanks was shot in his hand and knee and watched his best friend die, one of 13 killed in the 1999 attack in Colorado. His physical injuries healed quickly, but he turned to opioid painkillers to dull the psychological pain and spent 11 years fighting addiction.

Ultimately, Mr. Eubanks said he learned that “you have to find the courage to lean into the pain. In order to heal it you have to feel it. You have to know you will come out the other side.”

Mr. Littlefield and his then wife were among 30 people injured in the 1966 clock tower shooting at the University of Texas; 17 people died. He was shot in

the back while trying to protect his wife, who worked on the campus. The bullet just missed his spine but tore through his colon and damaged a major nerve, leaving his left leg partly paralyzed.

Back then, he says, “there was no such thing as counseling for post-traumatic stress. You went on with your life, picked up the pieces, put it back together and made the best of it.”

Mr. Littlefield turned to his family for solace, especially his father, who helped rescue him. Though he was told he would never father children, he has two sons and a second wife he cherishes. He still feels pain, in his back and hip, and walks with a limp, but says, “I’ve had a wonderful life.”

Still, he said the Las Vegas shooting brought that lurking fear back.

“The sounds of gunfire and arriving first responders all remind me of the helplessness that surrounds you at that moment,” he wrote on his Facebook page. To the survivors and grieving loved ones, he added, “I surely feel your pain.”

At an Orlando vigil for the Las Vegas victims, Mr. Colon said his first thought was, “How can we help these families. Because we know what it feels like.”

Before the shooting, Mr. Colon was a dance exercise instructor, now he walks with a cane. He said keeping close to family and friends is helping him heal. So does “staying positive and trying to help out as much as I can and spread all the love that I can.”

Norman Casiano, another 27-year-old Orlando survivor, was hiding in a bathroom stall when the gunman shot him twice through the door. He is on disability and says he still has anxiety. He came to the vigil “to show the support we were shown last year.”

To Las Vegas survivors: “It seems really hard and it seems like there’s no light at the end of this crazy, crazy tunnel that you’re going through right now, but there is,” he said.

Mr. Eubanks emphasized that the emotional fallout spreads far beyond the victims to families, the rescuers and the medical professionals.

“The ripple effects of these are tremendous,” he said.

Now 35, he runs a substance abuse treatment center in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, where fly-fishing and other “healthy pursuits” help him feel whole.

“The most important piece is human connection,” he added. “I’m surrounded by people who know everything about me. I have no problem calling any of them to say, ‘I’m really struggling today.’”

That ripple effect hit Ashley Cech hard. She was a 20-year-old college student taking a final exam on December 14, 2012, when she heard about gunfire at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, where her mother was a librarian, in the town where she grew up.

Yvonne Cech had herded a group of fourth graders into a closet to hide from the shooter, a former student who killed 20 first-graders and six educators before taking his own life. She was not physically hurt but her daughter says the whole family’s life changed that day.

Ashley Cech knew many of those killed, and attended 13 funerals with her mother. Counseling from a trauma specialist who came to Newtown helped her understand her own grief, Ms. Cech said.

Five years later, she said she is still “hyper-aware” in crowds, always looking for an escape route.

The shooting prompted her to switch career goals from teaching to advocacy. She now works with violence survivors at a group that promotes gun safety.

“The part that is so heartbreaking... those people are now going to be going through exactly what our community in Newtown went through,” she said.

Each of these survivors demonstrates the incredible ability of human beings to press on after horror and adversity—often devoting their lives to end such pointless carnage forever.

Yet why such needless violence? Why must random victims go through life maimed, paralyzed and traumatized? Why must they live with permanent emotional scars?

Read the article *Making Sense of an Earth Filled with Violence* at reg.org/realtruth. You CAN understand why such evil persists in the modern age. □

■ **GRIEF:** Mourners attend vigils for victims of the mass shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada.

PHOTOS: MARK RALSTON/AFP/ (TOP); ETHAN MILLER/ (MIDDLE); DREW ANGERER/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES



An aerial photograph showing a flooded neighborhood in Catano, Puerto Rico, after Hurricane Maria. The water is dark and murky, with debris scattered throughout. Several buildings are visible, some with damaged roofs and walls. A white car is partially submerged in the water. The overall scene is one of significant destruction and flooding.

AFTER THE

STORMS

■ **DEADLY SURGE:** An aerial view shows a flooded neighborhood in Catano, Puerto Rico, in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria (Sept. 22, 2017).

PHOTO: RICARDO ARDUENGO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Puerto Rico in Survival Mode Following Maria



The aftermath of the Category 4 hurricane has tested Puerto Rico's national character.

BY NESTOR A. TORO

A WEEK AFTER Hurricane Maria battered Puerto Rico, I texted a close friend who lives in the island's town of Toa Alta.

There I was, a Puerto Rican myself, writing from Mississippi as a middleman between him and an 83-year-old woman, whom he also knows well. In one sense, they were close to each other. She lives only a few miles away from Toa Alta in the town of Bayamon.

Yet, in terms of communication, there was a gaping chasm between them. Her landline was working, but not her cellphone. He could communicate through text, but not make phone calls.

I explained she needed water. His reply was, "OK. The water situation is complicated because they are stealing the potable water trucks."

He added that "it is difficult to find water but we will find a way to take it to her."

That day, he spent from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. standing in line to buy a limited amount of gas.

So was the situation for millions right after Maria. Food: scarce. Power: almost 100 percent gone across the island. Mobility: curfew from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Communication: unreliable at best—if in the right location.

The island's inhabitants have been living on edge since Maria swept through. Their ability to survive as a nation has been put to the test, and so has their ability to learn crucial lessons from this tragedy.

Do It Yourself

Amid the bleak conditions, Puerto Ricans' resilience has shined through. The *Miami Herald* reported:

"Left to fend for themselves a day after Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico and forced them into a primitive existence, San Juaneros took to the streets... to do what they say Caribbean people do best: *Inventar*. Figure it out.

"No electricity? A mustachioed man in a white undershirt played traffic cop at a Santurce intersection. No ambulances? A daughter borrowed her brother's SUV to race her frail mother from the La Perla neighborhood to a hospital. No debris removal? A physician and two neighbors borrowed garden tools to clear main Condado thoroughfares on their own... 'Get busy!' implored Dr. Joseph Campos, a 52-year-old... tree-trimmer in hand as he and his neighbors cut down a tree partially blocking access to a highway. 'Even if all you can do is pick up a single, little branch. I'm not eating, and I'm healthy, and I'm

■ **OUT TO DRY:** Top, a man hangs laundry as people wait for the electrical grid to be repaired in Progreso Barrio Pulguillas, Puerto Rico, after Hurricane Maria passed through (Sept. 24, 2017).

PHOTO: JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

working. You don't have to sit home stress-eating.”

The recovery in the first week after the storm was also mostly a do-it-yourself affair.

In the central town of Morovis, Manolo Gonzalez built a makeshift raft out of a plastic pallet buoyed by soda bottles to help neighbors ferry food, gasoline and other basic supplies across a river where the bridge was destroyed.

Someone had already strung a cable over the 100-yard stretch of river so people could hold on as they crossed in search of supplies.

“There's no food over there,” Mr. Gonzalez said. “We have to help each other because that's all we have.”

Elsewhere, the sentiment was the same. “There is a tradition here of people helping each other, especially during disasters,” Doris Anglero said as she looked for what was available in an Old San Juan supermarket.

Some disappointed shoppers were sharply aware that others have it worse. Mercedes Caro wept as she talked about her four grandchildren in Rincon, the western town that has been largely cut off from aid shipments as well as contact with the outside world. “Not knowing is so hard,” she said, turning to walk off.

“Mixed Feelings”

With power out for almost the entire island, families were anxious to move

out elderly and other vulnerable relatives.

Leaving, though, was a challenge. Just a few commercial flights were departing at first from the capital city of San Juan.

Yadira Perez Marcano was one of the few to snare a seat on the solitary Delta flight to New York City's Kennedy Airport on September 26.

Passengers cheered when the plane landed, but Perez Marcano, whose apartment building in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, shook violently through the storm, said she had “mixed feelings” about leaving the destruction behind for the comfort of a sister's home.

“I left back my family, friends and co-workers. And I'm here. They don't have water. They don't have lights. They don't have so many things they need, and that makes me really sad,” she said, starting to cry.

Maciel Garcia-Tilen of Miami said her elderly parents in Mayaguez, on the island's west coast, told her over a borrowed cellphone that they had water and food for only another week. Ms. Garcia-Tilen said she wants to fly to San Juan as soon as possible to take supplies to the island and then fly her parents back to Florida.

Miguel Besosa, a retired truck driver in Hartford, Connecticut, has not been able to speak with his wife who

was visiting her cancer-stricken sister in Ponce, on the island's south coast, when the hurricane hit. He learned that she survived from a relative who found a working payphone, but he worries it will take weeks for her to find an available flight.

“At least they are alive,” said Mr. Besosa. “They are suffering a lot.”

Reality of Life

For Puerto Ricans, hurricanes are as a reality of life as tornadoes in the central U.S., ice storms in the Northeast, earthquakes in Mexico, or volcanoes in Indonesia.

Maria is just the latest one. Back in 1989, I lived through Hurricane Hugo. It left us without electricity or water for a while, and I remember having to go to the river to obtain water. Between 1899 and 1929, four major hurricanes wreaked havoc on the population and economy. For example, Hurricane San Ciriaco in 1899 killed 3,000 people.

Each time, many Puerto Ricans have had to “start from scratch.” Some choose to leave the island and do so by saying no more to “hurricane alley.” Others stay back. Either way, they often must start anew, learn lessons, and hope life is stable again before another disaster strikes.

*Please see **MARIA**, page 29*

■ **BASIC ESSENTIALS:** Left, a man sits and waits in line for gas during the aftermath of Hurricane Maria (Sept. 26, 2017). Right, a woman collects water from a natural spring created by landslides near San Juan, Puerto Rico (Sept. 24, 2017).

PHOTOS: JOE RAEDLE/ (LEFT); RICARDO ARDUENGO/AFP (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES





Floods, Fires, Other Disasters Stress State Budgets

ATLANTA (AP) — A summer of natural catastrophes, from epic hurricanes to scorching wildfires, has exposed another peril in disaster-prone states: How to pay for the rescues, repairs and rebuilding.

The combined tab from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma is expected to hit \$200 billion or more. While the federal government is expected to pay most of that, the affected state and local governments have to start paying for recovery now and eventually could be on the hook for tens of millions of dollars or more.

States vary on how prepared they are to weather such costs. Florida and South Carolina, both hit by Hurricane Irma, are among the dozen or so states that do not have dedicated disaster funds and opt to cover the expenses after the fact, potentially by dipping into reserves or shifting money from other state agencies.

Experts say such pay-as-you-go disaster funding can be risky. Add an economic downturn when reserves are

low and budgets are tight, and state and local officials could easily find themselves struggling to pay for recovery and rebuilding.

Even putting money into a dedicated disaster fund may not be enough.

In Montana, where wildfires raged across the state this summer, threatening hundreds of homes and destroying a historic lodge in Glacier National Park, the firefighting costs so far have exceeded the amount set aside in a special disaster fund by \$20 million.

“It took us all by surprise,” state Representative Nancy Ballance said.

All but a handful of states maintain so-called rainy day accounts, but in most cases “rainy day” is a misnomer: The money is typically used to get through economic downturns rather than responding to natural disasters. States tapped, and in many cases depleted, their rainy day funds to avoid massive cuts and maintain critical services after tax revenue plummeted during the recession.

Several states have struggled to rebuild their savings since then because tax revenue has not rebounded enough to provide a cushion. In all, 33 states

■ **AFTERMATH:** A car stands abandoned as part of heavy damage that occurred in Rockport, Texas, when Hurricane Harvey slammed into the Texas coast (Aug. 26, 2017).

PHOTO: MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

reported tax revenue coming in below forecast last year.

New Jersey’s rainy day fund has been empty since 2009. Pennsylvania’s is so small it would barely fund government operations for two hours, according to a recent study by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Texas, hit hard by Hurricane Harvey, has the largest rainy day fund of any state—\$10 billion—but state officials are keeping that as a last resort. Governor Greg Abbott has said he wants to consider what other funding might be available first. That could include tapping into money already allocated to state agencies.

Others in Texas, including Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, have advocated for tapping into reserves now.

“If this isn’t a rainy day, I don’t know what is,” Mr. Patrick said.

Georgia is one of the states better prepared financially to handle the

unexpected costs of a disaster. It has a dedicated emergency fund with roughly \$20 million available annually and a rainy day fund with approximately \$2.4 billion, said state Representative Terry England.

“Thankfully, our economy is in pretty good shape right now,” said Mr. England, who is chairman of the House budget committee in Georgia, where all 159 counties reported damage from Hurricane Irma. “If this had hit in 2010 or 2011, it might have been a little bit different.”

In addition to budget reserves, 28 states have established special funds to help residents and businesses after a disaster. The downside: Several are not currently funded, according to the National Emergency Management Association.

California is among the states with a dedicated disaster fund—for fighting wildfires—but already has burned through more than half the \$427 million it set aside this year. Even if that fund runs dry, however, the state will tap other sources, said H.D. Palmer, spokesman for the state Department of Finance.

“There has never been a situation when the state’s finances would be an impediment to deploying crews and

materials to knock down a fire as soon as possible to save lives and property,” he said.

Montana’s wildfire season has left lawmakers there facing difficult decisions.

The state typically keeps between \$50 million and \$100 million on hand for wildfire costs. This year, after a relatively wet winter and facing an estimate of lower than expected tax revenue, lawmakers authorized the governor to use some of that money to help fill a budget gap—leaving about \$30 million in the fund.

Then disaster struck in the form of several large wildfires, which the state estimates have burned about 10 times as much land as last year’s fires. So far, the state has spent roughly \$58 million on fire suppression since the beginning of July.

“We thought we would be OK with fires,” said Ms. Ballance, chairwoman of the House budget committee, “so we took the money to use in other ways.”

With tax revenue down, the state has depleted its reserves and emergency funds. The governor has asked state agencies to prepare for 10 percent cuts to fill a projected \$227 million budget shortfall.

While the federal government spends tens of billions to help communities recover, the assistance is not guaranteed and the amounts generally cover only a share of the recovery costs—up to 75 percent.

The federal share also might be changing.

President Donald Trump’s budget proposal calls for cutting billions of dollars from agencies involved in disaster management. At the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Mr. Trump has proposed cutting the disaster relief budget by \$667 million, targeting grants that help state and local governments prepare for natural disasters.

In addition, FEMA is considering a change to how it reimburses states for disaster costs. It would require them to pay a predetermined amount before the federal government would provide money to repair or replace damaged infrastructure.

The main challenge, experts say, is for state and local officials to set aside money ahead of time.

“It’s very difficult for elected officials to pay attention to disaster funding when the sun is shining and the sky is blue,” said Trina Sheets, executive director of the National Emergency Management Association. □

■ **DOWNED:** A tree blocks a road after it was toppled by winds from Hurricane Irma in Miami, Florida (Sept. 11, 2017).
PHOTO: JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES



LEAVING HOME IN A FIRE ZONE

and Fearing It's a Final Goodbye



During the height of California's wildfires—which left destruction and death in their wakes—an *Associated Press* reporter offered a first-person view on what it was like to leave everything behind.

NEIGHBORS AND strangers huddle along streets under siege by wildfires. We fix our worried stares on ridges encircling us, at billowing smoke and hope we don't see the glow of flames.

In the path of one of California's deadliest blazes, talk is of wind direction, evacuations and goodbyes.

Each time I turn the key to lock my front door, I think I might be

leaving home for the last time. I've covered my share of stories about people fleeing catastrophes, but I'm living the life of a fire evacuee for the first time.

"Take care, sweetie," one woman said in my community on the edge of the small, rural, wine-centric city of Sonoma, hugging me through my car window on one of three consecutive nights we fled an approaching blaze.

On that Tuesday night, October 10, flames arced like solar flares on the ridges above sprawling old oaks and

tall redwoods. The trees conceal the wooden former cottages from Boyes Hot Springs' days as a resort destination for wealthy San Franciscans looking to soak away their aches in the hot springs.

Now, it's a tinder-dry working- and middle-class community on edge.

Another neighbor climbed onto his roof with a garden hose, training water first on his house, then surrounding ones. Another neighbor vowed to stay, envisioning taking a stand against any looters.



With the ever-present stench of smoke, discussion that night on the street focused on the direction of the wind and advancing fires.

“Northeast,” one man said. I didn’t understand the subtleties but knew winds from the north were bad.

“Northwest,” a woman next to him angrily corrected, glaring at him in darkness brought on by a loss of electricity.

“Northeast,” he insisted, and we all lapsed back into our silent sentry of the ridgetops.

Not everyone in Northern California had the ability to watch the fire grow when so-called Diablo

winds whipped up the wildfires late Sunday. In the first hours, dry tempests toppled oaks onto roads, ripped loose power lines and drove deadly embers ahead for miles.

Many of the more than two dozen people killed so far died in those first hours as wildfires reduced whole blocks of houses to ankle-high ruins with little or no warning.

At 3:30 a.m. Monday, smoke was so strong that I awoke thinking my house was on fire. With electricity already gone, it shocked me how long it took to gather contact lenses, shoes and other essentials I scattered when I had returned to California a few hours earlier from a cousin’s wedding in Oklahoma.

For two sleepless days, I drove around with my dog, John, in the backseat in case fire overtook my home while I was reporting on the destruction.

The death toll climbed. The number of houses destroyed grew into the thousands. And two dozen fires kept advancing at the whim of the winds.

My canine companion lost hope he was on an extra-long trip to the dog park and grew steadily depressed, slumping on the seat. Many others had their dogs in tow, their heads sticking out car windows as firetrucks sped past and mountains burned.

With my suitcase still packed from the wedding, I had a go-bag with me, although the knee-length dresses and heels were unsuitable evacuee wear.

Hundreds of police officers and then National Guard members poured into fire zones, helping evacuate residents and block people from returning to burning and scorched areas.

My press pass got me past roadblocks. Highways and farm lanes were blackened for miles on both sides. With familiar buildings and landmarks gone, whole stretches of road were unrecognizable.

I came across former volunteer firefighters defending their houses from relentless flames that advanced

at first from one ridge, then another, then another. The popping of propane tanks in the area punctuated conversations.

People clustered at barricades that blocked them from their homes. Some pleaded with lawmen to pass. Others numbly accepted it.

I encountered people on foot where it seemed unwise to be.

A woman with a duffel bag hanging from each shoulder stood alone on a highway, the only pedestrian for miles in a burning area.

“What should I do?” she asked.

She had been told the fire was coming, that her house would surely burn. It wouldn’t burn, would it? she asked, seeking reassurance. She didn’t want to go to Sonoma, where I was heading, so she thanked me and stayed behind.

I gave a lift to a San Francisco man who had left his car and set out on foot to check the fate of a vacation rental property. He celebrated to see it unburned but returned to the car grumbling about how messy the vacationers had left it when they fled.

I returned home Wednesday morning and relished a rare normal moment walking my dog, only to have the mood dampen when I realized ash was raining down.

Later that morning in Napa, the namesake city of the neighboring wine-making area, smoke blinded a driver as he rolled down a window exiting a freeway and rear-ended my gray Prius.

Driving back home with the left rear lights and back frame of my car now askew, the radio station I was listening to had a news reporter breathlessly broadcasting from my block. Never a good sign.

Ash pelted my windshield and officers encouraged us to go.

I picked up my tortoise shell cat, Jumpy, and sadly freed two chickens to their fate in my backyard before turning the key in the lock one more time.

Tree limbs started swaying gently as the wind rose and I drove away, hoping it wasn’t the final goodbye. □

■ **REDUCED TO ASHES:** A man hugs his daughter as they visit the site of their home destroyed by fires in Kenwood, California (Oct. 10, 2017).

PHOTO: AP/JEFF CHIU





STUCK in the SAND

Will the U.S. Ever Get Out of Afghanistan?

It is America's longest war. And the United States does not appear to be leaving the Middle East nation anytime soon.

WHAT DRAGGED America into a 16-year war in Afghanistan? Most point to 9/11, when al-Qaida wreaked havoc with hijacked commercial jets.

Yet events 48 hours earlier tell a different story.

On September 9, 2001, Afghan General Ahmad Shah Massoud sat on a couch alongside his translator. They were in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley, preparing for an interview with a Moroccan reporter and cameraman.

The 49-year-old political and military leader successfully held off the Soviet Union decades earlier. For his efforts, he was named minister of defense in the newly formed Afghan government and fought to defend the nation from warring factions.

By the time the Taliban rose and began swallowing up Afghan territory in the mid-90s, General Massoud and his Northern Alliance were a significant force that stood in their way.

As the interview began, the translator asked the reporter what questions would be included. The response: "Why are you against Osama bin Laden?" and "Why do you call him a killer?"

Before the translator could interpret the first question, the cameraman detonated a bomb inside his camera and the reporter detonated explosives strapped around his waist, killing Massoud.

The fake reporter and cameraman were al-Qaida operatives.

On September 10, al-Qaida and Taliban-led forces attacked the Northern Alliance. The day after, an emboldened al-Qaida attacked New York.

Bin Laden, al-Qaida leader and mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks, is said to have ordered the assassination of Massoud as a favor to the Taliban. The terror leader sought refuge in Afghanistan for himself and his al-Qaida forces and military training camps.

For this reason, America focused on Afghanistan at the start of the Bush administration's "war on terror."

■ **ENDLESS CONFLICT:** A U.S. Army helicopter flies outside of Camp Shorab on a flight to Camp Post in Afghanistan (Sept. 11, 2017).

PHOTO: ANDREW RENNEISEN/GETTY IMAGES

After the Taliban refused to turn over bin Laden after September 11, the world's most powerful military hit Afghanistan hard. After just two months, U.S. special forces who had teamed with the Northern Alliance toppled the Taliban government, drove al-Qaida into the mountains, and began reestablishing the Afghan government.

Yet nearly 16 years later—and counting—the Pentagon is preparing to send *more* soldiers into what remains one of the poorest, most corrupt nations on the planet. The Afghan government is losing its grip on the nation, the Taliban remains strong, and al-Qaida, long out of the world spotlight, is making a comeback.

The United States is facing a reality familiar to the Soviets and other world powers who tried—and failed—to control Afghanistan.

How is it that the U.S. is *still* stuck in Afghanistan? Even more, can America avoid becoming the next casualty to be buried in a region known as the “graveyard of empires”?

How Did We Get Here?

Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union have all learned why *CNN* called Afghanistan a nation with “a reputation for undoing ambitious military ventures and humiliating would-be conquerors.”

“It’s a hard place to fight, to conquer and rule,” Patrick Porter, a lecturer in defense studies at the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Kings College London, told the news outlet.

“The geography is very hard: It is a country of mountains and deserts, of quite severe winters and that makes it difficult not only to fight in, but also to operate logistically. It limits your mobility and it is difficult to project power,” Dr. Porter said.

The Soviets were bogged down in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. The Afghan mujahedeen used guerilla warfare tactics to face down and ultimately defeat the powerful Russian army.

After the Soviets were dispelled, the Afghans understood they defeated a global military power. When the

Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the victors were further emboldened.

In 1994, the Taliban emerged and began seizing power and territory from various mujahedeen leaders. By 1996, the Sunni Islamic fundamentalist political group captured the Afghan capital of Kabul and set up a de facto government. It eventually held power over nearly three-quarters of the country. Meanwhile, tribal warfare in Afghanistan turned into a bloody civil war from the mid-1990s to 2001.

This is the turmoil into which America entered following 9/11.

“The Afghan government is losing its grip on the nation, the Taliban remains strong, and al-Qaida, long out of the world spotlight, is making a comeback. The United States is facing a reality familiar to the Soviets and other world powers who tried—and failed—to control Afghanistan.”

Along with going after al-Qaida and defeating the Taliban, U.S. President George W. Bush’s “war on terror” sought to establish stability in Afghanistan. Yet America’s goal to install democratic institutions in a tribal and terroristic environment proved elusive, particularly after U.S. forces also

focused their military and “democracy building” resources in Iraq.

After being voted into office by a war-weary citizenry, President Barack Obama attempted to breathe life into the flagging war with his 2009 decision to increase troop levels. Calling the conflict in Afghanistan “the good war,” the president sought to protect the Afghan population from continued Taliban attacks and help reintegrate insurgents into Afghan society.

Mr. Obama coupled his troop surge announcement with a public declaration to withdraw U.S. forces beginning in 2011, which some saw as a grave tactical mistake. Critics thought the move communicated to the Afghan people that America’s protection was limited, both in time and substance. To the Taliban, it said, “Hold on until we leave.”

As has happened to nations repeatedly over the centuries, renewed efforts by America to control Afghanistan ultimately failed. The U.S.-supported Afghan military and police forces were unable to hold off the Taliban and, by the time the mission in Afghanistan formally ended in December 2014, the 13-year war was the longest fought by the United States.

As the U.S. began pulling out, the Taliban strengthened and the Islamic State terror group, which officially formed in 2014, gained a foothold in the nation.

Following the official end of combat operations, NATO planned on maintaining 13,000 troops in Afghanistan, including 9,800 Americans, in an advisory and counterterrorism capacity. U.S. troop levels were to be cut in half by the end of 2015 and all forces, with the exception of those needed for the embassy, would be withdrawn by the end of 2016.

Current State

A 2016 report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction revealed that the Afghan government lost control of nearly 5 percent of its territory to the Taliban since the beginning of 2015. The report also

showed that the area under the Afghan government's "control or influence" decreased to 65.6 percent by the end of May 2016, from 70.5 percent in 2015. It amounted to a loss of 19 of the country's approximately 400 governing districts.

The numbers are trending worse. According to the U.S. Forces Afghanistan, only 59.7 percent of the country's 407 districts remain under Afghan government control or influence as of February 2017. This represents almost an 11 percent decrease from the same time last year.

ISIS has joined forces with the Taliban in certain instances to attack the established Afghan government and help gain more territory. The relationship between ISIS and the Taliban has been described as "complex"—sometimes they fight together, other times against each other.

But when ISIS and the Taliban cooperate, they are a formidable force.

"One of the things we are concerned about here in Afghanistan, the reason we think that the entire world needs to be focused on Afghanistan, is the potential for convergence among the various groups in this area," said General John W. Nicholson Jr., commander of NATO and American forces in Afghanistan (*The New York Times*).

It is natural for Americans to wonder why this is happening. Why is government control going in the wrong direction? After nearly 16 years devoted to this nation—and its people—what is going wrong?

Next Steps

In July, President Donald Trump, the third president to try and bring stability to Afghanistan, expressed frustration with the U.S. strategy.

"We aren't winning," he said, according to senior administration officials (*NBC News*). Some of Mr. Trump's advisors were advocating for a very limited U.S. role in the war, while others recommended several thousand additional troops.

In August, the president unveiled his new Afghanistan strategy during a primetime address to the nation. In his

speech, he said he would "shift away from a 'time-based' approach, instead linking [U.S.] assistance to results and to cooperation from the beleaguered Afghan government, Pakistan and others" (*Tampa Bay Times*).

"America will work with the Afghan government as long as we see determination and progress," Mr. Trump said. "However, our commitment is not unlimited, and our support is not a blank check."

The president stressed a "'regional' strategy that addressed the roles played by other South Asian nations—especially Pakistan's harboring of elements of the Taliban" (*ibid.*).

While Mr. Trump pledged that the U.S. would crush al-Qaida and obliterate ISIS, he notably did not include defeating the Taliban. Despite the hostile relationship, the president said that lasting peace in Afghanistan may require cooperation with the powerful group.

"Someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban in Afghanistan," Mr. Trump said. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson added later that the U.S. would support peace talks with the Taliban "without preconditions."

Though purposely vague on troop levels, the president hinted at agreeing to a Pentagon recommendation of sending an additional 4,000 U.S. troops to support the 8,400 already in the region.

Despite the increase, these numbers are significantly lower than the roughly 100,000 troops in Afghanistan under the Obama administration, which failed to gain control of the situation. The more recent focus on advising and training Afghan forces and on counterterror operations is not expected to dramatically change under the current White House plan.

President Trump asked the American people for time for his policy to take hold. Underlying his message was an unstated appeal to stay calm and objectively assess the

war. After 16 years, the need for more time and objective analysis is hard for some to take.

"Hold the Line"

In a region where empires have gone to fail, the *best* the U.S. may be able to do is *hold* crucial, populous and strategically important areas. The remainder of Afghanistan may have to endure as a "no man's land," aka tribal insurgent territory. After many years of lost lives, limbs, and taxpayer funds, America may not have much of a choice. The most powerful nation in the world has its own problems and being engrossed in a never-ending war is not helping.

Following the release of the president's plan, U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis addressed a few dozen American troops in the Middle East. His speech appears to echo the harsh reality of the current state of America and how it should proceed in Afghanistan.

"For those of you I haven't met, my name's Mattis," he began. "Thanks for being out here, OK? I know at times you wonder if any of us know...but believe me, I know you're far from home every one of you, I know you could all be going to college you young people, or you could be back on the block."

"The only way this great big experiment you and I call America is gonna survive is if we've got tough hombres like you."

"You're a great example for our country right now. It's got some problems—you know it and I know it. It's got problems that we don't have in the military. And you just hold the line, my fine young soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines. You just hold the line until our country gets back to understanding and respecting each other and showing it, of being friendly to one another. That's what Americans owe to one another..."

These motivational words describe both the military strategy—and the tenuous nature of American society.

Sixteen years into the "war on terror," or the "good war," Mr. Mattis' words must be tempered with the reality on the ground. For America, holding the line after 16 years may be a viable military strategy—but at what cost? □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

way before Me [Christ]: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the MESSENGER of the covenant, whom you delight in..."

Christ is the "MESSENGER" of the gospel—not the message itself.

Now compare the passage in Malachi with another: "The law and the prophets were until John [the Baptist—only Old Testament scriptures had been preached previously]: *since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man [who chooses] presses into it*" (Luke 16:16). Remember that in Mark, Jesus preached the Kingdom of God and called it *the gospel*.

The word *gospel* comes from the Old English term "god-spell" or *good news*. The word *kingdom* also derives from an Old English term that simply means "government." Therefore, it is accurate to say Christ preached "the good news of the government of God." You can know the *who, what, where, when, why* and *how* of this good news, and how it relates to the Bible's very greatest prophecy.

The Kingdom of God is the dominant theme of not only the New Testament, but also of the whole Bible. Incredibly, most know little or nothing of it. This world's ministers are oblivious to this gospel, and never preach about it. Therefore, virtually the whole world stands in complete ignorance of the single greatest truth in God's Word!

All God's Prophets Preached the Kingdom

The book of Acts contains an extraordinary statement from the apostle Peter. Let's read it: "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the *presence of the Lord*. And He shall send *Jesus Christ*, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of *restitution* [or restoring] of *all things*, which

God has spoken by the mouth of *all His holy prophets since the world began*" (3:19-21).

Notice that Peter refers to the coming of Christ (vs. 19) as "the presence of the Lord," meaning He will be back on Earth. Verse 20 states that God "shall send Jesus Christ." Verse 21 describes God's Kingdom as the "restitution of all things." Peter stated that this "restitution" (Christ establishing His Kingdom) is something "God has spoken by the mouth of *all His holy prophets since the world began*" (vs. 21).

"The word *gospel* comes from the Old English term 'god-spell' or *good news*. The word *kingdom* also derives from an Old English term that simply means 'government.' Therefore, it is accurate to say Christ preached 'the good news of the government of God.'"

This is a stunning statement! But is it true?

Did God actually use *all* of His prophets to announce His Kingdom? Bible scholars and religionists ignore this knowledge—and even reject it without examination.

Let's review just a few examples. In fact, let's start with the period before the Flood. The apostle Jude, Jesus' brother, stated, "Enoch [Noah's great-grandfather]...prophesied...

saying, Behold, *the Lord comes* with ten thousands of His saints, to *execute judgment upon all...*" (vs. 14-15). These verses clearly refer to Christ establishing a world-ruling *government*.

The Bible calls Enoch a "preacher of righteousness" (II Pet. 2:5). Including Abel, there were *six other men* who previously held this role, with their lives spanning the entire period between Adam and the Flood.

All of them spoke the same message. Remember, Peter said, "since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

Is there evidence the gospel was preached in the period *following* the Flood?

In Genesis 12:3, God said to Abraham, "...in you shall *all families* of the earth be blessed." This verse is also referenced in Galatians 3:8, but is phrased a little differently: "...In you shall *all nations* be blessed." This verse also states that the gospel was "preached...unto Abraham." This is fascinating understanding! Not only did Abraham have the gospel preached to him (probably by Melchizedek), but it is also preached in *Genesis* through the writings of *Moses*! Ask: how could *all* nations be blessed unless Christ establishes His government *on Earth*—where the nations are?

Moses was the first man God raised up to lead ancient Israel. As both a prophet and judge, he preached the gospel to Israel in the wilderness.

Acts 3:24 references Samuel, also a prophet, as having preached the gospel. Notice: "*All the prophets from Samuel* and those that follow after, *as many as have spoken*, have likewise foretold of these days."

These are powerful statements that cannot be glossed over. This verse says, "All God's prophets...as many as have spoken...foretold of these days!"

King David preached the Kingdom of God! He recorded, "...for You [God] shall *judge* the people righteously, and *govern* the nations upon earth" (Psa. 67:4). This obviously refers to God's coming supergovernment. Nations are on Earth, not in heaven!

Major and Minor Prophets

Notice what the prophet Isaiah wrote: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the *government* shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His *government* and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon *his kingdom*, to order it, and to establish it with *judgment* and with *justice* from henceforth even *forever*” (9:6-7).

This prophecy is so obvious it needs no explanation!

Now the prophet Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch, and *a King shall reign* and prosper, and shall execute *judgment* and *justice* in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely [neither of these are happening now]: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:5-6).

These verses also need no explanation.

Ezekiel wrote this of Israel’s descendants alive today: “For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and

will bring you into your own land” (36:24).

The next 10 verses describe a period of rebuilding and national prosperity that can only happen *after* Christ’s Return. They are unmistakably clear.

Did the prophet Daniel preach the Kingdom of God? The Bible answers: “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a *kingdom*, which shall never be destroyed: and the *kingdom* shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms [of men], and it shall stand forever” (2:44).

All the so-called minor prophets also recorded the gospel of the Kingdom of God in one way or another.

God’s Servants Preached the Same Message

Remember, the phrase “the gospel of the kingdom of God” is not the only proper way of describing this coming government!

Peter wrote: “God *has* spoken by the mouth of *all* His holy prophets since the world began” until the “res-titution of all things” (Acts 3:21).

An important point from this verse. It says, “*God has spoken...*” The gospel of the Kingdom of God is a

message *from God*. It should be clear that *God speaks* through whatever kind of servant He is using—prophet, patriarch, judge, deacon, preacher of righteousness, king, apostle or pastor!

His servants always spoke the *same message!*

The word *gospel* is found over 100 times in the Bible. Sometimes it is found alone, and sometimes “of the kingdom” follows it. Other times, it includes “of the kingdom *of God*,” or the equivalent phrase “of the kingdom *of heaven*.”

Note that it says “*of heaven*,” not “*in heaven*.” It is heaven’s Kingdom, and there is a big difference between the two. Just as Kingdom *of* God means God’s Kingdom—not the Kingdom *in* God—the same is true of the Kingdom *of* heaven or *heaven’s Kingdom*.

Grasp this crucial point!

Throughout the New Testament, the word “kingdom” is found 27 times, “kingdom of God” 75 times, and “kingdom of heaven” 34 times. All are clearly one and the same.

What Paul Preached

Paul preached the Kingdom of God to the gentiles. Yet some believe he preached to them a “different” gospel—again, unaware that it was Paul

MARIA

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This reality has ingrained them with a unique dose of optimism, and the ability to jump into “survival mode.”

“We can live without power, but without water it’s harder,” 67-year-old Luis Torres told the *Miami Herald* after the storm. “If it rains today, I’m going to shower in it.”

The newspaper asked, “So why stay? Why insist on rebuilding? Torres pointed to the crashing ocean waves. “This is the best place to live in the world...”

Living on a beautiful Caribbean island comes at a price—hurricanes come with the territory.

Therese Casper is an example of someone who quickly learned that. She and her husband had moved to Puerto Rico from Denver, Colorado, only a few weeks before Hurricane Maria. Ever since the storm knocked out their power, the couple has been getting by in their dark, sweltering apartment on instant oatmeal and anything else they can cook on a propane stove as they wait for a flight back home.

“I tell my husband it’s like camping. It’s ‘Survivor’ Puerto Rico,” Mrs. Casper said. “It’s not what we bargained for.”

Yet hurricanes and other natural disasters have a way to wisen the survivors, if they allow it.

Some people do not learn much from their suffering, or that of others. They lament and complain about their losses, or resort to selfish acts such as stealing an entire water truck.

Others are grateful to have come out alive. They recognize that they were spared from sudden death. They take it in stride, seek to learn the lessons behind it, and move on.

I am privileged to know several people in Puerto Rico who think and feel the latter.

Though you may never live through a Hurricane Maria, you can still learn from your difficult times as well. To learn how, read the article *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* at rcg.org/wdgas. □

who pronounced a curse on anyone who did this. However, he did not neglect the subject of Christ's role in the salvation process.

First, Acts 19:8 establishes which gospel he preached: "And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the *kingdom of God*." In many of his epistles, Paul taught the Kingdom to gentile congregations. His message was always the same. He continually preached, taught and referred to the *Kingdom of God*.

He wrote, "I have gone preaching the *kingdom of God*...repentance toward God, AND *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 20:25, 21). He preached the same gospel to both Jew and gentile.

Finally, let's read this last recorded picture of Paul's life: "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, AND *teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*..." (28:30-31).

Luke, who was the writer of Acts, differentiates between preaching about the Kingdom of God and preaching about Jesus Christ! While both are vitally important, they are clearly two *separate* subjects!

The deacon Philip also preached both in Acts: "But when they believed Philip...concerning the kingdom of God, AND the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (8:12). Philip differentiated between the Kingdom of God and Christ. Remember, the messenger is not the message.

Notice that those in Samaria were baptized only after "they believed" the right message—not some human idea about it. Also, Jesus' name was taught as an all-important, but *additional*, understanding.

Jesus is *not* the gospel. However, He does stand directly *alongside* the true gospel and, as Head of God's Kingdom on Earth under the Father, *will* rule the entire Earth—with the saints beside Him!—after He returns to establish it.

Do not lose sight of this!

The apostle Paul further distinguishes between the *gospel* and the *person* of Christ in this powerful warning: "For if he that comes preaches *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached...or *another gospel*, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him" (II Cor. 11:4). Paul wanted the Corinthians to reject false teachers and hold to what *he* had taught them. The point here is Paul distinguishes between the teaching of a *false Jesus* and that of a *false gospel*. These are—and always have been—separate errors.

Some get confused when reading I Corinthians 15:1-4, thinking Paul contradicts himself by stating that "the gospel...[is] how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day." Careful reading makes clear "the gospel" reference in verse 1 is not connected to Christ's death for our sins and His burial, referenced in verses 3 and 4. When correctly understood, rather than saying Jesus is the gospel—which would contradict all other passages on the subject—this passage confirms the opposite, and supports all the scriptures we have covered.

Since Jesus preached "repent and believe the gospel," it should now be clear why. His role must always be preached alongside the Kingdom of God. One cannot enter the Kingdom unless he understands and accepts that "Christ died for our sins"—and that person has *repented* of his sins.

What evidence is there that other New Testament writers preached the same message? A great deal!

All the Apostles Preached This Same Gospel

The apostle Peter also preached the Kingdom of God: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the *everlasting kingdom* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:11). So did the apostle James: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the *king-*

dom which He has promised to them that love Him?" (2:5).

Matthew's account mentions the phrase "gospel of the kingdom" three times. Notice one: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the *gospel of the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (9:35). In most of His parables, Jesus taught the basics of the Kingdom of God. Matthew alone makes over 50 references to it.

Luke records what Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples to preach: "Then He called His twelve disciples together...And He sent them to preach the *kingdom of God*..." (9:1-2). Soon after, He sent 70 others to preach, and they also carried the message of the "kingdom of God" (10:1, 9).

Being Preached Today

In the Matthew 24 and 25 Olivet Prophecy, Jesus was asked about the events that would be the signs of His return and of "the end of the world [age]" (24:3). He foretold certain trends and conditions that would occur first. In verse 14, He also stated, "This *gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the *end* come."

Preaching the truth of the gospel to the world was restored by Herbert W. Armstrong beginning in 1934. God used this man to reach hundreds of millions with this message throughout a 52-year ministry that ended with his death in 1986. Mr. Armstrong taught me the true gospel and trained me to be able to take this same message to the world.

Make no mistake! Jesus Christ *will* soon return to Earth and establish His Kingdom. It will ultimately reign over the *entire* Earth—ALL nations—and the resurrected saints—those who have qualified to rule with Christ—shall share this reign with Him.

In just this brief Personal, you have learned more about the true gospel of the Bible than most have ever known.

Take time to read *Which Is the True Gospel?* at rcg.org/wittg. You will be left with no doubt. □

UGANDA

Continued from page 13

Mr. Museveni further expressed his desire that refugee children “get quality education because it would help them acquire new skills and regain the lost time during the fleeing.”

Yet this admirable solution comes with a hefty price tag, and the nation is being stretched to its limit because of the many benefits it is attempting to provide Sudanese refugees.

The Ugandan infrastructure is collapsing from the constant inflow of people. The largest settlement in Uganda, Bidi Bidi, is no longer able to receive those seeking asylum. With nearly 270,000 refugees located in that one settlement, availability of food, water and medical attention is thinning.

According to a statement by UN officials, children make up 62 percent of the total refugee population. *Reuters* reported that more than 100 children cross Uganda’s borders without a parent or guardian each day, totaling close to 9,000 unaccompanied minors. Providing education for youth is becoming increasingly difficult. Classrooms are overflowing and teachers are unable to keep up with the growing daily demands.

With the increasing number of youth among the refugee population comes another issue—early marriage. Noah Gottschalk, an Oxfam representative, said in an interview with *NPR*: “There is a rising problem of early marriage in the settlements. As people are finding that they have no other options to provide for themselves or their families, then to marry off their daughters for the bride price that they receive. When those girls get married,

they’re not in school anymore. And that really deprives South Sudan of an entire generation of young people.”

Uganda’s infrastructure—roads, dams, railways and oil pipelines—is also ailing as a result of the crisis. Proposed infrastructure improve-

ments for the coming years would cost billions of dollars, which would force the nation to rely on loans from other nations and only further hinder its ability to provide for refugees.

“All these projects have one thing in common: they depend on borrowed money, mainly from China,” *The Guardian* reported. “The infrastructure boom has increased Uganda’s exposure to debt and there are fears the country could be headed for a financial crisis.”

The refugee crisis has created an impossible situation for the African nation. It either collapses from insufficient infrastructure or suffers trying to repair and improve it. Despite the noble intentions of the Ugandan government in trying to help surrounding nations, its actions are inadvertently burdening the nation’s economy.

Across the globe, nations struggle with what to do with displaced individuals and families. Nations *want* to help those in war-torn or disaster-damaged areas. However, as is the case in Uganda, attempting to solve the refugee problem always brings about *further* problems—it always brings

about more bad news.

What everyone wants is good news.

Unknown to many, the Bible term “gospel” means just that, *good news*. However, this is not just theological jargon or some feel-good idea. And the true meaning of this word is *not* what people think.

Rather, the gospel involves global solutions to mankind’s worst problems such as war, famine and disease. Read this issue’s Personal “Good News—Just Ahead!” to learn how the gospel will affect everyone on Earth—and soon! □



■ HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: Refugees from South Sudan wait to receive treatment at a health center in the Bidi Bidi camp in Uganda (April 14, 2017).

PHOTO: ISAAC KASAMANI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“The refugee crisis has created an impossible situation for the African nation. It either collapses from insufficient infrastructure or suffers trying to repair and improve it.”

EUROPE

Homelessness on the Rise in the UK

Homelessness in every form has dramatically increased in recent years, costing the United Kingdom's public sector in excess of \$1.6 billion per year, a report from the nation's government said.

Figures from the National Audit Office show that an estimated 4,134 were forced to sleep outside during the average autumn night in 2016—up 16 percent over the previous year.

One reason for the growing problem is rising rent costs. Citing a report from the charity Shelter, *The Guardian* wrote: “More than a million households living in private rented accommodation are at risk of becoming homeless by 2020 because of rising rents, benefit freezes and a lack of social housing...”

On top of sleeping on the streets, the number of those in other homeless situations is also growing. The charity Crisis reported that among British households in 2016:

- 68,300 were sofa surfing
 - 19,300 were living in unsuitable temporary accommodations
 - 37,200 were living in hostels
- In addition, 26,000 households were living in other circumstances, including:
- 8,900 sleeping in tents, cars or on public transport
 - 12,100 squatting on a property they did not own
 - 5,000 in women's refuges or winter night shelters. □



■ **HARD TIMES:** People walk past a homeless man sleeping outside Leicestershire Square Underground Station in London, England (Dec. 6, 2016).

PHOTO: JACK TAYLOR/GETTY IMAGES



■ **DROP IN THE BUCKET:** Members of the Colombian antinarcotics police arrange packs from a one-ton shipment of cocaine seized from the country's biggest drug cartel, the Gulf Clan, in Buenaventura, Colombia's main port on the Pacific Ocean (Aug. 10, 2017).

PHOTO: RAUL ARBOLEDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

AMERICAS

Colombia's Resurgent Cocaine Problem

Bogota, Colombia (AP)—Washington has called into question Colombia's efforts to eradicate cocaine production in its country given the growth of coca cultivation and cocaine production to record levels over the past year.

Drug seizures by bilateral maritime counter-drug cooperation between Colombia and the United States have not been keeping pace with an explosion in cocaine production, which the U.S. estimates surged more than 200 percent since 2013 to potentially 710 metric tons last year.

The Colombian government's strategy to combat that trend relies heavily on the cooperation of former guerrillas. Under terms of last year's peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the government and former insurgents are working with peasant families to try and voluntarily eradicate some 123,000 acres of coca this year in exchange for monthly cash stipends and alternative development projects.

American officials, who still consider the disbanded FARC a terrorist organization, are skeptical the strategy will work. A senior U.S. State Department official

accused the FARC of co-opting the peasant groups negotiating with the government and said the peace accord has had no effect on coca production trends.

“The solution to this problem is to figure out how to cut the FARC out of having any engagement either as trafficking organizations or as allegedly supporting the efforts to address the drugs issue,” William Brownfield told the U.S. Senate's international drug caucus.

Concerns increased in 2015 when Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos ended the aerial spraying of chemicals on illicit crops, a program that had been the backbone of almost two decades and \$10 billion of U.S. counter-narcotics work in the South American nation.

Authorities have stepped up their pursuit of drug traffickers even as they chase a goal of destroying 100,000 hectares of coca crops this year through a combination of manual eradication and voluntary crop-substitution agreements with farmers.

Colombia produces 50 percent of the cocaine used worldwide and 90 percent for the U.S. □

Study: Microscopic Plastic Found in 83 Percent of World's Tap Water

Nearly all of the world's tap water contains microscopic fibers of plastic, a new study found, sparking concerns that millions may be consuming hazardous water.

The research, directed by nonprofit news outlet Orb Media based in Washington, D.C., with the help of researchers from the University of Minnesota and the State University of New York, involved collecting more than 150 tap-water samples in cities on five continents. Of those, 83 percent tested positive for microplastic.

Rates varied depending on location, from 72 percent across test samples in Europe to 82 percent in India and a high of 94 percent in the United States.

Plastic waste in the world's oceans has been a major environmental concern for decades—300 million tons of plastic are produced annually and much of it ends up floating in rivers and oceans. This devastates marine life and ecosystems. But Orb's study revealed the increasing threat plastic waste poses to human health.

Deutsche Welle reported: "When consumed, plastic fibers may ferry toxins from the environment into the human body, experts fear.

"Researcher Richard Thompson of Plymouth University said that in animal studies, 'it became clear very early on that the plastic would release those chemicals—and that actually, the conditions in the gut would facilitate really quite rapid release.'"

Experts are not entirely clear how the plastic fibers enter tap water sources. But there is "one confirmed source of plastic fiber pollution," the German news outlet continued. "Synthetic garments emit up to 700,000 fibers per washload, researchers found. Much of that evades treatment and is discharged into public waterways."

Mary Kosuth, who worked on the study, said that while the findings present a serious issue, there is more to discover.

"Since this is the first global tap water survey of plastic pollution to have been completed, the results of this study serve as an initial glimpse at the consequences of human plastic use [and] disposal rather than a comprehensive assessment of global plastic contamination," she wrote, according to *Fox News*. "These results call for further testing within and between regions." □

EUROPE

1 in 50 Refugees Die While Attempting to Cross Mediterranean to Enter Europe

Since the unforgettable image of Alan Kurdi came out in September 2015, the 3-year-old Syrian boy whose body washed ashore in Turkey, at least 8,500 migrants have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean while boating to Europe. These figures come from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

While the number of arrivals in 2017 has been lower since the European Union made a deal with Turkey that stemmed the flow of refugees coming into Greece, the numbers of those drowning remains alarmingly high. According to the UN agency, 4,337 people—approximately 1 in 50 who attempted to cross—drowned in the first



■ **ADRIFT:** Migrants wait to be rescued by a ship run by Doctors Without Borders in the Mediterranean, 30 nautical miles from the Libyan coast (Aug. 2, 2017).

PHOTO: ANGELOS TZORTZINIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

six months of the year. For those trying to reach Italy, the chances of death are 1 in 39.

Due to the clampdowns on more popular routes, such as Libya to Italy and Turkey to Greece, migrants are increasingly using more dangerous routes. Morocco to Spain is one example.

The UN agency reported that 9,500 people reached Spain during the first

six months of 2017, mostly by sea. This is compared to just 4,936 who arrived during the same period in 2016.

"It's the most the country has seen since the start of the crisis," *CNN* reported. "And it's flared in August—with a staggering 604 migrants rescued in just 24 hours. Increasingly, African migrants are seeking a cheaper and easier path to Europe, setting sail for Spain from Morocco in toy dinghies and on jet skis." □

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