

COMMENTARY

Marilyn Monroe v. Samuel Alito

By Maureen Dowd
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — I was watching Vogue's live feed as Kim Kardashian tried to walk the red carpet at the Met Gala in her skintight, flesh-tone dress, gallantly helped up the stairs by Pete Davidson. I flashed back to Marilyn Monroe on another May night in Gotham, doing similar mincing steps in a similar shimmering dress she was sewn into, when she suspired "Happy Birthday" to JFK.

Then Variety sent out a news bulletin that Kim was actually wearing Marilyn's dress. I had last seen the crystal-strewn soufflé concoction back in 1999, at a Christie's exhibit for an auction of Marilyn's property. It sparkled amid detritus such as sombreros, see-through nighties and lighters from Frank Sinatra's Cal-Neva lodge. The "nudest dress," as the designer Jean Louis called it, was reverently displayed in a room by itself, lit from above like the Pieta.

As I was contemplating the comeback of this sartorial symbol of American seduction, I got another news bulletin: The Supreme Court was going to yank away the right of women to control their own bodies, strapping us into a time machine hurtling backward.

The two simultaneous emails were a perfect distillation of America's bizarre duality — our contradictory strains of sexuality and priggishness.

Justice Samuel Alito's antediluvian draft opinion is the Puritans' greatest victory since they expelled Roger Williams from the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Alito is a familiar type in American literature: the holier-than-thou preacher, so overzealous in his attempts to rein in female sexuality and slap on a scarlet letter that one suspects he must be hiding some dark yearnings of his own.

That was certainly the case with Clarence Thomas, another of the justices wanting to turn America into Saudi Arabia. (Saudi Arabia at least allows abortions if the woman's physical or mental health is at risk.) Thomas — married to the off-the-wall right-wing activist Ginni — got on the court with the help of Republican senators who smeared Anita Hill as a perky liar when they knew all along that Thomas was the perky liar. The senators claimed Thomas could not possibly have been talking about porn in the office, as Hill said, even though they knew from his D.C. video store visits that he was indeed a connoisseur of so-called "freak-of-nature" porn, especially the movies of Bad Mama Jama, a porn star so sadly obese she could barely move.

Newt Gingrich pursued Bill Clinton like Javert, even as he was having an affair with a young political aide (whom he later married). And prissy Ken Starr hounded Monica Lewinsky, producing a seven-volume report that read like a panting bodice-ripper, full of lurid passages about breasts, stains and genitalia. The Pharisaic Holy Roller, who sang hymns while he jogged, became fixated on Clinton's sex life in a warped way.

The 1999 version of Donald Trump, when he was still a fan of the Clintons and boasting that he was "pro-choice in every respect," was appalled. "Starr's a freak," he told me back then. "I bet he's got something in his closet." It was no surprise last year when Judi Hershman, who worked with Starr on public relations through that shameful period, wrote that she had an affair with Rev. Ken Dimmesdale.

Like Ronald Reagan, Trump was a

Democrat who turned conservative, latching onto the Christian evangelical electorate. As Carl Hulse reported in "Confirmation Bias," Trump soothed conservatives uneasy with his lax morality by promising to appoint justices who would overturn Roe v. Wade, chosen from a Federalist Society-approved list. The libertine who transgressed with women traded off their rights to nail down a base.

Now perky Matt Gaetz tweets, "How many of the women rallying against overturning Roe are overeducated, under-loved millennials who sadly return from protests to a lonely microwave dinner with their cats, and no Bumble matches?" This is a man under investigation over whether he had sex with a 17-year-old and was a sex trafficker.

And let's not even start on Madison Cawthorn's fantasies of drug-fueled orgies.

This past week's stunning reversal on women's rights is the apotheosis of the last 40 years, through Reagan, Schlafly, Meese, Rehnquist and Scalia, climaxing in Mitch McConnell, who made a Faustian bargain to support chuckleheaded Trump to get a conservative court. Because of McConnell's machinations blocking Merrick Garland and ramming through Amy Coney Barrett, Trump was able to name three anti-abortion conservatives to the court, all of whom prevaricated under oath before the Senate about their intentions on Roe.

When will the Democrats stop being betas? As an emotional Gavin Newsom said at Planned Parenthood's Los Angeles headquarters, "Where the hell's my party? Where's the Democratic Party? Why aren't we standing up more firmly, more resolutely?"

The Founding Fathers would be less surprised that there's a popular musical about Alexander Hamilton than they would be that, in an age of space travel, the internet, Netflix and in vitro fertilization, the majority of the court is relying on a literal interpretation of a document conceived in the agrarian 1780s.

They would be devastated that the court is just another hack institution with partisan leaks. Alito helped open the door to dark money and helped gut the Voting Rights Act, but he wants to ban abortion largely because, he says, the Constitution doesn't expressly allow it. That's so fatuous. The Constitution doesn't mention an awful lot of things that the court involves itself with. But while it expressly prohibits state-sanctioned religion, this court seems ready to let some rebel public school football coach convene a prayer session after games. These rogue justices are always ready to twist the Constitution to their purposes.

They are strict constructionists all right, strictly interested in constructing a society that comports with their rigid, religiously driven worldview. It is outrageous that five unelected, unaccountable and relatively unknown political operatives masquerading as impartial jurists can so profoundly alter our lives.

Chief Justice John Roberts has been trying to protect the court's reputation by working to split the difference on some of these explosive decisions. He may be doing that in this case. But he has lost control of a lost-its-marbles majority. To borrow an image from the great Mary McGrory, Roberts seems like a small man trying to walk a large dog. At this point, he can't even see the end of the leash.



YOUR OPINION

Midwest Sterilization: 'Beware of Wolves in Sheep's Clothing'

Midwest Sterilization Corporation has been in the news recently coming under scrutiny because of its cancer-causing emissions from its facility located off Killam Industrial Blvd. near the Mines Road (FM 1472). The emissions, ranked highest in the nation, are obviously unacceptable since Midwest is near several United ISD, Laredo ISD and private schools. The controversy has united several hundred Laredoans from all professions to protest Midwest by creating a Laredo Clean Air Coalition (LCAC). The Coalition gathered families with children of all ages for a run, walk and bicycle race on Saturday, April 30 at Father Charles McNaboe Park for public awareness.

Since the Laredo Clean Air Coalition shed light on Midwest, the company has gone into a 'defensive mode' publishing for several months in the Laredo Morning Times advertisements applauding its 'committed to community'. However, "Beware of Wolves in

Sheep's Clothing." In a Laredo Morning Times Chamber of Commerce 33rd Vision Conference special edition last Monday (May 2), Midwest Sterilization was listed as a Benefactor (\$10,000) sponsor. Photos were also published with Midwest donating \$5,000 to significant Laredo non-profits Bethany House, \$15,000 each to South Texas Food Bank and Laredo Regional Food Bank, and \$25,000 to Laredo International Fair and Exposition (LIFE).

Wow. Given the facts, talk about an oxymoron when it comes to Midwest Sterilization Corporation and its harmful effects on oxygen, the air we breathe.

Like the Laredo Clean Air Coalition t-shirt notes, "Clean Air is a Human Right" and "EtOfastogo".

Let's clear the air. Public health is people over profit.

Let's clean the air and not err when it comes to air.

Salo Otero and JoAnn Otero

COMMENTARY

The right-wing justices think they are unaccountable. Wrong.

By Jennifer Rubin
WASHINGTON POST

The Supreme Court's approval ratings have been in sharp decline for a while. But in revealing itself to be a partisan gang seeking to impose a specific version of Christianity on the rest of America, the court might finally have gone a step too far. The leaked draft opinion foretelling a reversal of Roe v. Wade has boomeranged on the partisan, radical majority.

A Morning Consult-Politico poll taken Tuesday found that "relatively few voters believe the ruling should be reversed entirely (28%). Half of voters said Roe should not be overturned, up from 45% who said the same in December." Furthermore, "voters are more than twice as likely to say abortion should be legal nationally than that it should be illegal. . . . Relatively few voters believe abortion should be illegal in all or most cases (35%)."

Worse, from the justices' perspective, a mere 14% say they have a lot of confidence in the court. Support for expanding the court is up, with 44% strongly or somewhat favoring the addition of justices. That's nothing compared with the 67% who strongly or somewhat support term limits. In addition, 74% support imposing a mandatory code of ethics; 63% favor an age limit; and 59% would like the court to have an equal number of Democrats, independents and Republicans (having dispensed with the fraud that the partisans in robes aren't political).

Democrats would be foolish not to introduce legislation to enact some or all of those reforms. The voters are way ahead of the politicians. It turns out that rather than controversial, these proposals would be highly popular. Let Republicans defend exempting justices from ethics rules and preserving lifetime tenure for justices who benefited from Republican Minority Leader Sen. Mitch McConnell's procedural chicanery. Democrats should welcome this fight and stick

with the theme that a bunch of unelected, out-of-touch justices should not be ordering the rest of us around. The tighter the GOP holds on to an imperious court bent on imposing its religious biases on an increasingly secular country, the clearer that message will be.

"White evangelical Protestants (whose median age is now 56) are living in what could be fairly described as a cultural world that is detached not only from Americans under the age of 40 but from the growing number of Christians of color and nonreligious Americans," explained Robert P. Jones, chief executive of the Public Religion Research Institute. "If [former president Donald] Trump fancied himself, in the executive branch, the embodiment of a wall protecting white Christian America from the changes of the last half century, the conservative majority on the court is unequivocally signaling to this same base that it is willing to play an analogous role in the judicial branch."

But here's the thing: Despite Utah Republican Sen. Mike Lee's insistence that we are "not a democracy," no branch of government can hold out forever when it positions itself opposite the deeply held values of a supermajority of Americans. Something's got to give. In this case, what needs to give is the Supreme Court's arrogant refusal to accept its limited role in the lives of 330 million Americans of all races, religions (or lack thereof), ages, etc.

Having burst through the bounds of judicial restraint, just as the Supreme Court of the 1930s did with the New Deal, this court faces blowback. While President Franklin D. Roosevelt's court-packing scheme "failed," the court, chastened, stopped striking down his transformative legislation.

Perhaps this court will realize its choice: end its play for theocratic supremacy, or face a seriously reimagined court in which many of its current occupants won't be there as long as they imagined.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Laredo Morning Times does not publish anonymous letters. Letters must include the writer's first and last names as well as a phone number to verify identity. The phone number is not published; it is used solely to verify identity and to clarify content, if necessary. When responding to another's letter, writers should focus on the topic and not on the original writer themselves. No name-calling or gratuitous abuse is allowed. Letters are edited for style, grammar, length and civility. Also, letters longer than 1,000 words will not be accepted. Please send letters to editorial@lmtonline.com attached in a word document or in the email itself. If you cannot send an email, mail to Letters to the Editor, 111 Esperanza Drive, Laredo, TX 78041.