



The plot to change Catholicism



Ross Douthatt

The Vatican always seems to have the secrets and intrigues of a Renaissance court — which, in a way, is what it still remains. The ostentatious humility of Pope Francis, his scoldings of high-ranking prelates, have changed this not at all; if anything, the pontiff's ambitions have encouraged plotters and counter-plotters to work with greater vigor.

And right now the chief plotter is the pope himself.

Francis's purpose is simple: He favors the proposal, put forward by the church's liberal cardinals, that would allow divorced and remarried Catholics to receive communion without having their first marriage declared null.

Thanks to the pope's tacit support, this proposal became a central controversy in last year's synod on the family and the larger follow-up, ongoing in Rome right now.

But if his purpose is clear, his path is decidedly murky. Procedurally, the pope's powers are near-absolute: If Francis decided tomorrow to endorse communion for the remarried, there is no Catholic Supreme Court that could strike his ruling down.

At the same time, though, the pope is supposed to have no power to change Catholic doctrine. This rule has no official enforcement mechanism (the Holy Spirit is supposed to be the crucial check and balance), but custom, modesty, fear of God and fear of schism all restrain popes who might find a doctrinal rewrite tempting.

And a change of doctrine is what conservative Catholics, quite reasonably,

believe that the communion proposal favored by Francis essentially implies.

There's probably a fascinating secular political science tome to be written on how the combination of absolute and absolutely-limited power shapes the papal office. In such a book, Francis's recent maneuvers would deserve a chapter, because he's clearly looking for a mechanism that would let him exercise his powers without undercutting his authority.

The key to this search has been the synods, which have no official doctrinal role but which can project an image of ecclesiastical consensus. So a strong synodal statement endorsing communion for the remarried as a merely "pastoral" change, not a doctrinal alteration, would make Francis's task far easier.

Unfortunately such a statement has proven difficult to extract — because the ranks of Catholic bishops include so many Benedict XVI and John Paul II-appointed conservatives, and also because the "pastoral" argument is basically just rubbish. The church's teaching that marriage is indissoluble has already been pushed close to the breaking point by this pope's new expedited annulment process; going all the way to communion without annulment would just break it.

So to overcome resistance from bishops who grasp this obvious point, first last year's synod and now this one have been, to borrow from the Vatican journalist Edward Pentin's recent investigative book, "rigged" by the papal-appointed organizers in favor of the pope's preferred outcome.

The documents guiding the synod have been written with that goal in mind. The pope has made appointments to the synod's ranks with that goal in mind, not hesitating to add even aged

cardinals tainted by the sex abuse scandal if they are allied to the cause of change. The Vatican press office has filtered the synod's closed-door (per the pope's directive) debates to the media with that goal in mind. The churchmen charged with writing the final synod report have been selected with that goal in mind. And Francis himself, in his daily homilies, has consistently criticized Catholicism's "doctors of the law," its modern legalists and Pharisees — a not-even-thinly-veiled signal of his views.

(Though of course, in the New Testament the Pharisees allowed divorce; it was Jesus who rejected it.) And yet his plan is not necessarily succeeding. There reportedly still isn't anything like a majority for the proposal within the synod, which is probably why the organizers hedged their bets for a while about whether there would even be a final document. And the conservatives — African, Polish, American, Australian — have been less surprised than last fall, and quicker to draw public lines and try to box the pontiff in with private appeals.

The entire situation abounds with ironies. Aging progressives are seizing a moment they thought had slipped away, trying to outmaneuver younger conservatives who recently thought they owned the Catholic future. The African bishops are defending the faith of the European past against Germans and Italians weary of their own patrimony. A Jesuit pope is effectively at war with his own Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the erstwhile Inquisition — a situation that would make 16th century heads spin.

For a Catholic journalist, for any journalist, it's a fascinating story, and speaking strictly as a journalist, I have no idea how it will end. Speaking as a Catholic, I expect the plot to ultimately fail; where the pope and the historic faith seem to be in tension, my bet is on the faith.

But for an institution that measures its life span in millennia, "ultimately" can take a long time to arrive.

A rapist's nightmare



Nicholas Kristof

LUCKNOW, INDIA For as long as anyone can remember, upper-caste men in a village here in northern India preyed on young girls. The rapes continued because there was no risk: The girls were destroyed, but the men faced no repercussions.

Now that may be changing in the area, partly because of the courage of one teenage girl who is fighting back. Indian law doesn't permit naming rape victims, so she said to call her Bitiya — and she is a rapist's nightmare.

I'm on my annual win-a-trip journey, in which I take a university student along on a reporting trip to the developing world. The winner, Austin Meyer of Stanford University, and I see in Bitiya a lesson for the world about the importance of ending the impunity that so often surrounds sexual violence, including in the United States.

Bitiya, who is from the bottom of the caste system, is fuzzy about her age but thinks she was 13 in 2012 when four upper-caste village men grabbed her as she worked in a field, stripped her and raped her. They filmed the assault and warned her that if she told anyone they would release the video and also kill her brother. So Bitiya initially kept quiet.

Six weeks later Bitiya's father saw a

15-year-old boy watching a pornographic video — and was aghast to see his daughter in it. The men were selling the video in a local store for a dollar a copy.

Bitiya is crying in the video and is held down by the men, so her family accepted that she was blameless. Her father went to the police to file a report.

The police weren't interested in following up, but the village elders were. They decided that Bitiya, an excellent student, should be barred from the local public school.

"They said I was the wrong kind of girl, and it would affect other girls," Bitiya said. "I felt very bad about that."

Eventually, public pressure forced the school to take her back, but the village elders continue to block the family from receiving government food rations, apparently as punishment for speaking out.

In the background hovers caste. Bitiya is a Dalit, once considered untouchable, at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Civil society scrutiny belatedly led to the arrest of four men, who were then released on bail. The case has been dragging on since, and Bitiya's father died of a heart attack after one particularly brutal court hearing. The family also fears that members of upper castes will kill Bitiya's 16-year-old brother, so he mostly stays home — which means he can't take jobs, leaving the family struggling to afford food.

The rape suspects offered a \$15,000 settlement if Bitiya's family would drop the case, bringing the money in cash to her home with its dirt floor. Bitiya had never seen so much cash — but scoffs that she wouldn't accept twice as much.

"I want them in jail," Bitiya says. "Then everyone watching will know that people can get punished for this."

"I never felt tempted," adds her grandfather. Bitiya says she does not feel disgraced, because the dishonor lies in raping rather than in being raped. And the

resolve that she and her family display is having an impact. The rape suspects had to sell land to pay bail, and everybody in the area now understands that raping girls may actually carry consequences. So while there were many rapes in the village before Bitiya's, none are believed to have occurred since.

Madhavi Kuckreja, a longtime women's activist who is helping Bitiya, says the case reflects a measure of progress against sexual violence.

"There has been a breaking of the silence," Kuckreja said. "People are speaking up and filing cases."

Kuckreja notes that the cost of sexual violence is a paralyzing fear that affects all women and girls. Fearful parents "protect" daughters from sexual violence and boys in ways that impede the girls' ability to get an education, use the Internet or cellphones, or get a good job. For every girl who is raped, Kuckreja says, many thousands lose opportunities and mobility because of fear of such violence.

A girl in India resists threats and bribes to pursue the upper-caste men she says gang-raped her.

That holds back women, but also all of India. The International Monetary Fund says that India's economy is stunted by the lack of women in the formal economy.

In one village, I asked a large group of men about rape. They insisted that they honor women and deplore rape — and then added that the best solution after a rape is for the girl to be married to the rapist, to smooth over upset feelings.

"If he raped her, he probably likes her," explained Shiv Govind, an 18-year-old.

I'm rooting for Bitiya and strong girls like her to change those attitudes and end the impunity that oppresses women and impoverishes nations.

Blinded by the light

Lionel Shriver

At 13, I covered multiple lamps in my bedroom with variously colored theatrical gels, the better to create a luminary ambience to suit my mood. When I felt sunny, I chose the yellow; when glum, the blue. And hey, I was a teenager. The blue got a lot of use.

In my repellingly contented middle age, I don't seek blue light. Like most sane people, I spurn restaurants whose lighting glares. I recoil from mirrors under fluorescent tubes. I switch on an overhead only to track down a water bug while wielding a flip-flop. Yet each evening from March onward, in the Brooklyn neighborhood where I live part of the year, it seems as if the overhead is always on.

Along with other parts of South Brooklyn, Windsor Terrace is an early recipient of the Department of Transportation's new light-emitting diode streetlights. New Yorkers who have not yet been introduced to these lights: We are living in your future.

Our new street "lamps" — too cozy a word for the icy arrays now screaming through our windows — are meant to be installed across all five boroughs by 2017. Indeed, any resident of an American municipality that has money problems (and what city doesn't?) should take heed.

In interviews with the media, my fellow experimental subjects have compared the nighttime environment under the new streetlights to a film set, a prison yard, "a strip mall in outer space" and "the mother ship coming in for a landing" in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Although going half-blind at 58, I can read by the beam that the new lamp blasts into our front room without tapping our own Con Ed service. Once the LEDs went in, our next-door neighbor began walking her dog at night in sunglasses.

Medical research has firmly established that blue-spectrum LED light can disrupt sleep patterns. This is the same illumination that radiates in far smaller doses from smartphone and computer screens, to which we're advised to avoid exposure for at least an hour before bed, because it can suppress the production of melatonin. The tribute to "the city that never sleeps" was meant to celebrate a vibrant cultural night life — not a town of hollow-eyed "Walking Dead" insomniacs.

While the same light has also been associated with increased risk of breast cancer and mood disorders, in all honesty my biggest beef with LEDs has nothing to do with health issues. These lights are ugly. They're invasive. They're depressing. New York deserves better.

Yet the substitution of LEDs for tradi-

tional high-pressure sodium bulbs, whose familiar tangerine glow would have suited my rare upbeat humor at 13, is proving irresistible to many cities because of the economic benefits. Chicago, Seattle, Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit and Los Angeles have all undertaken mass retrofits. Although three to four times more expensive, the new bulbs are supposed to last two to four times longer than their predecessors, reducing energy costs between 30 and 70 percent.

Thus the advance of this technology has an inexorable quality. Rather than stand in the way and get mowed down, we urban aesthetes are probably better off focusing on the fact that all LEDs are not created equal.

Color temperature is measured in Kelvin units. Lower temperatures are warm, in the yellow range; higher temperatures are cool, in the blue. Sodium bulbs are around 2,200 Kelvin — light in which one might fall in love. The brutal LED outside our

This eco-friendly disaster might be on its way to your neighborhood.

house is 4,000 — light more conducive to dismembering a corpse. New York's D.O.T. has also opted for lights that penetrate lower-floor residential properties like ours with rude, invasive lateral glare. Though the D.O.T. claims to have adjusted the angles slightly in disgruntled neighborhoods, our street's lights appear untouched.

But LEDs come in warmer spectra. Even fiscally and environmentally conscientious California has compromised on this point. Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco have all opted for yellowish LEDs. These cities have willingly made the modest 10-15 percent sacrifice in efficiency for an ambience that more closely embodies what Germans call Gemütlichkeit and Danes call hygge: an atmosphere of hospitality, homeyness, intimacy and well-being.

Other municipalities have worked successfully with citizens to reconcile

energy savings with a more pleasing nocturnal landscape. In Berlin, in response to outcry over a similar conversion, engineers designed LEDs that imitate the qualities of gaslight. After enough complaints, Davis, Calif., sponsored a variety-pack test street, from which residents ultimately selected not only a lower color temperature fixture, but one with a lower wattage, thus saving the city yet more money.

For New York, it may not be too late to marry practicality and aesthetics. Specifications could still be revised — though LEDs may last up to 20 years, and once they're installed citywide it will be too late. So even if you don't live in a south Brooklyn neighborhood, call 311 to support:

- Limiting, per a stalled City Council bill, streetlights to no more than 3,000 Kelvin (think an incandescent "soft white");
- Installing some kind of shade or lens cover to reduce lateral glare;
- Exploring ways of dimming lighting in residential neighborhoods;
- Suspending further installation until specifications are refined.

My husband claims that everyone will eventually "get used to" these grisly blue-spectrum diodes, and he's probably right. But then, we've "gotten used to" garish big box stores and the foreshortening blight of fast-food franchises that make so many American cities look fungibly frightful. Parents "get used to" a clutter of kitschy plastic toys. Just because one is capable of becoming dullly inured to something doesn't make it desirable.

As currently conceived, the D.O.T.'s streetlight plan amounts to mass civic vandalism. If my focus on aesthetics makes this issue sound trivial, the sensory experience of daily life is not a frivolous matter. Even in junior high school, I understood that lighting isn't only about what you see, but how you feel.

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REBECCA MOCK

Mismanaging the conflict

Nathan Thrall

JERUSALEM The streets of Jewish West Jerusalem are eerie and still. Silence hangs over the city, punctured occasionally by a siren's wail. Buses are half empty, as is the light rail that runs alongside the walls of the Old City.

Heavily armed security forces, joined by army reinforcements, patrol checkpoints, bus stops and deserted sidewalks. Young men in plain clothes carry assault rifles. The evening news broadcasts images of stabbings and shootings. Among the few shops doing good business are those selling weapons and pepper spray.

In the city's occupied East, residents are frightened, too. Massive cement cubes block exits from their neighborhoods. Lengthy lines at new checkpoints keep many from their jobs. Men under 40 who were barred from Al Aqsa Mosque on Friday prayed instead behind police barricades in the surrounding decrepit streets.

Last week, an Israeli minister called for the destruction of all Palestinian homes built in East Jerusalem without permits, a threat that targets nearly 40 percent of the city's Palestinians because of restrictive zoning. Jerusalem's gun-wielding mayor has called on Israeli civilians to carry arms. Jewish mobs chanting "Death to Arabs" have paraded through the streets.

Palestinian parents keep children indoors, afraid they will be arrested or shot. Nightly police raids visit their neighborhoods. Returning from work in West Jerusalem's kitchens, hotels and construction sites, some Palestinians seek to protect themselves by wearing yarmulkes. On their cellphones, teenagers watch videos of stabbing attacks and of Palestinians shot at close range.

Several days ago, an East Jerusalem business owner told me that he and his employees were frightened to travel to the West. Like many others I've spoken with, he lamented the growing hatred and the killings, but rejected the idea that they had been without purpose. They had made clear to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he said, that a

red line stands before Al Aqsa; no matter how weak the Palestinian leadership might be, he argued, the people would not allow Israel to restrict Muslims' access to the occupied holy site, particularly while growing numbers of Israeli activists, some calling for the mosque's destruction, are permitted to visit under armed protection.

Perhaps most significant, he concluded, the violence signaled that whatever the intentions of their leadership, Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank will not indefinitely extend to Israel a period of calm while no corresponding reduction of the occupation takes place.

The unrest has been sufficiently alarming to induce Secretary of State John Kerry to announce a visit to the region. But it has not brought Israeli leaders to rethink their insistence on never relinquishing East

Violence in Jerusalem is rooted in rage at leaders who offer only impasse.

Jerusalem, which includes the Al Aqsa compound, a site also revered by Jews as the Temple Mount. Yet the Jewish public's mood is shifting, as it did during the second intifada. It was during the worst month of those four horrific years, in March 2002, that pollsters found peak Israeli support for the territorial concessions proposed by President Bill Clinton in December 2000, including a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem with sovereignty over the Al Aqsa compound. Last week, about two-thirds of Jewish Israelis surveyed in a poll said they wished to separate from the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, excluding the Old City.

Contrary to claims that Israel's occupation is growing only further entrenched, the decades since Israel conquered East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza have been characterized by a slow process of Israeli separation, often reluctant and driven by violence. To date, the unrest has not approached the scale that led successive prime ministers to partial withdrawals: Yitzhak Rabin's bestowing limited autonomy on Palestinians in parts of Gaza and the West Bank at the end of the first intifada; Benjamin Netanyahu's pulling out

of most of Hebron after the deadly 1996 riots over Israeli excavations beneath the Al Aqsa compound; and Ariel Sharon's announcing a withdrawal from Gaza during the second intifada.

It was at that time that Mr. Sharon erected the wall and fence separating Israel from the West Bank. Palestinians, like most of the international community, view the wall as an illegal seizure of 8.5 percent of the West Bank, but by the same token, it is now nearly impossible to imagine that any of the 91.5 percent of territory on the Palestinian side would go to Israel in a future partition.

It is a deeply regrettable fact that, during the past quarter-century, violence has been the most consistent factor in Israeli territorial withdrawal. That may partly explain why growing numbers of Palestinians support an uprising and demand the resignation of President Mahmoud Abbas, who abhors attacks on Israelis and has presided over nearly a decade of almost total quiet in the West Bank without any gains to show for it.

Last month, a survey of Palestinians found support for an armed intifada at 57 percent (and at 71 percent among 18- to 22-year-old men). Support was highest in Hebron and Jerusalem. Two-thirds of those surveyed wanted Mr. Abbas to resign.

Mr. Kerry is scheduled to have meetings with Mr. Abbas and with Mr. Netanyahu in an effort to achieve their shared goal of restoring calm and returning to the status quo. Violence is politically threatening to both leaders, especially to Mr. Abbas, and both will continue to work to suppress any escalation.

Yet if they succeed only in ending the unrest, they will have merely restored the status that gave rise to it. This is what Israelis call "managing the conflict." There is certainly no guarantee that if the two leaders fail to stop the flow of Palestinian and Israeli blood, things will eventually get better.

But what does seem guaranteed is that most Palestinians will continue to believe that if the occupation is cost-free, there will be little incentive to end it. Mr. Abbas and Mr. Netanyahu have taught them that.

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The empire strikes back



Maureen Dowd

WASHINGTON Nobody plays the victim like Hillary.

She can wield that label like a wrecking ball.

If her husband humiliates her with a girlfriend in the Oval Office, Hillary turns around and uses the sympathy engendered to launch a political career. If her Republican opponent gets in her space in an overbearing way during a debate, she turns around and uses the sympathy engendered to win a Senate seat. If conservatives hold a Salem witch trial under the guise of a House select committee hearing, she turns around and uses the sympathy engendered to slip into the H.O.V. lane of a superhighway to the presidency.

Hillary Clinton is never more alluring than when a bunch of pasty-faced, nasty-tongued white men bully her. And she was plenty alluring during her marathon session on Thursday with Republican Lilliputians, who were completely oblivious to the fact that Hillary is always at her most potent when some Teardruther is trying to put her in her place.

Trey Gowdy and his blithering band of tea-partiers went on a fishing expedition, but they forgot to bring their rods — or any fresh facts.

It was a revealing display of hardcore conservatives in their parallel universe, where all their biases are validated by conservative media. They crawled out of the ooze into the sea of cameras, blinking and obtuse. Ohio's Jim Jordan, bellowing. South Carolina's Gowdy, sweating. Alabama's Martha Roby, not getting the joke. And Indiana's Susan Brooks, allowing that "most of us really don't know much about Libya."

Hillary acted bemused, barely masking her contempt at their condescension. She was no doubt amazed at what an amateur job they were doing at character assassination.

The Republicans came across as even more conspiratorial than their other target, Sidney Blumenthal, and his nickname is "G.K.," for grassy knoll. One conservative on the panel, trying to paint Clinton as an added 68-year-old, as of Monday, kept snidely offering to pause while she read the notes her posse was passing her.

They must have been mistaking her for W., who always looked as if he wouldn't know what to say if his notes blew away in the wind.

It is not the terrain of Gowdy's lame committee, but it is legitimate to examine Clinton's record in the Middle East.

As a senator, she made a political vote to let W. invade Iraq. As much homework as she did to get ready for the Libya committee,

she chose not to do her homework on Iraq in 2002 — neglecting to read the sketchy National Intelligence Estimate. She didn't want to seem like a hippie flower girl flashing a peace sign after 9/11. Then she urged President Obama to help topple Muammar el-Qaddafi without heeding the painful lesson of Iraq — that if America went into another nebulously defined mission, there would have to be a good plan to prevent the vacuum of power being filled by militant Islamic terrorists.

Since she was, as her aide Jake Sullivan put it, "the public face of the U.S. effort in Libya," one of the Furies, along with Samantha Power and Susan Rice, who had pushed for a military intervention on humanitarian grounds, Hillary needed to stay on top of it.

She had to be tenacious in figuring out when Libya had deteriorated into such a caldron of jihadis that our ambassador should either be pulled out or backed up. In June 2012, the British closed their consulate in Benghazi after

their ambassador's convoy was hit by a grenade. A memo she received that August described the security situation in Libya as "a mess."

When you are the Valkyrie who engineers the intervention, you can't then say it is beneath you to pay attention to the ludicrously negligent security for your handpicked choice for ambassador in a lawless country full of assassinations and jihadist training camps.

According to Republicans on the committee, there were 600 requests from Stevens' team to upgrade security in Benghazi in 2012 and 20 attacks on the mission compound in the months before the Sept. 11 siege.

In a rare moment of lucidity, Representative Mike Pompeo of Kansas said to Clinton: "You described Mr. Stevens as having the best knowledge of Libya of anyone," but "when he asked for increased security, he didn't get it."

As Hillary kept explaining, that job was the province of the "security professionals," four of whom were later criticized for providing "grossly inadequate" security at the Benghazi compound and removed from their posts.

The 11-hour hearing showcased the good Hillary, but there were occasional flashes of the bad. She still doesn't believe that setting up her own server was so wrong. Even though the inspector general of government intelligence said that there was top secret information in her emails, she sticks with her parsing.

"There was nothing marked classified on my emails, either sent or received," she told Jordan.

She seemed oddly detached about Stevens, testifying that he didn't have her personal email or cell number, "but he had the 24-hour number of the State Operations in the State Department that can reach me 24/7."

There were no call logs of talks between Stevens and Clinton, and she said she could not remember if she ever spoke to him again after she swore him in in May. "I was the boss of ambassadors in 270 countries," she explained.

But Libya was the country where she was the midwife to chaos. And she should have watched that baby like the Lady Hawk she is.

South Africa's student revolt

Nicky Falkof

JOHANNESBURG Last Wednesday, I arrived at the University of the Witwatersrand, where I work, and couldn't get inside. Some major entrances to the campus in the center of Johannesburg were locked. Others had been barricaded by students. The university had expected a docile, two-hour protest; instead, a week before exams, the campus was shut down by a crowd of 2,000. It's been closed ever since.

Students at Wits, as it's known locally, are protesting because the poor are being priced out of higher education. For many of them, getting into a university is a triumph; but staying there is a miracle.

Neither universities nor the government are doing nearly enough to help poor (which generally means black) students survive and graduate. The original impetus for the protests was a proposed 10.5-percent fee increase that would have locked some students out for life. A 10,000-rand (about \$750) up-front fee would have prevented many existing students from registering and caused them to lose access to whatever funding or scholarships they had. In just one week, student demands evolved from canceling fee increases at Wits to a government commitment to publicly funded higher education (the government studied such a reform in 2012 but never released its findings to the public).

On Friday President Jacob Zuma announced that there would be no fee increases in 2016. This is a significant victory but it's only the start of a larger struggle. The government has not committed to cover the shortfalls that universities will face or explained how it plans to fund higher education in the longer term. On Saturday, Wits students voted to continue the shutdown until the government addresses their demand for free education.

These issues are real for students like Lebo, a 19-year-old black woman in her second year at Wits. She wakes up at around 5 a.m. each morning to take a packed minibus taxi from her township to the center of the city. From there she'll take another minibus to campus, or walk if money is tight. She'll bring leftovers, and if there aren't any she won't eat all day, because food on campus is expensive. She'll also stand in line for the computer lab for at least half an hour. When Internet is only available on your phone and your only computer access is on campus, you make your essay-writing time count. By afternoon she'll be hungry and tired, facing the long commute to a one-bedroom home shared with her grandmother and two sisters.

Lebo is not unusual. At Wits there are 10,000 students on financial aid and many more who are struggling but aren't quite poor enough to merit state assistance. Close to 500,000 university students nationally, just under half of those enrolled, receive official state loans, which leaves many with fee shortfalls and little for living expenses.

Across the country, university stu-

dents and their families are still feeling the legacies of apartheid's poverty trap, which provided guaranteed jobs for whites and set up a substandard educational system for blacks designed to create a low-skilled, low-paid work force. Black students were prohibited from attending elite universities, and only a few well-connected black families could afford private schooling. Twenty years has not been enough to alter that, especially coupled with the abject failure of the African National Congress to provide decent primary and secondary education.

Wits students have linked up with groups at other universities — last Wednesday's protests shut down campuses across South Africa — and, using social media and the force of their own bodies, they have sparked a national conversation about the value of higher education and the right of the poorest to access it. A group of between 300 and 1,000 students have occupied a central building on the Wits campus, while thousands more turn up daily to take part in the

marches across the city. They've made civil disobedience feel possible again. The atmosphere on Wits campus is like something out of a gauzy Bertolucci film about Paris in 1968. It should have been news, but for a while it wasn't.

What was news, instead, was violence — which is strange because there has been virtually none. Mainstream press reporting, phone-in radio shows, social media and casual conversation were filled with talk about violence and whether the Wits students had "done it" yet. People spoke about being intimidated, about volatile crowds, about feeling threatened and afraid. No one specified that these crowds were largely black; but then they didn't need to.

It's more difficult to associate violence with these students after you've seen them chased by police dogs, shot at with rubber bullets, attacked with tear gas and stun guns, and arrested for daring to protest outside Parliament. Nonetheless, an undercurrent remains: that somehow

this treatment is, if not exactly deserved, then not surprising, given the students' supposed violence in taking over spaces, interrupting others' educational trajectories and generally "misbehaving."

Last Monday, a white male driver attempted to run over students staging a sit-in on a busy road, after which a small group gave chase, and the driver was injured and his car damaged. Aside from this, academic staff have observed no acts of violence on the part of students, despite being pepper-sprayed by private security officials, rammed by the cars and motorbikes of wealthier (mostly white) students and injured by white police spouting racist epithets.

Why, then, were many South Africans so quick to attribute violence to these students? The answer is depressingly simple. Even today, in a country that's majority black, a large group of young black people moving as a crowd means one thing only to the panicked public imagination: a threat that needs to be contained. This became clear last week when black students from the University of Cape Town, fearing for their safety as the largely black police contingent advanced on them, called on white classmates to form a human shield. They did, and the police retreated. Because even in South Africa, even now, unruly white bodies aren't threatening but unruly black bodies are.

South Africa suffers from a shrinking economy, rising unemployment and crime rates bordering on the epidemic. For many families paying a \$750 registration fee is impossible. Extending access to higher education is not some socialist dream; it's a vital part of stabilizing the country. And yet, many South Africans do not see what I've seen this past week. They do not see the impressive discipline, careful political thought and deep commitment to a better future. They do not hear the great harmonies as anti-apartheid struggle songs are reborn. They do not feel joy, solidarity or hope. What they feel is fear, what they fear is disorder — and what they see is only the threat of violence.

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Students marching at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg last week.

Meet a 21st-century slave



Nicholas Kristof

KATHMANDU, NEPAL When readers hear about "modern slavery" in America or abroad, they may roll their eyes and assume that's an exaggeration. Slavery? Really? Modern slavery?

If you're one of the doubters, then listen to Poonam Thapa, a teenage girl I met here in Nepal, where she is putting her life back together after being sold to a brothel.

And if you think, as Amnesty International suggested recently, that the solution is to decriminalize the commercial sex trade around the world, then pay special heed.

Poonam was poor and uneducated when a woman offered an escape in the form of a well-paying job. "You can have a better life," Poonam remembers the woman saying. "And if you make good money, you will be respected by your father. You can help your family."

So Poonam, then age 12, ran off with the woman. When Poonam was eventually deposited in a brothel in Mumbai, India, she was puzzled. "I didn't even know what a brothel was," she recalls. The brothel owner, a woman, dolled her up in a skimpy dress, equipped her with falsies, and gave her heels. Then the owner sold Poonam's virginity to an older man.

"The man raped me," Poonam says. "I didn't know what he was doing. But I was bleeding and hurting and crying." The brothel owner sternly told Poonam to buck up — she had paid \$1,700 for Poonam and needed to recover her

investment. So Poonam was locked inside the brothel, forced to have sex with 20 to 25 men a day, and more on Sundays and holidays. There were no days off, no trips outside the brothel, and, of course, no pay.

One day Poonam was hurting and refused a customer. She says the brothel owner beat her and burned her with cigarettes; she showed me the scars.

Poonam thus became one of 20.9 million people worldwide — a quarter of them children — subjected to forced labor, according to the U.N.'s International Labor Organization. In the United States, tens of thousands of children are trafficked into the sex trade each year.

Men visiting Poonam's brothel paid \$2.50 for sex and were sometimes oblivious to the brutality, flattering themselves that the girls liked their work. They see girls who often smile; no one is holding a gun to their heads.

Poonam responded with what so many others have said: The smiles are on the outside, even as girls are crying inside.

"We were told to smile, because a smile is money and will pull in customers," Poonam said. The girls were also ordered to say that they were over 18 and working voluntarily.

Then one day police raided the brothel. Warned by the brothel owner that the police would torture her if they found she was a child or trafficked, Poonam claimed that she was 23 and working voluntarily, but the police could see that she was a child and took her to a shelter.

Indian authorities returned Poonam to the care of Maiti Nepal, a leading anti-trafficking organization. Now Poonam is studying to be a social worker in hopes of helping other trafficked girls. A new study suggests that post-traumatic stress disorder is frequent among those who have been trafficked.

Anuradha Koirala, founder of Maiti Nepal, notes that there has been a bit of

progress against sex trafficking of Nepali girls. A crucial step, whether in Nepal or the United States, is ending the impunity for pimps and traffickers, and Koirala says that Maiti Nepal has helped prosecute 800 people for involvement in trafficking. In America as well, we need to prosecute traffickers rather than their victims.

Plenty of well-meaning people back Amnesty International's proposal for full decriminalization of the sex trade, including of pimps and brothels, and it's certainly true that some women (and men) work in the sex trade voluntarily. Yet in practice, approaches similar to Amnesty's have ended up simply em-

powering pimps. And while under these proposals human trafficking would remain illegal, the police would no longer have a reason to raid brothels to search for girls like Poonam.

Both Poonam and Koirala think that full decriminalization is a catastrophic idea; if it were in place, Poonam might still be enslaved.

"There is no protection to the powerless," Koirala said of full decriminalization. "All the benefits go to the perpetrators and exploiters."

The blunt truth is that no strategy works all that well against trafficking. But maybe the most successful has been Sweden's, cracking down on traffickers and customers while providing social services and exit ramps for women in the sex trade.

I'm in South Asia on my annual winter-trip journey, taking a student — this year it's Austin Meyer of Stanford University — with me to report on neglected social issues.

That's what human trafficking is, an ugly form of exploitation that at its worst amounts to modern slavery. In the 21st century, isn't it finally time to abolish slavery forever?

Shmuel Rosner

Contributing Writer

TEL AVIV The northern Israeli city of Nazareth witnessed an incredible confrontation on Oct. 11. Two Muslim men, both leaders in the Arab Israeli community, had a verbal duel in the public square. And the stakes for their community could not be higher.

Knesset member Ayman Odeh, the head of the third-largest party in Israel's Parliament, the United Arab Party, was there for a TV interview. He was standing on the sidewalk, adjusting his earphone, when a white car suddenly stopped beside him. From that car, Mr. Odeh's visible astonishment, the mayor of Nazareth, Ali Salam, began raging at him: "Go away ... get out of here ... you've ruined this city ... what are you doing to us ... you've burned the whole world."

Mr. Odeh's usual manner is relatively mild. He does not use much provocative language. But as the head of the United Arab Party he bears responsibility for its policies. And its policy of confrontation with the Jewish majority agitated Mr. Salam. It "ruins our future, and ruins coexistence," the mayor said the next day. These are volatile days. Stabbing and shooting attacks on Jews continue, and some of them have been carried out by Arab citizens of Israel. This puts Arab Israelis in an especially stressful position. They are Israeli and also Palestinian. Their state is engaged in a battle against their people, and they are a minority within a Jewish majority. This majority is on edge; its members see suspects everywhere and fear the next attack.

Israeli Jews have little patience for blunt dissent or provocation, and little patience for nuance. This is an ugly truth. Too many Israeli Jews, upon encountering an Arab — be he a pharmacist or a supermarket cashier or a cab driver — are thinking: Will he pull a knife? Does he intend to kill me?

In an opinion poll published earlier this month, 92 percent of Jewish Israelis said they would feel "unsafe" walking in a predominantly Arab city like Nazareth. Eighty percent said they would feel unsafe even in a mixed city — like Haifa, Acre or Lod, where both Jews and Arabs live.

No wonder Nazareth is empty of Jews, as Mayor Salam complained. A third of Israeli Jews, according to the poll, believe that most Israeli Arabs "support the current wave of terrorism." Another third believe that "some of them" do.

Why wouldn't they think so when most Arab Israeli political leaders are busy arousing the anger of their constituents against the Jewish majority

rather than trying to calm the situation? Arab Knesset members use harsh language against the authorities. (One shouted at Israeli policemen, "You have no place here.") They engage in verbal provocation (such as referring to suicide bombers as heroes), and in provocative acts (such as trying to reach Jerusalem's Temple Mount when they know it is closed to all).

An Islamic leader, Sheikh Raed Salah — whose movement is one of the main culprits in a campaign of lies about Israel's supposed intentions to change the status quo on Temple Mount — called upon his people to "defend Al Aqsa," the mosque atop the mount, with their lives, and declared: "We will win or die."

This is part of "a deliberate attempt to make the Temple Mount a point of religious conflict," Israel's former foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, said recently.

These Arab leaders' words and actions have an impact on their constituents. Last Tuesday, Arab students demonstrating near Tel Aviv University called upon their people to "raise the flag of revolution over all of the occu-

pled land, from Rafah to Metula" — which is to say not just in the occupied West Bank but also within Israel itself.

The Jewish majority isn't blameless in making Arab citizens feel ambivalent about their country. There is discrimination against Arabs. There are Jews who speak and think ill about Arabs. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rallied his supporters on election day by warning that Arabs "are coming out in droves to the polls."

But none of this matters much when knives flash and bullets fly. Upon witnessing Arab Israeli leaders pit their supporters against the majority, an Israeli Jew cannot help but wonder: What do they want to achieve? What are they aiming for?

Their actions are unlikely to bring about a Palestinian state, but they are very likely to ruin Jewish-Arab relations within Israel and lead to a violent backlash that is costly both economically and in human life. If Jews will no longer shop in Arab markets or employ Arab workers, the Arab Israeli community will suffer.

Arab-Israeli leaders are careful to say they oppose violence. But to many Jews their words feel hollow. On Wednesday, in a Knesset shouting match, Zeev Elkin, a minister from the Likud party, denounced an Arab member, Ahmad Tibi, telling him: "You and your comrades are responsible for the blood spilled both of Jews and Arabs." This was unfortunate words but an honest expression of the way many Jews in Israel feel today.

A responsible Arab leadership would consider these feelings and remember that the Arab community has a stake in coexistence, in Israel's success, and in partnership with the Jewish majority. They may also be wise to remember that provoking a tense majority could have grave consequences, first and foremost, for the minority population.

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