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THE RULING CLASS:
How They Corrupted America and
What We Can Do About It

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Introduction by Rush Limbaugh

... The Ruling Class is the subject of this wonderfully written and crafted essay by Codevilla, who is a professor emeritus at Boston University. We belong to what Professor Codevilla calls the Country Class, meaning not the hick class, but the country. We are the country. The Ruling Class is a minority. Fewer than 15 percent of Americans agree with the thought process, philosophies, goals, and objectives of the Ruling Class. We in the Country Class, we believe in merit. We rise or fall based on merit. We believe that a good GPA is what’s necessary to get you into college. We believe that performing well on the job is how you get promoted and how you get paid well. That is not true for the Ruling Class. In fact, for them, merit is looked down upon. As Professor Codevilla points out, these people are a minority, and they have no relationship to the rest of us in the Country Class. Yet somehow we are now being ruled—not governed—by these people. They have certain strange beliefs. One of these is that the United States is the problem in the world. Another is that those of us not in the Ruling Class haven’t got the smarts to know what’s best for ourselves. They think they have to decide for us. ...
FOREWORD

... While most Americans pray to the God who created us in His own image, our Ruling Class prays to themselves as saviors of the planet and as shapers of mankind in their own image. While the Ruling Class thinks that Americans are unfit to run their own lives, most Americans have noticed that our Ruling Class has lost every war it has fought, run up an unpayable national debt, and generally made life worse.

... Because any standard of right and wrong beyond the Ruling Class’ reach challenges its self-conception, its greatest concern has been to denigrate the American people’s devotion to God, because the Ruling Class accepts no standard it cannot control. Because natural families represent affections into which government has difficulty intruding, and because natural families educate the children they produce, the Ruling Class has done its best to undermine marriage and to take as much authority from parents as it can.

CHAPTER 2 - The Ruling Class

Today’s Ruling Class, from Boston to San Diego, was formed by an educational system that exposed them to the same ideas and gave them remarkably uniform guidance, as well as tastes and habits. These amount to a social canon of judgments about good and evil, complete with secular sacred history, sins (against minorities and the environment), and saints. Using the right words and avoiding the wrong ones when referring to such matters—speaking the “in” language—serves as a badge of identity. Regardless of what business or profession they are in, their road up included government channels and government money, because as government has grown, the boundary between it and the rest of American life has become indistinct. Many in the Ruling Class began their careers in government and leveraged their way into the private sector. Some (e.g., Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner) have never held a non-government job. Hence, whether formally in government, out of it, or halfway in, America’s Ruling Class speaks the language and has the tastes, habits, and tools of bureaucrats. It rules uneasily over the majority of Americans who are not oriented to government.


Professional prominence or position will not secure a place in the Ruling Class any more than mere money. In fact, it is possible to be an official of a major corporation or a member of the U.S. Supreme Court (just ask Justice Clarence Thomas), or even president of the nation (Ronald Reagan), and not be taken seriously by the Ruling Class. Like a fraternity, this class requires, above all, comity—being in with the right people, giving the required signs that one is on the right side, and joining in despising the Outs. Once an official or professional shows that he shares the manners, the tastes, and the interests of the class, gives lip service to its ideals and shibboleths, and is willing to accommodate the interests of its senior members, he gains the presumption of competence as well as access to the establishment’s countless profitable connections. Republicans salivate for that status. If, for example, you were Laurence Tribe in 1984, Harvard professor of law and leftist pillar of the establishment, you could “write” your magnum opus by using the work of your student assistants, including Ron Klain. A decade later, after Klain admitted to having written some parts of the book, and other parts were found to be verbatim or paraphrases of a book published in 1974, you could claim (perhaps correctly) that your plagiarism was “inadvertent,” and you could count on the law school’s dean, Elena Kagan, to appoint a committee (including former and future Harvard President Derek Bok) that would issue a secret report that “closed” the incident. (Incidentally, Kagan ended up a justice of the Supreme Court.) Not one of these people did their jobs—the professor did not write the book himself, the professor or some assistant plagiarized instead of researching, the dean and the committee did not hold the professor accountable—and yet all ended up rewarded. To
corruption, the Ruling Class adds hypocrisy: for example, if non-Ruling Class people write learned papers and lead distinguished careers in climatology at, say, MIT (Richard Lindzen) or UVA (S. Fred Singer), this is not enough for their questions about


America’s top-tier schools advertise that they lower their standards for “minorities” (not including Asians). Moreover, the whites they admit are not necessarily the ones with the best SAT scores. Rather, they tend to be children of members of the upper-middle class or aspirants of the Ruling Class. Few whites from humble backgrounds, never mind Christians, are to be found. The top schools select for compatibility, not excellence. Moreover, it is an open secret that the “best” colleges require the least work and give out the highest grade-point averages. These schools have been the national leaders in grade inflation. At Stanford, where the most common grade is an A, a student complained to the Daily that his classes’ academic content got in the way of the reason he had chosen the school—learning how to run the country.


By 1853, when Senator John Pettit of Ohio called “all men are created equal” “a self-evident lie,” much of America’s educated class had already absorbed the “scientific” notion (which Darwin only popularized) that man is the product of chance mutation and natural selection of the fittest.


[Woodrow] Wilson was the first American statesman to argue that the Founders had done badly by depriving the U.S. government of the power to reshape American society.


As the saying goes, they came to Washington to do good, and stayed to do well.

Truly, after Barack Obama described his opponents’ clinging to “God and guns” as a characteristic of inferior Americans, he justified himself by pointing out he had said “what everybody knows is true.”

CHAPTER 3 - Power and Privilege

... our Ruling Class’ first priority in any and all matters, its solution to any and all problems, is to increase the power of the government—meaning of those who run it, meaning themselves. Secondly it is to recompense political supporters with public money, privileged jobs, contracts, etc. That is why our Ruling Class’ solution, not just for economic downturns and social ills but also for hurricanes and tornadoes, global cooling and global warming, has been to claim more power for itself. ... But there can be no doubt that such power and money makes Americans ever more dependent on those who wield it.


By taxing and parceling out more than a third of what Americans produce, through regulations that reach deep into American life, our Ruling Class is making itself the arbiter of wealth and poverty. ... By endowing some in society with the power to force others to sell cheaper than they would like to, and forcing others yet to buy at higher prices—or even to buy in the first place—modern government makes valuable some things that are not, and devalues others that are. Whatever else government may be, it is inherently a factory of privilege and inequality. Thus, if you are not among the favored guests at the table where officials make detailed lists of who is to receive what at whose expense, you are on the menu. Eventually, pretending forcibly that valueless things have value dilutes the currency’s value for all. But that matters not at all to those at the table.

Laws and regulations nowadays are longer than ever, because length is needed to specify how people will be treated unequally. For example, the healthcare bill of 2010 takes more than 2,700 pages to make sure not just that some states will be treated differently from others because their senators offered key political support, but more importantly to codify bargains between the government and various parts of the healthcare industry, state governments, and large employers regarding who would receive what benefits (e.g., public employee unions and auto workers) and who would pass what indirect taxes on to the general public. The financial regulation bill of 2010, far from setting unequivocal rules for the entire financial industry in few words, spends some 2,500 pages tilting the field toward some and away from others. After the bill’s passage, the New York Times reported that the financial industry’s larger firms were hiring highly paid former federal regulators to conduct the negotiations that would spell out the law’s real meaning for each of them.
Even more significantly, these and other products of Democratic and Republican administrations and Congresses empower countless boards and commissions to arbitrarily protect some persons and companies while ruining others. These laws’ real meaning emerges from the charters that these boards and commissions write for themselves, from the identities of the persons appointed to run them, and from the policies on which they settle. Thus, in 2008, the Republican administration first bailed out Bear Stearns, then let Lehman Brothers sink in the ensuing panic, but then rescued Goldman Sachs by infusing cash into its principal debtor, AIG. Then its Democratic successor used similarly naked discretionary power (and money appropriated for another purpose) to give major stakes in the auto industry to labor unions that support it. Nowadays, the members of our Ruling Class admit that they do not read the laws. They don’t have to! Because modern laws are primarily grants of discretion, all anybody has to know about them is whom they empower.

This defines “crony capitalism.” The regulators and the regulated become indistinguishable, and they prosper together because they have the power to restrict the public’s choices in ways that channel money to themselves and their political supporters. Most of the world is too well acquainted with this way of economic life. Americans are just starting to find out. By making economic rules dependent on discretion, our bipartisan Ruling Class teaches that prosperity is to be bought with the coin of political support. Thus in the 1990s and 2000s, as Democrats and Republicans forced banks to make loans for houses to people and at rates they would not otherwise have considered, builders and investors had every reason to make as much money as they could from the ensuing inflation of housing prices. When the bubble burst, only those connected with the Ruling Class, at the bottom and the top, were bailed out—at the expense of the “unconnected majority.”

Similarly, by taxing the use of carbon fuels and subsidizing “alternative energy,” our Ruling Class created arguably the world’s biggest opportunity for making money out of things that few, if any, would buy absent its intervention. The prospect of legislation that would put a price on carbon emissions and allot certain amounts to certain companies set off a feeding frenzy among large companies to show support for a “green agenda,” because such allotments would be worth some $1.2 trillion in the first ten years.


The 2010 medical law is a template for the Ruling Class’ economic modus operandi: the government taxes citizens to pay for medical care and requires citizens to purchase health insurance. The money thus taken and directed is money that the citizens themselves might have used to pay for medical care. In exchange for the money, the government promises that
care will be available through its system. But then all the boards, commissions, guidelines, procedures, and “best practices” that constitute the system become the arbiters of what any citizen ends up getting. The citizen might end up dissatisfied with what the system offers. But when he gave up his money, he gave up the power to choose, and became dependent on all the boards and commissions that his money also pays for and that raise the cost of care.


In sum, our Ruling Class’ economics aim not at making us wealthier, but at making us more dependent. Thus does it deny the principle of human equality.


... Wilson wrote that competent government must be like “a foreman [who] take[s] a hand in the work which he guides; and so I suppose our legislation must be likened to a poor foreman, because it stands altogether apart from that work which it is set to see well done.” A competent government must also have full power “to remedy the mistakes of the legislation of the past.” So Wilson, and the class in which he was so prominent, simply “pushed the envelope” of constitutional limits, especially during “crises,” slowly, practically, to craft a “living” Constitution that does not so much restrict government as it confers “positive rights”—meaning charters of government power. Thus they slowly buried eighteenth-century words with twentieth-century practice.


In America, ever more since the 1930s—elsewhere in the world this practice is ubiquitous and long-standing—government has designated certain individuals, companies, and organizations within each of society’s sectors as (junior) partners in elaborating laws and administrative rules for those sectors. The government empowers the persons it has chosen over those not chosen, deems them the sector’s true representatives, and rewards them. They become part of the Ruling Class.

Thus in 2009–10, the American Medical Association (AMA) strongly supported the new medical care law, which the administration touted as having the support of “the doctors,” even though the vast majority of America’s 975,000 physicians opposed it. Those who run the AMA, however, have a government contract as exclusive providers of the codes by which physicians and hospitals bill the government for their services. The millions of dollars that flow thereby to
the AMA’s officers keep them in line, while the impracticality of doing without the billing codes tamps down rebellion in the doctors’ ranks. When the administration wanted to bolster its case that the state of Arizona’s enforcement of federal immigration laws was offensive to Hispanics, the National Association of Chiefs of Police—whose officials depend on the administration for their salaries—issued a statement claiming that the laws would endanger all Americans by raising Hispanics’ animosity. This reflected conversations with the administration rather than a vote of the nation’s police chiefs.

Similarly, modern labor unions are no longer bunches of workers banding together, and are instead groups of persons bundled under the aegis of an organization chosen jointly by employers and government. The U.S. labor movement now consists almost exclusively of government employees, employees of companies doing government contracts, or companies that are subsidized by government. Like their counterparts around the world, they trade political contributions and votes for guaranteed contracts. . . . The union’s leadership is part of the Ruling Class’ beating heart.


The point is that a doctor, a building contractor, a janitor, or a schoolteacher only counts in today’s America insofar as he is part of the hierarchy of a sector organization affiliated with the Ruling Class. Less and less do such persons count as voters.

Ordinary people have also gone a long way toward losing equal treatment under the law. The America described in civics books—in which no one could be convicted or fined except by a jury of his peers for having violated laws passed by elected representatives—started disappearing when the New Deal inaugurated today’s administrative state, in which bureaucrats make, enforce, and adjudicate nearly all the rules. Today’s legal and administrative texts are incomprehensibly detailed and freighted with provisions crafted specifically to affect equal individuals unequally. The bureaucrats do not enforce the rules themselves so much as whatever “agency policy” they choose to draw from them in any given case. If you protest any “agency policy,” you will be informed that it was formulated with input from “the public”—but not from the likes of you.


In 2010 a Federal Judge declared “unconstitutional” the people of California’s referendum approval of a state constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Consider: with which constitution was the people of California’s action inconsistent?
Certainly not with the US Constitution, ratified by the American people in 1787, or with any amendment thereto. That Constitution does not mention marriage, any more than abortion. Moreover, any reference to what those who wrote and ratified that Constitution had in mind when they thought of marriage or abortion lends no support whatever to the notion that restricting marriage to one man and one woman was repugnant to them any more than restricting abortion was.

So, in relation to which Constitution is the people of California’s action “unconstitutional”? Answer: the people of California’s insistence that marriage is between one man and one woman runs against the Constitution imagined by the judge and supported by the Ruling Class. But that raises the most important questions: What obligation has anyone to obey that Constitution? Whoever agreed to it? No one even knows what it might say on any subject from one day to the next.

Are the words of the Constitution and laws to be understood according to the dictionary and grammar book? The 2010 confirmation hearing for Elena Kagan give us the Ruling Class’ answer. On the second day of the hearing, Kagan engaged in what seemed like a scripted exchange with committee chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT). Leahy said that some legal scholars believe that the Constitution is what the words in the document say, while others believe that those words’ meaning must change with changing circumstances and needs, and thus that we have a “living Constitution.” Kagan answered that she saw merit in both arguments, and that there are some cases in which the words mean what the dictionary says, and others in which it is necessary to find them compatible with what needs to be done, and that judges must decide on a case-by-case basis. This was supposed to show Kagan’s moderation.

It takes but a little thought to realize that the power to decide when words mean what they say and when they do not is the power to do so whenever one wants, for whatever purpose. After all, the reason that kings have traditionally opposed constitutions is that if a constitution has any meaning at all, it is some kind of restraint on government. But if government can decide that the constitution contains things that it does not, and allows things that it forbids, then adieu to the rule of law.

By 2010, some in the Ruling Class felt confident enough to dispense with the charade. Asked what in the Constitution allows Congress and the president to force every American to purchase health insurance, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi replied: “Are you kidding? Are you kidding?” It’s no surprise, then, that lower court judges and bureaucrats take liberties with laws, regulations, and contracts. That’s why legal words that say you are in the right avail you less in today’s America than being on the right side of the persons who decide what they want those words to mean.
Since marriage is the family's fertile seed, government at all levels, along with "mainstream" academics and media, have waged war on it. They legislate, regulate, and exhort in support not of "the family"—meaning married parents raising children—but rather of "families," meaning mostly households based on something other than marriage. The institution of no-fault divorce diminished the distinction between cohabitation and marriage, except that husbands are financially responsible for the children they father, while out of wedlock fathers are not. The tax code penalizes marriage and forces those married couples who raise their own children to subsidize child care for those who do not. Top Republicans and Democrats have also led the society away from the very notion of marital fidelity by precept, as well as by parading their affairs. For example, in 1997, the Democratic administration's secretary of defense and the Republican Senate majority leader (joined by the New York Times et al.) condemned the military's practice of punishing officers who had extramarital affairs. While the military had assumed that honoring marital vows was as fundamental to the integrity of its units as it is to that of society, consensus at the top declared that incest on fidelity is "contrary to societal norms."

Not surprisingly, rates of marriage in America have decreased as out-of-wedlock births have increased. The biggest demographic consequences has been about one in five of all households are women alone or with children, in which case they have about a four in ten chance of living in poverty. Since unmarried mothers often are or expect to be clients of government services, it is not surprising that they are among the Democratic Party's most faithful voters.

While our Ruling Class teaches that relationships among men, women, and children are contingent, it also insists that the relationship between each of them and the state is fundamental. That is why people like Hillary Clinton have written law review articles and books advocating a direct relationship between the government and children, effectively abolishing the presumption of parental authority. Hence, where as within living memory school nurses could not administer an aspirin to a child without the parents' consent, the people who run America's schools nowadays administer pregnancy tests and ship girls off to abortion clinics without the parents' knowledge. Parents are not allowed to object to what their children are taught. But the government may— and often does—object to how parents raise children. The Ruling Class' assumption is that what it mandates for children is correct ipso facto, while what parents do is potentially abusive. It only takes in an anonymous accusation of abuse for parents to be taken away in handcuffs until they prove their innocence. Only sheer political weight (and in California, just barely) has preserved parents' right to home-school their children against the Ruling Class' desire to accomplish what Woodrow Wilson stole year and for: "to make young gentleman as unlike their fathers as possible."

At stake are the most important questions: what is the right way for human beings to live? By what standard is anything true or good? Who gets to decide what? In posted in Wilson's words and explicit in our Ruling Class' actions is the dismissal of the answers that most Americans would give to these
questions. The dismissal of the American people’s intellectual, spiritual, and moral substance is the very heart of what our Ruling Class is about. Its principal article of faith, its claim to the right to decide for others, is precisely that it knows things scientifically, and operates by standards beyond others' comprehension of what they claim are ultimate truths.

While the unenlightened believe that man is created in the image and likeness of God, and that we are subject to His and His nature's laws, the enlightened know that we are products of evolution, driven by chance, the environment, and the wheels to primacy. While the unenlightened are stuck with the antiquated notion that ordinary human minds can reach objective judgments about good and evil, better and worse through reason, the enlightened know that all such judgments are subjective, and that ordinary people can no more be trusted with reason than they can with guns. Because ordinary people will pervert reason with ideology, religion, or interest, science is "science" only in the "right" hands. Consensus among the right people is the only standard of truth. Facts and logic matter only in so far as proper authority acknowledges them.

CHAPTER 4 - The Country Class

Describing America's Country Class is problematic because it is so heterogeneous. It has no privileged podiums, and it speaks with many voices, which are often inharmonious. It shares above all the desire to be rid of rulers it regards as inept and haughty. It defines itself practically in terms of reflexive reactions against the rulers' defining ideas and proclivities—e.g., ever-higher taxes and expanding government, subsidizing political favorites, social engineering, approval of abortion, etc. Many want to restore a way of life that has been largely superseded. The Country Class, like the Ruling Class, includes the professionally accomplished and the mediocre, the geniuses and the dolts. Demographically, the Country Class is the Other Side of the Ruling Class' coin: its most distinguishing characteristics our marriage, children, and religious practice. Politically, the Country Class may well be defined in terms of its lack of connection with government, and above all but attitudes opposite to those of the Ruling Class.


... In their view, government owes equal treatment to its people, rather than action to correct what anyone perceives as imbalance or grievance. Hence, they tend to oppose special treatment, whether for corporations or for social categories. Rather than gaining government regulations, those in the Country Class tried to stay as far from them as possible. The Country Class knows that the government is there to serve the strong: the Ruling Class' members and supporters.


The Country Class thinks that individuals, and in special circumstances local elected officials--not Federal or state bureaucrats-- have the right to decide what kind of light bulbs a home should have, how much water should flow from a shower nozzle, what kind of toilet you should install. Country Class people are not happy with automobiles designed to meet evermore regulations, which have made these vehicles virtually impossible to fix without specialized equipment run by technicians. Losing the capacity to get your own car going means losing some more autonomy, becoming further subjected to the workings of a "system" that seems to produce mainly less freedom and more dependency on people less and less like yourself.

Whereas rejection of human equality is the Ruling Class' defining feature, most of the Country Class believes that all men are created equal. While some believe in human equality and abhor privilege for religious or ideological reasons, many more do so, as it were, out of Newton's First Law of Motion: "bodies in motion tend to remain in motion." Equality is so fundamental to everything American, so ingrained in how we regard and deal with one another, and the notion that America is classless is so fundamental to our self-conception, that unless someone is taught, very carefully taught, that he is superior or inferior to others, he is likely to agree, without much thought, that the declaration of independence is right: "all men are created equal." Presuming equality made it difficult for the Country Class to notice that a class of people was carefully taught the contrary.


While the Ruling Class prods Americans to become more like Europeans, and talks as if America should move up to" world standards," the Country Class believes that America's ways are superior to the rest of the world's, and regards most of mankind as less free, less prosperous, and less virtuous than Americans. . . .


Small, rural public schools are a special case because parents can influence the content and standards of education. They typically have the lowest per-pupil expenditures (Utah spends only $5,257 per pupil) and produces America's highest SAT scores, while the states that spend the most produced the lowest. If one divides the number per capita of dollars spent by any jurisdiction by the total SAT points scored by students in those jurisdictions, Utah gets 2.1 SAT points per dollar, while the District of Columbia, which spends three times as much as Utah, gets only .07. The Country Class has learned through bitter experience, and is ever less shy about the fact that parents have proven to be better guides to educating the next generation then have highly credentialed and paid experts wielding government power.

CHAPTER 5 - Agendas Revolutionary?

The Ruling Class' manifold efforts to discredit and drive worship of God out of public life—not even in the Soviet Union were students arrested for wearing crosses or praying, or reading the Bible on school property, as some US localities have done in response to Supreme Court rulings—convinced many among the vast majority of Americans who believe and pray that today's regime is hostile to the most important things of all. Every December, they are reminded that the ruling class deems the very word "Christmas" to be offensive. Every time they try to manifest their religious identity in public affairs, they are delusional accusations of being "American Taliban" trying to set up a "theocracy." Let members of the Country Class objects to anything the Ruling Class says or does, and likely as not their objection will be characterized as "religious"-- that is to say, irrational, not to be considered on a par with the "science" of which the Ruling Class is the sole legitimate interpreter. Because aggressive, intolerant secularism is the moral and intellectual basis of the Ruling Class' claim to rule, resistance to that rule, whether to the immoralities of economic subsidies and privileges, or to the violation of the principle of equal treatment under the law, or to its seizure of children's education, must deal with secularism's intellectual and moral code. This lies beyond the boundaries of politics as that term is commonly understood.

CHAPTER 6 - How?

Early twenty-first-century American political struggles transcend the Democratic—but mostly the Republican—Party. As we have noted, only a fourth of those who vote Republican are happy about it. Few who will vote Republican in 2010 and 2012 will do so for the sake of Republican "views and stands, whatever they are." In short, the Republican Party lives by default, because, in the short term, the country class has no alternative but to channel its political efforts through Republicans. But generic Republican "views and stands" and candidates have been losers. As it was before, and has been after Ronald Reagan, the Republican Party has zero claim to the Country Class' trust because it does not live to represent the Country Class. Rather, those who dominated the Party have served that themselves and co-opted into the Ruling Class persons whom the electorate elected to oppose that class. The few who tried to make the Republican Party the representative of Republican voters, the party treated as rebels. The party helped defeat Barry Goldwater. When it failed to stop Ronald Reagan, it settled his and subsequent Republican administrations with establishmentarians who, under the Bush family, repudiated Reagan's principles as much as they could. Barack Obama exaggerated in charging that the Republicans had driven the country "into the ditch" all alone. But they had a big, unforgettable hand in it. Republican voters, never mind the larger Country Class, have little reason to believe that the party is on their side. Republicans who imagine that the Country Class votes they will receive in 2010 and perhaps 2012 are for them, rather than against the Ruling Class, will have rude awakenings.


... How ready, willing, and able is the Country Class to do more than vote every couple of years for people about whom it does not know and on issues it does not care to understand? Above all, how many in the Country Class are ready, willing, and able to run local affairs? Just as in all cases of rehab, everything depends on how much the patient puts into his well-being.


... The shorter the electoral leash, the likelier and official is to have his chain yanked by voters, . . . Only citizens' understanding of and commitment to law can possibly reverse the patent disregard for the Constitution and statutes that has permeated American life.


For the Country Class, winning elections will be the easy part. Avoiding bitter partisan government on the one hand, and co-option into the Ruling Class on the other, will be harder. Harder yet will be
sweeping away a half century’s accretions of bad habits. Taking care to preserve the good among them is hard enough; establishing, even reestablishing, a set of better institutions and habits is much harder. The Country Class’ greatest difficulty will be to enable a revolution to take place without imposing it. America has been imposed on enough.