

CORBIS

New York's great new wave of immigration is not black or Latino, much less Middle Eastern or European, but Asian, and especially Southeast Asian. Over the decade of the 1990's, the number of white students declined ten percent (177,000 to 160,000), while the number of black students rose four percent (354,000 to 367,000), Hispanic students 22 percent (325,000 to 397,000)—and Asian students 67 percent (73,000 to 122,000). Brainy tyros they were, too. Each newly created trade school in the system had to enroll its share of students with subpar reading scores. Old hands knew that the trick was, in the words of one assistant principal, to “go down the lists and check off every Asian name you come to. If they have low scores, all that means is they just came through Immigration. Give them six months, and they'll lift your whole boat for you.”

At least three years before 9/11, the mating game in New York got turned on its head. By this past summer, the ratio of girls to boys in Manhattan was so girl-heavy (as first reported in *The Observer* in July) that boys no longer

even bothered expending the time and energy required to chat girls up in bars. They just handed every likely lovely their business card and waited for the calls, which they got with an almost lust-busting inevitability. The mantra for such young men about town had always been “You can't be too rich or too thin.” Last summer, they were all enrolling in fitness centers that looked like cocktail lounges with Cybex machines, and the mantra went: “Pecs, abs, delts, lats, obliques, traps and quads—you can't be too rich or too ripped.”

Now that's change.

The changes to look for next? It's hard not to see them coming. The girls will either read *The Rules*, which say that girls must never ring up boys, or else move to Boston and Cambridge, where, for some reason, when Cupid strikes, the targets stay struck and get married. New York's Asians

will finally become a bloc no politician can write off, which will be obvious to all when the Mayors start making ritual visits—and they will—to the other side of the international date line. Meanwhile, Latinos will take their turn dominating the ranks of public employees, from the marriage-bureau clerks to the school principals, just like the Irish, Italians, Jews and African-Americans before them. The Asians will get theirs later. The artists and architects will finally shake the overvalued urge known as “style” and head in a revolutionary direction known as “content.” The cabby and the shrink will be succeeded as New York characters by the house-call computer swami and the diversity consultant. The bond market will become a heaving crap shoot, and the line bankers, as well as the I-bankers, will have themselves a boom with esoteric instruments such as Joshua Tree Federal 10-years. (I didn't say when.) The aging, flimsy glass-box office buildings of midtown and lower Manhattan will house artists' studios. (Nice light, but don't give up your lease in Jersey City yet.)

One thing won't change: lunch. 🐭

Don't Cry for Us, Oklahoma

BY JOHN STRAUSBAUGH

The vultures from the Grief Industry have been circling over Manhattan since a certain morning last September. Their work done in Columbine, in Oklahoma City, in all those other places stricken by acts of violence or sudden destruction, they flocked east to New York City, bringing with them their long dogooder faces and their pious rhetoric about “healing” and “bereavement” and “trauma” and “spirituality” and “recovery.”

One of those vultures landed two Sundays ago in the pages of *The New York Times*, offering a nearly pornographically mawkish argument that since Oklahoma City and New York City have both been sites of terrorist attacks, they are now joined in “A Sisterhood of Grief.”

“Many in Oklahoma City know too well the new world New Yorkers now live in,” Edward T. Linenthal intoned. “Family members of the dead and survivors have traveled from Oklahoma to New York to be at the trade center site with their new sisters and brothers...”

Their new sisters and brothers. We are family. And guys like this are our new family counselors. Oy.

“Nowhere did the events of Sept. 11 resonate more than in Oklahoma City, New York's new sister city. For many in Oklahoma, images of smoking ruins, dazed survivors and grim rescue workers resurrected the slumbering wounds of April 19, 1995, when 168 died.

“New York now belongs to what some in Oklahoma City call ‘the trauma club.’ Both cities are joined at the hip through bereavement. Amid the torrent of words raining on New York, as we all still try to make sense of Sept. 11, the wisest thoughts, I think, will come from the Oklahomans.

“Their words will be firm, honest, gentle... They will help those wounded in mind, body and spirit, not by talking about lessons, but by helping them navigate the contours of an alien landscape. Theirs will be voices of experience, seeking to bring

John Strausbaugh is editor of the *New York Press*.



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kindness to those no longer just fellow citizens, but soul mates.”

Oh my God, what hideous grief-counselor palaver. You can almost see the author in his deacon’s weeds, wringing his bony hands and crying big crocodile tears of phony sympathy for all us poor brothers and sisters in sorrow.

Listen, if Oklahomans really have become the professional bereavers this guy portrays them as, and if droves of them really are descending upon New York City with gentle words of experience to share with their new soul mates, I have some advice for them: Shut up. And stay home. And keep the trauma club membership cards, thank you very much.

Linenthal is “a professor of religion and American culture at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh,” and the author of a book called *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*. (That title is a giveaway: it’s in this guy’s professional interest to keep Oklahoma City “in American memory.”) I don’t know where he’s from originally, or how much time he’s ever spent in New York City, but this piece suggested he understands nothing about New York or New Yorkers.

I’ve never been to Oklahoma City—I’m as clueless about it as Linenthal is about New York City. But I bet it has a lot more in common with the many big-little white-bread Midwest/Western cow towns I have seen—St. Louis, Kansas City, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Denver, etc., etc., etc.—than with New York City. The one parallel linking the two cities, that they’ve both been sites of terrorist attacks, is so obvious and superficial as to be a useless cliché. Why isn’t Washington, DC, mentioned

as a third sister? (Of course, maybe he’s retooling this piece for *The Washington Post*, with proper find-and-replace substitutions. In fact, from what I’ve experienced of the cowering mood in DC, the Grief Industry might do well to shift its focus there.)

What about London, Paris, Jerusalem, Belfast, all terrorist favorites? What about all the other cities and towns around this country that have been sites of disastrous events, with multiple deaths and/or large-scale destruction—earthquakes, twisters, floods, fires, race riots, mad gunmen, ferries sunk, bridges collapsed, chemicals spilled? Are they all our sisters-in-grief too? Have we become a Nation of Grief? (Linenthal specifically indicates that indeed we have.) Is New York to be invaded by well-meaning Frenchies, West Virginians, Brits and Los Angelenos, all intent on talking us through these terrible times?

Please, all of you, if that’s your intent, stay away.

As a representative of the Grief Industry, Linenthal is, of course, against rebuilding at the World Trade Center site, preferring an Oklahoma City-style memorial park of some sort.

“To respond well to the fullness of such events, we cannot forget how they live on long after the fact,” he opines. “In both cities, there were immediate calls for the reconstruction of the ravaged buildings as an act of defiance against the terrorism, and a desire to ‘get back to normal.’ In Oklahoma City, however, many argued that the site was sacred ground. The conviction that rebuilding would be an offense against the dead won the day...”

“Were I to make an argument for memorialization, the first sentence would be:

“An unprecedented act of terrorism on American soil demands the unprecedented use of some of the most valuable real estate in New York City as memorial space.”

Yes, Dr. Grief, no doubt you would write that. Who asked you?

“It was astonishing and painful one month after Sept. 11 to hear people proclaim that it was time to ‘move on,’ that we needed to put mourning and grieving ‘behind us,’” Linenthal declares. “What disrespect for the enormity of the event. What disrespect to think that a month’s pause in the work of the everyday was considered enough before consigning the thousands of the dead to the anonymity of a cultural body count. Before there is any talk of healing, there must be reflection, an awe-filled accounting of what was lost. Too often the rhetoric of healing seeks not to bind spiritual wounds, but aims to resolve them too quickly.”

What is this? Do I detect a rift between the competing Grief Industry and Healing Industry? Does Dr. Grief think the Healing Industry is muscling in on his turf too soon?

And anyway, who is this Oshkosh professor to tell any New Yorkers they’re showing disrespect? New Yorkers have in fact shown tremendous respect for “the enormity of the event,” and for all its victims, and for all those involved in rescue and recovery efforts. We’ve been grieving in our own way, pal. We’ve been holding our funerals and memorial services and concerts; we volunteered to over-capacity and raised millions of dollars in aid; we’ve been having the most subdued and contemplative holiday season in memory. It’s an insult—an astonishing and painful one—to have this Hickville academic tell us we’re not grieving the right way, like the good survivors of Oklahoma City. And so typical of the Olympians at *The New York Times*, our make-believe hometown daily, to have printed this ignorant contumely, this self-serving insensitivity hiding under the mourning rags of false empathy.

We’re New Yorkers. We’re not Oklahomans, and this ain’t Oshkosh. We know how to grieve. We also believe in picking ourselves up and moving on. That’s how we deal. This city isn’t anywhere near having bounced back yet, but it will, because that’s what New York City is all about. If we recover too fast for you, Dr. Grief, stay in Oshkosh and promote your book in Columbine. ↘

You deserve a factual look at...

Those "Palestinian Refugees"

Who are they, what is the real story?

Although, in view of the violence of the Palestinians, negotiations with them would seem fruitless, or at least a long way off, one issue that will arise again is that of the "Palestinian Refugees." It has been a sticking point in past negotiations and will without question arise again. These "refugees" are the children and mostly grandchildren of those who left Israel during the 1948 War of Independence. Yasser Arafat insists that there can be no peace unless those "refugees" are allowed to "return" to Israel.

What are the facts?

650,000 "refugees" swell to 5 million. You have heard about those "Palestinian refugees", who claim "right of return" to Israel. Of course, virtually none of them ever lived in Israel -- they are the children and mostly grandchildren of those who fled in 1948. The total number of those who fled in 1948 is estimated to have been about 650,000. Now the number who wish to return has swollen to almost five million!

How did this exodus come about? In 1948, on the day of the proclamation of the State of Israel, five Arab armies invaded the new country from all sides. In frightful radio broadcasts, they urged the Arabs living there to leave, so that the invading armies could operate without interference. They could return after the expected quick victory in that "holy war", get their property back -- and that of the Jews. Things turned out differently. The invading armies were defeated. Those who had left became refugees -- people without a country. Those who stayed, and their children, are full-fledged citizens of the state of Israel.

These so-called "Palestinian refugees" have not been allowed to settle in the "indivisible Arab nation". They have been supported in camps since 1948. So far, close to \$1.8 billion has been spent on their maintenance. No end is in sight. Who pays for that? You guessed it: Through UNWRA Relief, the United States contributes more than 60% of the total cost.

The Arab countries, among them some of the richest in the world who fritter away their enormous fortunes on undreamed luxuries, are satisfied to leave their Arab brethren in those miserable camps. They have never contributed a penny to their maintenance.

Another side of the "refugee" story. But there is another side to the "refugee" story. Little is heard of the 800,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries, who fled those countries to settle in the newly formed Jewish State of Israel. Every one of those refugees was immediately accepted, resettled, taken care of, and

given full citizenship by the fledgling, impoverished, and embattled Jewish State. There never has been, and there certainly is not now, a Jewish "refugee" camp in Israel or anywhere else.

The Arab "refugees" who fled Israel left little wealth and little history, since most of them had not come to "Palestine" until Jewish settlers opened economic opportunities in what had been a desolate country for centuries. But the Jews of Arab lands have a history going back thousands of years. When forced to flee, they left behind land, wealth, and a long history. They arrived in Israel, quite literally only "with their shirts on their backs." They now make up almost 60% of the vibrant and productive population of Israel. What have the Arabs, the

The Arabs are committed not to allow any "non-believers" to be in control of any part of the Middle East. That is the real cause of the "Palestinian refugee problem."

richest people in the world, done with their "refugees" in more than 50 years? They have kept them in misery, on the dole of the world, and have taught their hopeless

youth the "skills" of suicide missions and of slaughtering defenseless and unarmed men, women, and children.

If the Arab nations truly decided to make peace with Israel and to put an end to the century-long strife, they could easily accomplish it by accepting the "Palestinian refugees" in their countries and, just as Israel did with Jewish refugees from Arab countries, integrating them into their societies and making useful citizens of them. In fact, acceptance in their countries might also be offered to the Israeli Arabs, who, despite enjoying a higher standard of living, education, and health than Arabs in any of the surrounding countries and despite having the same civil rights as Israeli Jews, are not happy to live in a Jewish state.

Population transfers are common, especially in the wake of wars. They have been practiced throughout history. In 1923, Greece and Turkey agreed to the resettlement of 2 million Greeks and 800,000 Turks; in 1945, the resettlement of 3 million Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia was arranged. Following the collapse of its North African empire, France accepted close to 1.5 million people. More than 12 million (!) Muslims and Hindus were exchanged between India and Pakistan.

It is clear that the "Palestinian refugee problem" is a red herring, kept alive by the Arab nations for their political purposes, and with cynical disregard for the great number of impoverished people who live in these camps. It is being kept alive and is being used as a "non-negotiable" bargaining chip, for the purpose of destroying the State of Israel -- a feat that the Arabs have attempted several times by military means, but which has always ended in disastrous failure. Apart from the unsolvable social problems it would create, the introduction of, say, even one-half of the 5 million who claim to be "refugees" would, with one stroke, dramatically alter the demographic makeup of the country and would inevitably destroy the Jewish State. That is of course the whole idea behind the demand for the "return of the refugees". If the Arab nations were willing to solve the "refugee problem", the legitimacy of Israel could no longer be questioned. But that is not acceptable to the Arabs. They are firmly committed not to allow Israel or any "non-believers" to be in control of any part of the Middle East. It is that, and that alone, which is the real cause of the "Palestinian refugee problem."

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AHEAD OF THE CURVE

ART LAFFER SPEAKS

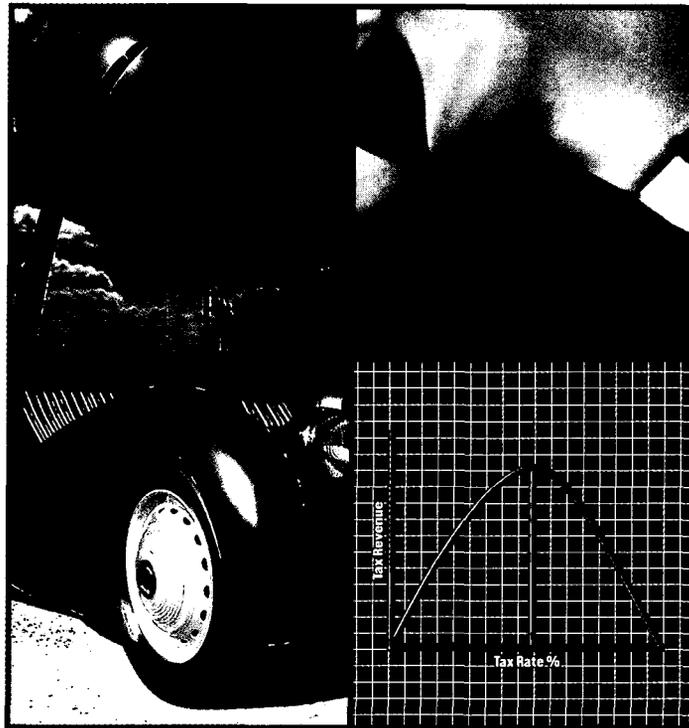
BY BRETSWANSON

It is the Friday before Christmas in California, and Arthur Laffer is hurtling down the freeway in a silver Lexus ES 400. He's treating his youngest son, Justin, 18, and eldest grandson, Kai, 13, to a semi-pro hockey game between the hometown San Diego Gulls and the Bakersfield Condors. They jump off at the exit for Kai's house, searching for the

right quiet street. "That was it!" Justin yells. Laffer whips the Lexus around and surges, then rolls into his daughter's driveway. His self-imposed 80 mile-per-hour speed limit, I'd learned, applies not just on thoroughfares but on twisty mountain roads and side streets as well. He had a minor fender-bender that very day but says there have been no major accidents in decades.

Art Laffer has been hurtling along the usually sedate byways of the dismal science for three decades, ever since he hit Washington during the Nixon administration, as the first chief economist of the Office of Management and Budget. On leave from a teaching job at the citadel of American free-market economics, the University of Chicago, he quickly impressed his OMB boss, the future Secretary of State George Shultz, with what turned out to be an uncanny prediction of the gross domestic product in 1971.

Then, on a cool autumn evening in Washington in 1974, Laffer, 35, had one of those moments that end up defining



someone for the rest of his life. Gerald Ford's chief of staff, Don Rumsfeld, and his deputy, Dick Cheney—things were different then—were sitting atop the Hotel Washington in the Two Continents lounge near the White House. Watergate and stagflation gripped the country. Ford wanted to WIN—Whip

Inflation Now!—with a five-percent tax surcharge, which was supposed to re-ignite the American economy by taking big bites out of it. Today raising tax rates in a recession seems silly to almost everyone except Tom Daschle and the junior senator from New York. In the fall of 1974, Rumsfeld and Cheney were looking

for alternatives. Happy to oblige was Laffer, who pointed to a mandala sketched on a cocktail napkin—two perpendicular lines and an arc—as the answer to the complex problems plaguing the nation. The Laffer Curve, one of the icons of supply-side economics, was born.

But when Jimmy Carter arrived, Laffer turned his back on the Washington power game, and headed off to California. Keeping in touch with his old friends, he was part of Reagan's informal team of economic advisers, but he never again took a full-time job in Washington. He taught for several more years and then started his own California-based economics consulting firm. And revealed in America's Eden, raising kids, cultivating palm trees, rearing giant turtles and helping turn Jerry Brown from whatever he was into a temporary flat-taxer for his quixotic 1992 Democratic presidential run. (What if...)

And that is where he seemed inclined to stay, the happy Hobbit of Rancho Santa Fe. But somewhere along the road that brought Republicans—and a