

[Opinion](#)  
[News](#)



by Michael Sean Winters

[View Author Profile](#)

Follow on Twitter at [@michaelswinters](#)

## [\*\*Join the Conversation\*\*](#)

September 27, 2018

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

My favorite political story of the season comes from the family of Rep. Paul Gosar whose political views are so extreme and offensive, six of his siblings came together to make an ad for Gosar's opponent. [The Washington Post has the story](#). Defending the honor of their family is a noble thing to do, and for those who think you should never air familial dirty laundry in public, I would argue it is the nutty congressman who has aired the dirt, and his siblings who are trying to apply the Clorox.

The U.S. bishops recognize that they have squandered their moral capital, but do they recognize how to get it back? Yes, they need to think through their failure to confront clergy sex abuse, but they also need to be out front defending their people, especially the immigrants. [This bishops' conference statement](#) from the migration committee chair Bishop Joe Vasquez, opposing President Trump's outrageous proposal to punish immigrants who receive public benefits, is a good start, but we need to see bishops get out of their chanceries and down to ICE detention centers and over to Catholic Charities and CLINIC offices to stand with our immigrant brothers and sisters.

[At Public Discourse](#), Professor Lee Strang replies to my concerns about second-generation originalism. I think he continues to mistake what we 21st-century RCs

mean by natural law for what late 18th-century Deists meant — and he could consult, for example, Jefferson's "Notes on Virginia" and its comments on race to see what I mean — but I remain unconvinced about the central claims of originalism. Strang, in the penultimate graph of his commentary, writes:

*Originalism today, as described by Professor Larry Solum in his [testimony](#) at the Gorsuch confirmation hearings, is committed to two propositions. First, the meaning of the Constitution's text was fixed when it was ratified. Second, judges should follow this original meaning. This fits the conception of originalism I advanced in my article, it fits Judge Bork's earlier conception, it fits the views of nearly all contemporary originalist scholars, and it fits Judge Kavanaugh's remarks.*

I don't buy it, for reasons detailed in [my review](#) of Richard Brown's book *Self-Evident Truths*, which I posted last week. The meaning of the Constitution was not "fixed" when it was ratified, at least not to the people who wrote the thing and who ratified it. Here is the central, historical fallacy of originalism.

[At Working Class Perspectives](#), Allison Hurst delves into a bunch of sociological data to show why some white working-class voters tend to support Republicans and others do not. Turns out, some working-class people, especially foremen, think of themselves as middle class. Hurst writes:

*Class is not merely an objective social position, defined by occupation and power, but also something relational whose contestation can take the form of identification. In other words, by claiming middle-classness, workers can identify with the winning side against other workers. And, vice versa: by claiming working-classness, workers can align themselves with the collective struggle against the bosses. This is not simply a matter of class consciousness, but of where one wants to align oneself.*

President Trump's pettiness never ceases to amaze. He cited his ongoing spat with Mayor Carmen Yuliz Cruz of San Juan, Puerto Rico, as the reason he opposes calls for statehood for the island. Did anyone think to tell him that Ms. Cruz belongs to the party that opposes statehood? There are many reasons to oppose it, and I think the efforts by Gov. Ricardo Rossello to use the catastrophe of Maria and economic meltdown to promote statehood is foolhardy. But, for Trump it is enough that the mayor challenged him. [AP has the story](#).

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

Editor's note: Don't miss out on Michael Sean Winters' latest: [Sign up to receive free newsletters](#) and we'll notify you when he publishes new [Distinctly Catholic](#) columns.

Advertisement