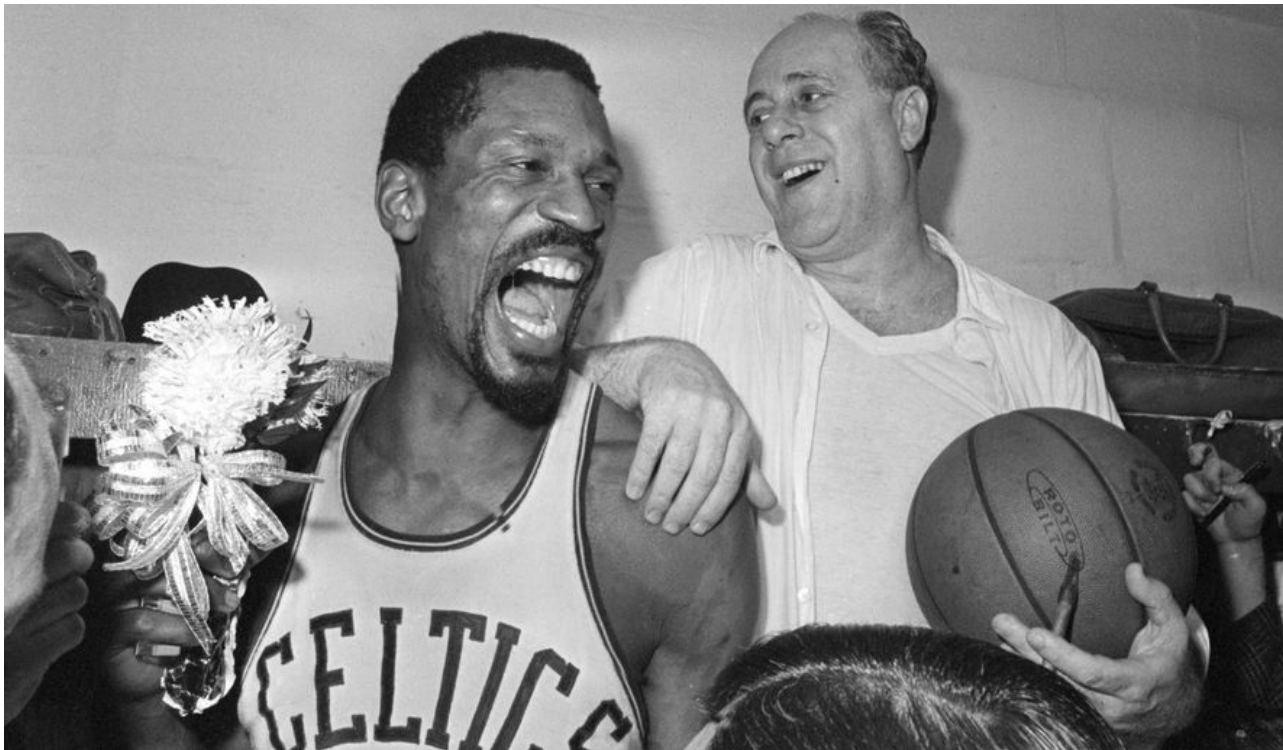


# Bill Russell would be appalled by today's NBA

The league he helped build now kowtows to China



*FILE - Boston Celtics' Bill Russell, left, holds a corsage sent to the dressing room as he celebrates with Celtics coach Red Auerbach after defeating the Los Angeles Lakers, 95-93, to win their eighth-straight NBA Championship, in Boston, in this ... more >*

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## COMMENTARY

By Michael McKenna - - Wednesday, August 3, 2022

## OPINION:

On Sunday, the greatest basketball player of all time, William Felton Russell, died at the age of 88.

In his impressive career, he won two NCAA championships (at the University of San Francisco), an Olympic gold medal and 11 NBA championships (with the Boston Celtics), and became the first Black man to coach a team in a major sports league.

More than that, Bill Russell was a warrior for others. He used his abilities and fame to advocate for equal rights and to combat the lingering disease of racism. No doubt, some of what spurred him to greatness was the treatment he received at the hands of fans and others, but he never became bitter.

He had a reputation for being tough on the court and prickly off the court. But he was kind and generous, especially to young fans, even young Knicks fans who ran across him in a hallway of the Holiday Inn in Hollywood in the summer of 1974.

Upon his death, the pro forma statements were offered by the usual suspects. NBA players, league officials and reporters were all quick to note (correctly) that Mr. Russell was a leader in the 1960s in the effort to realize the full promise of the United States.

Not surprisingly, none of those sentiments compared Mr. Russell's life's work to the embarrassment that is the NBA's relationship with communist China.

If Mr. Russell were at the start of his career now, one hopes that he would recognize and speak out against the wrongness of being on the payroll of a regime that profits from slavery, a regime that is recognized as genocidal by pretty much everyone, a regime that as recently as this week has made incendiary threats directed at American officials and the United States.

The NBA, which Mr. Russell put in so much to build (the league was just six years old when he was drafted by the Celtics), is now completely comfortable with working with a genocidal, enslaving regime, even to the point where the league will throw its own people overboard if they offend the communists.

For example, in October 2019, when communist China was bringing the formerly free city of Hong Kong to heel, Daryl Morey, the general manager of the Houston Rockets tweeted: "Fight for freedom, stand with Hong Kong." Mr. Morey quickly deleted the tweet, but the damage was done. Rather than stand for democracy, rule of law, rights, the citizens of Hong Kong and their own people, both the Rockets and the NBA caved and apologized to the communists.

The current on-court heir apparent to Mr. Russell, LeBron James, embarrassed himself and joined in, describing the situation in China as "challenging," and asking why Mr. Morley wasn't being punished by the league. It is perhaps not an accident that Mr. James picks up the occasional bag of cash from Nike (around \$32 million a year), a company with its own questionable relationship with slavery in China.

Similarly, when Enes Kanter Freedom, an 11-year NBA veteran, decided he wanted to make statements on and off the court about what the NBA celebrates — communist China and its products, like Nike — and what it does not — his brand of thought leadership — the league made a concerted effort to silence him.

As recently as last month, audio recordings appeared that made it clear that owners and NBA Commissioner Adam Silver understand and accept that the price of access to China's marketplace is silence in the face of slavery and genocide.

Given all of this, it is easy to conclude that the cash involved must be impressive. It is. As Mark Fainaru-Wada and Steve Fainaru at ESPN noted in a story in May: "The owners had reason to stay quiet: In addition to the money their teams derive from the NBA's \$5 billion business in China, many

have significant personal stakes there through their other businesses. ESPN examined the investments of 40 principal owners and found that they collectively have more than \$10 billion tied up in China.”

Despite the accolades league officials and players lavished on Mr. Russell on the occasion of his death, the reality is that they do not honor his memory nor his life’s work to help people — all people. For him, people mattered.

For the current NBA, its owners, and unfortunately many of its players, the only thing that matters is the cash.

• *Michael McKenna, a columnist for The Washington Times, is the president of MWR Strategies. He was most recently a deputy assistant to the president and deputy director of the Office of Legislative Affairs at the White House.*

# An open letter to President Biden

You profess one thing and do the precise opposite

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**COMMENTARY**

By Michael McKenna - - *Friday, October 21, 2022*

**OPINION:**

Mr. President, many of us who share your Catholic faith are worried about the condition of your soul.

In the last six months, there have been attacks on nearly 100 Catholic churches and more than six dozen pregnancy centers. During this time, you — a self-described devout Catholic who carries a rosary on his person to remind you of the sacrifice of Mary, Mother of God, whose own pregnancy led to the redemption of the world — have remained silent with respect to these attacks.

Instead of speaking out as the attacks have escalated, you instead have made it clear that you intend to use the full weight of the federal government — which you command and direct — to ensure that abortion and its providers retain all of their privileges.

In addition, it has come to light that the Department of Justice, no doubt at your direction and presumably in concert with the FBI, has created a task force directed specifically at pro-life advocates, and, perhaps not

coincidentally, there have been several recent high-profile arrests of such advocates.

Again, you have remained as silent as the grave as the federal government attacks pro-lifers while ignoring the fire-bombings and other attacks on our institutions (still waiting for the first arrest in any of those attacks).

Moreover, in this election cycle, you have actively participated in a political campaign that has at its core the preservation of the unfettered right to abortion.

That is, of course, your prerogative. But all of this is clearly and unambiguously contrary to the teaching of our shared religion.

The Catholic Church could not be any clearer with respect to this issue. Your own church has consistently condemned abortion as the direct and purposeful taking of the life of the unborn child. Catholics are required to believe and act on the belief that all life is sacred from conception until natural death, and the taking of innocent human life, whether born or unborn, is morally wrong. No one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right to destroy or — and here's the problem for an elected official who "personally" opposes abortion but supports policies that enable it — assist in the destruction of an innocent human being.



The Church could not make it any more simple or direct.

This is important. Most of what makes concord impossible between us — even though we share the same religion — is not that we have disagreements over election results or that you insist on using inflammatory rhetoric directed at your political opponents (we're not fascists, and it seems unlikely that you really believe that) or that you've made a mess of the economy (that is a transitory problem).

What makes true Christian harmony impossible is that with respect to the most important moral issue of our time, you profess one thing and do the precise opposite. Your public and obvious embrace of the symbols of Catholicism and your unwillingness to do anything except help abortion grow and flourish is unconscionable. Your unwillingness to even say anything about the physical attacks on our institutions is incomprehensible.

All of it precludes the possibility of fraternal correction and the establishment of understanding between co-religionists. This is crucial. This nation cannot long endure the endless round of attacks and recriminations from left and right. If we can't even agree on what constitutes a de minimis level of adherence to our own religious doctrine, how can we hope to bring others together?

Archbishop John Carroll, on the occasion of President George Washington's inauguration, composed a prayer, a part of which includes: "We pray O God ... through whom authority is rightly administered, laws are enacted, and judgment decreed, assist with your Holy Spirit of counsel and fortitude the president of these United States, that his administration may be conducted in righteousness and be eminently useful to your people over whom he

presides; by encouraging due respect for virtue and religion; by a faithful execution of the laws in justice and mercy; and by restraining vice and immorality.”

Amen.

• *Michael McKenna, a columnist for The Washington Times, co-hosts “The Unregulated Podcast.” He was most recently a deputy assistant to the president and deputy director of the Office of Legislative Affairs at the White House.*

# The dumpster fire that is the Republican National Committee

If you are giving your money to the RNC or any of its cognates, you are wasting it



*The Republican National Committee Dumpster Fire Illustration by Linas Garsys/The Washington Times more >*

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## COMMENTARY

By Michael McKenna - - Friday, November 25, 2022

## OPINION:

Despite losing ground nationally in 2018, 2020 and 2022, and despite losing her own state of Michigan in the presidential contest of 2020, and despite losing both bodies of the Michigan Legislature this cycle, Republican

National Committee Chairman Ronna Romney McDaniel is inexplicably running for reelection.

That, as the current occupant of the White House might say, is not a joke.

Perhaps worse than all that, until a few days ago, when Rep. Lee Zeldin, New York Republican, stepped up to the plate, Ms. McDaniel was running unopposed. Even now, there is still not a single state committee member — out of 168 souls — running against her to lead the party.

This awesome and incomprehensible lack of interest among party “leaders” in improving the national party and its constituent elements is part of a pattern. In 2020, in the actual wake of losing the presidency — including her own state — and Congress, Ms. McDaniel won reelection as chairman by 168-0.

That's right; there were no dissenting votes, despite the electoral catastrophe over which she presided. Back then, there were some concerns raised about her capacity for impartiality, given that President Trump had installed her in 2016 and endorsed her in 2020. Apparently no one thought to ask about her basic competence.

In response, Ms. McDaniel graciously and repeatedly said that she would step down after two years. As witnessed by her current campaign, that seems unlikely to happen.

To be sure, some of the blame for the losses experienced under Ms. McDaniel attaches elsewhere. But it is beyond odd for a party apparatus that has underperformed in three successive election cycles to rummage through the cabinets and conclude that the leader they need is the one they have.

There has been no moment — at least in the last 100 years — when a chairman who has presided over so many electoral defeats remained in power, let alone do so unopposed. This is for obvious reasons, not the least of which is that in the wake of a defeat, the general and appropriate sentiment is that some sort of change is in order.

The bigger problem is, of course, the derangement of the national committee. What does one have to do to get ejected from this game by the dumpster fire that is the national committee? How many cycles does one have to lose? How many times must one throw up on their shoes before they are shown the door?

If reflecting on past performance is insufficient motivation for change, perhaps thinking about what lies ahead will. The RNC's approval, yet again, of former President Donald Trump's preferred candidate for the chairmanship would make it clear to the dozen or so other Republicans planning to run for president that the RNC will not be neutral in the 2024 race.

Surely Mr. Trump is aware of this. He knows that reinstalling the RNC chairman would give him control over the party's apparatus, including fundraising, media and voter and donor databases. These will be most useful in running for president or even setting up electoral runs for the next generation of the family.

That's why he endorsed Ms. McDaniel in 2020, and that's why he is likely to endorse her again. The RNC should refuse to play along this time.

This has been said before, but it bears repeating: If you are giving your money to the RNC or any of its cognates, you are wasting it. You may as well just light it on fire. That will be especially true if Ms. McDaniel remains chairman.

• *Michael McKenna, a columnist for The Washington Times, co-hosts "The Unregulated Podcast." He was most recently a deputy assistant to the president and deputy director of the Office of Legislative Affairs at the White House.*