

Before his career took off, Rodgers worked as a water boy in Mississippi for the mostly black crews laying railroad track. The men he met, and their music, shaped his own emerging style—the songs he made popular as an adult were essentially the blues, to which he added a distinctive yodel. In 1930, at the height of his popularity, he recorded with Louis Armstrong, the protean jazz artist.

When A.P. Carter collected songs for the Carter Family, he brought along Lesley Riddle, a black slide guitar player, to help him remember the melodies. Riddle also taught the Carters a hymn from his church, “When the World’s on Fire,” which they recorded. They then used the same melody for another song, “Little Darling, Pal of Mine.” Years later Woody Guthrie, a fan of the Carters, borrowed the melody for his classic “This Land Is Your Land.” That one song’s journey encapsulates the real, interconnected story of American music.

Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass, was mentored by an African-American fiddle player. Hank Williams, the great honky-tonk singer, credited Tee-Tot Payne, a black street musician in Alabama, for “all the music training I ever had.” Bob Wills created Western swing by adapting jazz’s big-band sound to fiddles and steel guitars.

In Memphis in the 1950s, when rhythm and blues and gospel and hillbilly music began swirling together in the eddies of the Mississippi, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and others pioneered rockabilly, a precursor to rock ‘n’ roll.

The cross-fertilization went in both directions. Charley Pride—the first postwar black artist to have a No. 1 country hit, and the first artist of any color to win the Country Music Association’s male vocalist award two years in a row—was discovered in a bar in Montana, singing Hank Williams’s “Love-sick Blues.” He had grown up listening to the “Grand Ole Opry” show on the radio.

When the rhythm and blues star Ray Charles was given creative control of an album for the first time, he chose to record a selection of country songs. “You take country music, you take black music,” Charles said, and “you got the same goddamn thing exactly.” The album was a sales sensation.

“There’s a truth in the music,” the jazz musician and composer Wynton Marsalis told us, that “the musicians accepted at a time when the culture did not accept. And it’s too bad that we, as a culture, have not been able to address that truth. The art tells more of the tale of us coming together.”

Likewise, the history of country music is filled with strong and talented women in ways the common stereotype seems (or chooses) to overlook. From Patsy Montana to Patsy Cline, Kitty Wells to Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris to Rosanne Cash to Reba McEntire, women have created some of country music’s most enduring art.

In 1926, A.P. Carter and his wife, Sara, had been turned down by a record label on the theory that a woman singing lead could never be popular. Instead, the Carters added Sara’s cousin Maybelle to the group and went on to make history, centered on Sara’s remarkable voice and Maybelle’s innovative guitar playing, “the Carter scratch,” which has influenced generations of guitarists.

Jimmie Rodgers relied on his sister-in-law, Elsie McWilliams, as the writer of more than a third of his songs. (He couldn’t read musical notations, so she came to his recording sessions to teach her new compositions to him in person.)

In 1966, the same year that the National Organization for Women was founded and the phrase “women’s liberation” was first used, Loretta Lynn wrote and recorded “Don’t

Come Home A Drinkin’ (With Lovin’ on Your Mind),” a statement that dealt with spousal abuse and alcoholism and a woman’s right to her own body, with a bluntness no other musical genre dared make at the time. Her label later held back her song “The Pill” because it seemed too controversial; when it was released, some stations refused to play it—until her fans made it a Top-5 country hit and crossed it over to the pop charts.

“If you write the truth and you’re writing about your life,” Ms. Lynn told us, “it’s going to be country.”

At its best, country music has never been confined to one simple category or convenient stereotype. It sprang from many roots and then sprouted many new branches through the 20th century, creating a complicated chorus of American voices joining together to tell a complicated American story, one song at a time.

Country deals with the most basic, universal human emotions and experiences—love and loss, hardship and dreams, failure and the hope of redemption—and turns them into songs. The songwriter Harlan Howard once defined country music as “three chords and the truth.” Three chords imply simplicity. But the truth part is always much more complex. And more profound.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

HONORING CAPTAIN VINCENT LIBERTO, JR.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the life of Mandeville police officer Captain Vincent “Vinnie” Liberto, Jr., who was killed in the line of duty last week. Captain Liberto will be remembered for his life of service to the community and country.

After graduating from Brother Martin High School in New Orleans, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps, where he ultimately served 10 years as sergeant.

Captain Liberto had a combined 30 years of law enforcement service, 5 with the Orleans Parish Sheriff’s Department and 25 years with the Mandeville Police Department, where he was recognized as officer of the year.

The captain had a brilliant mind for law enforcement. He graduated from the FBI National Academy and ran the Mandeville Police Department’s Criminal Investigations Division, where he worked as a polygraphist and was responsible for the Department’s enforcement functions.

Those who knew him best describe him as a gentle giant, polite, upbeat, reasonable, and fairminded—all qualities that make a great police officer.

In his yard flies the Marine Corps flag, and mounted on the front door are twin wreaths, one for the marines and one for the police.

Captain Liberto is survived by his wife, Tracey, and seven children. He was 58 years old.

His passion for service was so strong that he inspired several of his children to follow in their dad’s footsteps by entering the military and law enforcement. That is the definition of setting a great example for children.

Captain Liberto’s death is a painful reminder that our law enforcement officers put their lives on the line to

keep our community safe. He died during a gunfire exchange when a routine traffic stop turned into a tragedy. The other officer, Ben Cato, was also injured but thankfully has returned to work.

Like Captain Liberto and Officer Cato, our law enforcement officers report to work every day knowing that they might not come home at night. They do it for us all, and for that we should always be grateful.

I ask those who are listening to say a prayer for Tracey, their kids, and the officers of the Mandeville Police Department, and for their entire community that is grieving the loss of one of their own.

Vincent Liberto made Louisiana a better place and our country a better place, and he will be sorely missed.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHINA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I don’t know of any topic that is more important for our country than the relationship between the United States and China.

I am a big fan of history. I love to read about history. I think one of the best ways to understand the future is to understand the past. It strikes me that, at some point in the future, someone will write a book about the 21st century, and I think that book will have mention of a number of the things that consumed our time in political debate. I believe the central issue globally that will define the 21st century is the relationship between the United States and China, in which direction it heads.

Let me say at the outset that China is destined to be what it already is becoming: a rich, important, and powerful nation. That in and of itself should not be threatening. It is a reality. It is one that I think holds promise, to the extent that a rich and powerful China is a responsible stakeholder in the affairs of the world.

I think there is another truth, and that is, what is developing today is an incredibly serious imbalance between the United States and China on trade and commerce, increasingly on diplomacy, and potentially—eventually—militarily and geopolitical.

So when I come today to speak about China, it is not simply in the context of our current trade tensions, which is a part of a much broader issue. The fact of the matter is that this is the way we should view it because this is the way the Communist Party of China views it. The truth is that they view our trade tensions as an inevitable blip in their long-term plan to supplant the

United States of America as the world's dominant political, military, and economic power.

Now, it is understandable why many Americans would feel uneasy at the prospect of being supplanted by China. First of all, they have seen so many of our industries that once thrived in our towns and cities weakened or leave altogether, and they have read about the grotesque violation of human rights and dignity of people and China's Communist Party's persecution of Christians, Muslims, and other religious minorities.

The sad fact is that we have come to this realization far too late in this city. For many years, many of the policy elites across the political spectrum turned a blind eye to this growing threat. There was this notion that, once China became rich and prosperous, they would become like us. It is as if somehow economic prosperity, in the sense and in the way China is achieving it, automatically leads to supporting values such as the ones that we hold dear. But the fact is that we can no longer ignore the reality that this is not the direction that China is headed, and it has implications for our country and the world.

Our country, our workers, and families can no longer afford elected officials in this city who turn a blind eye to the seriousness of this challenge. At this point, given all the information before us and the trends that have clearly emerged, ignorance on this matter is no longer an excuse, and, frankly, the Communist Party of China is no longer hiding its ambition about what this is all about.

I am not asking you to believe my words on this. I just ask that you believe them, that you take their words seriously. That is why I come here to point to a speech last week by Huang Qifan, who is a former Central Committee member and recently retired as the vice chair of the National People's Congress Financial and Economic Affairs Committee. He showed us, by the way, what passes as modernization within the Chinese Communist Party.

In the speech he gave, he didn't speak in the typical Communist jargon. He doesn't invoke abstract theories or laws of history or in any way hold back. He speaks with a frankness that we should actually be grateful for because it enlightens us and hopefully propels us to take action. To Huang, as he makes very clear, the trade war that is ongoing is a fight to the death, an inevitable outcome in a fight between two systems.

Paraphrasing Mao Zedong, he urged Chinese businesspeople to shed their illusions and prepare for struggle. China is the rising power. The United States is the aging hegemon, and China's rise will be sustained.

Huang declared, "At this time, the socialist road with Chinese characteristics is obviously more competitive. . . . than the U.S. economic system." Such confident words are not just his;

they emanate from the very top. Just after gaining power, their current President, apparently for life, Xi Jinping, told the party it is "inevitable that the superiority of our socialist system will be increasingly apparent."

The United States, according to Huang in his speech, cannot make partners and cannot make space for others in the world. Rather, we are stuck. We are stuck in a situation in which China must fight the United States either economically or militarily to find its place in the world.

Throughout his speech, by the way, he points to various events in the U.S. and the Western world that is evidence of the claims that he makes. He points to the financial crisis, to the ballooning deficits, and to what he terms political instability. In very clear language, he says that these are problems that "capitalism can't avoid"—that is his quote—but the Chinese system can through central guidance. "This is our institutional advantage," he argues.

Embedded in his speech, there are two themes. The first is a confidence in the inevitability of China's rise and its conflict with the United States. Closely related to it is a second theme, and that is an appeal to the rest of the world to follow in the Chinese authoritarian model, or, as they call it, socialism with Chinese characteristics. In their telling, it is clearly a superior model to ours.

The time has come for America and our allies, who value freedom and liberty and free enterprise, democracy, human rights, and the dignity of all people—the time has come for us to eagerly confront this assertion. Unfortunately, there are too many in the Western world and in the free world that refuse to see the challenges, indeed, the threat that is posed by the Communist Party and China's vision of the world in the future.

Rather than discuss the technical threat posed by an entity like Huawei, I want to articulate the threat in China's Communist Party's words, the threat in their own words, as Qifan said last week: "Our currency will become the world currency."

Understand the implications of this stated goal. China's aim is to use economic power to displace the United States of America and the role it has played in the world since the end of the Second World War. China's message to the world is that its industries, its workers, and its politics will be more productive than ours. The Chinese Communist Party says to foreign countries, to investors, and to businesses that the long-term play to keep their economies growing is by partnering with them, not partnering with us.

Some may say, What is the big deal about that? Let's just take care of our own problems. Here is the big deal. Here is what it would mean for Americans in real terms. If the world heads in the direction they advocate, it would mean lower wages for you, it would mean homes and mortgages that

are unaffordable, and it would mean a world where what you can say and do abroad but also at home is increasingly dictated by the Chinese Communist Party and its benefactors in the United States and elsewhere.

If you don't believe me, just realize that already major motion pictures produced in Hollywood are censored—censored, even as they are played in the United States because those movies will not have access to Chinese movie theaters. We have already seen multiple American companies have to apologize, take content off the internet, and change T-shirts that they sell at stores because they offend the Communist Party of China and are going to be cut off from selling to that market. It is already happening. It will happen at a much more accelerated pace.

By the way, we have also seen news outlets in some places have to cut back and censor what they say. We have had a television program in a major American network take out content from a program for fear of being censored in the vast Chinese market. Beyond that, the new companies, the new technologies, the improved standards of living, which the United States has always relied on to prove the superiority of our way of life, will also no longer exist.

Indeed, some of these predictions are already happening. The economic growth, the prosperity, and the stability that marks Americans' shared memory of the last century appear to be increasingly absent from this one. Simply put, the Chinese Communist Party believes that the 20th century, which was termed the American Century, was an anomaly, and they believe that they alone have mastered the scientific laws of history, so democracy must stand aside and give way.

We should clearly understand that the Communist Party of China's mission, a mission they term "national rejuvenation" of Chinese power and China's prominent place on the world stage, means supplanting our values and our way of life. As Xi Jinping explained 2 years ago, this goal is the original aspiration and mission of the party.

What is our model? Well, it is incumbent upon us as Americans and as leaders and our democratic allies around the world to make the case that our model is the superior. It is incumbent upon us to make the case on behalf of our model just as aggressively as an authoritarian China is making their case for socialism with Chinese characteristics. Our leadership must also be one that respects human dignity, that defends our interests and religious liberty, democracy and human rights, and the rule of law, which means consistently sticking up for nations committed to these same ideals and standing with people who are fighting for these and being crushed by totalitarianism anywhere in the world.

By the way, in the 20th century and the 21st century, American leadership

brought peace. After the carnage of the first half of the last century, the United States has led the world to avoid open great power conflict, and it meant historically little bloodshed and deep international stability compared to previous eras.

The international system that America helped craft and lead comes with a promise of multilateral security, and that is why we must remain wholly committed to protecting our allies. We spared no cost to help them rebuild to defend themselves and to protect the dignity of their citizens. The Chinese Communist Party, on the other hand, cannot conceive of a world that is not driven by status and hierarchy. They are not partners, and they view no one as partners. They view them as vassal states. So this progress, even to someone like Huang Qifan, is a hidden plot to suppress others.

Such cynicism, by the way, reveals more about the Chinese Communist Party than it does about us or the failure of American efforts to offer a helping hand to China in exchange for modernization. To the Chinese Communist Party, power serves no purpose but to strengthen the party's rule and to spread its influence around the world.

And for them, those who deviate from the party's expectations deserve to be sent to forced labor camps where they toil on the party's behalf and where mass surveillance is a necessary safeguard against deviants whose only crime is to want a private civic life.

As part of making the case for our model, we must continue to make the case as to why China is an untrustworthy partner in any endeavor, whether it is a nation-state project, in an industrial capacity, or financial integration. They have a neocolonial project, the Belt and Road Initiative, which follows a very consistent playbook: Approach nations with promises of lucrative state projects, exploit corruption, bleed those nations dry, and then hijack their domestic infrastructure. In Sri Lanka, what it meant was the de facto takeover of wide swathes of their political system after a project sputtered and Beijing seized the port.

Beijing is ultimately an untrustworthy partner in international commitments. We have seen this repeatedly in the Asia-Pacific where they have flagrantly violated international agreements and obligations in Hong Kong and Taiwan. We see it right off the coast of Vietnam and the Philippines, where Beijing is literally building artificial islands to substantiate ludicrous territorial claims.

Chinese leaders have long claimed to never seek hegemony, and yet the bullying of their neighbors, they justify it, and they justify it on the grounds that China deserves respect because of its power and position. Doing business in China is not just like here or anywhere else. It is not business between two private companies. It means doing business with companies backed by, sponsored by, and protected by the Chinese Communist Party.

Their economy is purposely opaque, and Chinese companies, many of which are state-owned or state-directed, are tools used by the Chinese Communist Party to further their mercantilist goals.

The telecommunications company that we have heard of so often, Huawei, is just one example. Nations that have naively partnered with Huawei on 5G have exposed vital technological infrastructure to Beijing's surveillance state, a partnership that Beijing has shown it will readily exploit.

The bottom line is that China, no matter what, will continue to play a prominent role in the future of our world; and frankly, we should welcome a growing, thriving China, but one that plays by the rules.

Today's China, governed by the Chinese Communist Party, is not playing by any rules. It is a predatory state in nature, and it actively seeks to supplant not just the United States but a world order committed to democracy, human rights, and the dignity of all.

Since their induction into the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has shown itself to be anything but a responsible global partner. This is a dangerous recipe for conflict, and that is what China's leaders are preparing for. Xi put the party on notice in 2013, saying that China "must diligently prepare for a long period of cooperation and of conflict" with capitalist democracies.

If anything, the intervening years have strengthened this conviction. Huang told business leaders that Americans "want your life." He calls it an illusion that "some small amount of money" would resolve the trade war.

"We do not want to fight but are not afraid to fight," Huang concluded, once again quoting Mao.

China clearly sees this moment—these decades, really—as their opportunity to supplant America from its global leadership role. Conflict, armed or otherwise, is an inevitable byproduct of that progression.

America, as Huang noted, has been the "world's leader for decades," and we have used that power to build an international system that prioritizes fundamental human rights, open democratic governance, and liberal economies, all the things that the Communist Party of China believes represents weakness.

So we must be absolutely clear as to what that means. If China becomes the world's dominant economic power, they will become the world's dominant military power; they will become the world's dominant financial power; and they will become the world's dominant cultural power. Given their critique—and I would say disdain—of our system, we can expect that a future such as that will look much different than the reality we live in now.

If China supplants America in the West, the world that our children will inherit will be nothing like the one we grew up in and know. Instead of ex-

ploiting China's brand of authoritarianism country by country, as they do now, China will be positioned to reorient the entire globe, the application of the party's governance at home applied on a global scale to the way countries interact with one another.

Let me close with the prophetic words of a Chinese dissident, Wei Jingsheng. In his testimony before Congress in the year 2000, against and in opposition to China's ascension to the WTO, he said:

If the United States will not fight the world's largest tyranny politically, then inevitably it will have to fight it economically, and eventually, militarily. Therefore, the only way to preserve peace and freedom begins by comprehending democracy's greatest enemy, and countering it effectively.

Blissful ignorance is no longer an option. We cannot overlook the obvious signs in favor of near-term economic gains. The world has reached a crossroads, one in which our inability to act will usher in a Chinese century, and that will have disastrous consequences.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture motions for the Cella, Jorjani, and Black nominations ripen at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 24; I further ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, following the cloture vote on the Black nomination, that the Senate resume consideration of the McGuire nomination, and that at 3:30 p.m., all postcloture time on the McGuire, Cella, Jorjani, and Black nominations be considered expired; finally, I ask unanimous consent that if any of the nominations are confirmed, that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.