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Racism Redux:

David Horowitz Then and Now

There is a tendency among progressives and leftists to wish that we could be done with David Horowitz. Hasn't this right-wing ideologue—publisher of *FrontPage Magazine*, founder of the Scaife-funded Center for the Study of Popular Culture, author of *The Professors* and nearly a dozen other reactionary screeds, and formulator of the Academic Bill of Rights (ABOR)—managed yet to marginalize himself by his own shrill rhetoric? Doesn't his silence about reparations over the past few years signal that his anti-black racism is unacceptable even to his own political base? Doesn't the fact that ABOR has not yet been adopted as policy by any of the state legislatures before which it was brought indicate that Horowitz's witch-hunting of radical professors is doomed to failure? In fact, can't his current claim simply to desire that politics of all kinds be kept out of the classroom, and that conservatives simply be given their fair chance at academic jobs, be seen as evidence that he has been forced to negotiate on the terms of the liberal academy that he so despises?

As one who in fact suspects that it is primarily liberals, rather than "the right," who are paving the way to a possible U.S. fascism, I include myself among those who yearn to bypass Horowitz and confront what I consider to be the greater danger posed by mainstream political discourse, as articulated—and put into practice—by Republicans and Democrats alike. But we cannot so readily ignore Horowitz and other ideologues of the far right. For it is crucial to recognize the role that they play in defining and extending the political spectrum. Their assertions and proposals function as trial balloons that, even when brought to earth, turn out to have introduced various reactionary ideas into the realm of accepted political debate.

For example, the ABOR may not yet be law: but the recent national movement for national college-level assessment standards—which, if implemented, would surely chill and quell the expression of "extraneous" political ideas in the classroom—embodies much of the Horowitz agenda, without even raising the question of culture wars. Similarly, Proposition 187—the 1994 anti-immigrant California ballot initiative—has been largely declared unconstitutional. But its portrayal of undocumented workers as an incubus on the body of the nation has entered the mainstream discourse of the current "immigration debate." Indeed, the so-called Sensenbrenner bill—which would criminalize not just being "illegal," but also aiding and abetting those who are "illegal"—would be unimaginable

without the prior groundwork laid by the commentary accompanying Proposition 187.¹

My principal concern in these brief comments is with the growing racist movement in the United States, of which Horowitz, despite his demurrals, is very much a part. Readers of *minnesota review* may recall that Horowitz first came to widespread national attention in 2000, when he attempted to publish in several dozen campus newspapers nationwide (and succeeded in doing so in many) an advertisement attacking the movement for African-American reparations titled "Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Blacks Is a Bad Idea for Blacks—and Racist Too" (*FrontPage Magazine* 3 January 2001). Until then known primarily to those who track the careers of former radicals turned conservative, Horowitz became notorious for a series of outrageous assertions about slavery and race. Rather than pointing to "ongoing racism," he proposed, the "economic adversity" experienced by the "black underclass" must be attributed to "failures of individual character." Blacks were demanding "an extravagant new handout that is only necessary because some blacks can't seem to locate the ladder of opportunity within reach of others—many less privileged than themselves." Indeed, he maintained, "American blacks on average enjoy per capita incomes in the range of twenty to fifty times that of blacks living in any of the African nations from which they were kidnapped." According to this impeccable logic, one could change "black" to "Jewish" and claim that the tsars' pogroms helped Jews by driving them to the U.S., where they could have the highest per capita income of any minority group. So if African Americans benefited from slavery, European Jews benefited from anti-Semitism, including even the Holocaust.²

Horowitz was immediately and effectively challenged. A range of prominent historians and journalists—including University of Massachusetts professor Ernest Allen, Jr., *Black Scholar* editor Robert Chrisman, investigative reporter Chip Berlet, and the prominent historian John Hope Franklin—demolished Horowitz's arguments on historical, economic, and sociological grounds. (Their arguments hardly need reiterating here.) Horowitz repeated without qualification or disclaimer all his key points in *Uncivil Wars*, his 2002 book detailing the "debate" over reparations that he claimed to have inspired. Probing out the truth was never the goal of his ad campaign; he was in the business of promulgating the Big Lie.³

Even as Horowitz was presenting himself as a compassionate conservative with only the best interests of black people at heart, he was publishing in *FrontPage Magazine* a series of articles by James Lubinskas, an unabashed white supremacist with neo-Nazi connections. Lubinskas has served as assistant editor of *American Renaissance*, which the conservative publication antiwar.com characterizes as promoting the view that "non-whites are generally, culturally, and morally inferior to whites." He has

published in the fervently anti-immigrant VDARE, *The Social Contract*, and *American Patrol*, as well as in *The Nationalist Times*, the organ of the neo-Nazi American National Union.⁴

Lubinskas expressed in *FrontPage Magazine* ideas similar to those he was used to voicing in the openly fascist press. In an August 2001 article linking the Washington, DC sniper killings with the 1972-1974 San Francisco "Zebra" killings, Lubinskas made the mendacious claim that some 71 whites had at the time been murdered by blacks—a number in contradiction with the number 15 that he himself had cited in an earlier piece on the subject published in *American Renaissance*. Black-on-white crime, Lubinskas raved, was a "taboo" subject in the U.S. media. In an 3 October 2002 article for *FrontPage Magazine* titled "Racial Myths and Realities," Lubinskas praised Horowitz's courageous statements on race; argued that at least as many German-Americans and Italian-Americans as Japanese-Americans were interned during World War II; and defended lynching from the charge that it had been a "vicious practice of whites against blacks." That Horowitz should publish the writings of such an over-the-top white supremacist as Lubinskas at the same time that he was presenting himself as a pro-black compassionate conservative should tell us something about the mixed messages that, at the turn into the millennium, he wished *FrontPage Magazine* to be sending out.⁵

Horowitz's promulgation of racism does not stop here. Through its archive, in other words, Horowitz's *FrontPage Magazine* is indirectly publicizing the current activities of radical racists. A link from Lubinskas's 2001 article on the Zebra killings in the *FrontPage Magazine* archive points to the current web site of the European American Issue Forum (EAIF), a publication "dedicated to the eradication of discrimination and defamation of European Americans" that provides up-to-date information about white supremacist activities in the U.S. As of this writing in October 2006, for instance, I learned from *FrontPage Magazine's* 2001 link to the EAIF web site about a memorial meeting about the Zebra killings (about which Lubinskas is clearly obsessed) scheduled for the end of the month, as well as about the monthly meeting of the San Francisco chapter of the EAIF in a *San Francisco police station*, whose precise address was given!

A further EAIF link to "Academia and Campus Outreach"—which contains helpful information about how to set up high school and college chapters—inform the reader that October is "European Heritage Month" and supplies information about how to report that one has been the victim—presumably as a person of European heritage—of a "hate crime" or "discrimination." Additional links from the EAIF web site lead to "U.S. Border Control," where one can read about the need to "close our borders to deadly diseases, terrorism and illegal immigration," as well as about current successful organizing efforts among African Americans by the anti-immigrant Minutemen.

FrontPage Magazine's support for racist initiatives is direct as well. Not only does the 20 October 2006 issue contain links to current activities of Students for Academic Freedom and various articles and interviews defending Israeli foreign policy and supporting the war in Iraq (even asserting that WMDs have been found). In addition, the issue contains:

- an interview with Tom Tancredo, the Colorado Congressman who has distinguished himself for his virulent attacks on undocumented workers;
- a link to a piece titled "Symposium: Terror from the North," which details the arrests of seventeen Muslim men in Ontario;
- and a link to a July 2006 *Washington Times* article on the recent decision of the Bush Administration to send tens of thousands of National Guardsmen to the Mexico-U.S. border.

Most egregiously, the 20 October 2006 issue of *FrontPage Magazine* contains a link to the website of the far-right United American Committee, which has as its stated goal opposition to the "threats of Islamist extremism" and the "education of the American people regarding the philosophies and activities of our enemies which are operating from within the United States borders." The most chilling of several grisly newstories recount the month-long preparations for, and then successful enactment of, the recent burning of an effigy of Osama bin Laden before a chanting crowd of hundreds in Culver City, California.

When I read these pieces, my blood ran cold, for what was being featured—and advocated—was the symbolic ritual lynching, pure and simple, of an Arab. The announcement that the ritual was going to take place; the detailed description of the episode; the photographs of the crowd attacking the effigy and displaying their trophy: the whole journalistic presentation resembled nothing so much as the kinds of advertisements for, and reports on, lynchings that used to circulate in the Jim Crow South. Follow the links yourself. You will see what Horowitz—for all his protestations to academic respectability—is promoting these days in *FrontPage Magazine*.⁶

To this day Horowitz is hard at work promulgating racism of the most vicious and violent kind. We fool ourselves if we think that he has drawn in his claws or retreated to the realm of academic debate. And we fool ourselves all the more if we think that the kinds of ideas and attitudes espoused in *FrontPage Magazine* and its cyber-linked allies are irrelevant to the debates occupying mainstream media attention and political discourse. Horowitz and his ilk continue to help load to the extreme right the "debate" over race and racism in the U.S. It is at our peril that we do not take him, and them, seriously.

Notes

1. For a thorough analysis of the significance of the movement around the ABOR, see David Brodsky, "Academic Bill of Rights' Wrongs Academic Freedom, Privileges Right-Wing Power in Higher Education," *Faculty Advocate* (AAUP) (November 2005) (<http://cas.umkc.edu/aaup/abor.htm>).
2. See also "The Latest Civil Rights Disaster: Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Slavery Are a Bad Idea for Black People—And Racist Too," *salon.com* 30 May 2000. Horowitz put his money where his mouth was, helping raise funds for Proposition 54, the California anti-affirmative action ballot initiative spearheaded by African-American neoconservative Ward Connerly. For more on Horowitz's relationship to Connerly's initiative, see Lee Cokorinos, "The Big Money Behind Ward Connerly," *Equal Justice Society Newsletter* 4 (Summer 2005). Cokorinos follows the money trail and points out not only that Horowitz contributed to Connerly's campaign but also that John Uhlman, who contributed some \$190,000 to Proposition 54, also had financially backed Horowitz's now-defunct *politicalwar.com*.
3. See "Ten Reasons: A Response to David Horowitz by Robert Chrisman and Ernest Allen, Jr.," *Black Scholar* 2 April 2001; Chip Berlet, "Response to David Horowitz's Complaint," *FrontPage Magazine* 12 Sept. 2003.
4. See *antiwar.com* 4 December 2000; Southern Poverty Law Center, *Intelligence Report*, (Spring 2001).
5. See James Lubinskas, "The NOI Connection: The Part of the Sniper Story that Disappeared," <http://www.amern.com/0212issue/0212issue.html#article2>. In his rewriting of the history of lynching, Lubinskas cites *Paved with Good Intentions* (1992) by the neo-Nazi Jared Taylor. See also James Lubinskas, "Horowitz and his Conservative Critics," where he argues that Horowitz has been largely abandoned by other conservatives and is "in for a lonely struggle" in his heroic battle against reparations (*FrontPage Magazine* March 2001); and James Lubinskas, "The End of Paleoconservatism," where he chastises twenty-first century conservatives for not following in the footsteps of Ronald Reagan (*FrontPage Magazine* Nov. 2000). For more on Horowitz's relationship with Taylor, as well as his connections with the Bradley Foundation, which funded the "research" for Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*, see Tim Wise, "Making Nice with Racists: David Horowitz and the Soft-Pedaling of White Supremacy," *ZNet Magazine* 16 December 2002 (<http://www.zmag.org/Sustainers/content/2002-12/16wise.cfm>).
6. See "A New Campaign for a New School Year," where Temple University is applauded for endorsing a Student Academic Bill of Rights, and prospective SAF members are given template letters of complaint against faculty who "politicize" their classrooms. The lead story in the 20 October 2006 issue is David Horowitz's attack on Michale Bérubé, "What's Not Liberal About the Liberal Arts," relevant to readers of the current issue of *minnesota review*. See also the link to "Uncle Sam Wants 30,000 to Serve on Border Patrol," *Washington Times* 31 July 2006.