

# The Public Eye

A PUBLICATION OF POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES SPRING 2007 • Volume XXII, No.1

\$5.25



Alex Wong/Getty Images

In challenging the separation of church and state (as is this activist holding the Ten Commandments in front of the US Capitol), conservative Christians distort America's secular founding.

## Becoming Americano

### The Ascent of the New Latino Right

By Roberto Lovato

After last year's elections, Lionel Sosa watched the returns and saw more than 30 years of his life's work endangered. Sosa, the advertising executive who, along with close ally, Karl Rove ("we've been good friends a long, long time"), engineered the GOP's historic advance among Latinos in the 2004 elections, had warned party leaders of the consequences of the anti-immigrant policies of certain of its members.

Latino support for Republicans rose from 21 percent in 1996, to 31 percent in 2000, to between 40 to 44 percent in 2004 (the number is still being debated). In 2006, after the final results were tallied, less than 29 percent of Latinos voted Republican, and Sosa publicly "I told you so'd" the GOP with comments like, "We

*Becoming Americano continues on page 15*

## History is Powerful

### Why the Christian Right Distorts History and Why it Matters

By Frederick Clarkson

The notion that America was founded as a Christian nation is a central animating element of the ideology of the Christian Right. It touches every aspect of life and culture in this, one of the most successful and powerful political movements in American history. The idea that

America's supposed Christian identity has somehow been wrongly taken, and must somehow be restored, permeates the psychology and vision of the entire movement. No understanding of the Christian Right is remotely adequate without this

*History is Powerful continues on page 9*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Letters .....	2
Truth and Reconciliation Comes to the South .....	3
Now online at <a href="http://www.publiceye.org">www.publiceye.org</a> .....	11
Book Reviews .....	19
Reports in Review .....	21
Eyes Right .....	23



— TO THE EDITOR —

I have just recently been introduced to your *Public Eye* magazine via your Winter 2006 issue, and very much appreciate the work you are doing. However, there is an inaccurate characterization on p.27 of that issue with regards to the Christian Reformed Church [Eyes Right, "A First for Women"].

You have called it "a 'dominionist' denomination that believes America is (or should be) a Christian nation." This is not true at all. While there may be members within the denomination that hold that opinion, the CRC and particularly Calvin College strongly oppose this and other brands of fundamentalism. The Reformed theology on which the denomination and college are based stresses that individuals should apply their faith and values to their work, including political leadership, but does not prescribe a specific political ideology nor does it ever advocate "theocracy."

This same theological system holds reason and the sciences in high regard and opposes literalist interpretations of the Bible, which is why the college has been teaching evolution for many decades. Moreover, the college has a very strong progressive-left element, demonstrated by the fact that when G.W. Bush was invited (resulting from a PR agreement between Karl Rove, a Michigan Republican congressman and some wealthy donors) to give the graduation speech in 2005, fully one-third of the college faculty signed a letter taking him to task for his economic and foreign policy positions. In a survey undertaken several years ago, just under half of the faculty reported voting Democratic all or most of the time.

I agree that it is important to expose the radical dominionist agenda of many fundamentalist churches and denominations, but the Christian Reformed Church is not part of this problem. Insofar as the denomination (via the college) helps to foster scientific and critical thinking among its students and exposes them to a diversity of political viewpoints, I would assert it is part of the solution. It was because of my Calvin College experience, rather than in spite of it, that my own progressive political viewpoint began to take shape 22 years ago.

*Peter Ruark, Lansing, MI*

# The Public Eye

**Publisher**

The Rev. Katherine Hancock Ragsdale,  
M. Div., D. Min.

**Editor**

Abby Scher, Ph.D

**Design/layout**

Hird Graphic Design

**Printing**

Red Sun Press

**Editorial Board**

Chip Berlet · Pam Chamberlain  
Frederick Clarkson · David Cunningham, Ph.D  
Surina Khan · Roberto Lovato  
The Rev. Katherine Hancock Ragsdale  
Tarso Luís Ramos · Abby Scher  
Holly Sklar



POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

**Founder and President Emerita**

Jean V. Hardisty, Ph.D

**Staff**

The Rev. Katherine Hancock Ragsdale,  
*Executive Director*  
Chip Berlet, *Senior Analyst*  
Pam Chamberlain, *Research Analyst*  
Cindy King, *Business Manager*  
Tarso Luís Ramos, *Research Director*  
Abby Scher, *Senior Editor*  
Renee Sweeney, *Data/Web Master*

**Intern**

Michelle Iorio  
Nate Stopper

**Board of Directors**

Richard Gross  
Heeten Kalan  
Vivien Labaton  
June Lorenzo  
Supriya Pillai  
Mohan Sikka  
Carlton Veazey  
Wendy Volkmann  
Alea Woodlee

*The Public Eye* is published by Political Research Associates. Annual subscriptions are \$21.00 for individuals and non-profit organizations, \$10.00 for students and low-income individuals, and \$36.00 for libraries and institutions. Single issues, \$5.25. Outside U.S., Canada, and Mexico, add \$9.00 for surface delivery or \$14.00 for air mail.

Please make checks payable to Political Research Associates, 1310 Broadway, Suite 201, Somerville, Massachusetts 02144-1837. 617.666.5300 fax: 617.666.6622

PRA is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. © Political Research Associates, 2006.

Website: [www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org)

All rights reserved. ISSN 0275-9322

ISSUE 55

# Truth and Reconciliation Comes to the South

## Lessons from Greensboro



By Jill Williams

On November 3, 1979, a caravan of Klansmen and neonazis from Greensboro, North Carolina and the surrounding areas confronted demonstrators preparing for a “Death to the Klan” rally called by the multi-racial Communist Workers Party (CWP) in the city’s Black Morningside Homes public housing community. Five anti-Klan demonstrators were shot and killed, at least ten others were wounded and many witnesses bore the trauma of that day for years afterward. Although four news crews recorded the events as they unfolded, the police were absent from the scene. Yet the department had issued a parade permit to the anti-Klan demonstrators and were in regular contact with their paid informant in the Klan who helped organize the counter-demonstration.

Klan and neonazi shooters claimed self-defense and were acquitted by all-white juries in both a state and a federal criminal trial. A third, civil trial jury found the shooters as well as two Greensboro police officers and the Klan informant jointly liable for the wrongful death of one victim. On their behalf, the City of Greensboro paid damages of nearly \$400,000 to the victim’s widow and to two injured protestors.

Twenty-seven years have passed since the shootings, but emotions still run high in Greensboro when the 1979 events are mentioned. Is it worthwhile to disentangle the myths and reopen community discussion about the killings?

Former Mayor Carolyn Allen was one of the community members who thought it was worthwhile. The divided memories of Nov. 3, 1979 were a barrier to solving

---

*Jill Williams is a trained mediator who served as executive director of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She now works as a consultant for the International Center for Transitional Justice, and is facilitating discussions in Greensboro about the Commission’s report and with other communities considering truth and reconciliation processes.*

William F. Cambell, Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

ills that continue to this day, she felt, ills such as community/police distrust, racism, and dire working conditions in local industries.

In returning to the political scene here — just sort of gradually as months and years went by — I began to see that many of our racial difficulties were related to a lack of trust, and much of that all seemed to head back to the '79 events.

And surviving CWP demonstrators — including Dr. Marty Nathan, the widow of Mike Nathan, and Rev. Nelson Johnson, now director of the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro — strongly hoped that opening up the mythology would promote healing and progress.

So in 2001, residents of Greensboro — survivors, city leaders, religious leaders and others — embarked on an unprecedented grassroots effort to seek the truth and work for reconciliation around the events of November 3, 1979. With financial support from the Andrus Family Fund and advice from the International Center for Transitional Justice, the group decided to adapt the truth and reconciliation commission model used most notably in South Africa and Peru after oppressed groups took power. But Greensboro's effort was significantly different. First, unlike these national efforts, Greensboro's process was not initiated or endorsed by a governmental body. Second, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission was mandated to examine the "context, causes, sequence and consequence" of one particular event rather than a pattern of human rights violations.

Third, unlike the South African Commission, the one in Greensboro did not have the power either to subpoena witnesses or to grant amnesty for crimes committed. This meant that the people who gave formal statements to the Commission — including Communist Worker Party demonstrators and their children, Klansmen and neonazis, police officers, former residents of the Morningside Homes housing project where it took place, attorneys and a judge involved in the related trials,

city officials and many others — did so because of a desire to share their portion of the "truth" in a public setting rather than the carrot or stick of amnesty or subpoena power. In this setting, residents listened to neighbors they may never have spoken to before.

But like the national efforts, Greensboro created a panel which heard statements from many viewpoints, with the aim of creating an accurate collective memory of the traumatic event that in turn would help nurture reconciliation of the entire community.

---

### Feelings about the events are shaped by a mix of truths, rumors, and lies.

---

In some ways, divisions around the events of November 3, 1979 are unique to Greensboro because they are related to its particular history and personalities. But the community response to Hurricane Katrina showed that America's pervasive racial and class disparities go beyond Greensboro. In the aftermath of both crises, citizens have the opportunity to examine our myths and illusions; we can either do something to rectify the truths that are illuminated, cling even more closely to the status quo, or even remain silent out of fear of speaking the truths we inherently understand.<sup>1</sup>

#### Conflicting Memories

The way one remembers 1979 seems to be connected to one's own experiences with the city of Greensboro and undoubtedly is influenced by one's race and class. For some, like Lewis A. Brandon, III, an African American civic leader who participated in the famous sit-ins at the whites-only lunch counter at Greensboro's Woolworths in 1960, the anti-Klan march was one of many challenges to the status quo in town:

I don't know of any social change that occurred in this community without a struggle . . . That's the Greensboro I know. Change doesn't come because of the goodness of people in the community. People have to struggle. People have to fight to get change in this community.<sup>2</sup>

Others, like Dr. Mary Johnson, a local blogger who is white, do not see the 1979 events as having anything to do with the city itself and, therefore, feel that they are best forgotten. As she wrote on a local blog:

As I have said before, the Greensboro I know and love and have experienced my whole life has NOTHING to do with the freakish aberration of one day in 1979 . . . Greensboro is also the home of the Woolworth's sit-ins, and I daresay that is what people in San Francisco and Boston and Seattle and New York City would think of FIRST if someone would just let them. MANY RESIDENTS of Greensboro in 2006 are saying, PLEASE LET THEM.<sup>3</sup>

Feelings about the events are shaped by a mix of truths, rumors and lies. Those who see the events of 1979 as fitting into a larger pattern of repression of struggles for social justice have had their own myths. For years, before some publicly set this belief aside, Communist Workers Party survivors said the prosecution team in the state murder trial intentionally lost the case. Within the African American community, a rumor remained unchecked for twenty-six years: that a pregnant woman was shot and killed that day. While a pregnant woman, Frankie Powell, was shot, it was not a fatal wound.

Among those who see the shootings as an isolated incident with little to do with Greensboro, several myths circulate. For starters, one often-repeated story has it that the police were not present at the permitted march because they were confused about its starting point, yet the starting point was clearly stated on the permit application. The police even gave the Klan a copy of the parade route. Another part of this story suggests that the police never

realized that the Klan/neonazi caravan was on its way to challenge the marchers, yet an intelligence officer was following the caravan, and police had an informant among the Klansmen who helped organize the counter-protest.

A third myth presented all those involved in the shooting as out-of-towners, or dismissed the event as a shootout between two extremist groups. While some of those involved in the Klan and the CWP did reside outside of Greensboro, many, including the police department's paid Klan informant who organized the Klan/neonazi caravan, were residents of the city. This narrative also ignores the role of the police department, very much a part of the city of Greensboro, in allowing the shootings to take place.

One of the most pervasive myths viewed the shootings as having nothing to do with race and class relations in Greensboro. After all, three of the five people killed were highly educated white men (see box). Yet the Communist Workers Party was a multiracial group organizing Black and white workers for better working conditions in the local textile mills; they were challenging the status quo that kept white and Black workers divided. And despite knowing from an informant that the Klan was coming, the police department left unprotected those in the Black neighborhood where the rally took place – no surprise in a racially divided town that had been a long-time Ku Klux Klan hotbed in the 1960s.

### Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Process

The first step in creating the Commission that took on these myths was for the initiating group — called the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project — to craft its mandate, which began:

There comes a time in the life of every community when it must look humbly and seriously into its past in order to provide the best possible foundation for moving into a future based on healing and hope. Many residents of Greensboro believe that for this city, the time is now.

The second step was to create a democratic selection process for the Commission that would examine the context, causes, sequence, and consequence of the events of November 3, 1979. The initiating group did this by inviting 17 organizations to appoint representatives to a selection panel. These organizations were chosen in the hopes that all Greensboro residents would feel represented by at least one of the appointing groups.

All of the organizations except for three — the police, the Chamber of Commerce,

and the Sons of Confederate Veterans and Daughters of the Confederacy — accepted the invitation to appoint someone to the panel. Though the mayor was a vocal opponent to the truth and reconciliation process, he appointed a local judge to the selection panel, who was then chosen to be its chair.

The selection panel chose seven Commissioners, keeping in mind the town's racial, socioeconomic, religious and sexual diversity. Five lived and/or worked in Greensboro and included a community

### Those Killed at the 1979 Communist Workers Party March in Greensboro

**César Cauce** was a Cuban immigrant who graduated *magna cum laude* from Duke University, where he was a campus leader in the anti-war movement. He sought to unionize Duke Hospital workers, supported a campaign to organize poultry workers at the Goldkist plant in Durham, and organized strike support for union struggles throughout North Carolina. He also traveled throughout the South, covering union struggles for the *Workers Viewpoint* newspaper.

While a student at Duke, **Dr. Mike Nathan** was an anti-war and civil rights activist. He organized and led a chapter of the Medical Committee for Human Rights, which fought for improved health care for poor people, and was a leader in a movement to send aid to liberation fighters who eventually toppled the apartheid system in what is now Zimbabwe. A specialist in child health, he treated sick children in a mountain clinic in Guatemala in 1972 and 1973, and in 1978 he had become the head pediatrician at Lincoln Community Health Center, the clinic that still serves Durham's poor African American children.

**Bill Sampson** was a student anti-war activist and president of his college student body. He received his Masters degree in Divinity from Harvard in 1971, then, as a medical student at the University of Virginia, organized health care workers to support the liberation struggles in southern Africa. He left medical school to work and organize in one of Cone Mills' Greensboro textile plants, where he built the union and focused on training new leaders. Before his death, the workers had chosen him to run for president of the local.

**Sandi Smith** was president of the student body and a founding member of the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) at Greensboro's Bennett College. She was a community organizer for the Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP) and became a worker at the textile mill where she and others formed the Revolution Organizing Committee (ROC) to unionize the plant. She led a march of over 3,000 people in Raleigh to free the Wilmington 10, ten desegregation activists charged with arson and conspiracy and considered prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International. In her work at a Cone Mills textile plant, she battled sexual harassment, low wages, and unhealthy working conditions.

**Dr. Jim Waller** had for many years lent his expertise in medicine to poor people in need. He received his medical degree from the University of Chicago. In 1973, at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, Jim set up a clinic to aid American Indian Movement activists under siege by the FBI. When he moved to North Carolina to teach at Duke University Medical School, he coordinated Brown Lung screenings in the state's textile mills. He left medicine to organize in a rural Cone Mills textile plant, where, before he died, he had led a successful strike and been elected president of his union.

organizer, a college professor, a retired textile manager, a retired corporate attorney, and a minister. Another Commissioner — a community organizer who was once a city councilwoman and 2002 candidate for U.S. Senate — was from Durham, North Carolina, and the last was the executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, based in Nyack, New York.

Over two years, the Commissioners engaged the community and conducted research. They interviewed community members, and examined both the voluminous paper trail created by the three trials and the heavily redacted local police and FBI records. By May 2006, the Commission had issued its 529-page report to the community. (The full report can be accessed at [www.greensborotrc.org](http://www.greensborotrc.org).)

### Community Engagement, Race and Class

The Commissioners discovered that nearly everyone with any knowledge of 1979 and of the pending truth and reconciliation initiative had strong feelings about both. The only middle ground to be found was among those who knew nothing about either. Nor did the divisions fall neatly along racial lines.

There were white and Black people both in favor of and opposed to reexamining the events of November 3, 1979, but the reasons for the support and opposition were generally quite different. Through a door-to-door campaign in poor and working class neighborhoods, Commissioners and staff noticed that white people tended to understand the 1979 events as being acts of outsiders and having nothing to do with Greensboro. If they opposed the process, it was often because they saw no connection between 1979 and today and felt that the process unfairly presented the city in a negative light to the outside world.

Gorrell Pierce, a former Imperial Wizard of the Federated Knights of the Ku Klux Klan who was not present on November 3 but was involved in prior confrontations between the Communist Workers Party and the Klan, praised Greensboro for its history and suggested that the city

should not feel ashamed about the 1979 events:

The city of Greensboro can be proud of itself. And a lot of change happened here. The Continental Army laid an ass whooping on Cornwallis right down the road here when he went to Yorktown and surrendered. And I'm very proud of that. And we go right down here to Woolworth's, and that's where the civil rights movement began. Right there. Greensboro has a lot to be proud of. They needn't be ashamed of November 3. It was

---

### The Greensboro community could have been more involved in rethinking the 1979 killings.

---

one of those things that happened and it was not orchestrated by the city of Greensboro to happen. It was not orchestrated by me and I don't think anybody on the other side, if they could turn the clock back, they'd change it too. But it happened. And I've had to live with it, I've thought about it every day of my life since then.<sup>4</sup>

Some whites, including Pierce, did support the process, but often the value they saw in it was largely based on their hopes for reconciliation, which many felt was at odds with the goal of truth. John Young, a member of the originating task force and a leader in a local Quaker congregation, wrote about this tension after the report was released:

Greensboro is an example that shows that if the reconciliation part and the healing part are not sufficiently nurtured at every stage of the process and

if the broader community cannot be significantly engaged then what we have is not sufficiently aimed at both Truth and Reconciliation. If this Greensboro Commission had placed more emphasis on community reconciliation their public hearings and their report would be different.<sup>5</sup>

In their outreach, Commissioners and staff reported that African Americans tended to understand the events within a pattern of race and class disparities and oppression in Greensboro. For many African Americans, the events of November 3 and their aftermath were no surprise.

That said, there were still plenty of African Americans who were opposed to the Truth and Reconciliation process. For poor and working class African Americans, this opposition seemed to grow largely out of a sense of hopelessness that anything would really change, the need to focus limited resources on more immediate concerns, and even a fear that participating could result in retaliation from the police, the Klan, employers, or the Housing Authority. Richard Koritz, a white labor organizer, expressed this concern to the Commission and in the local newspaper:

The GTRC process offers the poor and working poor "reconciliation" as a substitute for striving for some level of power. "Reconciliation" is a grand illusion that only serves the powers-that-be. . . . My opposition to the raising up of this defeat for the people that occurred on Nov. 3, 1979, is that it is a source of demoralization for the black community and the working people of this area in general, the very people who have more need than ever to stand up and fight for their rights.<sup>6</sup>

Overall, African-American supporters of the process tended to talk much more about the value of truth-telling than the longer-term goals of reconciliation. Ed Whitfield, a member of the originating group and vice-chair of the Commission's selection panel, described this tension in an interview:

[T]ruth processes strike me as being useful movements from the standpoint of what I'm concerned with, which is social justice. Not just about telling the truth and not just about getting where everybody can hug each other and sing kum bayah and can't we all just get along? ... so it's not about that. To me it's about kinda chipping away at a lie that I think prevents people from reaching their full potential in terms of their relationships with each other and even in terms of their growth individually as we're all out here engaged in the process of creating meaning in our lives.

These divisions played out in the local government arena as well. On April 19, 2005, after being presented with a petition signed by more than 5,000 Greensboro residents requesting that the city endorse the truth and reconciliation process, the Greensboro City Council voted, along racial lines, to oppose the effort.

### The Commission's Findings

Listening to the divided community reactions to the truth and reconciliation process and similarly divided memories of the events of November 3 led the Commissioners not only to a better understanding of the truth behind the 1979 events — which the Commissioners found were woven through with issues of race and class — but also to a better grasp of the context within which the events took place and of their consequences.

Responding to those who claim the events had nothing to do with race, the Commissioners recalled labor organizer Si Kahn's public hearing statement in which he said, "Scratch the surface of any issue in the South and you will find race." They encouraged residents to view the 1979 events like a photograph's negative, as if they had been "racially reversed":

Imagine a group of demonstrators is holding a demonstration against black terrorism in the affluent white community of Irving Park. A caravan of armed black terrorists is allowed to

drive unobstructed to the parade starting point, and photos are taken by the police as demonstrators are shot dead. Most of the cars are then allowed to flee the scene, unpursued, even as they threatened neighborhood pedestrians by pointing shotguns through the windows. The defendants are tried and acquitted by an all-black jury. The first shots — fired by the blacks screaming, "Shoot the Crackers!" and "Show me a Cracker with guts and I'll show you a black man with a gun!" — are described by black defense attorneys and accepted by jurors as "calming shots." Meanwhile, the city government takes steps to block citizen protest of black terrorist violence including a curfew in the white neighborhood. The scenario is so unlikely as to be preposterous. Yet, in racial reverse, it is exactly what happened.<sup>7</sup>

Although the Commission placed the "heaviest burden of responsibility" on the Klan and neonazi members who went to the march with "malicious intent" and fired their weapons, the Commission also held the CWP to a high standard and found some fault for the events in its leaders planning the march through a poor Black neighborhood:

The Commission finds that the [CWP] leadership was very naïve about the level of danger posed by their rhetoric and the Klan's propensity for violence, and they even dismissed concerns raised by their own members ... Although the [CWP] members felt that they had fully engaged with the Morningside community, it is apparent that there were many residents who felt uninformed and did not want the "Death to the Klan" rally in their community. The demonstrators' protest issues were grounded in the community's economic and social concerns, but their politics and tactics were not.<sup>8</sup>

The Commission's strongest findings about responsibility for the shootings were reserved for the Greensboro Police Depart-

ment, whose absence, the majority of the commissioners found, was the "single most important element that contributed to the violent outcome of the confrontation." The Commission, in some ways a microcosm of the larger community, was not immune from the divisions plaguing Greensboro; this difference in understandings was reflected and described in one of its findings regarding the police department:

While nearly all Commissioners find sufficient evidence that some officers were deliberately absent, we also unanimously concur that the conclusions one draws from this evidence is likely to differ with one's life experience. Those in our community whose lived experience is of government institutions that fail to protect their interests are understandably more likely to see "conspiracy." Those accustomed to reliable government protection are more likely to see "negligence," or no wrongdoing on the part of law enforcement officers. We believe this is one reason the community is polarized in understanding this event.<sup>9</sup>

### Lessons from Greensboro

As the first truth and reconciliation commission in the United States, the Greensboro process can serve as a model — in its success and challenges — for other communities considering commissions of their own.

The Commission is hopeful that Greensboro residents may someday embrace its recommendations: for instance, for the city government and police to apologize for their roles in the event, to create a citizen review committee of the police department, to investigate allegations of more recent corruption in the city, and to enact pro-labor policies like a living wage. It also issued a general call for residents to reflect on the way their actions support racial and economic privilege.

So far, the "reconciliation" aspect of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation process has not been fully realized. In fact, because of some people's heightened aware-

ness of the history of the 1979 events and their context, the city seems more divided than ever.

Still, the process has generated a more accurate and rich account of the shootings, allowing many Greensboro residents to see them as more than just an isolated clash between extremist groups. It has given approximately 150 people a chance to share their statements with the Commission, an act many reported to be healing in itself, while facilitating personal reconciliation between several, such as Roland Wayne Wood, one of the neonazi shooters, and Signe Waller, widow of Jim Waller, who was killed that day. And perhaps most powerfully, it provides an example for other U.S. communities of a group of people who have the courage to seek justice in the spirit of reconciliation around a great wrong even though police officers and other members of government were implicated.

Yet the community was not involved to the extent it could have been in Greensboro and this challenge might provide useful lessons for other communities.

Reflecting on Greensboro's truth and reconciliation process, Ed Whitfield, a member of the originating group and vice-chair of the Commission Selection Panel, wrote:

The failure to mobilize the grassroots community in its thousands to go beyond signing a petition has been raised as a weakness of our process. While there is always more and better work to do in this regard we are facing a community which is fundamentally engaged in the immediate struggle for survival and which does not always spontaneously make the connection between survival now and systems of oppression that were factors in the 1979 incident and its aftermath.<sup>10</sup>

Many of those involved have concluded that the community would have been more engaged if the effort had been connected right up front to present-day issues such as education or police accountability.

Others have criticized the Commission for failing to involve city officials from 1979 or to more effectively engage the current

city council. Both challenges were related to an ongoing struggle about whom to engage and how. Whitfield reflected on this tension when he wrote:

There are two divergent paths for Truth and Reconciliation processes: one toward seeking truth, giving voice to the voiceless, comforting the downtrodden and confronting the powers that be. The other path is toward avoiding confrontation, muting dissent, glossing over differences, appealing to the broadest possible cultural base and ultimately excusing injustice in the name of reconciling the community while supporting the status quo and those powers that depend on it.<sup>11</sup>

In order to engage those who were otherwise disinclined to share their views, the Commission indeed appealed to “the broadest possible cultural base” through less formal activities such as community dialogues, socials, and internet publications.

Although the Commission was set up to be independent even from those — like the Communist Workers Party survivors — who were in the group which gave it life, many in the community were concerned that the survivors would unduly influence the Commission's findings. The Commission repeatedly found itself explaining its independence and distancing itself from its initiating body. This created tension between the originating group and the Commission, but that distance helped secure testimony from the police, Klan, neonazis, and others who probably would have remained silent otherwise.

But Whitfield's first path, that of “seeking truth, giving voice to the voiceless, comforting the downtrodden and confronting the powers that be,” was the path of choice at most critical moments where a decision was required. It is on that path that the Greensboro process has seen the most success. If the Greensboro experience inspires any hope for other communities, it comes from the power of those who are traditionally silenced sharing their stories of violence and fear within a democratic process they organized themselves, and against

the disapproval of the local government and other powerful community members.

Like Hurricane Katrina, the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro opened up a space in which even the most privileged in town were engaged — willingly or not — in a dialogue about race and class disparities. It remains to be seen whether meaningful social, political, or economic changes will grow from this dialogue. We are now in a time when some call on governments and other institutions to apologize for slavery, Jim Crow laws, and other symptoms of racism, and others, like Virginia state delegate Frank Hargrove, call on Black citizens to “get over it.” A grassroots truth and reconciliation process is a promising tool for creating the space for engaging everyone in these difficult discussions without having to wait for another national tragedy to force us to do so. ■

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> University of Chicago professor Michael Dawson found that 90 percent of African Americans and only 38 percent of whites think Katrina showed that racial inequities are still a problem in the country. Furthermore, 84 percent of African Americans compared with 20 percent of whites believed that the federal government's response would have been quicker if the victims had been predominantly white. Michael Dawson, “After the Deluge: Publics and Publicity in Katrina's Wake.” *DuBois Review* v3, n.1, 2006: 239-249.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Brandon Public Hearing Statement, Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, July 15, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Mary Johnson, comment to “Apology,” [www.edcone.com](http://www.edcone.com), posted 6/24/06.

<sup>4</sup> Gorrell Pierce Public Hearing Statement, Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, July 16, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> John Young commenting in response to “More from the Truth Commission Convention,” *The Lex Files* blog, *Greensboro News & Record*, July 10, 2006. [http://blog.news-record.com/staff/lexblog/archives/2006/07/more\\_from\\_the\\_t.html](http://blog.news-record.com/staff/lexblog/archives/2006/07/more_from_the_t.html)

<sup>6</sup> Richard Koritz, “Reconciliation serves the status quo,” Letter to the Editor, *Greensboro News & Record*, October 7, 2005. [http://blog.news-record.com/staff/letters/archives/2005/10/reconciliation\\_1.html](http://blog.news-record.com/staff/letters/archives/2005/10/reconciliation_1.html).

<sup>7</sup> Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, pg. 381

<sup>8</sup> GTRC Final Report Executive Summary, pgs. 7 & 21

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Ed Whitfield, *Lessons from the Greensboro, NC, Truth and Reconciliation Process* (self-published), March 13, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, <http://www.gtcrp.org/memory.asp>, accessed January 1, 2007.

**HISTORY IS POWERFUL** *continued from page 1*

foundational concept.

But the Christian nationalist narrative has a fatal flaw: it is based on revisionist history that does not stand up under scrutiny. The bad news is that to true believers, it does not have to stand up to the facts of history to be a powerful and animating part of the once and future Christian nation. Indeed, through a growing cottage industry of Christian revisionist books and lectures now dominating the curricula of home schools and many private Christian academies, Christian nationalism becomes a central feature of the political identity of children growing up in the movement. The contest for control of the narrative of American history is well underway.

History is powerful. That's why it is important for the rest of society not only to recognize the role of creeping Christian historical revisionism, but our need to craft a compelling and shared story of American history, particularly as it relates to the role of religion and society. We need it in order to know not how the religious Right is wrong, but to know where we ourselves stand in the light of history, in relation to each other, and how we can better envision a future together free of religious prejudice, and ultimately, religious warfare.

We've seen how religious beliefs (and other ideologies) inspire people to view others as subhuman, deviant, and deserving of whatever happens to them, including death. It is the stuff of persecution, pogroms, and warfare. The framers of the U.S. Constitution struggled with how to inoculate the new nation against these ills, and in many respects, the struggle contin-



ues today. The story goes that when Benjamin Franklin, a hometown delegate to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, emerged from the proceedings, people asked him what happened. His famous answer was “You have a republic, if you can keep it.” To “keep it” in our time, we must appreciate the threat and dynamics of Christian nationalism, and the underlying historical revisionism that supports it. Then we can develop ways to counter it.

Meanwhile, the historical revisionist narrative has been fully integrated into the “biblical worldview” of a wide theological and political spectrum of the Christian Right. Christian nationalists

## The notion that America was founded as a Christian nation is a central animating element of the ideology of the Christian Right.

include such familiar figures as *Left Behind* novelist Tim LaHaye, as well as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, D. James Kennedy and James Dobson, and the late theologian R.J. Rushdoony.

Indeed, the general approach Rushdoony outlined has become widely accepted among Christian nationalists, specifically that God actively intervenes in and guides history, and that God's role can be retroactively discerned, from creation to the predestined Kingdom of God on Earth. Historical events described as “God's providence” are then interpreted in terms of what God must have been up to. This is how Rushdoony arrives at what he called Christian history, based on “Christian revisionism.”<sup>1</sup>

Here are a few examples of how Christian nationalism and revisionism permeate the Christian Right and affect American

political life. They should lend a sense of urgency to the project of contending for the story of the origins of American democracy and the rights of individual conscience.

### The Once and Future Christian Nation

“We want to reaffirm our Christian roots — we are a Christian country,” said John Blanchard, coordinator for The Assembly 2007, a Christian nationalist extravaganza to be led by televangelist Pat Robertson in April. The occasion is the 400th anniversary of the landing at Jamestown. The Assembly is an alternative to, but technically part of, the official Jamestown commemorative events led by mainstream historians at Colonial Williamsburg. “They did come ashore dragging a cross... We were started as a Christian nation,” Blanchard told *The Virginian-Pilot* newspaper, “and I feel it's God's purpose we stay a Christian nation.”

The Assembly, comprising two main events, promises to be influential on the Christian Right. There will be a “Consecration Conference” held at the Rock Church, a 5,200-seat megachurch in Virginia Beach, as well as a dedication ceremony at the beach, which will include a costumed reenactment of the landing. Participants will plant white crosses in the sand — the crossbars emblazoned with One Nation Under God, (available for \$14.95). The act is intended to mean that “you dedicate your church, family, and nation to God!”

According to the press release: “It was on April 29, 1607, that a young Anglican chaplain, Robert Hunt, planted a cross on what is now known as Cape Henry, dedicating the new land for the purposes of God.”

“We see this as a God-given time for our nation,” said Bishop John Gimenez, who is leading the team that is organizing the event. “We are encouraging Christians across the country to plant a cross at their churches or in their front yards to do their own personal dedication of the land to God.” According to organizers, the event will both make history and renew it — by

*Frederick Clarkson is the author of Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy, and founder of Talk2Action.org, the group blog about the Christian Right. He is a member of The Public Eye editorial board.*

re-establishing a 400-year-old covenant with God on Dedication Sunday, April 29, 2007.

A film, "The Landing," produced by Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, is scheduled to be aired on the ABC Family Channel. Additionally, parts of the dedication may be broadcast over various conservative Christian broadcast networks, and Paul Crouch of Trinity Broadcasting Network is among its organizers. Other leaders of the Assembly include Texas evangelist and political activist John Hagee; Ohio theocratic political operative Rod Parsley; prominent evangelists Jack Hayford and Kenneth Copeland; as well as Bishop John and Rev. Anne Giminez, who organized the massive Washington for Jesus rallies in 1980 and 1988; and Ron Luce, leader of Teen Mania Ministries, an agency that seeks to mobilize youth as a mil-

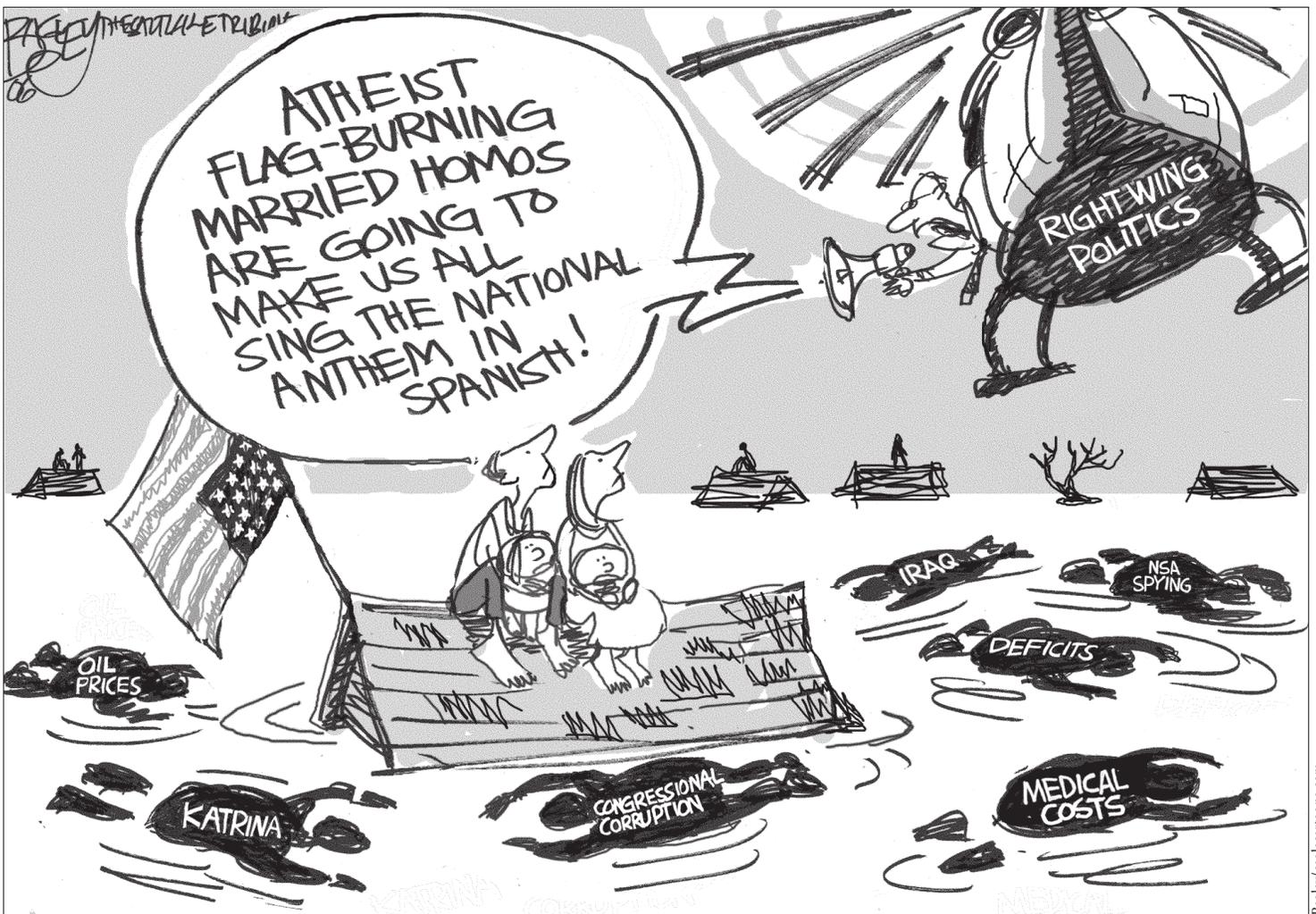
itantly dominionist force in American politics and culture.

John Blanchard claims that the Jamestown landing signifies that, "We were started as a Christian nation and I feel it's God's purpose we stay a Christian nation." Indeed, to read The Assembly 2007 web site, one would think that the King had sent missionaries to Virginia. Far from it. The London Company behind the venture pooled investors interested in making money. For years, it floundered badly. Eventually, the company gave up the commercial charter and control reverted to the Crown. The gauzy view of Christians claiming the land for Christ and King is clarified by history.

When news of The Assembly 2007 and Blanchard's claim reached Joe Conn at Americans United for Separation of Church and State, he pulled out his history

books in rebuttal: "According to Anson Phelps Stokes' *Church And State in the United States*, the London Company's November 20, 1606 'Articles, Instructions, and Orders' did, indeed, demand that the prospective American colony 'provide that the true word, and service of God and Christian faith be preached.' But the charter added that the 'true word' must be 'according to the doctrine, rights, and religion now professed and established within our realme of England.'"

In other words, Jamestown was to be a bastion of the Anglican Church, the established faith of England. The local government was to enforce religious conformity, not religious freedom. According to Leo Pfeffer's *Church, State and Freedom*, the leaders of the Virginia settlement wasted no time in carrying out that edict. Governor Thomas Dale in 1612 mandated



“Laws Divine, Moral and Martial” that decreed the death penalty for those who “speak impiously of the Trinity... or against the known articles of the Christian faith.”

Those who cursed would have a bodkin (needle) “thrust through the tongue,” and all immigrants to the new land were to report to the Anglican minister for “examination in the faith.” Anyone who refused faced a daily whipping “until he makes acknowledgement.”<sup>2</sup>

### The Separation of Church and State in Party Politics

Christian nationalism is permeating not just cultural but national political life. The Republican National Committee employed leading Christian revisionist author David Barton to barnstorm conservative churches in voter mobilization campaigns during the past few election cycles and to make appearances with GOP candidates. The talented Mr. Barton made hundreds of campaign appearances in 2004 alone. In his appearances, Barton glibly but effectively links the notion of one’s personal religious identity with the destiny of the nation, which in turn is conveniently interpreted in terms of the fortunes of GOP candidates.

This should come as no surprise. Barton was named one of the nation’s “25 Most Influential Evangelicals” by *Time* magazine in 2005 and for many years served as the vice-chair of the Texas GOP. In the 2006 mid-term elections, Barton again went out on the stump, notably with unsuccessful GOP gubernatorial candidate Ken Blackwell of Ohio.

“His presentation has just enough ring of truth to make him credible to many people,” wrote Brent Walker of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, (comprising mainstream Baptist groups, but not the Southern Baptist Convention) in a detailed critique of Barton in 2005. Among other things, Walker rebuts historical distortions and revisions regarding the phrase “separation of church and state.”

“Barton asserts that church-state separation is not in the Constitution,” writes

Walker. He continues:

Of course, neither the words “church-state separation” nor “wall of separation” appear in the Constitution. That does not mean Barton’s position is correct. The Constitution does not specifically mention “separation of powers” or “the right to a fair trial” either, but who would deny the Constitutional status of those con-

---

Prior to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution in 1787, nine of the 13 colonies had established churches.

---

cepts? “Church-state separation” is a metaphor for what certainly was and is the spirit of the First Amendment’s religion clauses — government is to be neutral toward religion to the end of ensuring religious liberty.

Barton mentions church-state separation as flowing from Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danbury Connecticut Baptist Association. He asserts that later in the letter Jefferson made it clear that he wanted only a “one directional wall” to prevent the government from harming religion, not to prevent religion from capturing the government.

A reading of the entire letter belies any suggestion that Thomas Jefferson thought it was “one directional.” There is absolutely nothing in the letter even to hint that that is the case. Indeed, to the degree that Jefferson’s notion was one-directional, most scholars would argue that he was more concerned with the church

harming the state than *vice versa*. (Laurence H. Tribe, *American Constitutional Law*, p. 1159.) Of course, Barton completely ignores Roger Williams’s reference 150 years earlier to the “hedge or wall of separation between the garden of church and the wilderness of the world.” (Perry Miller, *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition*, p. 89.) It is clear that Williams, a Baptist pioneer, saw the advantage to the church of a clear boundary erected between itself and the state. More than that, he thought this wall was mandated by the very principles of Christianity. To that end, he wrote:

“All civil states with officers of justice, in their respective constitutions and administrations, are ... essentially civil, and therefore not judges, governors, or defenders of Spiritual, or Christian, State and worship ... An enforced uniformity of religion throughout a nation or civil state confounds the civil and religious, denies the principles of Christianity and civility, and that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” (Stokes, *supra*, p. 199.)

Thus, Williams and Jefferson understood the benefits to both the church

Now Online at  
[www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org)!

### The Religious Face of Anti-Environmentalism

The religious face of antienvironmentalism is the Washington, DC-based Interfaith Council for Environmental Stewardship (ICES), founded by a Catholic priest who is a former gay activist. Editorial Board member Frederick Clarkson reveals the group’s history in this article from the Spring 2001 *Public Eye*.

Visit “Of Current Interest”  
on our home page.

On [publiceye.org](http://publiceye.org) now!

and state of keeping those two entities separate and distinct.<sup>3</sup>

Yet Barton has suffered little of this kind formal critique, and little mainstream or alternative press coverage, his prominent role in the GOP notwithstanding. Also lacking is a sufficiently accessible and credible narrative of American history that answers Barton and his ilk, and seizes the high ground based on sound history and a popular appeal to values we share or can come to share in common.

We need a widely agreed upon narrative of how religious pluralism and respect for the right to religious difference emerged in American history. Instead, political consultants demand that mainstream politicians speak of their “faith journey,” or excoriate “religious political extremists,” or denounce unnamed “secularists” who are said to be driving mainstream and progressive “people of faith” from public life. Such soundbite-ism seems to be the only narrative framework from which most of our national leaders operate, even as they make the customary paeans to religious liberty and the genius of the Founding Fathers, and other such disengaged platitudes.

Christian revisionist-influenced political breezes are even blowing in the Democratic Party. Prominent campaign consultants are advising their clients not to use the phrase separation of church and state because it raises “red flags with people of faith” and because the phrase does not appear in the Constitution. This is an excellent example of how successful Christian revisionists have been in their efforts to delegitimize the term as part of their efforts to shape and control public discourse in their direction. This is also symptomatic of the way that our political leaders are so far away from being able to articulate a compelling narrative of the story of religious liberty in America, that some are conceding the ground and listening to campaign consultants who say that it is better to say nothing.

### Finding Our Place in History

Running refrain in the revisionist narrative is that somehow the original intention of God and the Founding Fathers has been thwarted by some combination of liberals, judicial tyrants, the ACLU, secular humanists, and more. This notion,

which seems silly to some, is tremendously powerful in the context of the conservative Christian subculture. It asserts that “the Christians,” (however one may define Christians), are the intended rulers of the nation, because that’s what God, the Founding Fathers, and by implication, the Constitution, sought to accomplish.

It is a powerful piece of political and religious mythology that feeds into another powerful myth — that Christians are persecuted in the United States by the very forces that have thwarted God’s plan for America. The effect is to make people feel that something has been unjustly, unrighteously taken from them — and that that something must be “restored” or “reclaimed.” The Christian Right’s Jamestown event captured this sentiment.

But for all of the Christian revisionism that has gone into crafting this narrative, and as popular a notion as it is, there is a problem: the facts of history do not support the myth of Christian nationalism. That is why history has to be revised in the first place. This is one of many aspects of the Christian Right that has been largely ignored and has gone largely unanswered by the rest of society during its march to power.

Thomas Jefferson himself summarized the history of religious persecution in his own state in his 1781 book *Notes on the State of Virginia*. It is worth quoting at length:

The first settlers in this country were emigrants from England, of the English church, just at a point of time when it was flushed with complete victory over the religious of all other persuasions. Possessed, as they became, of the powers of making, administering, and executing the laws, they shewed equal intolerance in this country with their Presbyterian brethren....

The poor Quakers were flying from persecution in England. They cast their eyes on these new countries as asylums of civil and religious freedom; but they found them free only

### Excerpts from the Danbury (CT) Baptist Association letter to President Thomas Jefferson — and an excerpt from his reply:

Our sentiments are uniformly on the side of religious liberty—that religion is at all times and places a matter between God and individuals—that no man ought to suffer in name, person, or effects on account of his religious opinions—that the legitimate power of civil government extends no further than to punish the man who works ill to his neighbors; But, sir, our constitution of government is not specific... therefore what religious privileges we enjoy... we enjoy as favors granted, and not as inalienable rights. —*Danbury Baptist Association*

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties. —*Thomas Jefferson*

for the reigning sect. Several acts of the Virginia assembly of 1659, 1662, and 1693, had made it penal in parents to refuse to have their children baptized; had prohibited the unlawful assembling of Quakers; had made it penal for any master of a vessel to bring a Quaker into the state; had ordered those already here, and such as should come thereafter, to be imprisoned till they should abjure the country; provided a milder punishment for their first and second return, but death for their third; had inhibited all persons from suffering their meetings in or near their houses, entertaining them individually, or disposing of books which supported their tenets.

If no capital execution took place here, as did in New-England, it was not owing to the moderation of the church, or spirit of the legislature, as may be inferred from the law itself; but to historical circumstances which have not been handed down to us. The Anglicans retained full possession of the country for about a century. Other opinions began then to creep in, and... two-thirds of the people had become dissenters at the commencement of the present revolution. The laws indeed were still oppressive on them, but the spirit of the one party had subsided into moderation, and of the other had risen to a degree of determination which commanded respect.<sup>4</sup>

Jefferson, in a few sentences, summarizes the history of oppression and control exercised by the Anglican Church — the outlawing of Quakers fleeing persecution in Europe, the punishment of religious dissenters, the banning of books. He also briefly underscores the role of religious dissent in the run up to the American Revolution. It was this disentanglement of church and state in the name of the rights of individual conscience that the doctrine of separation of church and state sought to resolve, in Virginia, and in the new nation.

Prior to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution in 1787, nine of the 13 colonies had established churches. Rhode Island and Pennsylvania had been founded explicitly on the idea of religious freedom which they defined as the right to individual conscience. Baptists called it “soul freedom.”

---

### Those who wished to preserve or to extend the power of established Christian churches opposed ratifying the Constitution.

---

#### A Marvelous Alliance

It is out of such material that we can tell the story of our nation with a strong, clear narrative of our own: one that discusses the role of religion in public life; one that tells the moving story of overcoming religious persecution and oppression; one that explains why there is no mention of God in the Constitution; one that appreciates the meaning of separation of church and state as a necessary prerequisite for religious freedom.

In order for us to be effective in doing this, we need to be able to speak with the person-to-person persuasiveness that comes from solid knowledge and authentic conviction necessary to build the political coalitions we need to meet the challenges of our time. With this understanding of history, we can craft a national ethos of respect for different views and religious pluralism. If we can do this, we will have a powerful story to tell — a story that challenges the bogus, revisionist narrative of Christian nationalism.

The development of our own story, rooted in the values of the framers of the Constitution, will illuminate the roots of

religious freedom and the right of individual conscience in the United States.

There are any number of facts showing the country was not founded as a “Christian nation” that we can offer in the debates to come. For starters: the Treaty of Tripoli, negotiated with Muslim states in the first decade of the United States, was ratified unanimously by the Senate and signed by President John Adams in 1797. It stated in part, “As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”

The treaty is important because it clearly reflects the view of the founding generation.

But the strongest part of the story will always be the Constitution. It does not mention God or religion, except for Article 6 which prohibits religious tests for public office. Article 6 meant that any free, propertied man, religious or non-religious, Christian or non-Christian, could vote and hold public office. If the framers, who were mostly Christians of various sorts, had wanted to declare a special place for Christianity in governance and society, they would have done so. But they didn't. The Christian nationalists have to engage in some rather spectacular evasions to get around this inescapable fact.

The reasons for the founders' decision — and this is important to be able to explain — is that they were operating on the broad principle of the rights of individual conscience. Mainstream historians note that early opposition to the ratification of the Constitution came from those who, like Jefferson, felt that the Constitution was insufficiently strong and clear on these matters.

So in exchange for Jefferson and his allies' support for ratification, the convention penned the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, which says:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

It took time to extend these rights fully to the states, and to make them real in the lives of all citizens. As a nation we are still working on it. But it was this founding right to believe as you will, to believe differently than the powers that be — and to change your mind — free from the interference of the state or unduly powerful religious institutions, that was the main original contribution of the framers of the Constitution and is a central part of the story of the nation.

And even as many will note that the Constitution perpetuated various forms of oppression — of women, slaves, and people who did not own property — this founding principle contained the powerful possibility for change. The right to believe differently (having disentangled mutually reinforcing institutions of oppression via the unity of church and state) made possible every advance in human and civil rights that has come since.

Here is where a marvelous fact emerges that should illuminate any narrative. The

right of individual conscience and the ultimate ratification of the Constitution by the thirteen states was won because of the alliance between orthodox evangelical Christians of the day, notably Baptists and Methodists, and those influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, like Jefferson and Madison. For these strange bedfellows,

---

**Jamestown was to be a bastion of the Anglican Church, the established faith of England. The local government was to enforce religious conformity, not religious freedom.**

---

“both in reason and The Holy Scriptures, than that religion is ever a matter between God and individuals; and therefore, no men can impose any religious test without invading the essential prerogatives of our Lord Jesus Christ....And let the history of all nations be searched... and it will appear that the imposing of religious tests had been the greatest engine of tyranny in the world.”

But Article 6 opposing religious tests for office was equally important to deists and atheists. The pseudonymous writer Elihu, report Kramnick and Moore, defended the proposed Constitution in an essay printed in Connecticut and Massachusetts newspapers. “‘The Constitution is a rational document for a wise people in an enlightened age. The time has passed,’ he said, ‘when nations could be kept in awe with stories of God sitting with legislators and dictating laws.... [and the framers] come to us in the plain language of common sense, and propose to our understanding a system of government, as the invention of mere human wisdom; no deity comes down to dictate it...’”<sup>5</sup>

Religious dissenters and non-religious people wanted the same thing, for different but overlapping reasons.

Similar marvelous alliances are necessary today to answer some of the challenges of our time. As we look back at history — real history — it is evident that so many of today’s orthodox evangelical Christians and so many secular activists would have been great allies at the time of the framing and ratification of the Constitution. They would have known and agreed that to avoid the ravages of religious persecution, and even warfare, we need a nation based on the right of individual conscience; where our religious beliefs have no bearing on our citizenship or our right to hold public office. And we need a clear separation of church and state so as to make the state the guarantor of our rights, rather than an agency compromised and corrupted by official entanglements with religious institutions, jockeying for power and influence.

the issue was not whether Christianity or religion was good or bad, although certainly many differed on the point. The issue was that individuals should have the right to believe as they will without interference from powerful religious institutions or the government.

It is true that a major reason people opposed ratification of the Constitution was the absence of any mention of Christianity in general and the banning of religious tests for public office in particular. But Baptists were notably active and eloquent in their support for religious freedom. Cornell historians Isaac Kramnick and Lawrence Moore report that during the ratification convention in Massachusetts,

...a distinguished Baptist minister, the Rev. Isaac Backus, supported the absence of a religious test. “Nothing is more evident,” he commented,

**Four short accessible books that go a long way towards the development of a mainstream narrative of the development of the role of religion in American history are:**

Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers: Religion and the New Nation*, Harper & Row, 1987.

Franklin T. Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and The Place of Religion in America*, Princeton, 2003.

Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: A Moral Defense of the Secular State*, W.W. Norton, 2005.

Barry Lynn, *Piety and Politics: The Right-Wing Assault on Religious Freedom*, Harmony Books, 2006.

One of the ways we can achieve this is to recognize the power of the narrative of the once and future Christian nation, and what it means to the Christian Right political movement. Once we do that, we can more systematically expose the bogus underpinnings of Christian historical revisionism and recover the relevant facts of our history. Then we can tell our story powerfully, accurately, and well. ■

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Clarkson, Frederick. *Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy* (Common Courage Press, 1997), 83-86. See also; Jeff Sharlet, "Through A Glass Darkly: How the Christian Right is Reimagining U.S. History," *Harper's*, December 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Conn, Joe. "Carry Them Back To Old Virginny: Historically Illiterate Religious Right Celebrates Founding Of Jamestown Colony, Wall of Separation," *Americans United For the Separation of Church and State*, October 30, 2006. [http://blog.au.org/2006/10/carry\\_them\\_back.html](http://blog.au.org/2006/10/carry_them_back.html)

<sup>3</sup> Walker, J. Brent. *A Critique of David Barton's Views on Church and State*, Joint Baptist Committee for Religious Liberty, April 2005. [http://www.bjcpa.org/resources/pubs/pub\\_walker\\_barton.htm](http://www.bjcpa.org/resources/pubs/pub_walker_barton.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia, 1781*, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library. <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JefVirg.html>

<sup>5</sup> Kramnick, Issac, and R. Lawrence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: A Moral Defense of the Secular State* (W.W. Norton, 1996) pp. 39-40.

## INTERNS WANTED!

### The Public Eye

*The Public Eye* welcomes interns to join us in producing the only magazine dedicated to exposing the U.S. Right.

### Political Research Associates

Political Research Associates, the parent think tank of *The Public Eye*, offers a research internship, and a communication and development internship.

To apply, just email a letter and resume identifying the internship that interests you to [c.king@publiceye.org](mailto:c.king@publiceye.org).

**BECOMING AMERICANO** *continued from page 1*

as a party got the spanking we needed." The much-vaunted rise of the Latino Right had reached, at the very least, a pause.

From his office in San Antonio, Sosa told me, "I don't think everything I worked for is lost." Asked why, he relayed an insight given him by Ronald Reagan, who said that Latinos "are Republicans and they don't know it yet." Democrats should not see Latinos "in their hip pocket," Sosa added, because of their "conservative values"—rooted in their religion, strong work ethic, and traditional families.

Sosa is not entirely wrong. What will happen to the rightward-leaning tendencies among the country's ultimate swing voters depends not just on the political machinations of the GOP, which just appointed Cuban immigrant Mel Martinez as chairman of the Republican National Committee. Nor does the direction of Latino politics depend solely on what the Democrats—who just appointed Tejano congressman Silvestre Reyes as head of the powerful House Intelligence Committee—do or don't do.

While influential and important, the Machiavellian movements of the strategists and pollsters take place atop more important institutions and subterranean trends that will ultimately define the direction of the Latino Right—and, possibly the Latino politic. Chief among these influences are the soft-power effects of things like culture and religion, as well as the hard-power pull of militarism and jobs. The rightward tendencies among Latinos have more to do with things like some Latinos' embrace of a "white" identity (50 percent checked off "white" in the 2000 Census); the intensive focus on Latinos by Roman Catholic and evangelical Christian churches, the military, and the criminal justice system; and trends not as easily measured by surveys or exit polls. Such factors will determine how

---

*Roberto Lovato is a New York-based writer with New America Media and a member of The Public Eye editorial board.*

deep into the rabbit hole of rightward tendencies Latinos will go.

The stunning drop of support for George W. Bush and his party from approximately 40 percent (the best analyses confirm this number, not the 44 percent touted by Rove and the Republicans) in 2004, to the less than 29 percent support in 2006, demonstrates only that the consolidation of a Latino Right is not a completely done deal.<sup>1</sup> Sosa and Rove know better than most Democrats and media pundits the cultural, identity, and economic realities that change minds. They expanded the conservative base by building on segments and issues in the Latino community that do tend conservative.

Nowhere is this clearer than among reliably conservative Latino evangelicals. A study by the Pew Hispanic Center concluded that much, if not most, of the growth in the GOP's Latino support came from Protestant evangelicals.<sup>2</sup> While Latino Roman Catholic support for Bush was at 33 percent in both 2000 and 2004, support for Bush among Latino evangelicals mushroomed from 44 percent in 2000 to a 56 percent majority in 2004, according to the study. While no detailed analyses of the Latino vote in 2006 have been published to date, it is safe to assume that these numbers reflect the discontent expressed by Latino evangelical leaders since the introduction of the Sensenbrenner immigration bill in December 2005, which offended many with its call for a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border and other harsh measures.

Church leaders like the Reverend Luis Cortes, Jr. have been organizing and lobbying aggressively in support of legalization for the more than 12 million undocumented living in the United States. Cortes, who heads up Esperanza USA, a network of more than 10,000 Latino evangelical churches, told *Newsweek* that Latinos—including Latino evangelicals:

are unlikely to forget who made them the focus and the scapegoat for a failed immigration system. If the Republicans continue, they will be alienating Hispanics for decades.

Their only hope to win a national election will be voter apathy. The numbers are clear: by 2040 a quarter of all Americans will be of Hispanic descent. If the party wants to alienate us, they are welcome. But I don't think it is a sound political move.<sup>3</sup>

Most mainstream evangelical leaders reject legalization but some influential ones have begun responding to Cortes' and others' call. A new coalition, the "Families First in Immigration" coalition, was recently formed by conservative Christians to support more equitable immigration policy, and includes dozens of major Christian evangelical figures, such as ultra-conservatives as Paul Weyrich, head of Coalitions for America, Dr. Donald Wildmon from American Family Association, and Gary Bauer of American Values, along with David Keene with the secular American Conservative Union.

Reflecting both the political confusion and growing threat posed by the complexities of evangelical politics, the coalition recently proposed a "compromise" immigration proposal that includes punitive border security measures, an amnesty for undocumented workers who are relatives of citizens, and an end to birthright citizenship.

Strong bases of rightward-leaning Latinos exist in places like Martinez's Florida, where South Beach anti-Castristas built a political empire without equal in the United States. Although they are less than 3.5 percent of the Latino population, right-leaning Cuban-Americans, especially those of south Florida, have influenced national Latino and hemispheric politics since the 1970s. But the still quite powerful South Florida political machine built by Rafael Diaz-Balart, Fidel Castro's ex-brother-in-law who only recently died, is undergoing major challenges. In the Cuban American community, a new generation that is more moderate than the old is coming of age, and conservatives must face the fallout from their success in making it more difficult to travel and send money to Cuba. Meanwhile, massive numbers of

Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and other less rightward-leaning Latinos are migrating to Florida, adding to the pressure on the conservative Latino machine.

Another major base of operations for the workings of the Latino Right is Texas, the state that is home to Sosa, Rove and a slew of Latinos propped up as national leaders including Attorney General Alberto Gon-

---

**The stunning drop from approximately 40 percent support for George W. Bush and his party in 2004 to less than 29 percent support in 2006 demonstrates that the consolidation of a Latino Right is not a completely done deal.**

---

zalez, Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez, the now disgraced former head of the forces in Iraq, and others. Such "leaders" reinforce the "conservative values" Sosa, Rove, and Reagan tell us lie in the heart of Latino Americans.

And these values are backed up by a kind of national security Keynesianism and acculturation. With the critical need to increase Latino enlistment from 10 to 22 percent by 2025 (with black enlistment way down), the Pentagon is spending billions of dollars to identify, recruit and keep young Latinos in the military. Bilingual appeals to "Go Army" on Univision television and most other, more advertising-starved Latino media don't just turn Latino media into mouthpieces for the military. They also play to the community's eco-

nomic needs with promises of higher education and training.

When we consider that millions of Latino families will depend on the military for their very livelihood, the intense recruitment of Latinos reflects clearly the role of the military as a socializing institution described by Machiavelli, Gibbon, and more contemporary masters of national security-driven statecraft like Samuel Huntington. Nakedly laying out the acculturating effect of military service, Huntington, the former head of security planning in the Carter Administration's National Security Council, stated in his most recent and controversial book, *Who We Are*, "Without a major war requiring substantial mobilization and lasting years ... contemporary immigrants will have neither the opportunity nor the need to affirm their identity with and their loyalty to America as earlier immigrants have done."

That a fellow Democrat — and a Latino — Louis Caldera, was the first to push and implement the intensive recruitment of young Latinos shows the limits of party and ethnic loyalties. As the Secretary of the Army during the Clinton Administration, Caldera launched the Hispanic Access Initiative, inspiring similar efforts throughout the numerous branches of the Pentagon, all of which are cash rich and Latino starved. This lust for Latino bodies connects directly with the great needs of one of the country's poorest, least educated groups to create a different, more conservative, and patriotic Latino in the mold of the state, since military personnel tend to be more conservative politically. Such practices date back as far as Sparta and other city-states of ancient Greece.

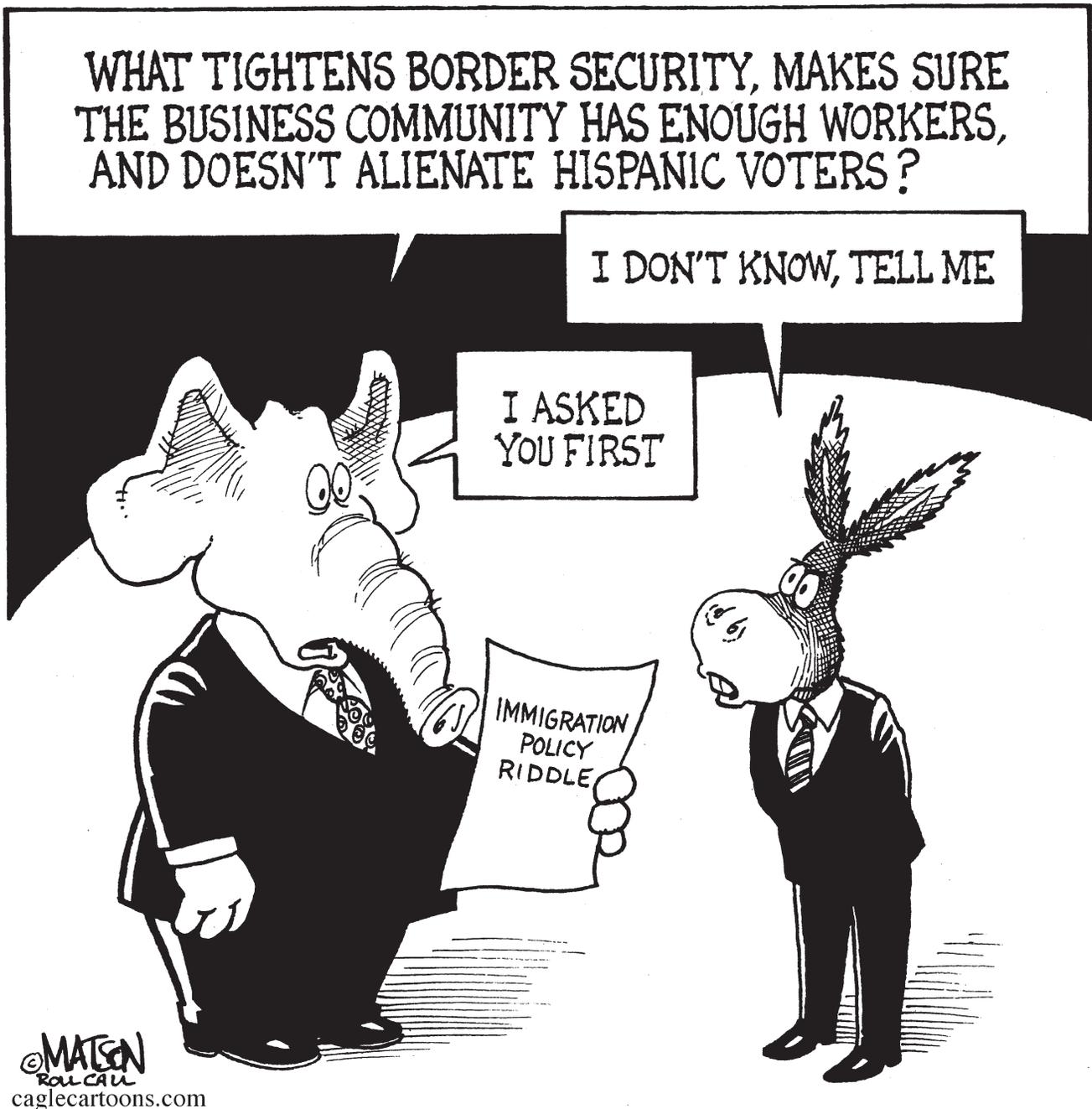
Using the military as a builder of nations and national character and culture began in earnest in the nineteenth century, when then nascent countries used the armed forces to build allegiance through what was deemed a "school of the nation." In Latin American countries like El Salvador, the ascendant capitalist elites used the military for multiple reasons. One of the major functions of the military was to draw the

allegiances of native peoples to their tribal structure, including tribal armies. Another was to reeducate and recreate Indian identity in its own image. And, for those who refused such acculturation and forced relinquishment of Indian land and life, the military also served to provide a final solution to that problem.

Such socializing dynamics are not lost on Rove, who, after working on a research project at the University of Texas on the work of the handlers and ideologues of the

McKinley Presidential campaign, came up with the strategies that helped tilt the Latino electorate rightward. Speaking of McKinley's success among the German, Irish, Polish and other immigrant groups in the late nineteenth century, Rove said, "A successful party had to take its fundamental principles and style them in such a way that they seemed to have relevance to the new economy, the new nature of the country, and the new electorate."<sup>4</sup> He basically wanted to do what McKinley's

strategists did in the industrial age, through messaging, policies, and jobs in the digital age — and he almost succeeded with the help of people like Sosa. Rove added that "He [McKinley] basically made it comfortable for urban ethnic working people to identify with the Republican Party." Rove and Sosa are clearer than most about how institutions like the church and the military are still among the most influential socializing — and right-leaning — institutions among Latinos.



Another institution that serves this socializing function is the criminal justice system. While most students of Latino politics focus on the prisoner side of the equation, nobody's watching the watchers of the penitentiary behemoth: the exponential growth of Latinos working in the criminal justice system headed up by Alberto Gonzalez, hailed as the first Latino Attorney General in US history.

At the same time, Gonzalez' ubiquitous smile hides the tragic reality of the growth of the Latino prison population from 17.6 percent in 1995 to 20.2 in 2005. It also appears to celebrate the rapid and little-discussed rise in the Latino prison guard population. And at a time when national security imperatives like those of the Department of Homeland Security push police departments across the country to become more militarized, the cultural reality behind, for example, the 13 percent increase (the fastest of any group) in Latinos employed in criminal justice between 2000 and 2003 means that more Latino families will be tied to another institution with powerful conservative influences.

Even as the families of incarcerated Latinos lose considerable income with the loss of a breadwinner, compare that to the middle class opportunities offered to families of Latinos arresting, prosecuting and guarding other Latinos. This cynical shift in wealth endows economic value on certain Latinos at the expense of others.

A similar transfer of human value takes place under the auspices of the Roman Catholic and Christian churches that, like the military and the criminal justice system, depend on Latino bodies for their future. Latino congregants are among the fastest growing, most important groups in both Roman Catholic and evangelical churches, both of which are key players in the move to create a Latino "values voter." The transfers of resources from the nonprofit sector serving Latino and other poor to the religious community realized through George W. Bush's "faith based initiative" makes clear who is elect in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the state. Organizations like Cortes' Esperanza USA receive millions of

dollars that would otherwise go to secular, nonprofit social service agencies that offer the same services, but without the Gospel-laden environment and messaging found in their drug rehab, family planning and other programs.

Though droves of Latino evangelical leaders and their congregants abandoned the Rove project during the last elections, in no small part because of immigration, much of the cultural software — the conservative "values" emphasized by Sosa and

---

### Latinos are among the fastest growing groups in both Roman Catholic and evangelical churches, both of which are key players in the move to create a Latino "values voter."

---

others — coded and massively distributed by the GOP remains in place. The use of abortion, anti-gay initiatives and other reactionary wedge political issues will continue to play the conservative programming with deep historical roots among Latinos.

A smaller, more dispersed, counterbalancing religious force can be found in congregations like Chicago's Adalberto United Methodist Church (where Mexican immigrant Elvira Arellano was granted refuge from immigration authorities) and other churches now declaring sanctuary as part of the immigrant rights movement. (Of course, their numbers are small since Pope John Paul II and then-Cardinal Ratzinger purged the church of more liberation theology-oriented priests and parishes.)

Will Latinos continue their turn away from the Right, continuing the momentum witnessed in last year's massive marches and

during the off-year elections? That will depend on how and whether the forces of the left in the community can bring awareness and offer alternatives to the ideological workings of powerful institutions like the Pentagon, the criminal justice system, and organized religion. Equally important is the need to educate people about the political nature of these institutions, as well as show how, without Latinos, these institutions may suffer great devastation. We need campaigns to decrease the number of Latinos in the military and (both sides) of the criminal justice system while at the same time press local and national Roman Catholic and Christian churches to adopt positions on issues like the Iraq war, Latino recruitment, rapidly growing incarceration rates, and U.S. policy in Latin America.

More of us need to understand how Latino poverty creates the same pool or hopelessness from which institutions like the military and the church draw their economic and human resources. Many of us grew and are still growing up in situations that leave us few options besides the military, law enforcement, or jail. The reasons for this poverty must be denounced at pulpits and legislative houses that remain silent on these issues all the while loudly affirming and defending "the sanctity of life" and "family values." Democrats, leftists and others concerned about the future of this soon-to-be "majority-minority" country (as most of the top 100 cities already are) should heed the call of the voiceless and the choiceless.

Failure to do so will result in a Latino politic in the service of empire. ■

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Pew Hispanic Center, *Latinos and the Midterm Election* (November 2006); *Hispanics and the 2006 Election* (October 2006); *Hispanics and the 2004 Election: Population, Electorate and Voters* (June 2005). (Washington, DC). <http://pewhispanic.org/factsheets/factsheet.php?FactsheetID=26>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> David Gerlach, "Soiling Our Flag," *Newsweek*, June 6, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Rove quoted in Dan Balz, "Bush's Iron Triangle Points Way to Washington," *Washington Post*, July 23, 1999, C1.

# Book Reviews

## The Right's Global Goals for Women *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*

By Jennifer Butler

University of Michigan Press, 2006, \$22.95 paperback, \$75 cloth, 224 pages

Reviewed by Michelle Goldberg

One of the most important and least noticed ways that President George W. Bush has rewarded his religious Right base is by giving them positions of power at the United Nations. Under Bush, members of official American delegations to UN conferences have included Janice Crouse, lead researcher of Concerned Women for America, Paul Bonicelli, former dean of academic affairs at the fundamentalist Patrick Henry College, and Janet Parshall, the religious Right radio host who narrated the hagiographic documentary "George W. Bush: Faith in the White House."

The religious conservatives who represent the United States on the national stage have made alliances with the Holy See and some of the world's most repressive regimes, including Iran, the Sudan and Libya, to fight agreements expanding recognition of women's and children's rights. The strange emergence of this ecumenical right-wing united front, especially at a time of such bitter antagonism between Muslims and Christians in other realms, has profound implications for women worldwide, as well as for everyone concerned about the growing influence of religious fundamentalism in public life.

Reverend Jennifer Butler's new book *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*, adds much to our understanding of how this international right-wing religious network has come into being, and how it is likely to evolve. The former Presbyterian Church (USA) representative to the United Nations, Butler saw the growth of religious Right influence at the UN firsthand, and her book relies on both her own experience and on valuable interviews with key players on all sides. *Born Again* is fascinating and important. It is also occasionally maddening, because, in her frustration over the success of the religious Right, Butler has adopted the hectoring anti-secularism that is becoming a depressing *leit-motif* of the nascent religious left.

The book begins with a memorable scene from a UN women's conference in March of 2000. Butler was sitting in a conference hall listening to a speech by the prominent global feminist Charlotte Bunch. "Many of the American women at the conference favored colorful, free-flowing dresses and carried book bags picked up at previous UN world conferences...covered with the symbols and slogans of women's empowerment,"

she writes. Suddenly, a group of young, conservative, mostly male Catholics and Mormons in suits "began streaming through the backdoors of the conference hall as if on cue...All of them wore bright campaign buttons emblazoned with a single word: 'Motherhood.'"

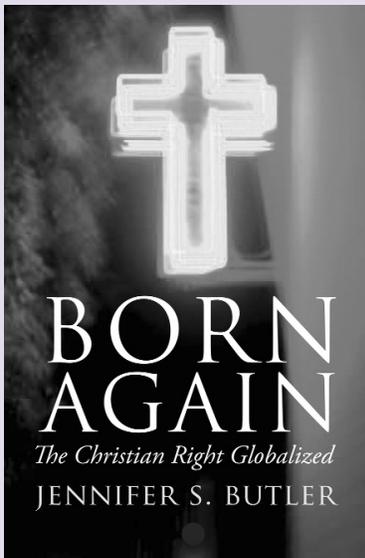
As Butler explains, since the 1990s, religious Right activists have been mobilizing against what they view as an anti-family, anti-religious agenda at the United Nations. Her book presumes a certain familiarity with the global women's movement and the byways of international organizing, so she doesn't do much to explain why UN conferences, statements and treaties dealing with cultural issues matter, but the stakes are in fact quite high.

In Tanzania, a court cited the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (a treaty ratified by 169 countries, though not the United States) when overturning a law that prohibited females from inheriting clan land from their fathers. In striking down Columbia's total ban on abortion last year, that country's supreme court noted that "Various international treaties form the basis for the recognition and the protection of the reproductive rights of women, which derive from the protection of other fundamental rights such as the right to life, health, equality, the right to be free from discrimination, the right to liberty, bodily integrity and the right to be free from violence. Sexual and reproductive rights of women have been finally recognized as human

rights." That notion, of course, is anathema to leaders of the world's most traditionally religious societies, including our own, and they have organized in opposition.

Religious Right activism at the United Nations is not simply a matter of the United States unilaterally imposing its moralism on the rest of the world. As Butler notes, relying on the work of religion scholar Philip Jenkins, conservative religion, both Christian and Muslim, is growing rapidly in the global south. The rhetoric of the international religious Right often echoes that of anti-colonialism, denouncing international attempts to empower women as unwelcome impositions of foreign libertinism. "Christian Right leaders at the UN portray themselves as defending the religious, family-oriented global South against the secular, liberal West," she writes. This is a powerful frame, and one that feminists have thus far failed to really grapple with. Butler quotes Jenkins saying, "What if a global North, secular, rational and tolerant, defines itself against the rest of the world as Christian, primitive, and fundamentalist?"

That is indeed a grim prospect, but the solution cannot be



to denigrate secularism. Frustratingly, like Jim Wallis and Michael Lerner, she tends to repeat right-wing canards about liberals being “intolerant” of religion as if they were fact. “Given the resurgence of religion in the political discourse and its continued strength in shaping cultural values, one might question whether political movements which categorically reject religious values can reach large numbers of people,” she writes. Who are these straw liberals who have categorically rejected the values of Desmond Tutu or the Dalai Lama? How could a global women’s movement that is rigidly anti-religious have made leaders of the committed Methodist Hillary Clinton, the Catholic Frances Kissling, or the Muslim Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi?

At one point, Butler writes of the domestic left, “Subscribing to overzealous interpretations of the separation of church and state, many progressives sought to ban all religious expression from public life. This alienated many Americans, who were willing to tolerate such expressions as prayer at football games.” There are a host of faulty assumptions and deceptive phrases packed into these sentences. By “many progressives,” one assumes she’s speaking of the ACLU and its supporters. The ACLU, of course, only seeks to ban publicly funded religion; when the government impinges on the free speech rights of indi-

vidual believers (say, to erect crèches on property where other public displays are permitted, or to proselytize in the school lunchroom) the ACLU *defends* religious expression. Going after government-sponsored prayers at football games may indeed be a foolish political strategy, but civil libertarians are most important precisely when they’re fighting for unpopular views and minority rights. Surely Butler isn’t suggesting that we make what “many Americans” are “willing to tolerate” the measure of how we apply the First Amendment?

Butler is correct to urge liberals to understand the resurgence of traditional faiths as something more than backward atavism. A progressive coalition that can fight the religious Right needs to learn to speak to the profound anxieties — about globalization, cultural destabilization and family breakdown — that make fundamentalism attractive to so many in the first place. But such a coalition will fail if the religious left becomes another force decrying secularism in a world where secularists already feel besieged. It’s not just the pious who can’t bear to see their most cherished values consigned to the dustbin of history.

---

### Christian Right leaders at the UN portray themselves as defending the religious, family-oriented global South against the secular, liberal West.

---

*Michelle Goldberg is a contributing writer for Salon.com and the author of Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism.*

## POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES BOOKSTORE

Reports and books from the premier watchdog on the US Right

*Special rates for Public Eye readers!*

### Our Activist Resource Kits

*Defending Justice* (2005): \$10

*Defending Immigrant Rights* (2002): \$5

*Defending Public Education* (1999): \$5

*Defending Reproductive Rights* (2000): \$3

*Defending Democracy* (2001): \$3

### Special Reports: \$3

*Deliberate Differences: Progressive and Conservative Campus Activism in the United States* (2004)

*Privatizing the Common Wealth: The Pioneer Institute* (2002)

*Calculated Compassion: How the Ex-Gay Movement Serves the Right’s Attack on Democracy* (1998)

*Challenging the Ex-Gay Movement: A resource packet* (1998)

### Books by PRA Associates

*Right-Wing Populism in America* by Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons: \$15

*Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence from the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers* by Jean Hardisty: \$10

*Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy* by Frederick Clarkson: \$10

---

To order, call PRA at 617.666.5300

Or send your check with \$3.50 postage for first item plus \$1.50 for each additional item to:

PRA, 1310 Broadway, #201, Somerville, MA 02144

[www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org)

Visa and Mastercard accepted

# .....Reports in Review.....

## REPORT OF THE MONTH

### Spies on the Right of Us

#### No Real Threat: The Pentagon's Secret Database on Peaceful Protest

*American Civil Liberties Union, New York, January 2007.*  
[http://www.aclu.org/pdfs/safefree/spyfiles\\_norealthreat\\_20070117.pdf](http://www.aclu.org/pdfs/safefree/spyfiles_norealthreat_20070117.pdf)

#### Review of the TALON Reporting System

*U.S. Department of Defense (February 2006)* <http://www.aclu.org/safefree/spyfiles/28021gl20070117.html#attach>

In December 2005, NBC News revealed that the Department of Defense (DoD) was gathering information on peaceful anti-war activity and storing it in a database known as TALON, Threat and Local Observation Notices. Campus protests and counter-recruiting efforts of such groups as Code Pink, Brooklyn Parents for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War and American Friends Service Committee won the DoD's attention as organizers of suspicious, possibly terrorist, activities near military installations. TALON's aim, according to the DoD, was "to alert commanders and staff of potential terrorist activity or apprise them of other force protection issues."

To learn more about "this disturbing echo of an earlier era of unchecked and illegal government surveillance," the ACLU filed Freedom of Information Act requests in February 2006 to view TALON reports. Yet it took a court order for the Pentagon to release any documents. The civil liberties group discovered that the Pentagon threat database stored not four dozen but at least 185 entries on lawful, anti-war political activities in fourteen states, reports which the Pentagon says are now deleted.

The most fascinating element of this report are the pages of reproductions of the released documents. Over and over you read information from activist email blasts or web site postings translated into bureaucrat-ese by a "Special agent of the federal protective service, Dept. of Homeland Security." A Department of Defense memo about TALON from February 2006 said most contributors of information on the lawful anti-war protests were from "civilian" (non-military) sources and

that it was unsolicited.

It is clear from the memo that local and state police were tied into the information gathering system and at least one TALON report stimulated the San Francisco Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force in November 2004 to advise commanders of military "processing stations" on how to handle upcoming counter-recruiting demonstrations. [Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Forces coordinate activities among all forms of intelligence and law enforcement in a region.]

Another TALON report quotes an FBI Intelligence analyst about the practices of International Action Center activists, revealing that the FBI is doing its own scrutiny of anti-war groups (p. 41). Similarly a report on a UC Santa Cruz protest against recruiters at a career fair refers to government surveillance of domestic political groups: "Source, a federal law enforcement officer with 20 years of experience in intelligence collection on domestic groups stated that civil disobedience can range from a sit-in to forcibly removing personnel from the station along with vandalism of the building(s)." (p. 42)

The DoD admitted in the February 2006 memo that the mission of apprising the government of not only terrorist threats but also "other force protection issues" generated "some confusion" and encouraged the reporting on anti-war groups. But it also noted that "This sharing of information has resulted in an enhanced relationship between DoD and local, state and federal law enforcement agencies."

In calling for Congressional hearings, the ACLU warned that we still don't know if there are any other databases, nor have we seen the directives guiding the TALON program or any other troublesome content.

One piece of good news coming out of the documents is that the government thinks counter recruitment is having an effect. As one report noted, "Counter Recruitment has become a national issue, and it's working. Between these efforts and widespread anger about the war, all branches of the United States military have seen drastic drops in their recruitment rates." (p. 34)

— Abby Scher

## Other Reports in Review

### In Katrina's Wake

#### Dismantling a Community

*By Leigh Dingerson, Center for Community Change, Washington, D.C., September 2006.*  
<http://www.communitychange.org/issues/education/publications/downloads/Dismantling-FULL.pdf>

This is a moving indictment of the bald opportunism of conservatives who privatized the public schools in New Orleans after Kat-

rina. Within nine days of the hurricane — and the destruction of over half of the city's schools — the Heritage Foundation had issued a market-based, privatizing vision for rebuilding of New Orleans that might have been a blueprint for what came afterward.

As the report documents, federal Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings repeatedly intervened to support Heritage's vision by waiving regulations and facilitating the transfer of millions of public dollars to establish pri-

vately run — but publicly funded — charter schools.

Around the country, government funded charters, which can be privately or publicly run, have been used to break teachers unions, siphon funds from already-strapped public schools, and offer corporations the chance to profit from public dollars.

Woven through the report's narrative is a morality tale in the shape of a news story that describes the conservative takeover of the

school system. We read how a “network of conservative anti-government activists have moved with singular intensity” to replace public education with charter schools that function like a sieve, rescuing white and middle class children and letting poor, underachieving and special needs students of color, who made up 93% of the city’s public school population, fall through the gaps.

In January 2006, only 17 public schools were open, 14 of them charters. By September 2006, only 53 schools were open, still fewer than half the pre-storm number, 31 of them charters with 21 different organizations running them.

Even after Katrina’s devastation of the educational system, students and former students in a community-based writing program run by the Center continued to write, and their eloquent stories form half of this publication. — Pam Chamberlain

### The Klan’s New Target

#### Ku Klux Klan Rebounds

*Anti-Defamation League, February 2007, on-line publication. [http://www.adl.org/learn/ext\\_us/kkk/intro.asp?LEARN\\_Cat=Extremism&LEARN\\_SubCat=Extremism\\_in\\_America&xpicked=4&item=kkk](http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/kkk/intro.asp?LEARN_Cat=Extremism&LEARN_SubCat=Extremism_in_America&xpicked=4&item=kkk)*

The Ku Klux Klan has been revitalized by the anti-immigrant fervor sweeping far right groups, attracting more members and fueling greater activity, according to this report by the Anti-Defamation League. The Klan’s particular ideology claims that Jews are coordinating a tide of non-White immigrants to flood the nation with the aim of challenging and ultimately destroying white supremacy in the United States.

Members loosely coordinated in 40 different Klan groups occasionally come together in “klonvocations” — not just in the South, but also the Midwest, mid-Atlantic and Western states. One newly founded sect in Florida, the Empire Knights of the KKK, now has chapters in 18 states. Groups have grown where immigrants have become relatively large proportions of the local population fairly quickly as they fill jobs like those in food processing plants of the Midwest.

The researchers track “unity rallies” bringing together the Klan with other anti-Semitic and racist groups like Christian Identity, neo-Nazis, and the Aryan Nation. Relying on publicity actions and public gatherings, Klan members have also been implicated in hate

crimes, illegal gun running, plots to blow up government buildings, and other criminal activity, including violence directed against disputing factions. For all this detail, carefully documented and happily without hyperbole, the report still focuses on a network whose current membership it estimates at about 5,000 nationally. — Pam Chamberlain

### Swinging Voters

#### Libertarian Voters in 2004 and 2006

*by David Boaz and David Kirby, The Cato Policy Report, The Cato Institute, January/February 2007. <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa580.pdf>*

This is a sound election analysis that takes an important kernel of truth — the influence of libertarian-minded people as swing voters in the 2006 elections — and uses it to inflate the importance of the authors’ own political position.

The Cato Institute is the libertarian think tank that promotes a free market ideology in which the government’s role is dramatically limited to protecting property and persons. “Libertarian” is also the word used to describe those across the political spectrum — including Cato Institute researchers — who support civil liberties. The authors studied the voting patterns of yet another definition of “libertarian” — those who are socially liberal and “fiscally conservative,” though not necessarily supporters of the free-market ideology such as Cato promotes.

These fiscally conservative libertarians could be 10 to 20 percent of the electorate, the authors suggest — more than soccer moms or NASCAR dads, other attractive, independent minded voters. They swung to the

Democrats in 2004 and 2006, according to their analysis of multiple polls. Still, the authors argue, journalists overlook the strength of libertarian fiscal conservatives because of their rigid prism dividing the electorate into a right and a left.

The authors admit these voters don’t actually identify themselves as libertarians, and it is difficult to compare polls which ask different questions. A close look at the questions also finds they often exaggerate the intensity of someone’s anti-government opinion, for instance by forcing the person to choose whether s/he thinks: “the less government the better” or “there are more things that government should be doing.”

With those caveats: Seventy four percent of these voters went for Bush, Sr. in 1988, according to one poll. In 2004, only 59 percent voted for Bush, Jr., while they doubled their vote for the Democrat, narrowing the gap between Republican and Democratic votes cast from 52 points in 2000 to 21 points in 2004. By 2006, that margin was 23 points. Last year, fifty-nine percent of fiscally conservative libertarians voted for Republicans.

The authors account for this erosion by a growing distaste for Bush, Jr.’s spendthrift, wiretapping ways. *The Public Eye’s* coverage of right-left coalitions against the Patriot Act (Spring 2006) supports this analysis. Yet voters tending toward fiscal conservatism do not necessarily embrace Cato-style libertarianism, which often gets lost in the authors’ repeated description of these voters as “libertarian” in a perhaps unconscious writerly sleight of hand. — Abby Scher

*Read the best analysis on the Christian Right on Talk2Action.org!*

*Talk2Action is a group blog led by Public Eye writer and editorial board member Frederick Clarkson. Read weekly contributions from Fred, Political Research Associates researcher Chip Berlet, and the rest of the best thinkers on the Christian Right.*

Visit [Talk2Action.org](http://Talk2Action.org).

# Eyes RIGHT

## DID YOU SAY POSITIVE?

Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Women for America, is thrilled with a new Heritage Foundation study that suggests why the abortion rate has declined, especially among minors. The study, by University of Alabama professor Michael New, places responsibility on a stronger economy, sexual activity starting at an older age, and — surprise — pro-life state-level laws that restrict access to abortion services.

“Dr. New’s research — based on fact — helps to shatter the myths being put forward by the abortion lobby and the media,” she told *CitizenLink*. “It verifies what common sense would tell us — pro-life regulations have a positive effect.”

Source: *CitizenLink* February 6, 2007 <http://www.citizenlink.org/CLtopstories/A000003845.cfm>

## THE ERA’S UNDERMINING MOTHERHOOD – AGAIN

The Family Research Council’s Tony Perkins is tracking Arkansas state Rep. Lindley Smith’s (D) effort to revitalize the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment. “The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), until recently, was a largely irrelevant piece of feminist propaganda dating back to the early 1970s,” said Perkins, dusting off a few outdated opinions of his own. “The ERA seeks not to end discrimination, injustice, or chauvinism, but to undermine motherhood, traditional sexuality, and innate gender differences.”

Source: *Washington Update*, February 6, 2007 <http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=WU07B04>

## HOMOSEXUALS AND THOSE ANNOYING ‘BREEDERS’

Peter LaBarbera the president of Americans for Truth about Homosexuality, an anti-gay organization, practiced his logic in a recent email update.

“Nature discriminates against homosexuality. Same-sex arrangements can never be ‘equal’ to the God-ordained institutions of marriage and family. They cannot produce children by themselves. Homosexual partners

# Eye LASHES

“This foreign infestation has grown to the point where the illegals among us victimize an American citizen every 17 seconds.”

– Laine Lawless, the lesbian, pagan, feminist founder of *Border Guardians* speaking at a Phoenix rally, December 16, 2006. ([Phoenixnewtimes.com](http://phoenixnewtimes.com), Feb. 15, 2007)

cannot acquire a child without involving heterosexual procreation in some way. Yep, those irritating ‘breeders’ come in handy once in a while. Heterosexual couples and larger society, on the other hand, do not need homosexuality to produce children. All but the most corrupted souls can see the divine purpose in male and female physiology.”

Source: “Breeders Still Required”, *AFT-Update*, email correspondence, February 2, 2007.

## GILDER-ING THE LILY

In his new book *The Enemy at Home*, social conservative pundit Dinesh D’Souza argues that the United States, or rather its decadent elements, are to blame for 9/11. No one has captured this argument in quite so pithy a way as George Gilder, author of several liberal-bashing books of his own.

“D’Souza raises the alarm that the anti-religious, sexual liberationist, anti-natalist and feminist thrust of American foreign, cultural, and free-speech global Internet policies threaten and estrange all the traditional cultures of the third world.” Hyperbole at its grandest.

Source: *Letter to the Editor*, *New York Times Book Review*, February 4, 2007. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/04/books/review/Letters.t-1.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/04/books/review/Letters.t-1.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)



## Support The Public Eye magazine!

Help us provide the best reporting and analysis on the U.S. Right and government repression.

Each issue of *The Public Eye* costs \$12,000 to produce – not including staff time! Yet we still make it available to everyone who wants it, with your help.

**Yes!** I want to support *The Public Eye*.

Enclosed is a donation of:

\$1000    \$750    \$500    \$250    \$100    \$50

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I want to subscribe to *The Public Eye*, \$21.

Check Enclosed

Charge my Mastercard or Visa (*circle one*)

Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail form with payment to:**

Political Research Associates, 1310 Broadway,  
Suite 201, Somerville, MA 02144-1837

# The Public Eye

NEWSLETTER

Political Research Associates  
1310 Broadway, Suite 201  
Somerville, Massachusetts 02144-1837

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
BOSTON, MA  
PERMIT NO. 54584

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED