

# The Public Eye

A PUBLICATION OF POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES WINTER 2004 • Volume XVIII, No.3

## RIGHTING CRIME

### Conservative Criminal Justice as Common Sense

## Crime and Political Ideology

By Jean Hardisty

### Introduction

“An eye for an eye” captures the conservative model of punishment in contemporary western societies. That is, when a wrong is done to an innocent person, the wrongdoer must be severely punished in order to “even the books” and stand as an example to deter other wrongdoers. Its advocates often call this punishment model the “law-and-order” model.”

In contrast, the liberal punishment model emphasizes the rights of the accused, humane (not “cruel and unusual”) punishment, and rehabilitation of those convicted of a crime. Conservatives and rightists belittle this model as “soft on crime.” In the United States, the two opposing models compete in the realms of culture and public policy. For most of U.S. history, the harsher punishment model has been so dominant that it is part of our international image. We are the country where we “hang ‘em high.” Only in an exceptional period does the principle and practice of redemption gain the upper hand.

What explains the U.S. inclination to favor the law-and-order punishment model? Certainly in times of social tension and economic unpredictability, the punishment paradigm is especially appealing. When people feel vulnerable and insecure, rationally or not, they often look for someone, some thing, or some group to blame. Because racism pervades U.S. society as a

whole, people of color, especially African Americans, who cluster at the lower end of the economic ladder, are close at hand to serve for White people as “the other,” as a source of criminal threat for the dominant population. (See Box on White Fear). And it is often true even for people whom White people have labeled as “the other,” but don’t see themselves as attached to, or identified with, those labeled criminals.

A convergence of several of the conditions that create social tension—for instance, hard economic times, rapid social change and/or a high crime rate—create a hospitable climate for an upsurge of the law-and-order paradigm. If rightists hold political power and rightist cultural values are dominant at the time these conditions prevail, they are likely to work to strengthen public support for this paradigm, usually by emphasizing an “us/them” dichotomy that demonizes criminals and expands the definition of criminal behavior.

Only a powerful political force can push against the historical U.S. preference for a harsh punishment model. A strong progressive movement can mount a countervailing political analysis that promotes an understanding of the *root causes* of crime, critiques the law enforcement and criminal justice systems, and emphasizes rehabilitation and rights for criminal defendants and prisoners. Such an analysis is associated with liberal politicians, activists and advocates. A progressive analysis that questions the very right of the State to incarcerate

its citizens rarely garners widespread public support.

However, even when liberal arguments gain political strength and acceptance, the policies that follow merely moderate the punishment model. A period of such moderation occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, when liberalism became strong enough to challenge the existing criminal justice system. Liberal publications, speakers at demonstrations, and political leaders talked about “equality” and “the dead-end life of the ghetto” as a place of no opportunity, and promoted a model of rehabilitation for criminals. This model focused on acknowledging that criminals were often the product of poverty and economic segregation, and that society should respond to behavior deemed criminal with education and opportunity as a form of crime prevention, and training while the criminal paid his/her debt to society.

*Crime and Political Ideology continues on page 3*

### IN THIS ISSUE

Crime and Political Ideology . . . 1
Guest Commentary . . . . . 2
Calvinism, Capitalism, Conversion, & Incarceration . . . 8
Books Received . . . . . 16
Eyes Right . . . . . 22
Eye Lashes . . . . . 22

# Guest Commentary

By Rose Braz

Condemning the abuse of Iraqi prisoners as “fundamentally un-American,” Donald Rumsfeld ignores the strikingly similar circumstances facing two million U.S. prisoners.

While Congress, the military and pundits alike argue that the Abu Ghraib photos do not depict conditions in American prisons, they forget that a few months before atrocities were caught on tape at Abu Ghraib, we watched our own videotape of guards at the California Youth Authority beating youth under their watch.

A few years earlier, at California’s Corcoran State Prison, guards staged and wagered on “gladiator fights” between prisoners. As in Iraq, there have been deaths in custody. For example, in Florida in 1999, guards beat prisoner Frank Valdez to death. And if there was any doubt that prisons beget torture, one need only remember Pelican Bay State Prison, where prison guards immersed a mentally ill prisoner in a tub of boiling water.

These are not isolated incidents, and the similarities do not end there. The Iraqi prisons are now run by the same people who run our prisons at home: two of the seven soldiers accused in the Abu Ghraib scandal are prison guards in the U.S. The man appointed to reopen Abu Ghraib last year was the director of the Utah Department of Corrections. He resigned that position in 1997 after a prisoner died while shackled to a restraining chair naked for 16 hours.

With additional revelations of more atrocities, the call rises to court martial Lynndie England and other abusers, get rid of the few “bad apples,” reduce the number of prisoners held at Abu Ghraib and possibly even close the prison.

Unfortunately, history and research show that eliminating torture requires more than just removing so-called bad apples from the barrel. The Abu Ghraib catastrophe, and the atrocities that occur in American prisons everyday, should instead make us rethink the use of prisons as answers to what are social, economic and political problems—both in Iraq and here at home...

... Today, there are 78,000 prisoners 19 years old and under, and two million adult prisoners. Our society continues to label prisoners as less than human, lock them in cages, strip them naked and even allow their murder and rape...

... On top of it all, prisons don’t make our communities safer. In the first national study on the impact of imprisonment on crime, the Washington, DC-based Sentencing Project found that people in states with more prisons and more people in prison were no safer than people in other states.

Since 1997, Critical Resistance has been working to debunk the myth that the prison industrial complex (PIC) will make our communities safer. After September 11, 2001, we found ourselves also working to debunk the myth that expanding the prison industrial complex, internationally and domestically, would make this nation safer. The same flawed principles of retribution and retaliation that have driven the growth of the PIC as an answer to what we label “crime” at home have now been employed as an answer

Guest Commentary continues on page 20

## The Public Eye

**Editor**

Nikhil Aziz, Ph.D.

**Design/layout**

Hird Graphic Design

**Printing**

Red Sun Press

**Mailing**

Walnut Street Center



POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

**Founder and President Emerita**

Jean V. Hardisty, Ph.D.

**Staff**

Roberta Salper, Ph.D. *Executive Director*

Nikhil Aziz, Ph.D. *Associate Director*

Chip Berlet, *Senior Analyst*

Pam Chamberlain, *Researcher*

Shelly Harter, *Database Manager*

Tom Louie, *Director of Development and Communications*

Namorya Nelson, *Office Manager and Bookkeeper*

Palak Shah, *Researcher*

**Board of Directors**

Michael Chapman

Heeten Kalan

Vivien Labaton

June Lorenzo

Rev. Katherine Ragsdale

Mohan Sikka

Wendy Volkmann

Paul Watanabe, Ph.D.

*The Public Eye* is published by Political Research Associates. Subscriptions are \$29.00 for individuals and non-profit organizations, \$39.00 for other organizations, \$19.00 for students and low-income individuals. 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 02144-1731. 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, 2004.

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

All rights reserved. ISSN 0275-9322

ISSUE 47

But in those same decades, a conservative backlash began to gain popularity. By the end of the 1970s, the New Right, a growing social and political movement whose central program was to attack liberal ideas and practices, had labeled the liberal model the “coddling” of criminals. The New Right directed its message—that the country appeared to be spinning out of control—to White men, conservative Christians, and White Southerners. “Middle Americans,” feeling they were losing status and financial security in a time of social change, were encouraged by rightists to fear “chaos” in the streets and in private life. Subtle messages appealed to racial stereotypes by implying that the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s had strengthened the position of “undeserving” welfare recipients (usually stereotyped as people of color) and criminals at the expense of “good” White people. Soon moderate Democrats and even some liberals began to collaborate in the promotion of the backlash slogan, “tough on crime.”

It wasn't simply economic and social tensions that underlay the New Right's success in promoting its message on crime. “Law and order” resonated with a powerful ideological strain within the U.S. populace—the conservative worldview. You might think of this worldview as the ideological default to which many White Americans return when they are anxious, confused, or resentful.

### The Prominence of the Conservative Ideological Worldview

As with so many of its policies, the Right's conservative view of human nature and a preeminent desire for an orderly society drives its law-and-order agenda. While the liberal, humanistic vision of human nature is that people are basically good, but are made bad by oppressive poverty, abuse, addiction, racism, and/or

lack of opportunity, the Right's view is that people are bad by nature. Rightists see urges to sinful, aggressive, and selfish behavior as human nature. Therefore, conservative rightists often accuse liberals and leftists of being “idealists,” who fail to understand that people are fundamentally flawed and prone to anti-social acts.

For many rightists—especially those in the Christian Right—the only fruitful

keep people on the correct path stems from a philosophical belief that society in its “natural” state is chaotic. Therefore society's first obligation is to establish a formidable authority.<sup>2</sup> Authority naturally resides in the State, the Church, and the family/community. In the words of Thomas Hobbes, the 17th century English philosopher who is the father of the conservative worldview, “Before the names of just and unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power.”

Rightists, despite their occasional adherence to values of love and charity, believe that humankind is divided into good (worthy) people and bad (unworthy) people. Bad or unworthy people are irresponsible and/or anti-social because of weakness, self-indulgence, and lack of the will to overcome their baser instincts. The definition of “good” and “bad” has many dimensions, including moral, cultural, economic, and political. The designation “unworthy” can be stark and unforgiving. Lack of discipline should earn a “bad reputation” and a watchful eye from law enforcement officials.

The character trait of a strong and law-abiding person, on the other hand, is “social responsibility.” For such a person, the first hurdle is to resist temptation and, by doing so, live a good life. The story of Hester Prynne, the Puritan woman in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*,

captures the conservative worldview. Prynne, who became the town minister's lover, was forced to wear a large, cloth scarlet A for “adulterer” on her chest for the rest of her life, making a clear statement that she was an undisciplined person.

The public policy implications of this worldview are enormous. For instance, if, as in the liberal model, all people are potentially good, preventive measures to keep them from coming under influences that

---

**What explains the U.S. inclination to favor the law-and-order punishment model? Certainly in times of social tension and economic unpredictability, the punishment paradigm is especially appealing. When people feel vulnerable and insecure, rationally or not, they often look for someone, some thing, or some group to blame. Because racism pervades U.S. society as a whole, people of color, especially African Americans, who cluster at the lower end of the economic ladder, are close at hand to serve for White people as “the other,” as a source of criminal threat for the dominant population.**

---

path of redemption lies in conversion to conservative Christianity. This path, promoted most notably by Charles “Chuck” Colson, whose conversion occurred while he served time in prison for crimes committed as part of the Watergate scandal in the 1980s, has become a small redemption industry.<sup>1</sup>

The conservative view of humankind as sinful and in need of self-discipline, harsh punishment, and religious redemption to

will turn them “bad” are not simply justified, but a practical response to a rising crime rate. But if, as in the rightist worldview, all people are born with a strong urge to be “bad” and some are unable to control those urges through discipline and social responsibility, punishment and isolation are the appropriate responses to their behavior.

The theme of law and order, as it stems from the conservative worldview, sets up a stark us/them dichotomy that makes it possible for “deserving” people to place “them” outside the boundaries of an orderly and godly society. From this perspective, once outside the boundaries of legitimate society, “the other” is no longer the responsibility of those who are good and worthy.

In order to advance the message that attention to “them” is misplaced by liberals, the Right launched its campaign to promote “victim’s rights” in the 1980s. Building on the conservative worldview, a “victims’ rights” campaign allowed rightists to introduce conservative tough-on-crime policies without appearing to be racist or opposed to individual rights and liberties.

### How Does Law and Order Play Out in Racial Terms?

In the United States, existing institutional, systemic, and individual racism magnify and reinforce this us/them dichotomy.<sup>3</sup> Because the criminal justice system of every country serves as a means of control over some members of that society (and others who get caught up in it), it always reflects the need of the State for control, the political desire of leaders to stay in power, and the norms and mores of behavior favored by those leaders and usually supported by at least a portion of the society’s members. In a country with the racial history of the United States, we cannot be surprised that Whites have always controlled the criminal justice system and used it to control people of color, especially African Americans and increasingly all dark-skinned people, including those from the Middle East and South Asia.

In the ideological and political campaign

### WHITE FEAR

It is a tragic irony that the European settlers greeted by native peoples when they arrived in what the immigrants called the “New World” evolved a xenophobic worldview called “Nativism.” The term is used to describe the notion put forward by many immigrant settlers and their offspring that the ideal citizen is a White, northern European, native (U.S.) born, Protestant.

Xenophobia is a fear of (or a distaste for, or a hatred directed at) people, ideas, or customs thought to be strange or foreign. In the United States, this often involves White racial nationalism. When the new nation was founded in the late 1700s, there was an example of Xenophobia prompting government policies in the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts. Periodically throughout U.S. history xenophobic Nativist movements have gained a mass following; spreading their ideas and pushing for federal action and legislation to limit immigration by people of color. Roberto Lovato calls the current manifestation of this phenomenon “White Fear.” “In white fear’s eyes, any shade of brown is suspect,” writes Lovato. And just like previous periods of anti-immigrant bigotry, this fear justifies a “war against those perceived as 21st century barbarians.” Lovato explains that “White fear mobilizes Republican and Democratic voters to defend their perceived racial interests under the guise of patriotism.”

According to Lovato, “Even though ideas about race, ethnicity, culture and civilization are fluid and murky, white fear is cohesive and entrenched.” He notes that “White fear is profitable. Bond issues for prison construction managed by major investment banks are more profitable than school construction bonds for improving the decrepit, crowded public schools.” He adds that “prison construction bonds also depend heavily on a steady flow of young, brown bodies of former students of de-funded schools, as do the crowded barracks in Iraq’s deserts.”

Part of contemporary White fear is driven by demographic trends that suggest White people will become a “minority” group sometime during the 21st century. Lovato warns this is creating a “new wave of minority politics: white minority politics. Though rooted in California, this new politics of fear is cropping up across the country as its promoters redefine who is racial victim and who is racial oppressor, neatly inverting—and co-opting—the arguments and terms of the civil rights movement.”

Source: Roberto Lovato, “White Fear,” *Pacific News Service*, May 18, 2004 <http://www.alternet.org/story/18734/>; Roberto Lovato, “Fear of a Brown Planet,” *The Nation*, June 11, 2004, online archive.

to promote “law and order,” conservative strategists have been careful to avoid any mention of its agenda’s racial implications. After arguing for criminalizing certain behaviors, especially drug consumption and distribution, they never mentioned how this would disproportionately affect communities of color (where the State’s arrests for such behavior are higher than in White and suburban communities). Some of the academics who promote law-and-order arguments have even maintained an identity as liberals, and claim to be writing in the interests of “the community.”

Through this sleight of hand, rightist policy-makers have constructed law-and-order policies as a series of supposedly race-neutral policies, although the outcome of these policies has been to criminalize, to a vastly disproportionate extent, the behaviors of certain targeted groups, especially racial minorities. Whether or not these law-and-order policies were intentionally racist may be open to debate, but many people, especially people of color, connect the dots and see their outcome as both intentional and systemic.

You might imagine that an increased

emphasis on law and order would result in increased attention to all forms of law-breaking. But addressing police brutality and other forms of State violence clearly is not the focus of law-and-order policies. Nor is it the focus of the ideological camp that promotes these policies. Such neglect of a whole class of “victims”—those victimized by police or military power—supports the assertion that illegitimate race-based practices are the single most salient feature of the contemporary criminal justice system. Rightists often blatantly deny statistical evidence of unequal rates of incarceration, arrest, and punishment by race or class for identical crimes, as well as evidence of police and criminal justice officials’ presumption of guilt according to the race of the accused.<sup>4</sup> Rightist Professor John J. DiIulio, Jr., a prominent law-and-order proponent who inaccurately predicted a growing wave of “super-predator” children, stated that data on the administration of capital punishment “disclose no trace of racism. . . .”<sup>5</sup> But it is nearly impossible to study the discrepancies between incarceration rates for people of color and those of Whites for similar behaviors and not conclude that these policies, and those who defend them, are racially motivated.

### **Ideological Contradictions in Law-and-Order Policies**

Each sector of the Right does not necessarily support the same policy solutions to the issues of crime and punishment. Various anti-crime policies create splits and disagreements within the Right. For example, rightist libertarians—who favor the most limited role possible for government—object to a punishment model that requires a huge investment of government funds, even when incarceration is privatized, and prisons eliminate training and treatment. The cost of building new prisons to house and police a swelling prison popu-

lation increases government spending in both the long- and short-term. Between 1985 and 1995, states and the federal government opened one new prison a week to cope with the flood of inmates into the prison system.<sup>6</sup> Much of this increase resulted from the increasing criminalization of non-violent offenders, through three-strikes laws, mandatory sentences, and

---

**The conservative view of humankind as sinful and in need of self-discipline, harsh punishment, and religious redemption to keep people on the correct path stems from a philosophical belief that society in its “natural” state is chaotic. Therefore society’s first obligation is to establish a formidable authority. Authority naturally resides in the State, the Church, and the family/community. In the words of Thomas Hobbes, the 17th century English philosopher who is the father of the conservative worldview, “Before the names of just and unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power.”**

---

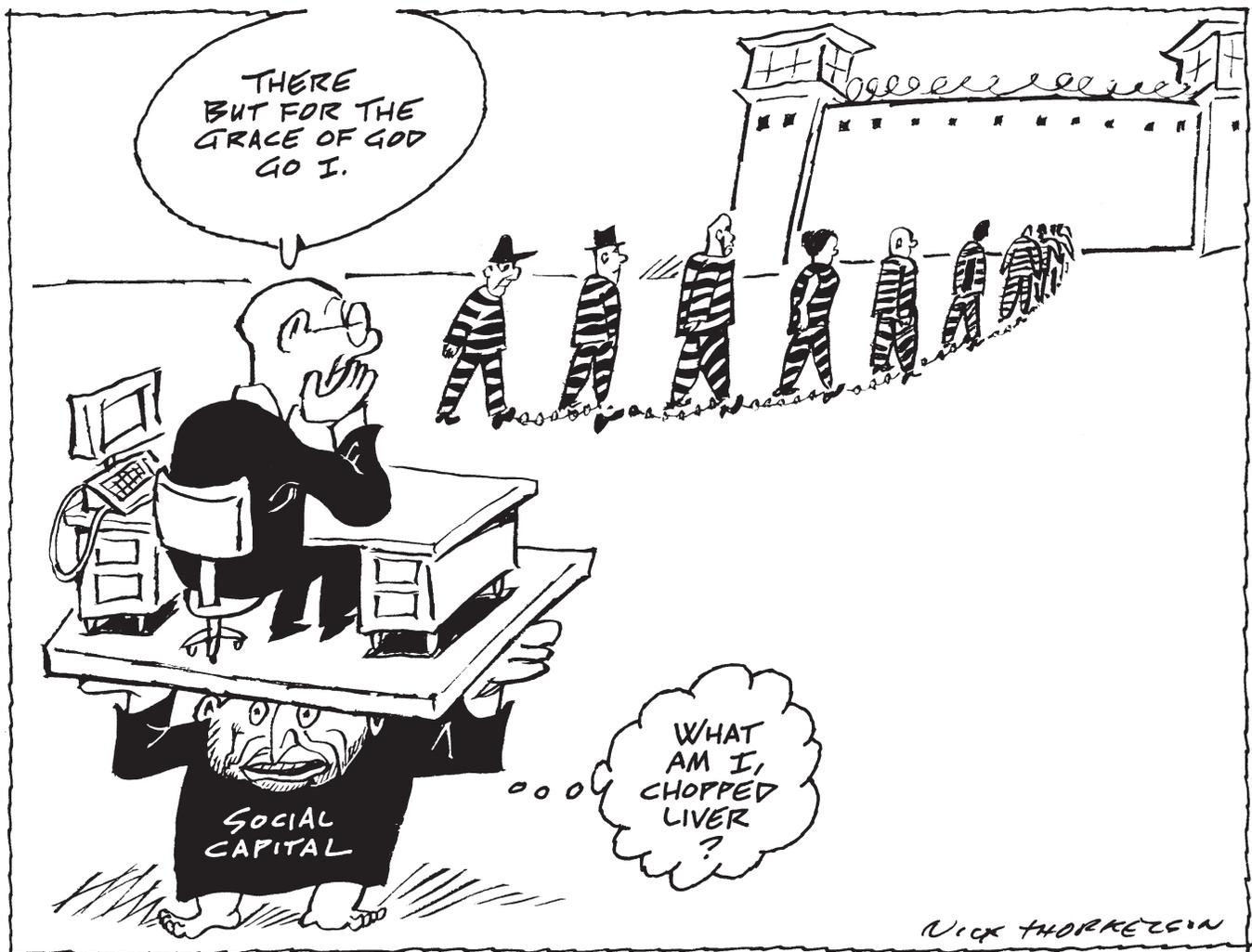
drug laws. Referring to the many economic interests that now have a vested interest in maintaining high rates of incarceration, some critics, notably Angela Davis, have called this the emergence of a “prison-industrial complex.” Police departments, private prison corporations, unions of prison guards, rural communities eager for prison jobs, and businesses that provide prisons with food, security, and maintenance serve as pressure groups to assure the continuation of ever-increasing funding for prisons and to support tough on crime policies

and drug laws that continually escalate rates of imprisonment.<sup>7</sup>

Widespread imposition of the death penalty also creates dissonance for some rightists. Between 1995 and 2003, prisoners in the United States were executed at an average rate of one per week.<sup>8</sup> Although execution is a more expensive form of punishment than life-long imprisonment (due to the cost to the State of legal appeals), until recently its use has been steadily increasing, driven, in large part, by the Secular Right. Some conservatives are disconcerted by the revelation, as a result of DNA testing, that innocent prisoners have been executed. Others more critical of the criminal justice system, have not been surprised by these cases.

Finally, some rightists are uneasy with the growth of federal domination over state criminal justice systems. Despite the traditional conservative commitment to “states’ rights,” criminal prosecutions usually conducted at the state level have increasingly been taken over by the federal government, as the law-and-order crime model has grown in influence. For decades, crimes that involve crossing state lines have been classified as federal crimes and are prosecuted in federal courts. Organized crime

cases and many drug and firearms crimes have swelled the number of federal cases. But journalist Ted Gest describes a “creeping federalization of criminal prosecutions” of crimes that occur at the local level. Liberals have supported some of this growth in the role of federal courts. Because they hope, for instance, that hate crimes, abortion clinic bombings, and stalkings will often be prosecuted more vigorously at the federal level than at the state level. But, as both political parties compete to appear tough on crime, much of the federalization



Reprinted with the kind permission of the artist.

of the criminal justice system is directed at drug offenders and non-violent criminals. It thereby diminishes the role of the states in fighting even local crime.<sup>9</sup> So much for states' rights, a key principle of the Right's ideology.

Why would rightists persist in favoring these "big government" aspects of tough-on-crime policies? The prevention and rehabilitation model, which has largely been defunded, ultimately costs less in tax dollars because it addresses the causes of crime and the rehabilitation of prisoners. The answer lies in the ideological compatibility of apparently contradictory ideas when they are held within an overarching worldview that explains the contradictions. Two especially strongly held conservative beliefs are not subject to debate — criminals must be punished, and government should remain small. But "smallness" does not mean that the government should be

weak. Thomas Hobbes' admonition that States must establish a strong power that can exert control undergirds the idea that a massive program of incarceration is ideologically acceptable for conservatives who don't believe in "big government." In this case, many conservatives who believe that criminals are bad and must be punished in order to protect good, responsible (read White) people accept a strong role for government as appropriate and consistent with a conservative ideology. All sectors of the Right oppose the one policy solution that is most likely to solve the problem of crime in the long term — the creation of jobs, housing, economic opportunity, and universal health care that includes treatment for addictions.

### Why Is the Law-and-Order Model so Widely Accepted?

People who are ideologically progressive

or who are disproportionately subjected to the excesses of "tough on crime" policies and practices, find it hard to understand the widespread vicious, mean-spirited attitude toward people labeled as criminals. For instance, what would make a crowd gather outside a death penalty execution to cheer it on? What beliefs could make the public indifferent to the horrific conditions and physical abuse so common in contemporary U.S. prisons? Why has "tough on crime" become a bottom line necessity for any successful politician, even when people know that a substantial number of innocent people have been imprisoned, or even executed, through overzealous or malicious prosecution, lack of adequate legal defense, and/or racism?

As I mentioned above, several factors that might inspire such attitudes are: racism; fear and anxiety for physical safety and security; economic anxiety that leads

people to seek a scapegoat who becomes the “other;” and a sense of growing chaos and declining order. These conditions clearly lead to a more punitive-minded general public, especially when political leaders and the media reinforce their inclinations.

Perhaps another important part of the answer lies in the widespread acceptance of the conservative ideological worldview, especially its view of human nature, by many average Americans. I suggest that many in the United States see *themselves* in much the same way that philosopher Thomas Hobbes saw humans—prone to sinfulness in the form of sloth, moral depravity, envy, covetousness, lust, and aggression. And they see their lives as a process of self-discipline to overcome these urges.

The struggle to live a life of virtue and dutifulness rather than sinfulness is an abiding source of pride in mainstream U.S. culture. To be a “good man” or a “good woman” is no small accomplishment. Average people know how much effort it takes to accomplish this identity. Accompanying the pride felt by those who work to maintain their virtue is a deep resentment of those they feel do not work and sacrifice to overcome their sinful urges. This resentment can turn especially bitter when “good people” perceive that “bad people” are reaping benefits that should rightfully be theirs. The resulting hatred is a major factor driving the country’s support for tough-on-crime policies and the law-and-order model. The common sentiment—“The bad people ruin it for all the rest of us”—captures much of the rightist worldview. To coddle the “bad” people is to devalue the hard work of the “good.”

To keep this system in place, two things are necessary: 1) there must be widely shared agreement on what is “good,” and 2) there must be a strict separation between the “good” and the “bad.” But in modern society, the definition of what is “good”

becomes more confused every day, causing status and identity anxiety. Changing definitions of “good” and “bad” can make traditional rightists resentful and angry, leading them to charge progressives, secularists, and others who disagree with them as being “moral relativists.” When social mores change—for instance, when obtaining an abortion or living together as an unmarried heterosexual couple becomes

---

**Perhaps another important part of the answer lies in the widespread acceptance of the conservative ideological worldview, especially its view of human nature, by many average Americans. I suggest that many in the United States see *themselves* in much the same way that philosopher Thomas Hobbes saw humans—prone to sinfulness in the form of sloth, moral depravity, envy, covetousness, lust, and aggression. And they see their lives as a process of self-discipline to overcome these urges.**

---

socially normalized behavior—the former definition of “good” and “bad” becomes contested territory. Most progressives hail such expansions of individual rights as progress for human rights. For conservatives, they represent a blurring of the lines, and a further erosion of the status of “good” people who resist “decadent” urges and model “virtuous” human behavior.

As free-market capitalism becomes more dominant and unregulated in U.S. society, subjecting workers to increasing job instability and pay fluctuations, many workers

respond with economic apprehension and status anxiety. Further, private enterprise responds almost exclusively to its predominant goal—maximizing profit. To sell products, family values can be mobilized, but if individualistic, “anti-family” attitudes can more successfully sell goods, the market will promote those values. This “amoral” profit-driven ethic often conflicts with established notions of good and bad or right and wrong, adding to the sense of dislocation on the part of many people, who then seek a target for their resentment over all that has changed “for the worse.” Such an environment offers the “criminal”—whose very existence defines those who are not criminals as “good”—as a convenient and serviceable scapegoat. And in a society characterized by institutional and individual racism, a “criminal” or “bad” identity is disproportionately attached to dark-skinned people.

### Conclusion

The Right’s law-and-order campaign has led to an increase in the severity and duration of incarceration since the early days of the Ronald Reagan Administration. Political moderates, and even liberals, collaborated in policies that have embodied reactionary intentions and racist outcomes. The mainstream media, by elevating sensational stories of criminals and victims to attract audiences and advertisers, have promoted a view of crime as rampant and frightening. By associating inner-city residents of color with guns and drugs, rightist politicians have promoted an ideological message that criminals are individuals who have choices and choose crime and victimization of those weaker than they.

Driven by a conservative ideological worldview, rightists and average people in the United States now support a huge prison industry that incarcerates people at

**Crime and Political Ideology** continues on page 20

# Calvinism, Capitalism, Conversion, & Incarceration

By Chip Berlet

## Introduction

Why are increased sentences and the severe punishment of those convicted of crimes so popular and prevalent in U.S. culture? Since the late 1970s our society has accepted increasingly rigid and vengeful ways of punishing those convicted of crimes. Behind this trend is the momentum of 250 years of a strain of religious philosophies brought to our shores by Pilgrims, Puritans, and other colonial settlers influenced by a Protestant theology called Calvinism. Today, many ideas, concepts, and frames of reference in modern American society are legacies of the history of Protestantism as it divided and morphed through Calvinism, revivalist evangelicalism, and fundamentalism. Even people who see themselves as secular and not religious often unconsciously adopt many of these historic cultural legacies while thinking of their ideas as simply common sense.

What is “common sense” for one group,

however, is foolish belief for another. According to author George Lakoff, a linguist who studies the linkage between rhetoric and ideas, there is a tremendous gulf between what conservatives and liberals think of as common sense, especially when it comes to issues of moral values. In his recent book *Moral Politics*, which has gained attention in both media and public debates, Lakoff argues that conservatives base their moral views of social policy on a “Strict Father” model, while liberals base their views on a “Nurturant Parent” model.<sup>1</sup>

Other scholars have looked at these issues and found similar patterns. According to Axel R. Schaefer, there are three main ideological tendencies in U.S. social reform:

Liberal/Progressive: based on changing systems and institutions to change individual behavior on a collective basis over time.

Calvinist/Free Market: based on changing individual social behavior through punishment.

Evangelical/Revivalist: based on born

again conversion to change individual behavior, but still linked to some Calvinist ideas of punishment.<sup>2</sup>

## Coalition Politics

Republicans have forged a broad coalition of two of the three tendencies that involves moderately conservative Protestants who nonetheless hold some traditional Calvinist ideas; Free Market advocates ranging from multinational executives to economic conservatives to libertarian ideologues; and conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists with a core mission of converting people to their particular brand of Christianity. This is a coalition with many fracture points and disagreements. The Calvinist/Free Market sector is already a coalition based on shared ideas about individual responsibility and successes in Free Market or *Laissez Faire* capitalism—sometimes called neoliberalism to trace it back to an earlier use of the term “liberal” by philosophers who opposed stringent government regulation of the economy.

---

Since the late 1970s our society has accepted increasingly rigid and vengeful ways of punishing those convicted of crimes. Behind this trend is the momentum of 250 years of a strain of religious philosophies brought to our shores by Pilgrims, Puritans, and other colonial settlers influenced by a Protestant theology called Calvinism. Today, many ideas, concepts, and frames of reference in modern American society are legacies of the history of Protestantism as it divided and morphed through Calvinism, revivalist evangelicalism, and fundamentalism. Even people who see themselves as secular and not religious often unconsciously adopt many of these historic cultural legacies while thinking of their ideas as simply common sense.

---

Libertarians are against government economic regulations and believe in a Free Market, but libertarians generally also oppose government regulation of social matters such as gay marriage and abortion. These and other social issues, however, are central to the conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists in the Republican coalition. This can get complicated. For example the evangelical idea that it is personal conversion and salvation that will make for a more perfect society, not government programs and policies, sometimes ends up supporting (in a complementary and parallel way) the goal of libertarians and economic conservatives to reduce the size of government.

As the Bush Administration has shifted government social welfare toward “Faith-Based” programs, it has diverted government funding into privatized religious organizations (which raises serious separation of Church and State issues), but the amount of funding applied to “Faith Based” projects is small compared to the large budget cuts in previously government-funded government-run social welfare programs. Libertarians approve of the overall budget cuts, but would prefer cutting out the government funding of “Faith Based” projects.

Not all evangelicals and fundamentalists are political conservatives, although most are. The Christian Right is that group of politically conservative Christians—primarily evangelicals and fundamentalists—who have been mobilized into a social movement around social issues and traditional moral values; and who have sought political power through elections and legislation. The Christian Right became a political force in the Republican Party in the 1980s as part of a strategy of right-wing political strate-

gists to enlist evangelical and fundamentalist leaders, especially television evangelists, in building a voter base.

The Christian Right has used populist rhetoric to build a mass base for elitist conservative politics.<sup>3</sup> This process leads many people to vote against their eco-

Resentment,” the title of a book by PRA founder Jean Hardisty.<sup>5</sup> While much of this resentment openly targets women’s rights and gay rights, it is also a reaction against the Civil Rights movement and changing racial demographics in the United States, which has created a backlash that author Roberto Lovato calls “White Fear.”<sup>6</sup> (See Box on White Fear).

Today, the Christian Right is the single largest organized voting block in the Republican Party. These are predominantly White evangelical voters. Most Black Christian evangelicals overwhelmingly vote Democratic. The voting power of White Christian evangelicals has meant they are now political players on the national scene. For example President George W. Bush’s first term selection as Attorney General of the United States of John Ashcroft, a hero to the Christian Right and himself a member of the ultra-conservative evangelical denomination Assemblies of God, was a political reward to White evangelical voters.

Some of the goals of many White evangelical conservatives are shared by another group of people who call themselves the Neoconservatives. These are former liberals and leftists who rejected the social, cultural, and political liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Neo-conservative social and cultural politics echo many Calvinist themes such as the need to defend traditional morality and the patriarchal family; the special role for America in world

affairs, and the righteousness of economic capitalism.

Neoconservatives defend this combination as necessary not only to preserve American civil society, but also for the extension of true democracy worldwide. As elitists, they see themselves as a secular

---

**While most mainline Protestant denominations and evangelical churches have jettisoned some of the core tenets of Calvinism, ideas about punishment and retribution brought to our shores by early Calvinist settlers are so rooted in the American cultural experience and social traditions that many people ranging from religious to secular view them as simply “common sense.” What Lakoff calls the “Strict Father” model gains its power among conservatives because it dovetails with their ideas of what is a common sense approach to morality, public policy, and crime. To understand where this “common sense” comes from, and why it is tied to the Strict Father model, requires that we trace the influence of Protestant Calvinism.**

---

conomic self-interest, as Thomas Frank observes in his book *What’s the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*.<sup>4</sup> The Christian Right and their allies in the Republican Party have used fear, demonization, and scapegoating as part of a strategy for “Mobilizing

“Elect” who must defend society against the ignorant or radical rabble. And they describe this as the natural culmination of Judeo-Christian Western thought, which allows conservative Jews and Catholics to join the team.

This conservative political coalition has shaped Republican Party policies and transformed American society for over two decades. As the New Right gained power, Republicans—and Democrats—began to support repressive and punitive criminal justice policies that were shaped by one of the historic legacies of Calvinism: the idea that people arrested for breaking laws require punishment, shame, and discipline.

While most mainline Protestant denominations and evangelical churches have jettisoned some of the core tenets of Calvinism, ideas about punishment and retribution brought to our shores by early Calvinist settlers are so rooted in the American cultural experience and social traditions that many people ranging from religious to secular view them as simply “common sense.” What Lakoff calls the “Strict Father” model gains its power among conservatives because it dovetails with their ideas of what is a common sense approach to morality, public policy, and crime. To understand where this “common sense” comes from, and why it is tied to the Strict Father model, requires that we trace the influence of Protestant Calvinism.

### The Roots of Calvinism

Martin Luther founded Protestantism in a schism with the Catholic Church in 1517, but it was John Calvin who literally put it on the map in the city of Geneva, which is now in Switzerland. In the mid 1500s, Calvin forged a theocracy—a society where only the leaders of a specific religion can be the leaders of the secular government.

Calvinists believed that Adam and Eve disobeyed God and tasted the apple from the tree of knowledge at the urging of an evil demon. As a result of this “original sin,” the betrayal of God’s command, all humans are born in sin. God must punish us for our

sins; we must be ashamed of our wrongdoing; and we require the harsh yet loving discipline of our heavenly father to correct our failures.

Calvinists also believe that “God’s divine providence [has] selected, elected, and predestined certain people to restore humanity and reconcile it with its Creator.”<sup>7</sup> These “Elect” were originally thought to be the only people going to Heaven. To the Calvinists, material success and wealth was a sign that you were one of the Elect, and thus were favored by God. Who better to shepherd a society populated by God’s wayward children? The poor, the weak, the infirm? God was punishing them for their sins. This theology was spreading at a time when the rise of industrial capitalism tore the fabric of European society, shifting the nature of work and the patterns of family life of large numbers of people. There were large numbers of angry, alienated people who the new elites needed to keep in line to avoid labor unrest and to protect production and profits.

Max Weber, an early sociologist who saw culture as a powerful force that shaped both individuals and society, argued that Calvinism grew in a symbiotic relationship with the rise of industrial capitalism.<sup>8</sup> As Sara Diamond explains:

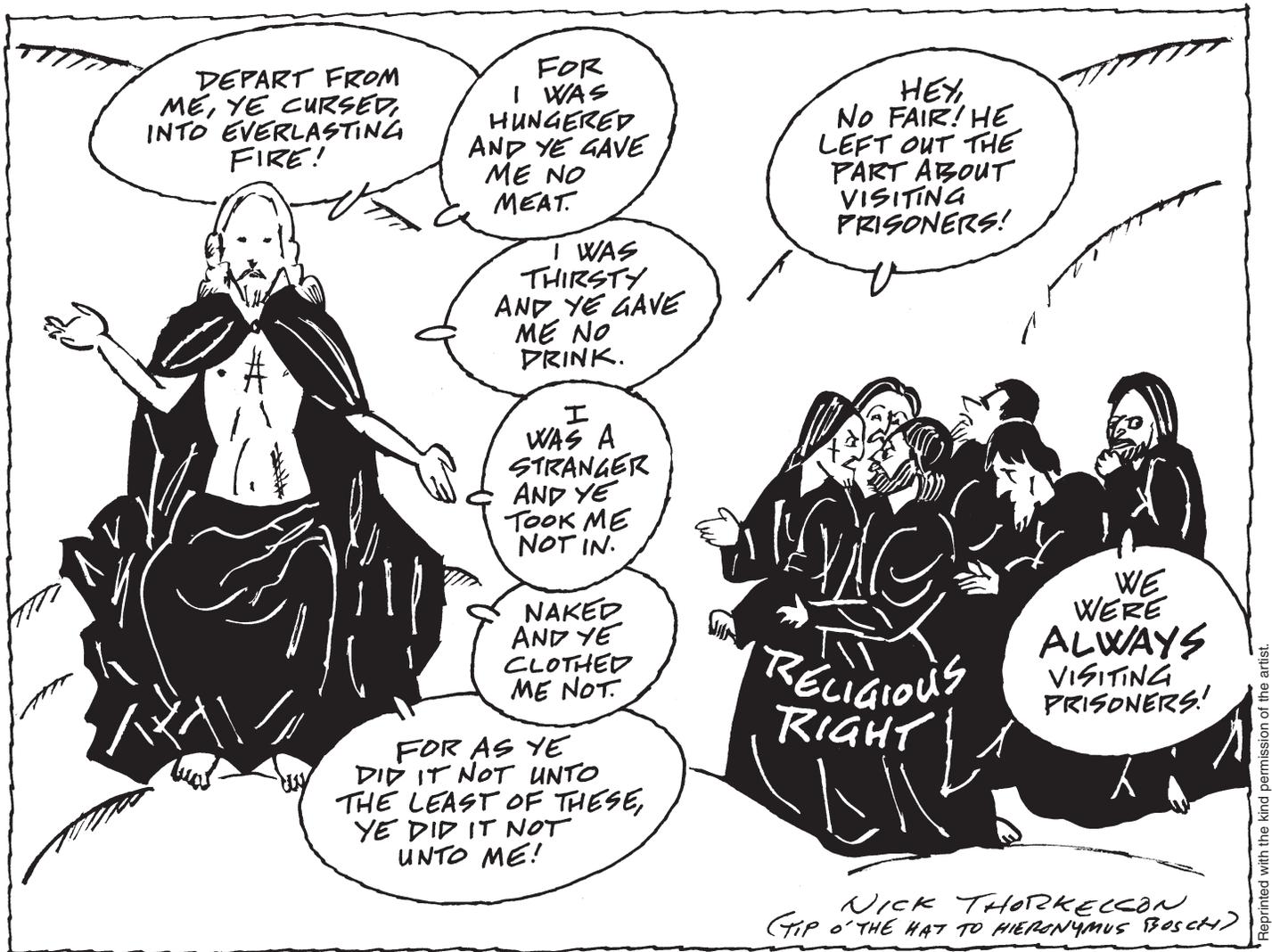
Calvinism arose in Europe centuries ago in part as a reaction to Roman Catholicism’s heavy emphasis on priestly authority and on salvation through acts of penance. One of the classic works of sociology, Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, links the rise of Calvinism to the needs of budding capitalists to judge their own economic success as a sign of their pre-ordained salvation. The rising popularity of Calvinism coincided with the consolidation of the capitalist economic system. Calvinists justified their accumulation of wealth, even at the expense of others, on the grounds that they were somehow destined to prosper. It is no surprise that such notions still find resonance within the Christian Right

which champions capitalism and all its attendant inequalities.

What Calvinism accomplished was to fulfill the psychic needs of both upwardly mobile middle class entrepreneurs and alienated workers. Middle class businessmen (and they were men) could ascribe their economic success to their spiritual superiority. These businessmen and others who were predestined to be the Elect of God could turn to alienated workers, and explain to them that their impoverished economic condition was the result of a spiritual failure ordained by God. Their place in the spiritual (and economic) system was predestined. This refocused anger away from material demands in the here and now. Because of their evil and weak nature, those that sinned or committed crimes had to be taught how to change their behavior through punishment, shame, and discipline.

In England, the Calvinist Puritans developed an “apocalyptic tradition [that] envisioned the ultimate sacralization of England as God’s chosen nation.”<sup>9</sup> The word apocalyptic means the idea that there is an approaching confrontation between good and evil that will transform society; and for Christians this involves the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This Christian Apocalypse involves the Battle of Armageddon where God triumphs over Satan and then decides which Christian souls are saved and rewarded with everlasting life in the new Garden of Eden under God’s holy rule in a new millennium of peace.

Puritan settlers transferred this notion to the New World colonies, and apocalyptic fervor and millennial expectation was common. If you think that time is running out, salvation—the saving of souls—takes on central importance. After the United States was founded, these ideas were transformed into an aggressive variety of evangelizing to save souls for Christ before the final apocalyptic judgment that would send the unsaved to a fiery sulfurous lake called Hell.



Reprinted with the kind permission of the artist.

### Awakening to Evangelicalism

From the 1730s through the 1770s there was a Protestant revival movement in the colonies dubbed the First Great Awakening. A line of Protestant preachers including Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley shaped the theology of the First Great Awakening. Edwards was a fiery preacher who still held to Calvinist orthodoxy: man was born bad, and God had predestined the Elect for Heaven. Alas, poor Edwards, he was a man mostly misunderstood. Those who heard and read his sermons (printing sermons in pamphlet form was a common practice) thought Edwards was saying people could change their fate by becoming more ardent Christians. Sometimes the theological fine points get lost in the oratory.

As the revival swept the colonies, many

reported a highly emotional experience of conversion after hearing sermons at large public meetings. Unlike Edwards, Whitefield and other preachers broke with Calvinist orthodoxy and challenged the idea of predestination. They suggested that sinners who embraced Jesus in the conversion experience could find a place in Heaven.

Predestination of the Elect was too elitist and static a brand of Christianity for a new society that claimed to be a classless society and valued individuality and initiative in the quest to conquer the frontier. The ideas of spiritual growth, and equality before God, started a public discussion about the need for the government to provide for public schools. It also planted the seeds for the anti-slavery movement. At the same time, this view could be adapted to

tell alienated workers that by accepting Jesus as their savior, they could learn to live with their earthly stress and subjugated status by looking forward to the future day of salvation.

The new evangelists tended to be zealous, judgmental, and authoritarian. Not everyone was happy with the results of the First Great Awakening, and some rejected the trend and remained on the traditional orthodox Calvinist path. Others rejected both and developed what became Unitarianism as a response. By the early 1800s there were three tendencies in colonial Protestantism:

- 1). Orthodoxy in the form of northern Calvinist Congregationalists and southern Anglicans;
- 2). Revivalist rationalism and evangelism that drew not only from the

Congregationalists and Anglicans (later called Episcopalians), but also swept through the smaller Protestant denominations such as the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians;

- 3.) Unitarianism, still relatively small but influential in the northeast.<sup>10</sup>

### Social Reformers: Quakers and Unitarians

Many ideas on social reform that are now supported by mainline Protestant denominations were initially promoted by religious dissidents such as the Quakers and later the Unitarians.

Quakers had been concerned with prison conditions since the late 1600s in both England and in colonial Pennsylvania, and they introduced the idea of prison as a means for reform rather than punishment.<sup>11</sup> They also promoted the “conception of the criminal as at least partially a victim of conditions created by society” which implied that society had some obligation to reforming the criminal.<sup>12</sup> In the early 1800s Quaker activist Elizabeth Gurney Fry launched a major prison reform movement in England, and these ideas were carried to the United States.

The Unitarians rejected the Calvinist idea that man was born in sin and argued that sometimes people did bad things because they were trapped in poverty or lacked the education required to move up in society. In the early 1800s the dissident Unitarians split Calvinist Congregationalism and succeeded in taking over many religious institutions in New England such as churches and schools. Harvard (founded as a religious college in 1636 by the Puritans), came under control of the Unitarians in 1805 as the orthodox Calvinist Congregationalists lost religious and political power. The Unitarians took the idea of transforming society and changing personal behavior

popularized by the First Great Awakening and shifted it into a plan for weaving a social safety net under the auspices of the secular government.

The attention to social conditions by the Unitarians and Quakers overlapped with the Second Great Awakening, which ran from the 1790s to the 1840s. Theologically, there was “a vigorous emphasis on ‘sancti-

... were so convinced their efforts could ring in the millennium, a literal thousand years of peace and prosperity that would culminate in the glorious second advent of Christ, that they threw themselves into fervent campaigns to eradicate war, drunkenness, slavery, subjugation of women, poverty, prostitution, Sabbath-breaking, dueling, profanity, card-playing, and other impediments to a perfect society.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the aspects of this evangelical revival were institutionalized into existing Protestant churches such as the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists; and these denominations grew even as they remained separate from the evangelicals. Meanwhile, the Anglicans, Quakers, and Congregationalists who directly opposed the evangelicals began to fade in importance.<sup>15</sup> By the late 1800s, most major Protestant denominations (called “Mainline” denominations) had found some accommodation with the discoveries of science and secular civic arrangements such as separation of Church and State favored by Enlightenment values.<sup>16</sup> There was also “a growing interest by churches in social service, often called the Social Gospel, [which] undercut evangelicalism’s traditional emphasis on personal salvation.”<sup>17</sup>

### Fundamentals and Prophecies

All of this created a backlash movement. A group of conservative ministers condemned this shift and urged Protestants to return to what they saw as the fundamentals of orthodox Protestant belief. From 1910 to 1915 these reactionary theologians published articles on what they saw as the fundamentals of Christianity. Thus they became known as the fundamentalists. Among their beliefs was the idea that the

---

Most evangelicals and fundamentalists embrace a form of apocalyptic belief called “premillennial dispensationalism” in which Jesus Christ returns to herald a thousand years of godly rule—a millennium. Evangelical premillennialists scan the Bible for “signs of the times” by which they mean signs of what they think are the approaching End Times prophesied in the Bible’s Book of Revelation. This means the Bible has to be read as a literal script of past, present, and future events; and it increases the urge to convert people to a “born again” form of Christianity and thus save souls before time literally runs out.

---

fiction,’ often called ‘perfectionism.’<sup>13</sup> Sin was seen as tied to selfishness. Good Christians should strive to behave in a way that benefited the public good. This in turn would transform and purify the society as a whole in anticipation of the coming Apocalypse. America was seen as a Christian Nation that would fulfill Biblical prophecy. Evangelical Protestants, explains Martin:

Bible was never in error and was to be read literally, not as metaphor. While rejecting Calvinist ideas of predestination and the Elect, fundamentalists sought to restore many orthodox Calvinist tenets—and they embraced the idea that man was born in sin and thus needed punishment, shame, and discipline to correct sinful tendencies.

Some who opposed what they saw as the liberal and progressive ideas of the mainstream and mainline Protestant churches decided to not go as far as the Fundamentalists, and they retained the identification of being evangelicals. Evangelicals and fundamentalists received such bad press during and after the Scopes “Monkey Trial” that many of them withdrew from direct political and social involvement, building a separate subculture that lasted until the Cold War. Although fundamentalists and evangelicals tended to withdraw from the political fray, devoting most of their energy to saving souls, they challenged modern ideas using such modern tools as radio and later television to communicate their message. Both groups were largely suspicious of the social reforms implemented during the administration of Franklin Roosevelt. Government welfare programs could be pictured as similar to the collectivism of Godless and perhaps Satanic Soviet communism.

Most evangelicals and fundamentalists embrace a form of apocalyptic belief called “premillennial dispensationalism” in which Jesus Christ returns to herald a thousand years of godly rule—a millennium. Evangelical premillennialists scan the Bible for “signs of the times” by which they mean signs of what they think are the approaching End Times prophesied in the Bible’s Book of Revelation. This means the Bible has to be read as a literal script of past, present, and future events; and it increases the urge to convert people to a “born again” form of

Christianity and thus save souls before time literally runs out.<sup>18</sup> These ideas became central to several groups of Protestants, today represented by denominations such as the Southern Baptists and the Assemblies of God.<sup>19</sup> Evangelicals and fundamentalist premillennialists concerned with the End Times could frame the burgeoning U.S. government apparatus, the spread of Soviet and Chinese communism, and the

churches and conservatives in mainline Protestant denominations felt themselves under assault by the growth of secular and humanist ideas in the society, a series of judicial decisions; and the social liberation movements. Religious belief in general seemed to be waning. The Supreme Court and other benches issued rulings on pornography, prayer in schools, Christian academies and tax status, and abortion. The country seethed with demand for justice and equity by the Civil Rights movement which spawned the student rights movement, and then the antiwar movement, the women’s rights movement, the ecology movement, and the gay rights movement. Conservative religious forces were involved in campaigns to clean up the movies and stop smut, as well as the 1974 textbook controversies such as in Kanawha County, West Virginia.

A popular theologian named Francis A. Schaeffer caught the attention of many Protestants in a series of books and essays calling on Christians to directly confront sinful and decadent secular culture with its humanist values. Several other authors picked up this attack on “secular humanism” and extended it. The most militant trend was called Christian Reconstructionism, which argued that America should be ruled by Biblical law including the death penalty for homosexuals and recalcitrant children. Christian Reconstructionism is based on

an End Times theology called postmillennialism in which Jesus Christ returns after (thus “post”) the reign and rule of godly men for a thousand years—a millennium. Christian Reconstructionism inherently promotes Christian political activism, and although they are a relatively tiny movement, their ideas challenged many evangelicals to rethink their stands on theology and politics.

---

**Lakoff explains that on a societal level, according to conservative “Strict Father morality, harsh prison terms for criminals and life imprisonment for repeat offenders are the only moral options.” The arguments by conservatives are “moral arguments, not practical arguments. Statistics about which policies do or do not actually reduce crime rates do not count in a morally-based discourse.” These “traditional moral values” conservatives tend not to use explanations based on the concepts of class and social causes, nor do they recommend policy based on those notions.”**

---

United Nations as all part of the End Times Antichrist system.

Evangelist Billy Graham coaxed some evangelicals back into the voting booth starting in the 1950s, but the voting patterns that emerged were not politicized, in that preference for Republicans or Democrats was primarily determined by demographic factors other than religious affiliation. In the 1950s and 1960s conservatives in evangelical and fundamentalist

### Dominion over the Earth

Premillennialists (as opposed to post) make up the vast majority of evangelicals and fundamentalists in the United States, and many of them believe that while there will be great “tribulations” on Earth during the End Times, faithful Christians will get “raptured” up into a heavenly protective sanctuary before God punishes the faithless and wicked on earth. What motivation is there for Premillennialists, especially those that believe in the Rapture, to become politically active?

One answer came from Francis Schaeffer, who teamed up with a pediatric doctor, C. Everett Koop, to create a film comparing abortion to slavery and the Nazi Holocaust. They urged Protestants to join the anti-abortion movement, which previously had been overwhelmingly Catholic. Another answer came from author Tim LaHaye who had taken the theories of Schaeffer and overlaid them with a conspiracy theory about secular humanism. LaHaye told Premillennialists that they needed to become politically active because there were pre-tribulation tribulations—in other words, true Christians had an obligation to confront sinful society during a crisis of moral values that came before the Rapture.

The result of all this turmoil in evangelical and fundamentalist communities was the development of a tendency called “dominionism” based on the concept that Christians—no matter what their views on the End Times millennialist schedule—need to take dominion over the earth. Dominionism is an umbrella term that covers politically-active Christians from a variety of theological and institutional traditions.

While this was happening, in May of 1979 a group of conservative political activists met with conservative religious leaders to plan a way to mobilize evangelicals into becoming conservative voters for Republican candidates. Attendees included Jerry Falwell, Richard Viguerie, Paul Weyrich, Howard Phillips, Ed McAteer, and Robert Billings. This is where Jerry Falwell was tasked with creat-

ing the Moral Majority organization, which became a key component of the New Right. The Moral majority focused on opposing abortion and pornography. After evangelicals helped elect Ronald Reagan president, he appointed C. Everett Koop to the position of surgeon general of the United States as a payback.

The New Right not only recruited evangelicals and fundamentalists into their coalition, but also sought to strengthen the bridge between traditional moral values Calvinists and the neoliberal *laissez-faire* “Free Market” advocates in the Republican Party; which included both anti-tax economic conservatives and anti-government libertarians. This was a coalition initially forged by conservatives in the 1950s.<sup>20</sup>

Many conservative Christians did not necessarily oppose a role for government, or object to government funding, as long as it focused on individual behavior. Thus faith-based initiatives are seen as a proper place for government funding because they shift tax dollars away from social change toward individual change.

### The Child, the Family, the Nation, and God

Since the 1980s and the rise of the Christian Right, public policy regarding the treatment of criminals has echoed the patriarchal and punitive child-rearing practices favored by many Protestant fundamentalists. Most readers will recognize the phrase: “Spare the rod and spoil the child.” This idea comes from a particular authoritarian version of fundamentalist belief. According to Philip Greven:

“The authoritarian Christian family is dependent on coercion and pain to obtain obedience to authority within and beyond the family, in the church, the community, and the polity. Modern forms of Christian fundamentalism share the same obsessions with obedience to authority characteristic of earlier modes of evangelical Protestantism, and the same authoritarian streak evident among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglo-American evangelicals

is discernible today, for precisely the same reasons: the coercion of children through painful punishments in order to teach obedience to divine and parental authority.”<sup>21</sup>

The belief in the awful and eternal punishment of a literal Hell justifies the punishment, shame, and discipline of children by parents who want their offspring to escape a far worse fate. This includes physical or “corporal” forms of punishment. “Many advocates of corporal punishment are convinced that such punishment and pain are necessary to prevent the ultimate destruction and damnation of their children’s souls.”<sup>22</sup> This is often accompanied by the idea that a firm male hand rightfully dominates the family and the society.<sup>23</sup> The system of authoritarian and patriarchal control used in some families is easily transposed into a framework for conservative public policy, especially in the criminal justice system.

Lakoff explains that on a societal level, according to conservative “Strict Father morality, harsh prison terms for criminals and life imprisonment for repeat offenders are the only moral options.” The arguments by conservatives are “moral arguments, not practical arguments. Statistics about which policies do or do not actually reduce crime rates do not count in a morally-based discourse.” These “traditional moral values” conservatives tend not to use explanations based on the concepts of class and social causes, nor do they recommend policy based on those notions.”<sup>24</sup> According to Lakoff:

For liberals the essence of America is nurturance, part of which is helping those who need help. People who are “trapped” by social and economic forces need help to “escape.” The metaphorical Nurturant Parent—the government—has a duty to help change the social and economic system that traps people. By this logic, the problem is in the society, not in the people innocently “trapped.” If social and economic forces are responsible, then other

social and economic forces must be brought to bear to break the “trap.”

This whole picture is simply inconsistent with Strict Father morality and the conservative worldview it defines. In that worldview, the class hierarchy is simply a ladder, there to be climbed by anybody with the talent and self-discipline to climb it. Whether or not you climb the ladder of wealth and privilege is only a matter of whether you have the moral strength, character, and inherent talent to do so.<sup>25</sup>

To conservatives, the liberal arguments about class and impoverishment, and institutionalized social forces such as racism and sexism, are irrelevant. They appear to be “excuses for lack of talent, laziness, or some other form of moral weakness.”<sup>26</sup> Much of this worldview traces to the lingering backbeat of Calvinist theology that infuses “common sense” for many conservatives.

## Conclusion

The conservative Calvinist/Free Market coalition works the front end of the criminal justice system, ensuring harsh sentencing and incarceration. The evangelical/revivalist groups agree with that aspect of Calvinism, but they also work the back end of the system, salvaging the souls of the incarcerated so that whether or not they leave prison, they will be born again as properly behaved citizens heading to Heaven. There are only a relative handful of evangelicals (conservative and progressive) who challenge the system of increasingly harsh sentencing.

Why do so many evangelical Christian Right activists create prison ministries? Because they believe those convicted of crimes can change through the act of confession and redemption—admitting their weaknesses and the nature of their sinful and evil selves, and redeeming themselves by giving their lives over to Jesus Christ. They might still be in prison, but their souls are saved even as their bodies remain behind bars. In their mission to save souls, many Christians, especially evangelicals and

the more doctrinaire fundamentalists, seek to improve prison conditions. It is not fair to dismiss this concern as not genuine simply because of their underlying religious desire to save souls.

At the same time, it is important to keep an eye on the baggage that some members of the Christian Right often bring along in the form of authoritarianism, sexism, patriarchy, and homophobia; and their reluctance to see the institutional and systemic roots of social problems.

Prison ministries run by Christians bring all this baggage to their work, but in the course of interacting with real prisoners they cannot help but become concerned about objective prison conditions. This seldom leads them to a systemic or institutional analysis favored by liberals and progressives, but it can mean that on a tactical basis, even leaders of the Christian Right can be temporary allies in formulating and organizing for specific reforms within the prison system or individual prisons.

*Chip Berlet is Senior Analyst at Political Research Associates.*

*Editor's note: A revised version of this article will appear in PRA's Defending Justice Activist Resource Kit scheduled to be published in early 2005.*

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Lakoff, George. [1996] 2002. *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- <sup>2</sup> Schaefer, Axel R. 1999. “Evangelicalism, Social Reform and the US Welfare State, 1970-1996,” pp. 249-273, in David K. Adams and Cornelius A. van Minnem, eds., *Religious and Secular Reform in America: Ideas, Beliefs, and Social Change*. New York: New York University Press. I have used slightly different language to describe the sectors identified by Schaefer.
- <sup>3</sup> Berlet, Chip and Matthew N. Lyons. 2000. *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*. New York: Guilford.
- <sup>4</sup> Frank, Thomas. 2004. *What's the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- <sup>5</sup> Hardisty, Jean V. 1999. *Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence from the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- <sup>6</sup> Lovato, Roberto. 2004. “White Fear in Wartime—Samuel Huntington Brings His ‘Clash of Civilizations’ Home,” Commentary, *Pacific News Service*, May 17, archived online at <http://news.pacificnews.org>.
- <sup>7</sup> Zakai, Avi. 1992. *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 5.
- <sup>8</sup> Weber, Max. [1905] 2000. *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Books/Putnam.
- <sup>9</sup> Zakai, op. cit., p. 7.
- <sup>10</sup> Unitarianism emerged as a theological tendency before the name itself was formalized.
- <sup>11</sup> Jorns, Auguste. 1931. *The Quakers as Pioneers in Social Work*. Trans. Thomas Kite Brown. New York: MacMillan, pp. 162-171. See also, Whitney, Janet. 1936. *Elizabeth Fry: Quaker Heroine*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.
- <sup>12</sup> Jorns, op. cit., p. 170.
- <sup>13</sup> Martin, William. 1996. *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*. New York: Broadway Books, p. 4.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Hutson, James. 1998. “Faith of Our Forefathers: Religion and the Founding of the American Republic,” *Information Bulletin*, The Library of Congress, vol. 57, no. 5, May. Online at <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9805/religion.html> (November 30, 2004).
- <sup>16</sup> Ammerman, Nancy T. 1991. “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed*, The Fundamentalism Project 1, pp. 1-65. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>17</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 6.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.
- <sup>19</sup> Oldfield, Duane Murray. 1996. *The Right and the Righteous: The Christian Right Confronts the Republican Party*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 14.
- <sup>20</sup> Himmelstein, Jerome L. 1990. *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- <sup>21</sup> Greven, Philip. 1991. *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse*. New York: Knopf, p. 198.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 62.
- <sup>23</sup> Greven, op. cit., p. 199.
- <sup>24</sup> Lakoff, op. cit., p. 201.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 203.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.

# Books Received

*Compiled by Shelly Harter.*

**Aberle, David F.**

*The Peyote Religion among the Navaho*

(Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pb, 451 pp.

**Abukhalil, As'ad**

*The Battle for Saudi Arabia: Royalty, Fundamentalism, and Global Power*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), pb, 213 pp, notes, index.

**Adonis, et. al**

*Autodafe: A Manual for Intellectual Survival*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), pb, 282 pp.

**Alley, Robert S.**

*Public Education and the Public Good*

(Silver Spring, MD: Americans for Religious Liberty, 1996), pb, 102 pp.

**Almond, Gabriel A., R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan**

*Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World*

(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), pb, 243 pp, appendices, notes, index.

**Balmer, Randall**

*Blessed Assurance: A History of Evangelicalism in America*

(Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), hb, 115 pp, notes, index.

**Barkun, Michael**

*Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-Over District of New York in the 1840s*

(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pb, 160 pp, notes, bibliography, index.

**Bauman, Louis S.**

*Russian Events in the Light of Bible Prophecy*

(New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1942), hb, 191 pp.

**Beech, Bettina M., PhD, and Maurine Goodman**

*Race & Research: Perspectives on Minority Participation*

(Washington DC: American Public Health Association, 2004), pb, 203 pp, notes, index.

**Bloomberg, Charles**

*Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa*

(Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), hb, 229 pp, Notes, Index.

**Bronfenbrenner, Kate et. al, eds.**

*Organizing to Win: New Research on Union Strategies*

(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pb, 338 pp, references, index.

**Chang, Nancy**

*Silencing Political Dissent: How Post-September 11 Anti-Terrorism Measures*

Threaten Our Civil Liberties

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), pb, 137 pp, notes.

**Chavez, Linda and Daniel Gray**

*Betrayal: How Union Bosses Shake Down Their Members and Corrupt American Politics*

(New York: Crown Forum, 2004), hb, 233 pp, notes, index.

**Clarke, Susanna**

*Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*

(New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), hb, 782 pp.

**Clawson, Dan**

*The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements*

(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pb, 205 pp, notes, index.

**Dobson, James**

*Marriage Under Fire: Why We Must Win This Battle*

(Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2004), hb, 123 pp.

**Doerr, Edd**

*Vox Populi: Letters to the Editor*

(Amherst, NY: Humanist Press, 1999), pb, 94 pp.

**Doerr, Edd and Albert J. Menendez**

*Religious Liberty and the State*

(Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), hb, 105 pp, appendices.

**Doerr, Edd and James W. Prescott, eds.**

*Abortion Rights and Fetal 'Personhood'*

(Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1990), pb, 116 pp, appendices.

**Dyer, Charles H.**

*The Rise of Babylon: Is Iraq at the Center of the Final Drama?*

(Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), pb, 184 pp, notes.

**Ehrenreich, Barbara**

*Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*

(New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001), pb, 221 pp.

**Ekanger, Talmage**

*Other Side of Tom Daschle*

(Ottawa, IL: Green Hill Publishers, Inc., 2004), pb, 95 pp.

**Esposito, John L.**

*Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pb, 160 pp, notes, glossary, index.

**Essien-Udom, E. U.**

*Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America*

(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), pb, 339 pp, appendices, bibliography, index.

**Farah, George**

*No Debate: How the Republican and Democratic parties secretly control the presidential debates*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), hb, 175 pp, appendices, notes.

**Feffer, John**

*North Korea, South Korea: U.S. Policy at a Time of Crisis*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), pb, 173 pp, notes.

**Frank, Thomas**

*What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*

(New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), hb, 251 pp, notes, acknowledgements, index.

**Frankel, Marvin F.**

*Faith and Freedom: Religious Liberty in America*

(New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), pb, 144 pp.

**Frykholm, Amy Johnson**

*Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), hb, 187 pp, notes, bibliography, index.

**Gutmann, Amy**

*Identity in Democracy*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), pb, 211 pp, notes, index.

**Hasan, Asma Gull**

*Why I am a Muslim: An American Odyssey*

(London, UK.: Element Books, 2004), hb, 192 pp.

**Heins, Marjorie**

*Not in Front of the Children: "Indecency," Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth*

(New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), hb, 263 pp, notes, index.

**Hitchcock, Mark**

*The Second Coming of Babylon*

Multnomah Publishers, Inc.

**Hitchcock, Mark, and Thomas Ice**

*The Truth Behind Left Behind: A Biblical View of the End Times*

(Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2004), pb, 206 pp, notes.

**Kaplan, Esther**

*With God on their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*

(New York: The New Press, 2004), hb, 277 pp, notes, index.

**Kappeler, Victor E., Mark Blumberg, and Gary W. Potter**

*The Mythology of Crime and Criminal Justice*

(Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2000), pb, 309 pp, references, index.

**Labaton, Vivien, and Dawn Lundy Martin, eds.**

*The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism*

(New York: Anchor Books, 2004), pb, 293 pp, notes, acknowledgements.

**Lee, Martha F.**

*Millennial Visions: Essays on Twentieth-Century Millenarianism*

(Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), pb, 232 pp.

**Lewis, Bernard**

*Islam in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East*

(Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 2001), pb, 496 pp.

**Lichtenstein, Nelson**

*State of the Union: A Century of American Labor*

(Princeton, NJ: University Press, 2003), pb, 352 pp.

**MacArthur, John**

*Terrorism, Jihad, and the Bible*

(Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2001), pb, 122 pp.

**Maddoux, Marlin**

*America Betrayed!*

(Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, Inc., 1984), pb, 153 pp.

**Menendez, Albert J.**

*Church and State in Canada*

(Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), hb, 127 pp, notes.

**Menendez, Albert J.**

*Abortion Rights at the Polls: An Analysis of the 1992 Maryland Referendum*

(Silver Spring, MD: Americans for Religious Liberty, 1993), pb, 77 pp, tables.

**Menendez, Albert J.**

*Visions of Reality: What Fundamentalist Schools Teach*

(Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), pb, 152 pp.

**Menendez, Albert J.**

*The December Wars: Religious Symbols and Ceremonies in the Public Square*

(Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), hb, 164 pp, index.

**Menendez, Albert J. and Edd Doerr**

*The Case Against Charitable Choice: Why President Bush's Faith-Based Initiative is Bad Public Policy*

Silver Spring, MD.

**Menendez, Albert J. and Edd Doerr**

*Religion and Public Education: Common Sense and the Law*

(Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991), pb, 89 pp, cases cited, bibliography, index.

**Menendez, Albert J. and Edd Doerr, eds.**

*Great Quotations on Religious Freedom*

(Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), pb, 173 pp, appendices.

**Mernissi, Fatima**

*Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World*

(Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1992), pb, 174 pp, notes, index.

**Milkman, Ruth, and Kim Voss, eds.**

*Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement*

(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pb, 270 pp, notes, references, index.

**Mojtabai, A.G.**

*Blessed Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, TX*

(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pb, 226 pp, notes, index.

**Molnar, Joseph J., ed.**

*Agricultural Change: Consequences for Southern Farms*

(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), pb, 424 pages, index.

**Moussaoui, Abd Samad**

*Zacarias, My Brother: The Making of a Terrorist*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), pb, 143 pp.

**Neale, Jonathan**

*What's Wrong with America? How the Rich and Powerful Have Changed America and Now want to Change the World*

(London: Vision Paperbacks, 2004), pb, 254 pp, references, index.

**Norwood, Stephen H.**

*Strikebreaking & Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America*

(Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), pb, 247 pp, notes, bibliography, index.

**Olshansky, Barbara**

*Secret Trials and Executions: Military Tribunals and the Threat to Democracy*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), pb, 62 pp, notes.

**Phillips, Peter**

*Censored 2004: The Top 25 Censored Stories*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), pb, 317 pp, appendices, index.

**Piche, Dianne M., William L. Taylor, and Robin A. Reed, eds.**

*Rights at Risk: Equality in an Age of Terrorism*

(Washington, D.C.: Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, 2002), pb, 343 pp.

**Radway, Janice A.**

*Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*

(Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pb, 222 pp, appendices, notes, bibliography, index.

**Rampton, Sheldon & John Stauber**

*Banana Republicans: How the Right Wing is Turning America into a One-Party State*

(New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2004), pb, notes, index.

**Reinhart, Tanya**

*Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), pb, 243 pp, notes, index.

**Sandy, D. Brent**

*Plowshares & Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*

(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pb, 210 pp, appendices, notes.

**Saris, Willem E. and Paul M. Sniderman, eds.**

*Studies in Public Opinion: Attitudes, Nonattitudes, Measurement Error, and Change*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pb, 357 pp, index.

**Sexton, Patricia Cato**

*The War on Labor and the Left: Understanding America's Unique Conservatism*

(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1991), hb, 278 pp, notes, index.

**Silliman, Jael, Marlene Gerber Fried, Loretta Ross, and Elena R. Gutierrez**

*Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*

(Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004), pb, 305 pp, bibliography, index.

**Slaughter, Thomas P.**

*The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pb, 231 pp, notes, index.

**Smith, Robert Michael**

*From Blackjacks to Briefcases: A History of Commercialized Strikebreaking and*

Unionbusting in the United States (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), pb, 130 pp, notes, bibliography.

**Strong, Donald S., Ph.D.**

*Organized Anti-Semitism in America: The Rise of Group Prejudice During the Decade 1930-40*

(Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1941), hb, 180 pp, bibliography, notes.

**Swomley, John M.**

*Religious Political Parties*

(Silver Spring, MD: Americans for Religious Liberty).

**Swomley, John M.**

*Myths About Public School Prayer*

(Silver Spring, MD: Americans for Religious Liberty), pb, 26 pp, appendices.

**Taylor, Jared, ed.**

*The Real American Dilemma: Race, Immigration, and the Future of America*

(Oakton, VA: New Century Books, 1998), pb, 139 pp.

**Telles, Edward E.**

*Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), hb, 270 pp, notes, references, index.

**The Century Foundation Task Force on the Future of Unions**

*What's Next for Organized Labor? Report of The Century Foundation Task Force on the Future of Unions*

(New York: The Century Foundation Press, 1999), pb, 108 pp, notes, index.

**Watson, Sydney**

*What the Stars Held Or the Secret of the Sphinx*

(London: William Nicholson & Sons Limited, 2003), pb, 216 pp.

**Watson, Sydney**

*By Order of the General*

(London: William Nicholson & Sons Limited, 1915), hb, 280pp.

**Wilson, James Q.**

*Thinking About Crime*

(New York: Vintage Books, 1985), pb, 265 pp, notes, index.

**Wolfe, Christopher, ed.**

*That Eminent Tribunal: Judicial Supremacy and the Constitution*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), pb, 224 pp, index.

**Yates, Michael D.**

*Why Unions Matter*

(New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), pb, 152 pp, appendix, notes, index.

**Zaniello, Tom**

*Working Stiffs, Union Maids, Reds, and Riffraff: An Expanded Guide to Films about Labor*

(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pb, 423 pp, thematic index.

CRIME *continued from page 7*

rates second only to Russia in the world. Progressives must challenge this runaway law-and-order campaign by redirecting attention to the root causes of crime, such as poverty, abuse, addiction, and lack of opportunity, and by challenging the demonization and scapegoating of “criminals.” This work is part of a larger campaign to revive the public will to address the economic insecurity that plagues so many in the United States, while the few live in increasing luxury.

*Jean Hardisty is Founder and President Emerita at Political Research Associates and*

*a Senior Scholar at the Wellesley Center for Women, Wellesley College.*

*Editor’s note: This article will appear in PRA’s Defending Justice Activist Resource Kit scheduled to be published in early 2005.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> www.prisonfellowship.org

<sup>2</sup> Hobbes, Thomas. 1981. *Leviathan*. New York: Penguin Classics. Hobbes envisioned the world as “a war of all against all.”

<sup>3</sup> See Russell-Brown, Kathryn. 2004. *Underground Codes: Race, Crime, and Related Fires*. New York: New York University Press.

<sup>4</sup> See Mauer, Marc. *Race to Incarcerate*. 1999. New York: The New Press, pp. 118-141.

<sup>5</sup> DiIulio, John J. Jr. “My Black Crime Problem and Ours,” *City Journal* (Spring, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Beckett, Katherine and Theodore Sasson. 2004. *The Politics of Injustice: Crime and Punishment in America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 185-186.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>9</sup> Gest, Ted. 2001. *Crime and Politics: Big Government’s Erratic Campaign for Law and Order*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 64-65.

<sup>10</sup> www.sentencingproject.org

GUEST COMMENTARY *continued from page 2*

to September 11. These policies have driven this nation to war and threaten to expand the PIC further at home and in Iraq. One result is the Abu Ghraib crisis.

Following September 11, we witnessed a myriad of proposals to expand the PIC, most coming under “The USA PATRIOT Act of 2001.” Ironically, the restrictions on our freedom came in the guise of protecting our freedom.

Among the more alarming proposals made in the aftermath of September 11: indefinite detention of legal immigrants—without charge—and in some cases the mandatory detention of immigrants; deportation based on the suspicion that a person may be willing to help a terrorist; expansion of the power to summarily deport without judicial review; a six-month moratorium on student visas and broad new powers of surveillance including national identification cards and the authority to wiretap any phone or computer that might be used by a suspect.

While not all of the above proposals came to fruition, many did. Since September 11, more than 1,100 people—almost all from majority Muslim countries—have been detained. Almost three years later, more than 600 detainees remain imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay

without charge. One man, Mohammed Rafiq Butt, held uncharged for a month in a New Jersey INS lock-up, died before anyone, including his family in Pakistan, knew that he had been arrested. In the aftermath of September 11, the government has secretly moved detainees—they were “disappeared”—their attorneys unable to find them.

Meanwhile, the stock prices of companies that sell surveillance equipment doubled in value directly after September 11. And companies that build and run private prisons, which were on the brink of bankruptcy before September 11, experienced as much as 300% gains after September 11 in anticipation of internment camps and new prisons.

While the PIC and “homeland security” efforts claim to be about safety and order, in reality both have made the lives of most people—especially people of color and the poor—less safe and more disordered.

The behemoth prison industrial complex that was in place prior to September 11 did not prevent what occurred that day. Similarly, an expansion of those failed policies will not prevent further tragedies from occurring. In fact, we recently learned from the U.S. State Department that rather than making us safer, these draconian

measures have led to a sharp increase in both the number of incidents labeled “terrorist” and the toll in victims in the last year.

The solution to the Abu Ghraib nightmare isn’t as simple as locking up England and her fellow military personnel in the same cages that they oversaw. It won’t be resolved by firing Rumsfeld or reducing the number of Iraqi detainees. Closing Abu Ghraib is at most a superficial gesture.

These proposed solutions will fail because, as Professor Philip Zimbardo recently told the *New York Times*, “It’s not that we put bad apples in a good barrel. We put good apples in a bad barrel. The barrel corrupts anything that touches it.” Americans are now faced with a choice: we must either relinquish our innocent self-image or dismantle the barrel.

*Rose Braz is the director of Critical Resistance, 1904 Franklin St #504, Oakland, CA 94612. See www.criticalresistance.org. This guest commentary is excerpted from an original article titled “More Than Just a Few ‘Bad Apples’: Confronting Prison Problems in Iraq and in the US” that was published in the RESIST Newsletter vol. 13, no. 6, July/August 2004, and is printed here with permission of the author and publisher. See www.resistinc.org.*

**A NEW ACTIVIST RESOURCE KIT  
BY POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES**

# Defending Justice

Almost two years in the making, the next publication in PRA's popular Activist Resource Kit series for activists will analyze the forces that grow and strengthen the current Criminal Justice System.

Titled *Defending Justice*, PRA's upcoming Activist Resource Kit will discuss the intersections between the Right-wing agenda and the Criminal Justice System.

Through articles, factsheets, graphics and more, *Defending Justice* will analyze and critique the origins, ideology and tactics of the following:

- ✓ The Rise of the "Tough on Crime" Movement and Quality of Life Policing
- ✓ War on Youth, Zero Tolerance and the School Safety Movement
- ✓ Religious Prison Organizations (Prison Fellowship Ministries and the Nation of Islam) and the Faith Based Initiative
- ✓ The Criminalization of Indian Country and the Anti-Sovereignty Movement
- ✓ Victims' Rights Movement
- ✓ War on Terrorism
- ✓ Mandatory Sentencing and the War on Drugs
- ✓ Reproductive Rights and the Criminalization of Women of Color
- ✓ NRA and gun culture, prison guard unions, ALEC and more

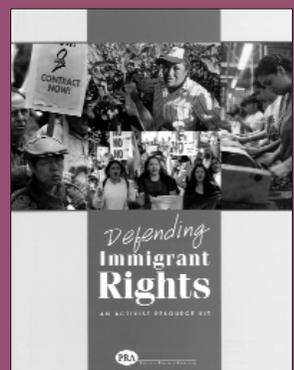
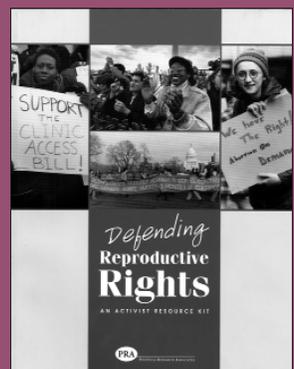
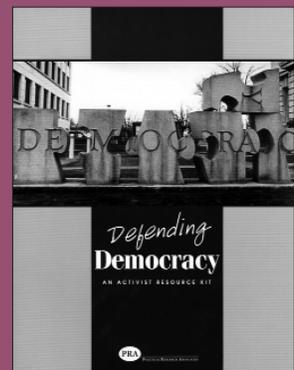
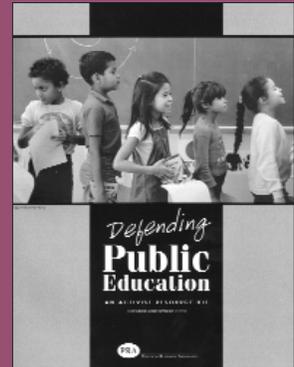
This 200+ page resource will include:

- ✓ Overview and topical articles on the Right's ideology, agenda, and tactics and how it intersects with the growth of the Prison Industrial Complex
- ✓ Description of "Get Tough" Arguments, Responses and Tips on Challenging the Right
- ✓ Samples of Right Wing Literature
- ✓ Annotated Lists on Right-wing Criminal Justice Organizations, Ideologues and Books

*Defending Justice* will be available early 2005!

**COMING SOON!**

Other Activist Resource Kits by PRA...



...available at (617) 666-5300 or [www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org)

# Eyes RIGHT

## TEACHING THE RIGHT LAWS

“The Rev. Jerry Falwell will open a law school this month in hopes of training a generation of attorneys who will fight for conservative causes.

“We want to infiltrate the culture with men and women of God who are skilled in the legal profession,” Falwell said in a telephone interview Tuesday with the Associated Press. “We’ll be as far to the right as Harvard is to the left.”

Graduates of the law school — part of Falwell’s Liberty University in Lynchburg, which is affiliated with his Baptist ministry — could tackle such issues as abortion rights and gay marriage, Falwell said.

Classroom lectures and discussions will fuse the teachings of the Bible with the U.S. Constitution, stressing the connections between faith, law and morality, said law school Dean Bruce Green, who has experience in civil liberties litigation.

“There is a strong need for this,” said Green, who believes many of his colleagues take sides on abortion and genetic engineering without first considering what is morally right.”

*Source: Chris Kahn, “Falwell opening his own law school.” August 18, 2004, Associated Press.*

## BUSH WAY OR THE IRS WAY

“The IRS has launched an investigation against the NAACP’s nonprofit status, citing criticism of the Bush administration’s economic and foreign policies at the NAACP convention. “This investigation is a brazen attempt by the Bush administration to intimidate dissenters into silence,” said People For the American Way President Ralph G. Neas. “It is a dangerous attempt to criminalize criticism of the president during an election year.”

“The people running this administration are bullies,” said Neas. “But I know Julian

Bond and Kweisi Mfume. They aren’t going to be bullied. They are going to fight for their right to speak truth to power. And we will be proud to fight with them.”

Neas said the announcement targeting the NAACP reminded him of an effort earlier this year to use the Federal Election Commission to impose draconian new rules that would limit nonprofit advocacy and essentially outlaw criticism of incumbent politicians’ policies during an election year. PFAW and other nonprofit organizations created the Coalition to Protect Nonprofit Advocacy and successfully beat back that attempt to silence election-year criticism of the president and other incumbents.”

*Source: Email from PFAW, “BUSH ADMINISTRATION TRIES TO SILENCE NAACP: IRS targets leaders for daring to criticize Bush administration policies.”*

## LOVE IN THE RIGHT, I MEAN WHITE PLACES

“William Regnery, the ‘famously reclusive’ member of the Regnery publishing family, is looking for investors for a whites-only dating service...”

If you’re looking for a life partner and are too busy to get enmeshed in the dating scene, hope is on the way: There are myriad dating services that promise to find you the perfect mate. Some arrange lunchtime meetings for over-scheduled workers; others offer a round-robin approach where you can spend a few minutes with a bunch of different prospects during one evening. There are online dating services, video dating services, and services aimed at hooking you up with an ethnic, religious or political counterpart.

If you’re a white supremacist, however, none of these services may be right for you. So, if you’re having trouble making a love connection and you’re uncomfortable at KKK rallies, haven’t made your way to a

Council of Conservative Citizens confab, or aren’t interested in re-locating to a compound in Idaho, William Regnery’s new

## Eye LASHES

“In fact, studies of homicide victims —especially the increasing number of younger ones—suggest they are frequently criminals themselves and/or drug addicts or users. It is quite possible that their deaths, in terms of economic consequences to society, are net gains.”

– Paul Blackman, Head NRA Researcher, “The Federal Factoid Factory on Firearms and Violence: A Review of CDC Research and Policies.”

*Source: <http://www.nraleaders.com/paul-blackman.html>*

whites-only dating service might be right up your alley. Regnery, one of the lesser-known members of the right wing publishing family, is currently searching for seed money to launch a service that promises to hook clients up with their very own special white supremacist love connection...

In a letter to subscribers, Regnery expressed his concern about the decreasing percentage of white people in the population and announced plans for a new dating service that he claims will address the problem. Internet-based and earmarked only for whites, Regnery's service aims to increase the white population in the United States through marriage and procreation.

Regnery's letter, titled 'Population is Destiny' was an appeal to potential investors. The dating service, he said, will be only the 'first arrow in a business quiver' providing 'services and products to whites.'

According to the [Southern Poverty Law Center's] Intelligence Report, Regnery pointed out that in addition to its money-making potential, the Caucasian-only dating service would be an opportunity to

ensure 'the survival of our race,' which 'depends upon our people marrying, reproducing and parenting'..."

*Excerpted from "White supremacist love connection: William Regnery, the 'famously reclusive' member of the Regnery publishing family, is looking for investors for a whites-only dating service." By Bill Berkowitz from WorkingforChange, August 24, 2004.*

## THE VOTING RIGHT ACT

"Bush administration lawyers are attempting to overturn of legal precedence by claiming that only Attorney General John Ashcroft and not individual voters have a right to go to federal courts to enforce the right of citizen's to vote. This according to the Los Angeles Times.

In legal briefs filed in Ohio, Michigan and Florida, the Bush administration is arguing that only the Justice Department, and not voters themselves, may sue to enforce the voting rights set out in the Help America Vote Act which was passed after the 2000 election.

Veteran voting rights lawyers say this would overturn decades of legal precedent and could greatly affect any legal challenge to Tuesday's election.

## HAIKU

moral values view  
conservative frames  
compassion fading

by Chip Berlet

According to the paper, since the civil rights era of the 1960s, individuals have gone to federal court to enforce their right to vote, often with the support of groups such as the NAACP, the AFL-CIO, the League of Women Voters.

Even the Supreme Court has backed the idea of private suits. In 1969, the justices issued a ruling in a case related to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that 'the achievement of the act's laudable goal would be severely hampered ... if each citizen were required to depend solely on litigation instituted at the discretion of the attorney general.'"

Source: <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=04/10/29/1414225>

SUBSCRIBE

### **Subscribe!**

Yes, I want to subscribe to *The Public Eye*.  
Please send a subscription to the address below.

### **Support PRA!**

Yes, I want to help PRA unmask the Right and its attacks on democracy and diversity. I have enclosed a contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ toward your work. (donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

CityState \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

My subscription is a gift to the person listed above.  
Please enclose a card to let them know the gift is from \_\_\_\_\_

Individual/Non-Profit Organization **\$29.00**  
Other Organization **\$39.00**  
Student/Retired/Low-Income **\$19.00**

Outside U.S., Canada, and Mexico add \$9.00/surfacemail, \$14.00/air mail

Subscription (4 issues) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Postage (outside U.S., Canada, and Mexico) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to support the work of PRA \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Donors of \$50 or more receive a subscription to *The Public Eye*)

**TOTAL** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Check Enclosed** (Make payable to Political Research Associates)

**Charge my Mastercard/Visa**

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

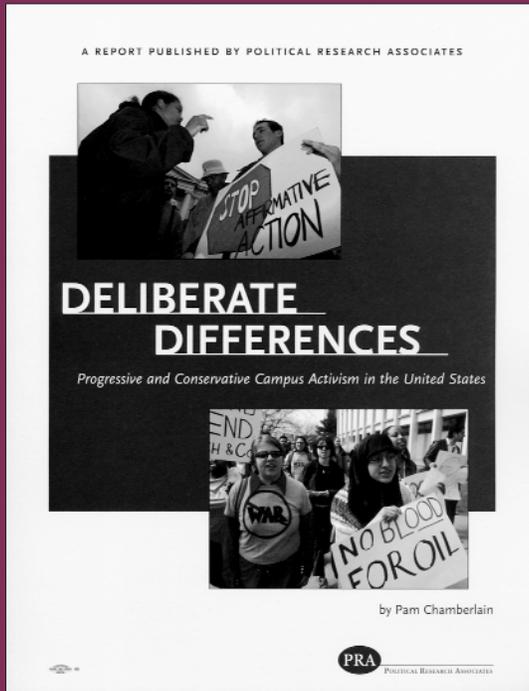
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

#### Mail form with payment to:

Political Research Associates, 1310 Broadway,  
Suite 201, Somerville, MA 02144-1731

SUPPORT PRA

For information on additional materials available from PRA, please visit our website: [www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org) and order on-line.



*Deliberate Differences*, a new study of campus activism, gives you answers to:

- ✓ How do conservative and progressive campus organizers differ?
- ✓ Is there healthy debate on campus?
- ✓ What national groups influence political work on campus?
- ✓ Can young activists get movement jobs after graduation?

## DELIBERATE DIFFERENCES

*Progressive and Conservative Campus Activism in the United States*

U.S. colleges and universities have a long tradition of political activism. They are centers of intellectual activity; concentrations of young people live in close proximity; and students can experience new ideas and constructs about the world at school. The public expects that our campuses will erupt from time to time in response to national and international crises, but many are surprised when they do.

*Deliberate Differences* uses social movement theory to examine both conservative and progressive campus activism, activists, and their organizations and also observes the impact of rightist and leftist social movements from the larger society on student groups. The author and project staff compiled an advisory committee of experts on the study of campus activism, conducted an in-depth literature review, identified and interviewed 86 key student leaders and faculty and staff from 8 representative schools, and 20 more graduates who are now interns or staffers at movement organizations around the country.

The report set out to:

- ▶ produce a rounded picture of political and social conflicts and tensions on campus, the campus activism directly related to these tensions, and the impact of the tensions on democratic principles and practices on campus, such as tolerance, openness, and dialogue
- ▶ describe and analyze the nature, goals and ideology of the programmatic work conducted on campus by national conservative and progressive organizations, their effect on campus culture, and the types of organizing being done on campus by conservative and progressive students and faculty
- ▶ assess the comparative effectiveness of conservative and progressive groups of the competing social movements in advancing their agendas on campus and recruiting student activists with leadership potential to their movements after graduation

84 pp. report includes findings from 8 schools, analysis and resource lists

Available now from PRA at  
**(617) 666-5300 or [www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org)**

# The Public Eye

NEWSLETTER

Political Research Associates  
1310 Broadway, Suite 201  
Somerville, Massachusetts 02144-1731

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

