

# The Public Eye

A PUBLICATION OF POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Summer 2011 • Volume XXVI, No.2



Boston demonstrators support Wisconsin public employees, February 2011

## Arizona's Anti-Immigrant Law SB1070

Where Did It Come From, Where Is It Going?

By Lauri Lebo

*M*isericordia. The word washes across the congregation at the tiny church, carried by voices singing in Spanish.

Mercy.

Young girls, their long, shiny black hair covered in sheer white doilies, sit close to each other in the pews at Surprise Apostolic Assembly in suburban Phoenix, Arizona, chattering and giggling into their hands. Mothers and grandmothers, their hair covered in scarves of black lace, lean over and gently shush them. A handsome young man with baby-smooth skin and glistening hair neatly parted at the side steps forward to the pulpit. Steve Montenegro, the youth minister, beckons to the congregation's children, who gather at his feet. He praises the little ones for their innocence as their mothers snap photos from the pews.

Steve's father, José Roberto Montenegro, the church's pastor, delivers the sermon

SB1070 continues on page 12

## The Attack on Unions

### Right-Wing Politics and Democratic Possibilities

By Abby Scher

#### The November 2010 Republican Sweep

More than a million people watched on YouTube as New Jersey Governor Chris Christie sneered at a public school teacher who had the temerity to ask him at a September 2010 town meeting how his policies would help the middle class when so many teachers had been laid off.<sup>1</sup> His response? He wasn't to blame—union chiefs forced the layoffs and were responsible. Young conservatives cheered his take-no-prisoners style, though only a few months later, Christie's high approval ratings, particularly among women, tanked.<sup>2</sup>

Still, the voucher-loving, tax-hating governor seemed to show free-market con-

servatives what they could do once they were in charge: how deeply they could cut government, and how successfully they could go after union "bosses," even with a Democratic legislature. Elected only in 2009, Christie quickly became an inspiration for the Right, as he went full throttle in blaming unions for the grossly underfunded state pension system and the \$11 billion deficit he inherited.

After the midterm elections of November 2010, he had a lot of company in statehouses across the nation. Aided by a potent, antilabor alignment of grassroots groups, legislators, and conservative institutions, Republicans enjoyed a sweep of state legislatures not seen since 1928.

The Attack on Unions continues on page 19

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### Beware ALEC

Although we didn't exactly plan it this way, the articles in this issue of *The Public Eye* speak to one another. Whether the topic is immigration, antilabor organizing, or the Tea Party, the same players on the Right constantly rear their heads, to paraphrase Sarah Palin. Of course, this has been true for a long time. Funders such as the Koch brothers, think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, and media outlets such as FOX News are involved in a multitude of issues.

However, one organization that appears both in Lauri Lebo's account of the forces that came together to pass Arizona's anti-immigrant law, SB1070, and in Abby Scher's analysis of the current antilabor backlash, although highly influential, is less well-known: ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council. A nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, ALEC members are state legislators and representatives of corporations. ALEC's mission, as paraphrased on its press releases, "is to promote free markets, individual liberty, and federalism through its model legislation in the states." (See [www.alec.org](http://www.alec.org).) Thus, SB1070 had its origins in ALEC; its wording is almost identical to legislation proposed by an ALEC task force in 2008. The task force itself included as members Arizona state Senator Russell Pearce, the bill's sponsor, and representatives of private prison corporations who, as Lebo explains, will profit nicely from locking up those arrested under the law. That's how ALEC's "individual liberty" works.

ALEC also plays a role in developing laws that weaken unions and impede organizing, Scher documents. Funded by the Koch brothers (them again!), ALEC teams have created model, so-called right-to-work and paycheck-protection laws—one of which was just passed in Arizona (there again!). That's the "free market."

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I'm sad to announce that this issue of *The Public Eye* will be the last that I edit. I hope to continue to work with the wonderful team at Political Research Associates from time to time, but other life responsibilities (I also edit *Women's Review of Books*) have "reared their heads," making it difficult for me to continue to devote the amount of time necessary to *The Public Eye*.

—Amy Hoffman

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*The Public Eye* is published by Political Research Associates, 1310 Broadway, Suite 201, Somerville, Massachusetts 02144-1837. 617.666.5300 fax: 617.666.6622

PRA is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. © Political Research Associates, 2011.

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

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ISSUE 70

# The Tea Party: The New Populism

By Arun Gupta

## “The Rant Heard Round the World”

On Feb. 19, 2009, two days after President Barack Obama signed the \$787 billion economic stimulus bill into law<sup>1</sup> and one day after the White House announced \$75 billion in direct aid to help homeowners refinance troubled mortgages,<sup>2</sup> CNBC commentator Rick Santelli delivered what became known as “the rant heard round the world.” Speaking from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange in his role as a financial analyst for the business news channel, Santelli excoriated the government for “promoting bad behavior” by “subsidiz[ing] the losers’ mortgages” instead of rewarding “the people that could carry the water instead of drink the water.” Crying “This is America . . . the silent majority” to the cheering, White male traders around him, Santelli announced, “We’re thinking of having a Chicago Tea Party.”<sup>3</sup>

A movement was born. It mattered little that Santelli was mum about the government’s many bailouts of Wall Street firms. (Financial analyst Nomi Prins estimates that by November 2008, direct and indirect support from the Federal Reserve to the financial sector had already climbed to \$6.39 trillion.<sup>4</sup>) Instead, Santelli—directing his wrath at the mortgage-refinancing program that would presumably aid the “losers”—asked, “How many of you people want to pay for your neighbor’s mortgage that has an extra bathroom and can’t pay their bills?”<sup>5</sup> Within hours, Santelli’s rant was featured favorably on right-wing websites such as the Drudge Report ([www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com)), and conserva-



One demand comes to represent the whole: “We Are All Wisconsin”

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tive talk radio programs like the *Rush Limbaugh Show* and the *Sean Hannity Show*.<sup>6</sup> The same day, FreedomWorks, an outfit chaired by former House Majority Leader Dick Armey,<sup>7</sup> “put up a website with tips on how to hold a tea party, then a Google map of events,” according to the *New York Times*. The *Times* said that, as “more people found the map on Web searches, they e-mailed FreedomWorks information on

their own events, ultimately allowing” the group “to compile a list of thousands of Tea Party contacts across the country.”<sup>8</sup>

In many ways, Santelli only sparked the abundant tinder of right-wing outrage. After all, despite Barack Obama’s historic victory, Republican presidential candidate John McCain garnered nearly 60 million votes, just 2.1 million short of the number George Bush received in his 2004 re-election win.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, almost ninety percent of McCain voters were White; around seventy percent made more than \$50,000 a year; a majority identified as conservative; most were male; and they skewed older.<sup>10</sup> As indicated by various polls, this is the heart of the Tea Party demographic.<sup>11</sup>

But many commentators, dazzled by Obama and the Democratic sweep of Congress, ignored this data. They declared that the Republicans were in a “death spiral,” “shrinking,” “increasingly constricted, with little space for growth,” and might “go

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Arun Gupta is the editor of *The Independent* and a former editor of *The Guardian Newsweekly*.

the way of the 1936 GOP, which didn't reclaim the White House until 1952."<sup>12</sup> Even those who hedged their bets, such as the *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, who saw a future for the Republican Party, albeit as "a haven for racists and reactionaries,"<sup>13</sup> were unable to imagine the stunning comeback it would make just two years later, fueled by the Tea Party movement.

The same pundits often interpreted the race-based falsehoods tossed about during the campaign—that Obama was a Muslim, that (in the words of Sarah Palin) he was "palling around with terrorists," that he was not a natural-born U.S. citizen—as the last cry of a dying right-wing species. Yet the rumor-mongering only gained a firmer foothold as the Tea Party gained momentum. In August 2007, seven percent of the public thought Obama was Muslim. By October 2008, twelve percent held this belief. By August 2010, it was up to eighteen percent, including 31 percent of all Republicans (with another 39 percent responding "don't know").<sup>14</sup> As hysteria peaked later that August over the proposal to build the so-called Park 51 mosque in downtown Manhattan—an issue pushed by FOX News and Tea Party figures such as Sarah Palin and Sharron Angle, the Republican candidate for Nevada's senate seat<sup>15</sup>—a *Time* magazine poll found that 46 percent of Republicans believed that Obama was Muslim.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in April 2010, 92 percent of Tea Party supporters said Obama's policies "were moving the country more toward socialism."<sup>17</sup> (While the Tea Party is not identical to the GOP, it overlaps with it significantly. A *New York Times*-CBS poll of Tea Party supporters in April 2010 found that 66 percent "usually" or "always" vote Republican, as opposed to a scant five percent who said that about the Democrats.<sup>18</sup>)

### Can Billions Buy a Movement?

Many progressives find the Tea Party perplexing, because a mass-based movement motivated by reactionary populist beliefs also appears to be marching to the tune of well-funded, top-down organ-

izations and prominent right-wing media. A debate has thus ensued over whether the Tea Party movement is genuinely grassroots, which I define as a bottom-up political process marked by relatively autonomous local formations, or Astroturf, which the website SourceWatch defines as "apparently grassroots-based citizen groups or coalitions that are primarily conceived, created and/or funded by corporations, industry trade associations, political interests, or public relations firms."<sup>19</sup>

As evidence for the Astroturf argument, critics often point to Charles and David

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Koch, oil-industry magnates with a combined fortune of \$44 billion, who control various foundations and political organizations linked to the Tea Party, such as FreedomWorks. A *New Yorker* profile of the brothers by Jane Mayer describes them as "out to destroy progressivism." They have pumped more than \$250 million into conservative political causes—of money that can be traced. Americans for Prosperity, a nonprofit founded by David Koch in 2004 that reportedly sought to spend \$45 million during the 2010 election cycle, has become a prominent player in the Tea Party Movement.<sup>20</sup>

But even for billionaires, buying a movement is not easy. The Koch brothers have

spent freely on political campaigns that have flopped, some of which were brazenly Astroturf. For example, in 1980, David Koch ran for vice president on the Libertarian Party ticket. He spent \$1.6 million in television advertising, which garnered him a whopping one percent of the national vote.<sup>21</sup> In 1995, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on Citizens for the Environment, a spin-off from the Koch-funded group, Citizens for a Sound Economy, which had received \$7.9 million from the Koch foundation between 1986 and 1993 and was the precursor of both FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity. Citizens for the Environment, said the *Post-Gazette*, "has no citizen membership of its own"; instead, "Oil, auto, timber, and chemical companies finance its inside-the-Washington-Beltway activities."<sup>22</sup> In 2008, Americans for Prosperity, which had received \$5.2 million from Koch foundations since 2005, kicked off a Hot Air Tour to oppose legislation addressing climate change.<sup>23</sup> During the next year, it made 75 stops around the U.S.,<sup>24</sup> but the *Wall Street Journal* uncovered the tour's Astroturf nature, including a lobbyist who forged letters to members of Congress.<sup>25</sup> In 2008, the *Journal* reported on another fizzled effort linked to the Koch brothers: the FreedomWorks Angry Renter campaign, which was meant to stir up opposition to federal programs that helped homeowners refinance troubled mortgages.<sup>26</sup>

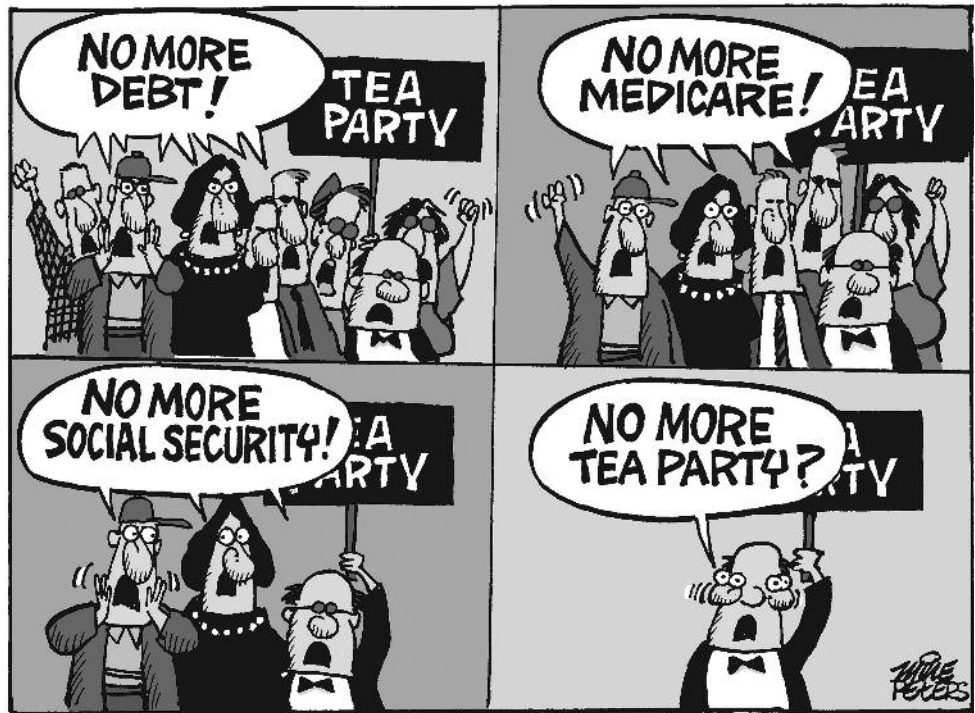
In the few weeks between Obama's inauguration and Santelli's rant, the same top-down forces were at play, at that point with little effect. In February 2009, demonstrations against the Obama administration's stimulus plan took place in Seattle, Washington; Denver, Colorado; Mesa, Arizona; and Ft. Myers, Florida. Most were timed to protest visits by Obama, and all benefited from support or promotion by the Right. The term used at these events to disparage the stimulus, "porkulus," was coined by Rush Limbaugh.<sup>27</sup> FreedomWorks claimed credit for the Ft. Myers protest. Pundit Michelle Malkin gave the protests a national platform, boasting that KFYI radio, part of the right-wing Clear

Channel media empire, was “taking the lead” in promoting the Mesa demonstration. Americans for Prosperity and the Independence Institute, which is funded by the ultraconservative Coors family, organized the Denver rally.<sup>28</sup> And John Hendrix, a “Tampa-based consultant who organized” an anti-stimulus protest in Tampa, Florida, says he got the idea from “FreedomWorks field coordinator Tom Gaitens.”<sup>29</sup> The Seattle protest, called by school teacher and Young Republican Keli Carender, appears to have been genuinely spontaneous, but FOX News radio was quick to promote it.<sup>30</sup> That nearly all these “local” protests were organized from above and received plenty of play from the right-wing media underlines how massive the conservative apparatus has become, bulked up by decades of funding from right-wing philanthropists.<sup>31</sup> But all the resources, money, and media did not guarantee success. The protests were scattered, and none appeared to draw many more than 100 people.

### From the Bottom Up

Curiously, what has arguably become the Tea Party movement’s nerve center—FOX News—was slow to react. Not until a second round of Tea Party protests slated for April 15, 2009, began to gather steam did FOX News start heavily promoting, endorsing, and providing organizing support.<sup>32</sup> On Tax Day, some 750 separate Tea Party protests were reportedly staged around the nation. While ABC, CBS, and the *New York Times* all cited this number without attribution, the protests were undoubtedly widespread.<sup>33</sup> Statistician Nate Silver tallied up press and police reports from 126 of the protests and found that about 112,000 people attended, with 47 cities reporting crowds of 1,000 or more.<sup>34</sup>

Still, many liberals interpreted the growing Tea Party movement as mere smoke and mirrors. Krugman called the demonstrations “Astroturf events.” Pointing to involvement by FreedomWorks, he noted that “the parties are, of course, being promoted heavily by FOX News.”<sup>35</sup> Lee Fang of ThinkProgress.org said “the principal



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organizers of the local events are actually the lobbyist-run think tanks Americans for Prosperity and FreedomWorks. The two groups are heavily staffed and well-funded, and are providing all the logistical and public relations work necessary for planning coast-to-coast protests.”<sup>36</sup> Citing much of the same evidence, Jane Hamsher, the founder of the progressive blog fire-

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doglake.com, rejected the idea that “right-wing infrastructure” was exploiting a grassroots movement.<sup>37</sup>

Yet labeling the Tea Party “Astroturf” does not explain its strength or its explosive growth. While opponents may find it comforting to claim the movement doesn’t have much real support, this notion is dubious. “Saying it’s inauthentic, it’s fake, it’s being manipulated by elites is an easy

way to dismiss it,” says Peter Bratsis, an observer of the Tea Party movement and a professor of political theory at the University of Salford in the United Kingdom. “The important thing is the degree of support the Tea Party movement has. The intensity of passion is quite acute. . . . It’s a social movement that is very widespread.”

One need look no further than the November 2010 elections, which were an unambiguous victory for the Tea Party. The Democratic Party was “thrashed,” as President Obama admitted, losing six seats in the Senate, 63 in the House, six governorships, and numerous state legislatures.<sup>38</sup> Of the House seats the Republicans flipped, “Tea Party-endorsed candidates accounted for 28 of those pick-ups,” according to Bloomberg News, and nearly one-quarter of Republicans in the House currently belong to the Tea Party caucus.<sup>39</sup> At the polls, an astonishing 41 percent of voters identified as Tea Party supporters.<sup>40</sup> The Tea Party gained enough strength during the 2010 midterm elections to enable the Republican Party to define the national issues going forward: maintaining the Bush-era tax cuts; cutting social services, unemployment insurance, public education, and healthcare; and waging war on

## TALKING TO THE TEA PARTIERS

I met Barry Silverman at a gathering of the Rockland County Tea Party/Coffee Party at the New City Public Library, about twenty miles north of New York City, in January 2011.<sup>79</sup>

I arrived after the Pledge of Allegiance had been recited. Ten attendees were discussing their first order of business, supporting a Republican presidential candidate for the 2012 election. Silverman was quick to speak up when Bruce Weinfeld, the chair, asked participants to list the qualities they look for in a presidential candidate. Silverman announced, “If the Republicans nominate only RINOs [Republicans In Name Only] in 2012, they’ll be finished. They’ll go the way of the Whigs.” It was a prediction he would state repeatedly.

During the meeting Silverman, a retiree who appeared to be in his sixties, said he had worked for a “Fortune 50 company.” He is a leader in the Rally for America Tea Party and has been a featured public speaker at Tea Party events.<sup>80</sup> After the meeting, I struck up a conversation with him and a few other participants, including Larry Rosner, who handed me a card describing himself as the founder of The Society Project website, whose motto is “Control the Government Not the People.” I did not identify myself as a reporter, just as someone who was curious about the Tea Party movement.

Silverman and his colleagues all expressed radical right-wing politics. They don’t believe change can come through existing institutions, which they believe need to be restructured or even eliminated. When I asked them if the food stamp program should be terminated, they cried, “Cut it!” The same cry greeted the mention of Medicare, Medicaid, and unemployment insurance. They saved their greatest ire for Social Security: “Social Security is a fraud,” they said.

“It’s a pyramid scheme. The trust fund doesn’t exist.”

“Stealing from us in taxes is unconstitutional and immoral.”

“The government isn’t allowed to tax us.”

Silverman explained that Obama’s election had led to his political awakening. “I was asleep for thirty years. I woke up because of Obama. It was the bailouts and stimulus and healthcare. It was socialism.” He added that he felt isolated until he attended a protest in Washington, D.C., in the summer of 2009 and found thousands of kindred spirits. “I had thought I was the only one yelling at my TV.”

Borrowing a line from libertarians, who make up a significant segment of the Tea Party movement, Silverman told me, “Equality of opportunity does not guarantee equality of outcome.” A young woman, the only African American in attendance, sat nearby texting on her cell phone during our discussion, often nodding approvingly at Silverman’s remarks. She spoke up only a few times, twice telling me to read *Uncle Sam’s Plantation* by Star Parker<sup>81</sup> to learn how the welfare system keeps poor people in a state of dependency.

During the meeting Silverman had declared, “The government is stealing our wealth.” During our conversation he elaborated, explaining that the government subsidizes the poor.

“How?” I asked.

Silverman’s face jutted forward, his eyes bulged with incredulity, and he sighed at having to suffer a fool like me, before ticking off the evidence on his fingers. “They get welfare, food stamps, healthcare, unemployment, housing.”

I pointed out that unemployment is an insurance system: you have to work to qualify, and it excludes many categories of workers—but to no avail. To Silverman, it was a taxpayer-funded subsidy to the undeserving and a form of theft.

“Name one government program that is effective and efficient,” Silverman demanded.

“The interstate highway system,” I responded, but he immediately denounced that as inefficient. The topic came up again later, and when I suggested the Veterans Administration he became visibly angry, labeling the agency “corrupt” and “scandal ridden.”

I declined to point out that a recent study determined that the VA healthcare system outperformed the for-profit healthcare system across seven different categories.<sup>82</sup> I also didn’t mention that the meeting and our conversation were taking place in a free public space paid for by taxpayers. The evidence was irrelevant. No matter how well a government program worked, it could never compete with Silverman’s utopian vision of the free market, which, in his words, would always be more “effective and efficient.”

The political scientist Peter Bratsis recommends that to understand the Tea Party, we start with the group’s name. “By evoking the Boston Tea Party,” he explains, “the movement is both referencing the national founding and celebrating patriotic pleasure and sacrifice.” He adds,

“Tea Party supporters think that things have gone awry precisely because Americans are driven by the nihilistic pursuit of self-interest. ... If greedy bankers and labor unions, corrupt and servile politicians, and free-riding law-breaking immigrants behaved in a more disciplined and principled manner, then we would finally be able to enjoy our own lives and the United States could go back to its former greatness.”<sup>83</sup>

For Silverman, as I suspect for many Tea Party supporters, the rhetoric and imagery of a national refounding tap into heroic ideals. We live in a society suffused with banality, in which people are pushed at every turn to overcome their dissatisfactions through shopping and eating, spectator sports, television, and cruises. In contrast, the Tea Party offers a heroic narrative that lends meaning to a middle-class, consumerist lifestyle by uplifting unfettered individualism and the free market as the paths to restoring the country to its former glory.

unions, particularly in the public sector.

Libertarian beliefs about limited government, personal responsibility, opposition to the downward redistribution of wealth, and the market as the source of liberty and democracy<sup>41</sup> have defined the U.S. Right since the 1930s, according to *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (2009), by Kim Phillips-Fein.<sup>42</sup> In *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (1995), Sara Diamond provides a succinct definition of the Right that fits the Tea Party movement: "To be right-wing means to support the state in its capacity as *enforcer* of order and to oppose the state as distributor of wealth and power downward and more equitably in society [emphasis in original]."<sup>43</sup>

Thus, Santelli struck a nerve because he was expressing what many Americans already thought: that their hard-earned money should not go to subsidize "losers." Shortly after his rant, CNBC asked visitors to its website, "Would you join Santelli's 'Chicago Tea Party?'" About 170,000 people responded within one day, with 93 percent saying "yes," according to Hamsher.<sup>44</sup> A CNBC spokesperson said the number of respondents was "much higher" than normal for a CNBC poll.<sup>45</sup> Within eleven days, the rant video was the most-watched clip ever on the CNBC website, with nearly 2 million views and another 855,000 hits on YouTube.<sup>45</sup> Santelli's distinction between those who "carry the water" and those who "drink the water" is what sociologists term classic "producerism." Researchers Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons<sup>47</sup> define producerism as pitting "the so-called producing classes," who work hard and create wealth, "against 'unproductive' bankers, speculators, and monopolists above—and people of color below." Many of the people who commented on the CNBC website in response to Santelli expressed producerist resentments such as these:

- "Why are the very people who never seem to do the right things being rewarded with my tax dollars?"

- "Here is the message Obama and Congress are sending: work hard, pay your bills on time, and you will be penalized by having your hard-earned money reward those who wallow in irresponsibility and have a total disdain for those who play by the rules."
- "Obama & Biden are very compassionate with other peoples' money ... This is not the role of the government (redistribution) & it's not their right to do it with my money!"<sup>48</sup>

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**"Saying [the Tea Party] is inauthentic, it's fake, it's being manipulated by elites is an easy way to dismiss it."**

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### Tea Party Racism

Producerism is intertwined with racism, and various Tea Party factions are no strangers to racist rhetoric. Curiously, because of such racism, some left-wing observers have dismissed the idea that the Tea Party could become a powerful political movement—even though they also recognize that racism is a potent force in U.S. society and politics.<sup>49</sup> Racism is a factor in the movement's success, and many Tea Party leaders, candidates, and supporters have been guilty of it<sup>50</sup>: Kentucky Senator Rand Paul inveighed against the 1964 Civil Rights Act during his 2010 campaign<sup>51</sup>; New York Republican gubernatorial candidate Carl Paladino sent out racist emails with doctored photographs of Michelle and Barack Obama<sup>52</sup>; crowds of Tea Party supporters reportedly yelled "nigger" at Black congressmen during the healthcare bill debate in March 2010<sup>53</sup>; racist signs regularly appeared at Tea Party

rallies<sup>54</sup>; there was an outpouring of Tea Party-backed Islamophobia during the summer of 2010<sup>55</sup>; Tea Party Express leader Mark Williams vented founts of racist diatribes long before his racist "satire" of the NAACP led to his resignation<sup>56</sup>; and high percentages of Tea Party supporters regularly claimed that Obama was a Muslim or was not born in the United States.<sup>57</sup>

Polling conducted in 2010 among Whites in California, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, and Ohio by the University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race, & Sexuality found that support for or opposition to the Tea Party movement was an accurate predictor of racial resentment. The survey found that among strong supporters of the Tea Party, 73 percent believed, "Blacks would be as well off as Whites if they just tried harder," while only 33 percent of strong opponents of the Tea Party movement believed this; 56 percent of strong supporters believed, "Immigrants take jobs from Americans," as opposed to 31 percent of strong opponents; and 72 percent of Tea Party backers disagreed that decades of slavery and discrimination made Blacks' economic situations difficult, while only 28 percent of opponents disagreed.<sup>58</sup>

Recent assaults on social welfare programs and the passage of laws criminalizing undocumented immigrants, especially in states with active Tea Party movements, are part of a racist backlash—and the demographics of the Tea Party may explain why. For instance, just 23 percent of Tea Party supporters in an April 2010 *New York Times*/CBS poll were under age 45, as opposed to 50 percent of all respondents. Only five percent of the total said they were Black, Asian, or of Hispanic descent or origin, indicating that the movement is about 95 percent White.<sup>59</sup>

### The Role of Populism

There remains the problem of how to make sense of the many apparently conflicting aspects of the Tea Party movement. Top-down elements with organizational, financial, and media resources, such

as the Koch brothers, Sarah Palin, FOX News, Glenn Beck, FreedomWorks, and the Tea Party Express (a front for Republican operatives) play prominent roles in the Tea Party movement. Yet there is clearly broad support for the Tea Party and its positions, as evidenced by polling data, the 2010 midterm elections, the variety of organizations, their ability to turn people out on the streets, and their ideological continuities with other modern right-wing movements.

The Tea Party movement thus appears to have both genuine grassroots and Astroturf elements. However, saying this doesn't explain much. Whether the movement is orchestrated or spontaneous, whether that matters, and how the elite interacts with the base are still unanswered questions. Ernesto Laclau's essay, "Populism: What's in a Name?," and his 2005 book, *On Populist Reason*<sup>60</sup> provide useful perspectives on the issues, although his theories are controversial.<sup>61</sup>

Laclau says that populism is a "political logic" that begins with "social demands." If a series of demands remains unfulfilled, then the various groups making the demands may begin to see themselves as having something in common. At first, there "is a vague feeling of solidarity," writes Laclau.<sup>62</sup> To use a non-Tea Party example, in Wisconsin in early 2011, after Republicans tried to take away the right of public-sector workers to bargain collectively, an outpouring of people from various sectors—teachers, students, liberals, government employees, religious groups, socialists, union members, progressives, sports stars, hackers—protested.

The movement then enters a second stage, says Laclau, in which "an individual demand . . . acquires a certain centrality," and becomes "the representation of an impossible whole."<sup>63</sup> In Wisconsin, the plight of unionized public workers came to represent everyone's plight; the movement's slogan became, "We are all Wisconsin."

A new identity is constructed: "the people": those whose demands are not met. The people can be known only in relation to the Other, the enemy. "The 'regime,' the 'oligarchy,' the 'dominant groups'" are on one

side, says Laclau, while on the other is "the oppressed underdog"—"the 'people,' the 'nation,' the 'silent majority.'"<sup>64</sup> "The people" is less than the whole of society, he notes, although it would like "to function as the totality of the community."<sup>65</sup> The enemy, which is also a construct, is illegitimate and must be excluded.

Viewing the Tea Party as a populist movement explains why it came into being so fast, and why the grassroots/Astroturf debate misses the point. The elements of the movement took shape during the 2008 presidential race. While Obama's campaign astutely crafted him as a symbol into which liberals, progressives, and many moderates could pour their hopes and ideals, he was also being shaped by his opponents as an enemy Other: a foreign-born, Muslim socialist.<sup>66</sup> Following Obama's election, forces on the Right began to make a series of demands, opposing the stimulus bill, deficits, social spending, bailouts, and government intervention in the market.<sup>67</sup> The demand of debt reduction rose above all the others, linking them together in what Laclau calls an "equivocal chain": that is, debt reduction began to represent all the demands. Thus, the movement explained its opposition to social programs, bailouts, and government regulations with the imperative of debt reduction: social welfare and bailouts increase the debt, while regulation and government spending sap the market of its ability to generate wealth.

While the lavishly funded right-wing media and networks were having little success in building a mass movement based on "porkulus" protests, Santelli's rant broke through because it suggested a populist identity and at the same time, constructed an enemy. As Laclau would say, the Tea Party discourse brings the "people" into being; it's not an already existing group. Tea Party rhetoric is full of this notion of a legitimate "people." "We the people" are contrasted with various Others—Obama, unions, welfare recipients, undocumented immigrants—who, according to Laclau's theory, "cannot be a legitimate part of the community."<sup>68</sup>

It's "useless," says Laclau, to explain people's attraction to populist movements by claiming that they are being manipulated from the top. "The most it would explain," he says, "is the subjective intention of the leader, but we would remain in the dark as to why the manipulation succeeds." Populism, he adds,

can start from *any* place in the socio-institutional structure: clientistic political organizations, established political parties, trade unions, the army, revolutionary movements, etc. "Populism" does not define the actual politics of these organizations but is a way of articulating their themes—whatever those themes may be.<sup>69</sup>

### The Tea Party's Vulnerabilities

Three characteristics of the Tea Party are already diminishing its support. First, the Tea Party is what Laclau calls an "empty signifier": it unifies a wildly heterogeneous reality, but only by "reducing to a minimum [each element's] particularistic content."<sup>70</sup> As Devin Burghart and Leonard Zeskind show in their study, *Tea Party Nationalism*, those drawn to the Tea Party include libertarians, evangelicals, nativists, constitutionalists, Islamophobes, militia members, and White nationalists.<sup>71</sup> These disparate groups can unite under the Tea Party banner even if they don't all support a particular demand such as charter schools, banning gay marriage, or cutting Medicare. The larger the number of demands the movement encompasses, the less it is attached to any one of them.

Many people who claim to speak for the movement advocate particular causes, which other factions within the movement do not support. Tea Party groups have devolved from focusing on universal claims to focusing on particular ones with less support. In some cases, the Tea Party has brought into being opposing equivalential chains and populist identities that have stolen its thunder,<sup>72</sup> as in Wisconsin. As Tea Party groups have become embroiled in specific battles over cutting funding for education and social programs, and limiting



the bargaining power of public-sector unions (whose members administer social programs), the Tea Party's negative ratings have leaped. In March 2011, 47 percent of respondents to a CNN poll had an unfavorable opinion of the Tea Party, up from 26 percent in January 2010.<sup>73</sup>

Second, when the political system assimilates a populist movement, the movement loses the system as its enemy Other, and it begins to lose strength. This may already be happening to the Tea Party. Its victories in the November 2010 election showed that the system could accommodate the movement, making it harder to claim plausibly that "real" Americans were being oppressed or excluded. A measure of the Tea Party's declining support is the Tax Day rallies. ThinkProgress noted that the Tea Party Patriots website listed only 145 rallies on April 15, 2011—down from 638 in 2010. And in many instances, turnout "was down precipitously."<sup>74</sup> In July, Bruce Weinfeld of the Rockland County, New York, Tea Party/Coffee Party, told me that his group and many others had stopped meeting. Weinfeld said it was a waste of time and energy when only "three or four people were showing up at meetings."<sup>75</sup>

Finally, some Tea Party supporters are having second thoughts. They had called for reducing the federal budget deficit at any cost, only to confront the reality that this would mean cutting social welfare programs that they themselves depended on. An April 2011 poll found that seventy percent of Tea Party supporters opposed cuts to Medicare and Medicaid "to deal with the federal budget deficit."<sup>76</sup> Another showed that "Tea Party supporters, by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, declared significant cuts to Social Security 'unacceptable.'"<sup>77</sup> By now, however, deficit reduction has already been fully incorporated into the country's political discourse, as demonstrated by the fact that both congressional Republicans and the Democratic White House are gunning for Social Security and Medicare—all the while trying to blame the other side for cuts.<sup>78</sup> As the Tea Party fulfills its agenda, it may wither away into obscurity, but it will leave behind vast social wreckage.

Both major parties endorse policies that undermine civil liberties, squeeze social welfare, wage multiple wars, preserve huge military expenditures, criminalize undocumented immigration, cut wages and pensions for public-sector workers, thwart policies to reduce global warming, and support Wall Street bailouts and historically low tax rates for the wealthy. Nevertheless, there are rhetorical differences between the two, and they disagree on wedge cultural issues such as gay marriage and abortion rights. Tea Party networks will probably remain a potent force, at least through the 2012 presidential election, since the Right can use them to mobilize resentment against Others and to organize opposition to Obama and the Democratic Party.

The overriding error of Tea Party critics is a crude material reductionism: to think that funding signifies control or that a racist reaction against the Other is just a defense of the wages of Whiteness. There are varying degrees of truth to these propositions, but the real issue is the the ability of the Tea Party (and the Right in general) to craft politics suffused with psychological and material appeals, which combine negative and positive emotions. Certainly Tea Party members are motivated by fear and some by hate; nevertheless, they see themselves as a positive force. They are the ones who will save America and return it to its former greatness. It may be a fantasy, but it's a powerful one that has captured the imagination of millions of people and redefined national politics, something the Left has failed to do for generations. ■

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- <sup>59</sup> "National Survey of Tea Party Supporters," the *New York Times* CBS News Poll.
- <sup>60</sup> Laclau notes, "A persistent feature of the literature on populism is its reluctance – or difficulty – in giving the concept any precise meaning." He singles out the early work of Margaret Canovan as being typically imprecise and lacking "any coherent criterion around which its distinctions are established." Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 3-6.
- <sup>61</sup> There is a spirited debate over Laclau's theory. For example, see "Against the Populist Temptation," Slavoj Zizek, 2006, accessed May 14, 2011, lacan.com/zizpopulism.htm
- <sup>62</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 117, 93.
- <sup>63</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 95, 80-81.
- <sup>64</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 87.
- <sup>65</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 81.
- <sup>66</sup> Laclau writes that "the internal frontier can only result from the operation of the equivalential chain." I am not following his schematic strictly because Obama was already the enemy for many on the right prior to stimulus existing even as a plan. Of course, one can argue the Tea Party's real enemy is government itself, but for the movement it has been personified in Obama. In any case, Laclau's concepts provide useful frames for analyzing the Tea Party, whether or not one follows exactly the process he outlines.
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- <sup>68</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 86.
- <sup>69</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 99; Laclau, "Populism: What's In a Name?" 44.
- <sup>70</sup> Ernesto Laclau, "Populism: What's In a Name?" In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza, (London: Verso, 2005), 40.
- <sup>71</sup> Burghart and Zeskind, "Tea Party Nationalism,"
- <sup>72</sup> This is actually what Laclau refers to by "floating signifiers," which just means signifiers that can float easily from Left to Right or back. For example, popular Tea Party ideas like Freedom, Liberty and Tyranny could easily be adopted by a left-wing populist movement. These signifiers float because they do not inscribe any specific social demand. Laclau, "Populism: What's In a Name?" 42.
- <sup>73</sup> "CNN Opinion Research Poll," CNN.
- <sup>74</sup> Alex Seitz-Wald, "Analysis: Taxed Enough Already? Tea Party Rallies Significantly Smaller This Year Than Last," ThinkProgress, April 19, 2011, accessed June 10, 2011, thinkprogress.org/politics/2011/04/19/159516/tea-party-rallies-getting-smaller.
- <sup>75</sup> Phone Interview, July 14, 2011.
- <sup>76</sup> David Weigl, "Poll: 70 percent of 'Tea Party Supporters' Oppose Medicare Cuts," Slate, April 19, 2011, accessed July 15, 2011, slate.com/blogs/weigl/2011/04/19/poll\_70\_percent\_of\_tea\_party\_supporters\_oppose\_medicare\_cuts.html
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- <sup>78</sup> As Glenn Greenwald argued, "Obama both believes in the corporatist agenda he embraces and assesses it to be in his political interest to be associated with it. If it means 'painful' entitlement cuts for ordinary Americans at a time of massive unemployment, economic anxiety and exploding wealth inequality, so be it." Glenn Greenwald, "Reports: Obama pushing for cuts to Social Security, Medicare," Salon, July 7, 2011, accessed July 11, 2011, salon.com/news/opinion/glenn\_greenwald/2011/07/07/social\_security.
- <sup>79</sup> <http://newcity.patch.com/articles/new-city-library-budget-approved-3-trustees-re-elected>
- <sup>80</sup> RFA Tax Day Tea Party Rally, Rockland County, NY 4/15/2010, April 16, 2010, accessed July 14, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=va7pNcSxP78.
- <sup>81</sup> *Uncle Sam's Plantation: How Big Government Enslaves America's Poor and What We Can Do About It*, by Star Parker. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003.
- <sup>82</sup> <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2005/0501.longman.html>
- <sup>83</sup> Bratsis, "Viagra for an Impotent America."

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SB1070 *cont'd from page 1*

in Spanish, as the son translates, switching easily between the two languages. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it,” the older Montenegro says, quoting from the book of Proverbs.

In the early 1980s, when Steve was only a baby, the Montenegro family fled from El Salvador to the United States. With help from the Apostolic Assembly, the refugees applied for and received asylum on the basis of their religion, making it possible for Steve to become a U.S. citizen.<sup>1</sup>

In 2008, Steve Montenegro was elected to the Arizona state house with strong conservative support.<sup>2</sup> Last spring, he became the only Latino lawmaker to cast a vote in favor of the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, otherwise known as SB1070, the notorious state law that requires state and local police officers to check the immigration status of anyone they arrest or suspect is in the country illegally. The law places the burden of proof on those questioned by the police to prove they are in the country legally; if they can't, they will be arrested and charged with trespassing. Known informally as the Show Me Your Papers Law or, more derisively, Driving While Brown, SB 1070's stated purpose is to crack down on the state's estimated 460,000 undocumented immigrants. As Arizona's senate president and the bill's primary sponsor, Republican Russell Pearce, wrote on his website,

The fact is Arizona's motto is “Attrition by Enforcement” and 90% will self-deport. ... [T]hose who say we need reform (code word Amnesty), because we can't deport them all, [are] saying come on in illegally, we don't intend to enforce our laws.<sup>3</sup>

April 23 was the anniversary of Governor Jan Brewer's signing of SB1070. Just a few weeks before that, on April 11, the

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U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld District Court Judge Susan Bolton's July 2010 injunction against the enforcement of certain provisions of SB1070, including those that require immigrants to carry their papers at all times and police officers to check suspects' immigration status. The 9th Circuit concluded that there was sufficient evidence that these parts of the law infringe on federal jurisdiction. Pearce has vowed to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>4</sup> Despite the injunction, the law's impact has been widely felt, across the state and nationally. Other states are preparing similar legislation, and immigrants with legal papers and without are living in fear.

Pentecostal observers say that the Montenegros' Apostolic Assembly denomination, with its large Hispanic membership, includes individuals of questionable documentation, who would pay a heavy price for their spiritual brother's support of SB 1070.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, like his Tea Party colleagues, Montenegro has been an active sponsor of a series of recently rejected anti-immigration bills, which critics say were even more draconian than SB1070. He was also the prime sponsor of Arizona's latest anti-abortion law, signed by Brewer in March, which makes it a crime to get an abortion because of the race or gender of the fetus and requires minority women to sign a document explaining their reasons for seeking the procedure.<sup>6</sup>

When I interviewed him in September regarding his support for SB1070, Montenegro declined to discuss how he was able to reconcile his votes with his religious beliefs and his church. “We don't mix religion and politics,” he told me. “If you're working on a story about what the religious experience has to do with [the law], I don't think that's fair.” He added that he and his family came to the United States legally, and that people who accuse him of being hypocritical are stereotyping him. At a Tea Party rally Montenegro summed up his position: “The fact that I can speak in Spanish doesn't automatically make me a protax, open border liberal hopelessly addicted to

big government spending. So today we send government a message: don't mess with my liberties, don't mess with my faith, and don't mess with my wallet.”<sup>7</sup>

That a Spanish-speaking immigrant and Latino church leader is a major supporter of SB1070 says much about the disparate elements that came together to pass the most restrictive anti-immigration law in the country—an unhealthy brew of Wall Street greed, political opportunism, and nativist fears.

### **The Mexican Financial Crisis, U.S. Banks, and the Private Prison Industry**

Today's debates about U.S. immigration policy have roots in the December 1994 Mexican financial panic. On the heels of NAFTA, Mexico emerged nearly bankrupt because of bond debt to Wall Street banks. The peso was devalued by forty percent. The U.S. government pushed the International Monetary Fund to give Mexico money so it could put together a package to pay its creditors, most of which were the Wall Street banks.<sup>8</sup> The IMF then contracted out the bailout loan to the U.S. Treasury.<sup>9</sup> Mark Fineman of the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “Three weeks after it started receiving one of the biggest and most controversial credit packages in U.S. history, the Mexican government has spent a fifth of the \$20 billion in promised U.S. loans to pay off American insurance companies, mutual fund investors, Wall Street brokerage houses, Mexican banks and the richest of Mexico's rich.”<sup>10</sup>

To meet its crushing debt to Wall Street, the Mexican government increased interest rates at the behest of the U.S. Treasury. The rates on business and farm loans rose from an average of eleven percent to 56 percent. Those on credit-card debt went from seven percent to 61 percent. The rates on home loans increased from an average of five percent to 75 percent.<sup>11</sup>

The impact on Mexican citizens was devastating. Thousands of farms and businesses, both large and small, went bankrupt. Jobs disappeared, and people could no longer support their families. The eco-

conomic hardships prompted a wave of mass migration, as millions of men, women, and children crossed Mexico's northern border seeking work.

### The Private Prison Companies Get Involved

In December 2006, more than a thousand men and women were arrested and detained in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids at meat-packing plants across the U.S. Instead of being charged with misdemeanors such as the misuse of a social security number—the U.S. practice since 1995—they were charged with crimes that carry lengthy prison sentences, such as falsifying documents or identity theft. The charges marked a significant shift in the enforcement of federal immigration policy.<sup>12</sup>

As Peter Cervantes-Gautschi, the executive director of Enlace, a group that helps low-wage workers develop and strengthen their organizations, wrote in an analysis for the Americas Program think tank, the shift spelled good news for the for-profit prison industry. Although the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, across the country, crime rates were down.<sup>13</sup> Private prison corporations, no longer able to keep their jails filled, had lost contracts and shuttered doors.<sup>14</sup> Now, however, wrote Cervantes-Gautschi,

This single change in enforcement of existing law created a potential “market” of over 10 million new felons almost overnight, multiplying the lucrative incarceration market for the private prison industry and sending a shock wave through immigrant-related communities across the country.<sup>15</sup>

A report by the Corrections Corporation of America, the country's largest for-profit prison company, noted that “[e]xecutives believe immigrant detention is their next big market.” CCA, said the report, was expecting to bring in “a significant portion of our revenues” from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).<sup>16</sup> Many of the same banking institutions that



*Kris Kobach campaigns for Kansas Secretary of State*

profited from the Mexican financial crisis of the 1990s, such as JP Morgan and the Bank of America, are now investing heavily in the private prison industry, enabling them once again to profit from those who lost their jobs and businesses following the Mexico bailout.<sup>17</sup>

### Kris Kobach, Crusading Attorney

In 2002, Kris Kobach was a 33-year-old advisor to U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, working in the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel. There, he was “intimately involved,” he says, in writing a memo arguing that local and state police have the power to arrest undocumented immigrants for civil violations of immigration law.<sup>18</sup> Kobach's memo directly contradicted opinions issued by his office in 1989 and 1996, which stated that only federal agents have that power, and his memo never became official policy.

In 2003, he left the department, and a year later, he was hired as senior counsel to the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), an organization that works to curtail immigration, which the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has identified as a White nationalist hate group.<sup>19</sup> In its report, SPLC cites John Tanton, FAIR's founder, who wrote that a clear “European-American majority” is needed to protect American culture.<sup>20</sup>

Although Kobach's Department of Justice memo never went anywhere,

Kobach uses it to justify the authority of local law enforcement in immigration matters. In a May 18, 2010, article, the *Washington Post* wrote that “[Kobach] ... has cited the authority granted in the 2002 memo as a basis for the legislation,”<sup>21</sup> and he is behind the anti-immigration laws that have started popping up in towns across the country, writing them and then defending them in court.

He has had limited success, however, in selling his arguments to judges. In 2007, he was brought in to defend a law in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, in a case that heated up the national anti-immigrant climate. Hazleton's municipal ordinance made it a crime for landlords to rent to undocumented immigrants and required all tenants to register with the city. As Hazleton Mayor Lou Barletta said at the time, Kobach intended to make the law “legally bullet-proof.”<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, in 2007, a federal district court judge struck it down as unconstitutional. In September 2010, the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the lower court's ruling that immigration law falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Hazleton has appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, which has remanded it back to the Third Circuit. “Mr. Kobach's experiments in pushing immigration enforcement to states and municipalities has real-world consequences, fueling xenophobia and pitting neighbor against neighbor,” said the Legal Director

of the Pennsylvania American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Witold Walczak, who argued the case.<sup>23</sup>

Last fall, Kobach was elected Kansas secretary of state, running on a pledge to end immigrant voter fraud—even though he provided no credible evidence that this problem exists. He cited one case, in which he claimed that someone who had died in 1996 had voted in August 2010. However, the *Wichita Eagle* found the “dead” man outside his house raking leaves.<sup>24</sup>

### Russell Pearce, FAIR, and ALEC

Both nativists and the private prison industry were at the center of developing and passing SB1070; Arizona’s Senator Pearce has ties to both.

His connections to FAIR go back to at least 2004, when he was the co-chairman of the campaign for Proposition 200, a voter-approved law that cut off benefits to undocumented immigrants.<sup>25</sup> The ballot initiative marked FAIR’s first foray into Arizona politics, for which the organization spent \$500,000 in lobbying the public.<sup>26</sup>

Certainly, FAIR and Kobach fingerprints are all over SB1070, with its references to pressuring undocumented immigrants to “self deport” and to “attrition through enforcement,” which come directly from FAIR’s talking points.<sup>27</sup> Dan Pochoda, the legal director of the Arizona American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), points out that the enforcement strategy, also embraced by the Arizona Tea Party, is at the heart of all of Kobach’s cases.<sup>28</sup> Still, Kobach’s previous ordinances had “only fiddled around” with giving local police enforcement responsibility, says SPLC Director of Research Heidi Beirich. “SB 1070 was a big innovation,” she notes.<sup>29</sup>

Kobach did not return phone calls for requests for an interview.

Pearce also has close connections to the prison industry, due to his membership in the American Legislative Enterprise Council (ALEC), a nonprofit, private membership organization that develops “model legislation” dedicated to advancing “free markets” and “limited government” for state lawmakers.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the law-

makers, ALEC’s membership includes 200 corporations, who pay tens of thousands of dollars for the privilege of gaining access to the state officials. Both CCA and Geo Group, another large private prison company, are corporate members of ALEC.<sup>31</sup>

Pearce is an ALEC lawmaker-member and serves on the council’s Public Safety and Elections Task Force—which also includes CCA representatives. Pearce admits that he submitted a draft to the task force of the bill that would become SB1070 in December 2009.<sup>32</sup> Kobach says he helped draft a version of the law, likely the version that Pearce brought to ALEC.<sup>33</sup>

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A month after Pearce presented the draft to the task force, the January-February edition of *Inside ALEC* published a list of the model legislation the council had approved at its December States and Nation Policy Summit, including this:

Resolution to Enforce Our Immigration Laws and Secure Our Borders  
Calls on states to enforce immigration laws and end sanctuary policies.

Calls on law enforcement officers to execute their authority to arrest any person guilty of hiring, harboring, or transporting illegal immigrants and to turn over illegal immigrants to fed-



*Arizona State Senator Russell Pearce (with folder and without cowboy hat)*

eral authorities for removal from the United States.<sup>34</sup>

In March, Pearce introduced a bill into the Arizona state legislature that was practically identical to ALEC’s model legislation.

For its part, CCA donated to the campaigns of thirty of the bill’s 36 cosponsors and hired a lobbyist to work the state capitol on the bill’s behalf. Two of Governor Brewer’s top advisors, Spokesman Paul Senseman and Campaign Manager Chuck Coughlin, are former lobbyists for the private prison industry.<sup>35</sup>

### Tapping the Tea Party

Even though the forces that came together to pass SB1070, such as the private prison industry and ALEC, are powerful, neither group alone would have achieved such success. The prison industry’s lobbying efforts have been behind the scenes—in fact, it denies any lobbying at all. Obtaining grassroots support was crucial, and FAIR focused on generating it, tapping into Arizona’s motivated Tea Party movement.

FAIR set the stage for SB1070 with the Proposition 200 campaign. Frank Sharry, the executive director of America’s Voice, which lobbies for comprehensive immigration reform, said the legislation restricting public benefits to those who could not prove their immigration status, was in fact symbolic. “Few undocumented workers collect benefits, but [FAIR’s] strategy was to mobilize their base,” Sharry said. “In some ways [it became] the predecessor to the Tea Party. [FAIR] used online organ-

izing to build a pretty formal cadre of activists around the country.... The anti-immigration movement has been able to stir up the Republican base so that the Republicans are scared of them in low-turnout elections.”<sup>36</sup>

FAIR invested a half-million dollars in the campaign, hiring signature gatherers and mobilizing support with a misinformation strategy, claiming (falsely) that undocumented immigrants cost the state \$1.3 billion a year. (To produce this number, a FAIR study included \$810 million the state spends on educating the children of immigrants who are US citizens.)<sup>37</sup>

The referendum campaign fanned the flames of anti-immigrant fears. “The Minutemen vigilantes have diverted the attention of the public and the media while their counterparts, sporting suits and ties in the state capitol, promote racist laws,” said Luis Herrera, an organizer with the St. Peter’s Housing Committee in San Francisco. “A war against immigrants and people of color has been declared in Arizona.”<sup>38</sup>

Margot Vernes, a community activist and volunteer with Corazon del Tucson, said that the White progressive community was reticent about the racist motivations of the White nationalist movement, which helped the anti-immigrant movement in the long-term, setting the stage for the SB 1070 showdown.<sup>39</sup>

Proposition 200 passed with 56 percent of the vote.<sup>40</sup>

For the next few years, as Prop. 200 faced legal challenges, FAIR’s legal arm, the Immigration Reform Law Institute, headed by Kobach, spent its time and resources trying to institute anti-immigration policies at the local level. After losing several high profile cases such as the one in Hazleton, in 2009, Kobach and FAIR turned their attention back to Arizona. Governor Janet Napolitano had just been appointed Secretary of Homeland Security. Lieutenant Governor Jan Brewer, a staunch conservative supportive of anti-immigration legislation, became the new governor, and Pearce moved into the powerful position of head of the Senate Appropriations Committee.<sup>41</sup>

“Given all that, with the local ordinances held up in the courts, I suspect they figured, ‘Hey we’ve got strong support in Arizona,’” Sharry said. “Prop. 200 sowed the seed for SB1070, because FAIR had gotten to know Pearce at the time. They had gotten the Republican establishment behind them.” He continued,

There has been a significant demographic change in America. The White majority is getting increasingly fearful that they have lost control and [Republicans] have tapped into that fear. California is already multi-ethnic. Arizona is next door and next up. The White majority population there thinks it’s losing out to the growth of the Hispanic community and are reacting in a very tribalistic way. FAIR and these groups are pretty skillful at blowing the dog whistle of demagoguery without being overtly racist.<sup>42</sup>

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**The anti-immigration movement has been able to stir up the Republican base so that the Republicans are scared of them in low-turnout elections.**

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As evidence of the anti-immigrant groups’ success, Sharry points to the reversal of U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) on immigration reform. In 2005, McCain worked with Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) on a bipartisan plan that would have increased border security but also granted amnesty to illegal workers already in the country. By 2008, in response to anti-immigration activism, he changed his position and endorsed strict border crackdowns

and blamed undocumented residents for “home invasions and murders.”<sup>43</sup>

“This is less a policy issue than it is a front on the culture war and in the partisan political war,” Sharry said.

The Tea Party, emerging in the wake of this anti-immigration fervor, embraced FAIR’s talking points and ran with them. Politicians like Montenegro carried favor with this motivated constituency.

Tea Party support has not waned. In February, the Tea Party Patriots, a national umbrella group, held a so-called policy summit in Phoenix. In its invitation, the group wrote, “It will also be our opportunity to support the citizens of Arizona in their current political battles that carry so many national implications.”<sup>44</sup>

### **The Prison Industry Cleans Up**

Even now, before SB1070 has gone into effect, there are twelve for-profit, private prison and detention facilities in the state of Arizona. CCA holds the federal contract to house detainees in Arizona who are suspected of violating immigration laws. When someone is arrested on suspicion of being in the country illegally, the state or county must notify ICE, which then has 48 hours to determine the detainee’s status. Each day that CCA holds a detainee in one of its facilities means an additional payment, whether from the state, county, or federal government. According to Cervantes-Gautschi, CCA currently bills the Department of Homeland Security \$11 million per month. “[CCA’s] stated goal is to make as much money as they can off detained immigrants,” he says.<sup>45</sup>

SB1070 would expand the private prison industry’s market, effectively turning state and local police officers into its very own taxpayer-funded sales team. The new trespassing offences created by the law carry a maximum of twenty days in jail for a first offense and thirty days for a second offense. (The main difference between the ALEC model legislation and the bill presented to Arizona legislators was that in the ALEC version, there was no maximum limit on how long a person could be detained.) Private prisons would profit

handsomely from these sentencing guidelines—for which the state would be required to pick up the tab.

Although Pearce asserts that the law will reduce prison overcrowding, even the Arizona legislature's own fiscal analysis predicts that it will bring greater numbers of prisoners into the system, increasing costs. The analysts admit, however, that they cannot put a dollar figure on the cost increase, because no one knows how many people will be rounded up.<sup>46</sup>

In absence of any credible figures, many are turning to a study done by the Yuma County Sheriff's Department in 2006, in response to a bill similar to SB1070 that would have rounded up suspected undocumented immigrants, but that never made it into law. Yuma is one of Arizona's fifteen counties, with a population of about 200,000. Sheriff Ralph E. Ogden estimated that county law-enforcement agencies would have to spend an additional \$775,880 to \$1,163,820 under the law. Increased processing expenses and jail costs would be between \$21,195,600 and \$96,086,720.<sup>47</sup>

With these kinds of increased costs to the taxpayer, SB1070 clearly conflicts with the Tea Party's demand for smaller government. Yet, the majority of the Tea Party candidates don't seem to recognize this. The alliance between CCA and FAIR typifies the ironies surrounding SB1070, since FAIR reaches out to Tea Party activists who profess to want to stop illegal immigration; while the CCA's financial survival is directly linked to its continuation.

"They (Tea Party supporters) don't know because they don't listen to us," Cervantes-Gautschi said. "The argument that this eases overcrowding of prisons is utter nonsense."<sup>48</sup>

Beirich called the attempts of Tea Party politicians like Montenegro to reconcile their support of SB 1070 with smaller government "absolute balderdash." "They haven't been forced to reconcile it," she said. "To their base, they play up this red-meat, culture war issue. To the press, they insist they're just for limited government. They're supposed to be for liberty, less govern-

ment intrusion, but what they're endorsing is the ultimate intrusion."<sup>49</sup>

### Second Thoughts

During the past few months, various segments of the electorate have expressed concern that perhaps things have gone too far. The economic boycott, started by the National Council of La Raza and widely endorsed by other civil liberties organizations after the passage of SB1070, has already cost the state dearly. In the first six months after the bill's signing, the convention industry lost \$141 million.<sup>50</sup>

"On top of that, there is all the negative publicity," said Democratic State Senator Steve Gallardo, who is pushing for a repeal of the law. "It's going to take years to get out from under this black cloud." Because

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## A war against immigrants and people of color has been declared in Arizona.

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Arizona is developing a reputation for racial discrimination, he said, "We're being called the Mississippi of the Southwest."<sup>51</sup>

Some business leaders are pushing back. In March, nearly sixty CEOs signed a letter to legislators opposing Arizona's most recent round of anti-immigration legislation. The letter referred to the "unintended consequences" of the state's "going it alone" on the immigration issue. "It's all based on their own self interests," Pochoda said. "They lost money. But we'll take it."

Nonetheless, FAIR and the private prison industry continue their lobbying efforts. After a lull in support, the forces behind SB 1070 are now seeing some success spreading similar legislation to other states. In May, Georgia's governor signed into law a bill based on the ALEC model legislation.<sup>52</sup> In June, Alabama passed an even more stringent anti-immigration law,

which Kobach proudly takes credit for writing.<sup>53</sup> Missouri and Pennsylvania are debating similar legislation.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, the FAIR-linked group State Legislators for Legal Immigration (SLLI), led by Pennsylvania Republican State Representative Daryl Metcalfe, has been developing model legislation for state challenges to the notion of birthright citizenship, which would prevent children of undocumented immigrants—so-called anchor babies—from automatically receiving U.S. citizenship. The goal is to trigger a U.S. Supreme Court review of the 14th Amendment. In March, though, Arizona rejected its anti-birthright-citizenship bill.

Additionally, in May, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a different Arizona case that states do have the right in some instances to set immigration law, raising questions about judicial review of SB 1070.<sup>55</sup> Opponents had argued that such state and local anti-immigration legislation interfered with the jurisdiction of federal government to enforce immigration.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, Pearce still claims that the law's economic impact on the state has been positive. His website says,

Arizona has become a national leader in the restoration of the Rule of Law, with over 100,000 illegal aliens having left the state since 2007, saving over \$350 million in K-12, a huge reduction in violent crimes as high as 30% in some cities and the first time in Arizona history a declining population in our Prisons, reduction in social services cost and jobs for Americans, etc.<sup>57</sup>

His assertions are dubious—the statistics do not take into account the impact of the 2008 collapse of the U.S. economy and the skyrocketing unemployment rate on reducing overall immigration. The number of undocumented residents nationally has declined eight percent since 1997, according to a Pew Hispanic Center study.<sup>58</sup>

### The Sanctuary Movement

In the early 1980s, the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona, initi-



ated the sanctuary movement, when it sheltered thousands of people fleeing Central American death squads. The Rev. John Fife hung banners outside the church: “This is a Sanctuary for the Oppressed of Central America,” and “Immigration: Do not Profane the Sanctuary of God.”<sup>59</sup> The sanctuary movement was based on the religious concept that we are to show our neighbors mercy: “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:36-37). SB1070 would target such sanctuaries by prohibiting “any municipal, county or state policy from hampering the ability of any government agency to comply with federal immigration law.”

*Misericordia.* Perhaps it’s a forgotten concept. ■

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THE ATTACK ON UNIONS *continued from page 1*

Twenty states now have both Republican-dominated legislatures and Republican governors, in contrast to the previous session, when only eight states were all GOP.<sup>3</sup> Wisconsin, Michigan, and Maine flipped from totally Democratic to totally Republican, and all three governors are aggressively anti-union.<sup>4</sup> Tea Party-supported Republicans now occupy top leadership spots in Maine and other northern states. With the help of independents, the Republican base elected businessmen such as Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, who campaigned as a moderate, and Florida Governor Rick Scott, who carried their anti-union views from the private sector into office.

And here's a key point: these new Republicans are ideologically more conservative than those who came before them. Pro-labor Republicans—and there still are some—have been picked off, year by year, in primary challenges. The Tea Party insurgency, backed by right-to-work and other corporate money, added rocket fuel to the trend, as primary voters ejected those they deemed RINOs—Republicans in Name Only.

What's at stake is more than the livelihoods of union members. These conservatives want government to operate on a "business model" that dismantles public education, privatizes government functions—leaving retirees to fend for themselves, among other things—and abolishes collective bargaining, the right of workers to negotiate as a group over the conditions of their work. Unions are a right-wing target because they form a bulwark against such privatization, and they and their members fight against a winner-takes-all economy that leaves less and less for the poorer 98 percent. Using language right out of the right-wing populist playbook, conservatives smear public-sector unionists in particular as "elite" workers enjoying "special privileges"—which their "good government" reforms will eliminate.

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The usual deep-pocketed suspects were involved in the Republican sweep and the anti-union policies that followed: wealthy conservatives like the Koch brothers, who funded the campaigns of some governors, such as Wisconsin's Scott Walker, directly and others indirectly with a \$1 million-plus donation to the Republican Governors' Association; political action committees (PACs), like Karl Rove's American Crossroads, which channel millions from wealthy donors to political campaigns; and business lobbies like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the free market Club for Growth.<sup>5</sup>

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**New Jersey Governor  
Chris Christie quickly  
became an inspiration  
for the Right, as he  
went full throttle in  
blaming unions for the  
grossly underfunded  
state pension system.**

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While unions later complained that the candidates ran stealth campaigns, keeping mum about their anti-union politics, plenty of candidates and groups were perfectly frank. Virginia Governor-elect Bob McDonnell maintained while campaigning, "The secret to success in Virginia is this—you keep taxes, regulation and litigation low and you keep strong Right to Work laws, and if you do that, the free enterprise system will thrive."<sup>6</sup> The so-called right-to-work laws to which he's referring allow workers benefitting from union bargaining units to refuse to join the union or pay union dues. In Indiana alone, crowded the National Right to Work Committee, local and "national Right to Work

organizations sent out roughly 278,000 pieces of targeted mail identifying the *forced-unionism* positions of state legislative incumbents and challengers."<sup>7</sup> [italics in the original].

As soon as the election was over, the union-busters got busy. In Indiana, a right-to-work bill was submitted on the very first day of the legislative session—though the National Right to Work Committee was soon sputtering that the state's Republican Governor Mitch Daniels wasn't doing anything to enact it. New Hampshire's Republican legislators passed right-to-work bills in February and April, but without a veto-proof majority they faced a skeptical Democratic governor. Missouri's divided Republican legislature tried but failed to pass right-to-work legislation.

The antilabor legislation isn't limited to right-to-work bills. Also introduced into state legislatures were bills repealing project labor agreements—requirements that contractors on publicly funded projects be guided by collective bargaining agreements with unions laying out the terms of work—and prevailing wage laws, requiring contractors on such projects to pay their workers what are essentially union rates. These laws, which benefit construction unions, help set standards of work and keep all wages from spiraling down. Idaho's new law banning project labor agreements is now snarled in the courts. But the main battlegrounds are the heavily union states in the North, including Montana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, as well as not-so-union states like New Hampshire, and Maine.<sup>8</sup> Important fights are taking place in Florida and Tennessee, too. According to the AFL-CIO, 26 states are on the firing line over prevailing-wage laws. The *Wall Street Journal* called the state legislative sessions that ended in May and June test runs for battles this year.<sup>9</sup>

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### Collective Bargaining Challenged

After the Republican sweep, public-sector workers braced themselves for struggles in nineteen states, mostly in the Midwest, over their ability to bargain as a group over wages and benefits. The media turned its attention to this issue during the uproar in Wisconsin in January and February, when Democratic legislators fled the state rather than give newly elected Governor Scott Walker the quorum he needed to pass legislation curtailing the collective-bargaining rights of public-sector unions, barring state and municipal governments from collecting dues for unions, and requiring annual recertification elections for unions. Standoffs between Tea Party activists and union supporters became the paradigmatic media images of the season.<sup>10</sup> After weeks of prolabor demonstrations by teachers, unionists from the private sector, public-sector workers, and progressives, the Republican-dominated legislature used procedural manipulations to pass the limitations—only to find them snarled in court battles. The law finally took effect in late June even as pro-union activists campaigned to recall the senators who voted in favor of it; they needed to get rid of just three of the eight Republicans they are targeting to regain control of the state senate in elections scheduled for early August.

Also facing a fall recall vote because of his support for antilabor legislation is Michigan Governor Snyder, whom progressives hold accountable for a so-called emergency financial managers law, under which the state is consolidating municipalities, bypassing elected officials, and appointing “crisis managers” who have the power to rip up contracts and end collective bargaining in school districts.<sup>12</sup> The majority-Black town of Benton Harbor and

Detroit’s school system are Snyder’s test cases. This law too sparked a lawsuit and a recall campaign of the governor and some legislators, with 800,000 signatures needed by August 5.<sup>12</sup>

Although it attracted far less national attention, on April 1, Ohio’s Republican Governor John Kasich signed a law, SB5, that imposes limits on collective bargaining even broader than Wisconsin’s. SB5 includes police and firefighters’ unions, which Walker left out. Like the Wisconsin law, SB5 bans strikes and allows the negotiation only of wages, not of benefits such as health insurance, sick time, or pensions.

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Twenty states now  
have both Republican-  
dominated legislatures  
and Republican  
governors, in contrast  
to the previous session,  
when only eight states  
were all GOP.

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It also eliminates automatic pay increases in favor of merit raises. Ohio, the birthplace of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the site of the rubber and steel strikes that launched the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), is now ground zero in the counterattack. Union radicals there have pulled together in a new, national Emergency Labor Network,<sup>13</sup> while locally, Ohio unions and their allies collected a record number of signatures, almost 1.3 million, to force a referendum on November 8 to repeal SB5. The successful petition drive put the law on hold until after the vote.<sup>14</sup>

### Why the Right Opposes Unions

While unions and their supporters are waging a vigorous counterattack, there is no denying that the Republican takeover of the states was a hard-fought victory for three overlapping, antilabor elements of the free-market Right:

**1. Corporate-minded conservatives** such as the Koch brothers, the National Right to Work Committee, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. They hate unions because they view profits as rightfully belonging to business owners and see union demands for wage and benefit hikes as extortion. They want total control over working conditions, wages, and benefits, because their main goal is raising the bottom line.

**2. Moralists, seen most vividly at Tea Party rallies.** Because of their vision of rugged individualism, they oppose any collective endeavor—whether by unions or by government—in the name of the common good. They pit virtuous taxpayers against “taxeaters” and deride unionism as a form of authoritarian socialism imported straight from the Soviet Union. FOX News broadcaster Glenn Beck played a big role popularizing this vision, which was once confined to marginal Patriot movement activists and the far Right.

**3. Technocratic conservatism,** associated with Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan, think tanks like the Cato and Manhattan Institutes, and state legislators organized through the nonprofit American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). These groups claim—contrary to the evidence—that “limited government” works better than a regulatory, social-welfare state in creating jobs, building the incomes of everyday people, and enriching the middle class.<sup>15</sup> For the tech-

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nocrats, unions are bad because they are “job killers” in the private sector and demand inefficient costs in the public sector.<sup>16</sup> They see private businesses as the prototype for how public institutions should run and push for the privatization of government services, most notably schools.<sup>17</sup>

### Anti-Union Rhetoric, New and Old

The billionaire Koch brothers fund all three anti-union manifestations with their petrochemical fortune: the corporate conservatives through the Heritage Foundation, Cato, and Manhattan Institutes, as well as the lesser known Mercatus Center at George Mason University; the moralist-eclectic Tea Partiers through Americans for Prosperity; and the technocrats through ALEC and campaign donations to politicians such as Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker.

The brothers are important players, but they have the backing of a longstanding, deep bench. The free-market notions that unions kill jobs and are bad for the economy have been promoted for decades by other right-wing funders, such as the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Wilson Family Foundation, the Sarah Scaife Foundation, the John M. Olin Foundation, and the Castle Rock Foundation. After World War II, as some corporations made an uneasy truce with their workers, corporate-funded groups such as the National Right to Work Committee and the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce led the charge.<sup>18</sup> More recently, these powerhouses have been joined by the public relations expert Rick Berman, whose firm is notable for setting up antilabor and anti-environmental front groups, with names like the Center for Union Facts and the Employee Freedom Action Committee, to flog his clients’ messages.<sup>19</sup> The convergence of the economic crisis, underfunded public pensions, and the Tea Party insurgency has created the moment they’ve all been waiting for.

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**Conservatives want government to operate on a “business model” that dismantles public education, privatizes government functions, and abolishes collective bargaining**

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The long-established anti-union message presented by the think tanks and corporate-funded advocates has four elements:

1. Union leaders are undemocratic thugs.
2. Unions restrict individual choice.
3. Union workers are unproductive.
4. Unions interrupt the law of supply and demand by setting wages, thereby undermining free enterprise.

According to this reasoning, unions are both immoral and damaging to business and the economy. Weakening unions will jumpstart wage growth during the recession, argues the National Right to Work Committee: “Right to Work and Lower Taxes appear to deliver a one-two punch in states’ fights against unemployment and personal income decline. In fact,” the com-

mittee claims, referring to Florida, Virginia, and Tennessee, “Right To Work states lead in economic prosperity and personal income growth.”<sup>20</sup>

Tea Party candidates and their supporters have picked up on the venerable rhetoric about unions as Communist threats that would create a big government unsupportable by the tax base. Like Congressman Paul Ryan, the Republican Party’s point man on privatizing government functions such as Social Security and Medicare, the new Republicans feel no need to compromise on their embrace of the free-market mantra. To them, individuals who band together to negotiate their wages and working conditions are destroying not only businesses’ ability to create jobs but the entire moral order. Ryan says, “The attack on democratic capitalism, on individualism and freedom in America, is an attack on the moral foundation of America.”<sup>21</sup> This kind of thinking is emotionally supported by a belief system known as “producerism,” in which the middle class feels that its hard work is exploited by the lazy rich above it and the freeloading poor below.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to this extreme individualism, unions point out that theirs are democratic institutions that enable workers to fight exploitation, improve working conditions, protect wages, and win social reforms like the forty-hour work week, which benefit all workers. Union participation in corporate governance can actually democratize enterprises. Of course, like all democratic institutions, unions need oversight and accountability, so that officers who exploit their power don’t get away with it. But conservative media such as the *New York Post* and Rick Berman’s websites feature corrupt union officials to signal that any collective action is illegitimate.

### The Right-Wing’s Antilabor Strategists

In good technocratic fashion, in early March 2011, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce released a comprehensive blueprint for reversing proworker rules at the state level

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in order, it said, to create jobs. Its proposals include reducing state and local minimum and living-wage requirements when these exceed the federal levels; cutting the length and rates of unemployment insurance and workers' compensation; reducing leave, rest, and overtime levels that exceed the federal minimums; promoting right-to-work laws; and banning the payment of unemployment benefits to locked out workers.<sup>23</sup> The liberal think tank the Economic Policy Institute points out that in the decade after Oklahoma became a right-to-work state in 2001, its unemployment rate differed little from its neighbors.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, a chamber press release insisted that its plan for "streamlining government" would create "746,462 net new jobs nationwide." Such unfounded claims are enticing stuff for a nation in the midst of a recession.

The chamber is aided in its antilabor push by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an organization claiming as members "more than 2,000" state lawmakers who say they want limited government, as well as a so-called Private Enterprise Board with representatives from major U.S. corporations, including Exxon Mobil, WalMart, and Coca Cola.<sup>25</sup> ALEC teams legislators with member-lobbyists to craft model legislation such as right-to-work laws, and laws repealing minimum-wage hikes and prevailing-wage requirements.<sup>26</sup> ALEC teams also promote so-called paycheck-protection laws; called "paycheck deception" by unions and sought for decades by their opponents, these laws require explicit consent from union members before their dues can be directed toward political activities.<sup>27</sup> Arizona passed such a law in its last session.<sup>28</sup> And across the country, powered by a network of legislators organized by ALEC, states are seeking, in the name of austerity, to follow Utah, which shifted its public workers out of traditional, defined-benefit pensions, in which retirees receive a predictable amount each month, to 401(k)-style, defined-contribution plans, in which workers invest in funds directly and receive whatever the market is paying at the moment.

### "The Trouble with Public Sector Unions"

Journalist Steven Greenhut of the Pacific Research Institute set off the current debate over public-sector unions with his 2009 book *Plunder: How Public Employee Unions are Raiding Treasuries, Controlling our Lives and Bankrupting the Nation*, in which he labeled public employees a new elite and accused them of exploiting taxpayers for cushy benefits. In Spring 2010, Steven Malanga, a Manhattan Institute fellow and adviser to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, published a fiery article in his think tank's quarterly called "The Beholden State: How public sector unions broke California," following that up with his book, *Shakedown: The Continuing Conspiracy Against the American Taxpayer*. He writes,

How public employees became members of the elite class in a declining California offers a cautionary tale to the rest of the country, where the same process is happening in slower motion. The story starts a half a century ago, when California public workers won bargaining rights and quickly learned how to elect their own bosses... The result: unaffordable benefits for civil servants; fiscal chaos in Sacramento and in cities and towns across the state; and angry taxpayers finally confront the unionized masters.<sup>42</sup>

Adding intellectual heft to the idea that public-sector unions are illegitimate was an article by City College of New York Political Science Professor Daniel DiSalvo, the son of a union carpenter, called "The Trouble with Public Sector Unions," published in the Fall 2010 issue of *National Affairs*.<sup>43</sup> Picked up by the conservative blogosphere, as well as by the *Economist*, the *Atlantic* magazine blogger Andrew Sullivan, and most potently the *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, DiSalvo says that public-sector unions are big campaign spenders, which gives them unseemly power to chose those with whom they bargain. Arguing that these unions organize politically to increase the size of the governments that employ their members, he criticizes a 2009–2010 referendum in Oregon that raised taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations. The unions, says DiSalvo, create a distorted labor market and weaken public finances because of the pension obligations they require governments to incur. And alliances among public-sector unions and community groups diminish democracy, he claims, because public-sector unions negotiate on issues of public policy, such as the number of charter schools or merit pay for teachers, removing such issues from the legislative realm, where they belong.

By June 2011, the *New York Times* was telling a similar story, in an article that focused on a California lifeguard who retired after thirty years, at the top of the state's pension system. The *Times* fails to mention that California's system is not in the red: some states responsibly funded their pension systems while others, like Illinois, "borrowed" from pension payments, eventually pushing their systems into crisis. Nor does it note that many states made irresponsible cuts to the business and other taxes they needed to fulfill their obligations. And like most articles about public workers' pensions, this one fails to explain that many government workers don't pay into Social Security, so their pensions are all they have in retirement. Finally, while the article highlights apparently crazy pension rules, nowhere does it mention that the average state or local public pension benefit in the U.S. is \$22,653 a year, according to the U.S. Census. The California pension system website reports that 74 percent of its pensions are under \$36,000.<sup>44</sup>

### Why Attack Public-Sector Workers?

The attack on unions is old hat. New, however, are the number of Republican-dominated legislatures giving anti-union bills a chance of passage; the Tea Party, which gives the sentiment a popular base; the new politics of austerity created by the Right to engage with the economic crisis; and the attack on public-sector unions, in particular.

The usual suspects do not seem to have crafted the most potent justifications for the latest attack on the public-sector unions. ALEC, the Chamber of Commerce, and the National Right to Work Committee have not traditionally distinguished between types of unions. Republicans had been gun-shy about going after public-sector unions after a 2005 California ballot initiative curbing the unions' use of dues for politics was roundly defeated (although in

the same year, Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels met with success when he bypassed the legislature and removed state workers' collective bargaining rights with an executive order<sup>29</sup>). In January 2010, the Heritage Foundation had merely called on government to "reject union calls for higher taxes [and] reject proposals to increase union membership in the government." FreedomWorks, the beltway group through which former House Majority Leader Dick Armey mobilizes Tea Partiers, has long attacked teachers' unions in its effort to dismantle public schools. But even it only launched a broad campaign against public-sector unions in March.

A major push seems to have come from local Tea Party tax protesters, notably in California, regional think tanks like the free-market Manhattan Institute and California's Pacific Research Institute, and Republican politicians and strategists like Christie. The underfunding of some state pensions and a few large payouts to retirees gave conservatives a big bat with which to beat public sector unions. The Republican Governors Association gathering in San Diego in November 2010, right after the election, was abuzz with Wisconsin Governor-elect Scott Walker's campaign remark, "We cannot and should not maintain a system where public employees are the 'haves' and the taxpayers footing the bill are the 'have-nots.'"<sup>30</sup> Public-sector unions were becoming a political football.

The *Los Angeles Times* quoted Ohio Governor-elect John Kasich, the son of a public-sector worker himself, as he distin-

guished between public- and private-sector unions: "With organized labor, look, the public-employee unions, particularly the teachers union, you know how I feel about them," Kasich said. (He doesn't like them.) "But for the unions that make things, I'm going to sit down with them. And I'll tell you what, they're going to become part of the solution, not part of this problem." Similarly, on the FOX News *Hannity* program, the conservative shock-pundit Ann Coulter distinguished between "steelworkers who should have unions" and public-sector workers, who shouldn't.<sup>31</sup>

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### Free-market notions that unions kill jobs and are bad for the economy have been promoted for decades by right-wing funders.

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In a backgrounder on public-sector unions published on September 1, close to the elections,<sup>32</sup> the Heritage Foundation now implied that private sector unions are legitimate while "government unions"—a phrase promoted by the Republican pollster Frank Luntz because it polls badly—are not. "Collective bargaining by unions takes place very differently in government than it does in the private sector," wrote Senior Policy Analyst in Labor Economics James Sherk.

Private-sector unions have competitors and bargain over the profits they help create. The government earns no profits. Government unions have a legal monopoly and bargain for a greater share of tax dollars. Collective bargaining in government means that voters' elected representatives must agree on tax and spending decisions with union representatives.

Collective bargaining also politicizes the civil service. Government unions negotiate contract provisions that force workers to join and subsidize their fundraising. These subsidies have made them the top political spenders in the country. They use that money to lobby for higher taxes and protect their inflated compensation.<sup>33</sup>

Over at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Glenn Spencer, head of the Workforce Freedom Initiative, put it this way: "Public-sector unions have a guaranteed source of revenue—you and me as taxpayers."<sup>34</sup>

Attacks on public-sector workers, like attacks on "tax-cheating" welfare queens in the past, give the debate a (sometimes unconscious) racist tinge, since public-sector workers are disproportionately people of color.<sup>35</sup> Census data shows that African Americans are "thirty percent more likely than other workers to be employed in the public sector," says Steven Pitts, a labor policy specialist at the University of California Berkeley Labor Center; indeed, he argues that public employment helped create the Black middle class.<sup>36</sup>

In attacking public-sector unions and their contributions to political campaigns, the Right presents itself as a good-government champion with a simple message: unions are bad for government. Karl Rove's Government Union Reform Action Center, which operates out of Crossroads GPS, champions Christie as a good-government hero for issuing an executive order barring public-employee unions from lobbying the politicians they bargain with. Crossroads GPS itself is promoting the GOP's Public Employee Pension Transparency Act, which would require states to use a different method for calculating how large pension holdings should be—one that would make the state-pension crisis seem even worse.

### Labor Fights Back

In mid-February, at the Washington, D.C., Marriott Hotel, representatives from the National Right to Work Com-

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mittee, the Heritage Foundation, and other enterprises eager to destroy labor were busy setting up booths for the Conservative Political Action Conference. Youngsters in dark suits created displays of reading material about the free market.

At the same time, in a nearby ballroom, 600 United Steel Worker activists were discussing ways to fight state efforts to weaken both public- and private-sector unions. United Steel Workers International President Leo Gerard offered brilliant schooling in popular economics: trade policy, Chinese currency, tax policy, the financial sector—you name it. He was giving his troops ideological weapons for the fight of their lives. “The rich took the anger of our people and turned it against them [in the Tea Party],” he said. “We have a responsibility to invite you into the battle. And you have a responsibility to get in.”

“We lost 100,000 members in the economic collapse,” added International Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson. “They’re not here because they can’t be.” And things will get worse, he warned. “Best guess,” Johnson told his audience, “twenty percent of the union will leave under Right to Work. It will destroy the finances of your local union, and the national, and impede our ability to fight.” Wages are much lower in the country’s 22 right-to-work states, where unions don’t have the power to bargain up the rates, than in others—an average of \$5,538 lower, to be exact, said Gerard. So, the fight is not just for union members but for all workers.

The Steel Workers are well-aware that some of their neighbors soak in FOX News and its anti-union messages.<sup>37</sup> The unions’ defense of “big-government” programs makes them targets of the Tea Party, as well as of their traditional corporate adversaries. In a state breakout session, one regional leader said, “We’re the coaches,

### States Where Labor is Under Attack

**The 22 Right-to-Work states:** Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming.

**The sixteen states challenging public-sector unions’ collective bargaining rights:** Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, and Washington.

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## Conservative pundit Ann Coulter distinguishes between “steelworkers who should have unions” and public-sector workers, who shouldn’t.

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we’re the choir directors. We have to show what the union dollar does for the community. When we make 28 percent more a week, we spend more money in our community ... Let people know we’re working to protect Social Security.” The Steel Worker leadership, along with that of the AFL-CIO, takes it for granted that unions have a responsibility to fight for laws that regulate wages and hours, and benefits such as Medicare and Social Security, which help everyone. “If they disable us, and we never get a pay increase, what’s it going to do for the nonunion people?” the regional leader said. “This is one of the things we can tell the nonunion people.”

The Steel Workers and other industrial unions are determined that the Right will not succeed in dividing them from their public-sector brothers and sisters. A few weeks after the Washington meeting, in the midst of the labor uprising in

Wisconsin, Gerard addressed a rally at Steel Worker Union headquarters in Pittsburgh: “The recent wave of attacks on public employees is not the fault of the workers but the result of giving enormous tax breaks to the rich and the ultrarich,” he said. “Public-sector unions are being vilified, used as the scapegoats as budget shortfalls are, pure and simple, being used as political fodder to turn Americans against organized labor.”<sup>38</sup>

Polls show that many Americans agree with him. A March 2011 national Bloomberg survey found that 63 percent of respondents “don’t think states should be able to break their promises to retirees.” Respondents split over whether governors truly “aim to balance their budgets or weaken unions that back Democratic foes.” Seventy-two percent view public employees favorably, and about half say that “governors are unfairly targeting unions.”<sup>39</sup>

Yet conservatives had reason to believe their attacks on unions would go over well. Even in the Bloomberg poll, pro-union sentiment outpolled anti-union sentiment by only nine points, 49 to 40 percent. Americans’ support for unions started drifting downward in 2007 as the National Right to Work Committee and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce spent tens of millions of dollars on anti-union ads, in a successful effort to defeat federal legislation that would have made union organizing easier.<sup>40</sup> The advertisements brought the anti-union messages that the Right usually pumps out to its supporters to the general public, as well as to workers targeted by organizing campaigns. The propaganda

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becomes more effective as union density shrinks; only twelve percent of Americans now belong to unions. Fewer and fewer people know anything about unions first hand, or even know someone in a union. The idea that unions fight for a living wage and rights for all workers is almost wholly unknown.

The outlook is not completely bleak, however. Prolabor Republicans have slowed the sweep in Florida, where the governor was unable to bar automatic payroll deduction of dues by public sector unions; in Colorado, where a bill failed that would have ratified a four-year-old executive order barring collective bargaining by public sector unions; and in Missouri, where Republican legislators questioned whether a right-to-work push would really create jobs.<sup>41</sup>

Shrinking unions have learned that they can't win this fight alone, and are strengthening their relationships with small-business, women's, immigrant-rights, Black, and Latino groups. As inequality worsens, and obscene Wall Street paydays get more attention even as unemployment festers, they propose a moral vision, calling for Americans to build a more egalitarian nation. Groups such as Interfaith Worker Justice provide platforms where people can ask fundamental questions about how the economy works, why Americans don't talk about class, why big companies don't pay taxes, and why the top one percent are the only ones who are doing better. By tying moral insights together with technical knowledge about how an egalitarian economy would work, and how fair labor and tax rules would be structured, unions and the Left can regain momentum and remake our world. ■

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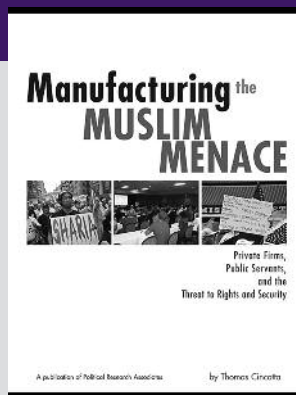
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## Manufacturing the Muslim Menace

The newest report from Political Research Associates details the systematic failure of federal government to regulate the highly prejudiced content of publicly funded counterterrorism training for first responders and others.

**Manufacturing the Muslim Menace** exposes the myths promoted in some training firms' curricula.

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# Book Review

## WHAT ASTROLOGY IS TO ASTRONOMY

### Boiling Mad

Inside Tea Party America

By Kate Zernicke

New York: Times Books, 2010, 256 pp., \$25.00, hardcover

### The Whites of Their Eyes

The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle Over American History

By Jill Lepore

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010, 224 pp., \$19.95, hardcover

### Among the Truthers

A Journey Through America's Growing Conspiracist Underground

By Jonathan Kay

New York: Harper Collins, 2011, 368 pp., \$27.99, hardcover

Reviewed by Joshua Holland

The notion that there exists widespread “rot at the top,” as corrupt elites grind hard-working, “real” Americans under their boot heels, is deeply embedded in the American psyche. It’s spawned dozens of populist movements on both the Left and the Right, some that have resulted in important political and social reforms, and others that have taken on a less savory character, giving rise to conspiracism and even violence.

In the wake of the attacks of 9/11 and two painful economic crashes separated by less than a decade, against a backdrop of several protracted conflicts abroad, Americans’ trust of not only the government but also of large corporations, the news media, and international organizations may be at a historic low. An Associated Press poll conducted in late 2010 found that Americans have become cynical about our major institutions: not one of the eighteen pollsters asked about got high marks from a majority of respondents. “Glum and distrusting, a majority of Americans today are very confident in—nobody,” conclude the pollsters.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps as a result, populist movements are flourishing. Three recent books examine some of the most prominent theories, as well as the political environment that nourishes them.

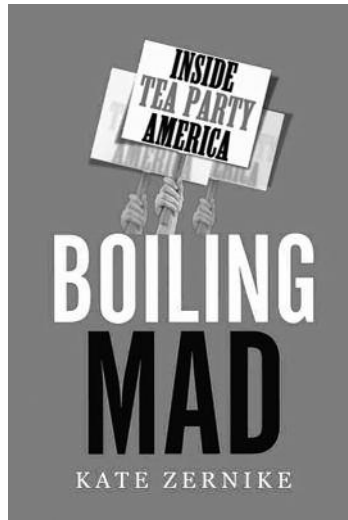
*Joshua Holland is an editor and senior writer at AlterNet.org, and the author of The 15 Biggest Lies About the Economy: And Everything else the Right Doesn't Want You to Know About Taxes, Jobs and Corporate America (2010).*

In *Boiling Mad*, veteran *New York Times* reporter Kate Zernicke takes us behind the scenes of the Tea Party movement, tracking its growth from a handful of small, grassroots protests to a nationwide sensation in American politics.

Her reporting brings us face to face with Tea Party activists. A lively read, the book humanizes a movement many progressives have viewed, from afar, as a bunch of angry White guys with poorly spelled signs condemning President Obama as a socialist and demanding that government keep its hands off Medicare. Zernicke encounters a group of dedicated activists who had seen their economic security slip away and the world around them change in frightening ways. Yet, she says, their movement is less a manifestation of the times than it is an expression of long-standing conflicts within the U.S. polity. “The Tea Party movement,” she writes, “went to the heart of conflicts that have bedeviled Americans for more than two hundred years and reflected anxieties that Americans had been expressing for generations.”

Perhaps *Boiling Mad*'s most important contribution—especially for those who have followed the Tea Party phenomenon only casually—is the help it offers in untangling the movement’s apparent contradictions. For example, the movement is touted by its proponents as a “leaderless” outpouring of citizen frustrations—over such issues as the deficit, George W. Bush’s bank bailouts, and the inability of Washington to create jobs and address the foreclosure crisis—yet its various “leaders” are all over the media. Zernicke describes the Tea Party as a franchise of sorts—a movement of small, local groups whose organizers are fiercely suspicious of “elites.” At the same time, high-profile conservative groups such as FreedomWorks, led by veteran Washington insiders and backed by corporate money, lend the nascent movement far more reach than it would otherwise enjoy by providing training and guidance on messaging, promotion, and infrastructure.

Zernicke visits the Freedomworks offices, where she finds that “the real work of spreading the Tea Party brushfires was done by a small knot of about twenty take-no-prisoners young conservatives” working with “the Red Bull-and-beer spirit of a fraternity.” These young operatives are hard-core libertarians, whose ideology doesn’t look fondly on such safety-net programs as Medicare. Their worldview has been embraced by a minority of Tea Partiers who have dedicated themselves to the cause, some quitting jobs and putting their lives on hold to join what they see as an existential fight for America’s future.



But the far-larger majority of Tea Party supporters—those who forward the emails, sign the petitions, and occasionally attend the rallies—are a different story. For them, writes Zernike, “fiscal responsibility meant not bailing out the car companies or the people who had taken out mortgages they couldn’t afford. It meant cutting waste and earmarks.” Couched in the rhetoric of patriotism and “freedom,” such ideas were incredibly attractive, explains Zernike, but

it wasn’t clear that [these Tea Partiers] understood that the strict Constitutionalist approach would eliminate benefits for the elderly, subsidies for students who could not afford college on their own, laws that made sure banks couldn’t disappear with people’s savings overnight.

The idea of “limited government” has always polled well in the abstract, but when it comes down to specifics, people like what government does—and that is as true for Tea Party foot-soldiers as it is for anyone else.

Thus, a movement whose leaders have a laser-like focus on fiscal conservatism actually consists of people whom polls reveal to be more likely than the population as a whole to identify with the Christian Right. The young, tech-savvy libertarians behind the Tea Party infrastructure don’t care about banning gay marriage or mounting public displays of the Ten Commandments. The movement, says Zernicke, “depend[s] on the blurring of ideological differences,” which she likens to “an older man ignoring that he had no music or cultural references in common with his young trophy wife.”

The Tea Partiers have been accused of being moved to action by racial animus, which many vehemently deny. That narrative is based on the fact that the Tea Partiers didn’t emerge while George Bush was doubling the national debt but only when America’s first Black president took office; the frequent accusations that Obama is “foreign”; and the tradition of using states’ rights arguments, beloved of Tea Party libertarians, to oppose integration and federal civil rights law. According to Zernike, this gets the causality wrong: White supremacists have long been attracted to pushes for states’ rights, and they happily jumped on the Tea Party bandwagon because of its mainstream gloss. Zernike talks to Tea Partiers who are appalled by the fringe characters who show up at their events with signs portraying Obama as an African witch doctor.

The Tea Party is clearly a magnet for confused, angry people, but it isn’t only that. Liberal critics have consistently missed the sense of community it has created. Activists, writes Zernicke, say that “the most rewarding aspects of the Tea Party work is ‘friendship’ and ‘fellowship.’” For all of its emphasis on individualism, “activists believed in this fellowship, of belonging to something greater.”

While the Tea Party “meant different things to different people,” Zernike notes that it “borrowed its language and its ideology from earlier conservative uprisings.” Indeed, if there is one thing that unites disparate Tea Partiers, it is their professed fealty to the Constitution and the original intent of the “Founders.”

...

In *The Whites of Their Eyes*, historian Jill Lepore delves into those claims, finding that “the Tea Party’s view of American history [bears] almost no resemblance” to the subject she studies and teaches. The Tea Party has adopted the mantle of the American Revolution, but as Lepore writes, “What was curious about the Tea Party’s revolution... was that it wasn’t just kooky history, it was anti-history.” It’s a strength of the book that her horror doesn’t come through in her writing; instead of mocking the Tea Partiers for their confusion, she lays out the complex, decidedly not-neat history of the founding of the Republic in an entertaining and readable way, bouncing between today’s Tea Party meetings in Boston and the Tea Parties that took place almost 250 years ago.

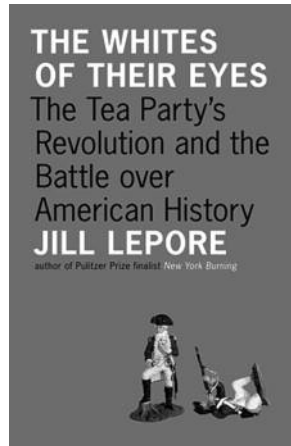
The reality eluding Tea Partiers is that the Founders didn’t share any one set of beliefs beyond the idea that they should enjoy self-determination. Between 1761, when the first signs of discontent with England became apparent in the colonies, and 1791, when the Bill of Rights was ratified, leading Americans debated an “ocean of ideas,” notes Lepore, from which “you can fish anything out.” The Tea Partiers have settled on a narrative of consensus among the Founders—that they all

believed in limited government, states’ rights, and according to many, the primacy of Christianity. If only U.S. history were so neat. In fact, it includes epic struggles to define the role of the public sector, the relationship between the states and the federal government, and the proper place for religious faith in public life.

As Lepore notes, claiming the mantle of the Revolution is nothing new in American politics. “Beginning even before it was over,” she writes, “the Revolution has been put to wildly varying political purposes. Federalists claimed its legacy; so did anti-Federalists. Supporters of Andrew Jackson’s Democratic Party said they were the true sons of the Revolution. No, Whigs said: we are.” During the Civil War, both sides claimed to be fighting for the the values that originally defined the United States, as embodied in the Constitution.

Today’s Left has ceded ground on this argument. Lepore tells of the New Left’s campaign to launch a People’s Bicentennial in 1976, using rhetoric surprisingly reminiscent of that employed by the Tea Parties. “We are faced today with the corruption, rot, arrogance and venality that our forefathers protested,” said one leader of that movement in the early 1970s. Lepore recounts how they gathered at the site of the original Boston Tea Party: “‘Dump Nixon, not tea’ read one sign in the crowd. The National Organization for Women was there, picketing: ‘Taxation without Equal Rights is Tyranny.’ Another banner read, ‘Gay American Revolution.’” These “protests by the left,” writes Lepore, would eventually give way to the “reactionary—and fanatical—version of American history” that prevails among Tea Partiers today.

However, Lepore does not bemoan the Left’s absence from this age-old battle. For her, appealing to the authority of long-dead historical figures does them a disservice by neglecting the complexities of the issues they wrangled with in their own era. Ultimately, the Tea Partiers’ claim



of fealty to the Constitution is a form of religion rather than analysis. “Originalism,” Lepore writes, “looks like history, but it is not; it’s historical fundamentalism, which is to history what astrology is to astronomy, what alchemy is to chemistry, what creationism is to evolution.”

• • •

That kind of fundamentalist belief system is unshakeable, and it leads to what Jonathan Kay calls a “sort of intellectual Yugoslavia—a patchwork of agitated [groups] screaming at one another in mutually unintelligible tongues.” But Kay, a conservative columnist with Canada’s *National Post*, isn’t writing about the Tea Parties *per se*; he spent two years delving into the world of American conspiracism, and *Among the Truthers* is the fruit of his labors.

Kay’s journey takes him across the country to visit with all manner of conspiracy theorists, from “Truthers,” who believe the attacks of 9/11 were a government operation launched to create a *casus belli* for the Iraq invasion, to “Birthers,” who believe that Barack Obama was born in Kenya and is therefore ineligible to serve as president of the United States. Trust in the institutions that shape our society, he says, is in short supply. He notes that this follows a pattern; conspiracism, writes Kay, “is more likely to blossom when great tragedies or national traumas—the French Revolution, World War I, the assassination of JFK, 9/11, the 2008 financial crisis—rupture society’s intellectual foundations, and shatter citizens’ faith in traditional authority figures.”

Kay expresses some surprise that many of his interviewees are articulate and well-educated. Through a series of conversations, some quite engaging, he offers a sort of typology of conspiracy theorists: the “midlife crisis case,” the “damaged survivor,” and the “failed historian,” to name a few. Although some of his historical and sociological analysis is derivative of earlier works—he devotes a chapter to how the Internet lowered the barriers to entry in the marketplace of ideas and led to an explosion of self-referential conspiracy sites—he provides a useful geography of conspiracist territory.

But conspiracy theories span the political spectrum, and the breadth of Kay’s undertaking forces him to sacrifice some much-needed depth. Ultimately, he seems to believe that the United States is a perfect meritocracy. “Life’s losers,” he concludes, “have no one to blame but themselves. And so the conceit that they are up against some all-powerful corporate or governmental conspiracy comes as a relief: It removes the stigma of failure, and replaces it with the more psychologically manageable feeling of anger.”

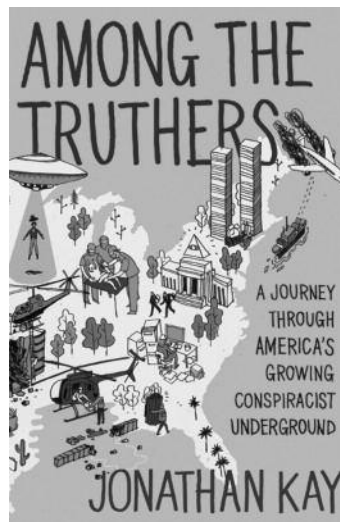
That, and Kay’s frequent references to the “liberal media”—he says the “birthers are a product of the liberal media that now heaps abuse on them”—foreshadow the final section of the book, which unfortunately devolves into a grab bag of Kay’s ideological grievances. He devotes quite a bit of real estate to the conspiratorial aspects of what he terms a “cult of political correctness” promulgated by insulated intellectuals who inhabit their own epistemic universe. He spends an inordinate amount of time on the belief system of an “ultraradical feminist,” whom he acknowledges doesn’t confuse her theories with actual fact—unlike others he interviews—and he devotes a notably lazy chapter to what he terms “shrill anti-Zionism” (Kay uses “anti-Zionism and “anti-Semitism” interchangeably) among liberal critics of Israel.

Kay says of his journey that it has “taught me to be careful of my own ideological commitments as well.” But after arguing that Naomi

Klein’s “increasingly radicalized hunt for corporate demons launched her into the realm of full-fledged conspiratorial fantasy,” and accusing *New York Times* columnists Paul Krugman and Frank Rich of embracing the “paranoid character of the blogosphere” in their criticisms of the Bush administration, it becomes clear that Kay is not as cautious about mixing ideological assumptions with hard-headed analysis as he believes himself to be.

As someone who has frequently tangled with conspiracy theorists of varying stripes, I was especially interested in Kay’s concluding chapter, in which he proposes a strategy for battling paranoid worldviews. But his solution—schools should offer classes in conspiracism—seems half-hearted and tacked on, while his views on what does and does not constitute acceptable discourse betray the flaws inherent in his proposal.

While acknowledging in a pro forma way that bizarre political theories often hold a “kernel of truth,” none of these works dig into the problem these worldviews represent in our public discourse. Conspiracy theories are indeed a way of explaining away the contradictions inherent in modern democracies—the frequent disconnect between the ideal of transparency and the exigencies of actual governance. But in the end, they distract from a deeper analysis of those structural inconsistencies rather than shed light on some nefarious actors pulling the strings behind the scenes. Ultimately, they represent a failure of critical thinking—a commodity that’s already in short supply.



<sup>1</sup> [http://www.presstelegram.com/breakingnews/ci\\_16094598](http://www.presstelegram.com/breakingnews/ci_16094598)

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

## REPORT OF THE MONTH

### **Unconstitutional and Costly: *The High Price of Local Immigration Enforcement***

By Gabe Martinez

Center for American Progress, 2011, 26 pp. [http://www.american-progress.org/issues/2011/01/unconstitutional\\_and\\_costly.html](http://www.american-progress.org/issues/2011/01/unconstitutional_and_costly.html)

The effects of Hispanic immigration can be felt across the country in different ways, but anti-immigrant backlash in small towns has resulted in expensive legal battles, lost tax revenue, and a blight on local economies, reports the Center for American Progress (CAP). Looking at five communities from Texas to New Jersey, this well-documented and persuasively written chronicle exposes the various financial consequences of enacting anti-immigrant ordinances.

Demographic changes often create fear. Small-town residents in the communities studied expressed concern that their way of life was threatened by newcomers. Knee-jerk reactions fed false claims that immigrants were noisy, criminal, undocumented, and tax cheaters. All five communities enacted anti-immigrant policies between 2005 and 2010. Hazelton, Pennsylvania, for example, with Riverside, New Jersey, following, imposed fines on landlords who rented to “illegal aliens.”

The copycat nature of the ordinances was no coincidence. Anti-immigrant activist lawyer Kris Kobach, who helped Arizona draft its

SB1070 law, encouraged communities across the country to put these similar policies in place. His fees are just one of the municipalities’ expenses. He was elected Kansas Secretary of State in 2010.

Legal challenges to the constitutionality of these ordinances became major drains on local coffers. Lawsuits against each community have cost more than \$1 million and climbing. In Farmer’s Branch, Texas, where city officials are still appealing earlier decisions, the bill has reached four times that amount.

Immigrants have a powerful economic impact, as residents of Riverside, New Jersey, learned the hard way. About half the businesses in town closed when 75 percent of the immigrant residents moved away after an anti-immigrant ordinance was put in place.

Other towns have observed and learned. Summerville, South Carolina, tabled its proposed ordinance in 2010, with one of its town councillors saying, “I just cannot with good conscience risk potentially spending millions in taxpayers’ dollars just to make a point.”

While one might hope that moral arguments against anti-immigrant policies would be persuasive, *Unconstitutional and Costly* demonstrates that in small-town America, among other places, money talks.

—Pam Chamberlain

## Other Reports in Review

### **Disappearing Parents: *A Report on Immigration Enforcement and the Child Welfare System***

by Nina Rabin. University of Arizona, Tucson, May 2011. 36 pp.

[http://www.law.arizona.edu/depts/bacon\\_program/disappearing\\_parents\\_report.cfm](http://www.law.arizona.edu/depts/bacon_program/disappearing_parents_report.cfm)

This is a tragic story of the unintended consequences that occur when two or more bureaucracies collide. For all practical purposes, undocumented parents who are detained in immigration detention centers “disappear” into the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) system and lose contact with their children. In Arizona, as elsewhere, the state Child Protection Services agency assumes custody of children whose parents or relatives are unable to care for them. The unpredictable timelines for immigration cases, often months long, exceed the time a

child can be in foster care before the state seeks a permanent placement, away from the parent. Sometimes these children are U.S. citizens. Detention centers typically have few social services, rendering detainees worse off than they would be in some jails or prisons, and parents have little to no support for applying for reunification. On top of this, a climate of fear, exacerbated by SB 1070, Arizona’s unjust immigration statute, prevents family members from stepping up to care for children of detainees.

A consortium of University of Arizona programs commissioned this study to uncover the extent of the problem, which they found to be so frequent that their recommendations carry a tone of urgency. Since no formal policies exist to untangle the knot of red tape, the resolution of each case depends on the individual personnel involved, which include

lawyers, social workers, and judges—all of whom struggle without benefit of written guidance. The report recommends the development of mechanisms to deal with ‘disappeared’ parents with the Department of Homeland Security, the child welfare system, and the Department of Justice. It calls on Congress to end mandatory detention and to free up legal services funds to represent detainees with U.S. citizen children.

While this is a story about Arizona, it exposes a problem and suggests remedies that can be useful to child and immigration advocates in most other states.

—Pam Chamberlain

### **Unearthing Latina/o Voices on Family, Pregnancy and Reproductive Justice,**

*By Ena Suseth Valladares and Marisol Franco  
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice,  
Los Angeles, 2010, 20 pp. <http://www.californialatinas.org/research/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CLRJ-Unearthing-Latina-o-Voices.pdf>*

In June 2011 California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) released the results of a groundbreaking survey of 900 Latinas/os in their state. Although Latinas/os will be the majority of California residents by 2050, inadequate information exists to inform advocates and policymakers about Latinas/os' attitudes towards health, education, and family issues. This report highlights immigrant voices and reveals a strong, values-based set of attitudes and beliefs about sexual health and reproductive issues that may surprise some readers. One assumption is that Latinas/os do not support access to abortion services. Another busted myth is that Latinas/os do not believe that talking about sexuality with their children is important.

Report highlights include:

1. Overwhelming support among families for communication about sexuality. More than eighty percent of those surveyed "strongly agreed" that parents should talk to their children about sexuality and that women should have the right to decide when to have their children. Many indicated that adolescent pregnancy and parenting were the result of a lack of family communication and access to sexuality education.
2. The belief that everyone in the community should have access to services such as contraception, preventive health, pre-natal care, and medically accurate information about pregnancy termination.
3. The feeling among respondents that cultural barriers affect the quality of healthcare more than language issues.

In keeping with CLRJ's commitment to advocacy, the report includes recommendations that call for the enforcement of existing laws, such as the requirement that sexuality education be medically accurate and bias free; it endorses a model of community healthcare for Latinas/os called *Promotores* and reminds pol-

icymakers of ways this model can be funded.

*Unearthing Latina/o Voices* is an excellent example of a survey designed by a community to uncover the actual beliefs and attitudes of its members, as opposed to a generic healthcare information tool that does not dig deep to answer questions about a particular group's issues and concerns. It should be a model to other states and advocacy groups about how to give those usually unheard a chance to express their concerns and values.

—Pam Chamberlain

### **Targeted and Entrapped: Manufacturing the "Homegrown Threat" in the United States**

*Center for Human Rights and Global Justice  
(New York: NYU School of Law, 2011).*

*Targeted and Entrapped* examines three high-profile terrorism prosecutions in which government informants devised terrorism plots that were then prosecuted. This report informs the debate about the human toll of the FBI's pre-emptive counterterrorism strategy. It illuminates cases where informants held themselves out as Muslims who looked to incite other Muslims to commit acts of violence.

In the Newburgh Four and the Fort Dix Five cases, informants pushed ideas about violent jihad and actually encouraged the defendants to believe it was their duty to take action against the United States. Through interviews with the defendants' family members, the authors document the human and societal cost of the FBI's dangerous policy of paying informants to concoct and foil plots. Family members lost their sons, husbands, brothers, or fathers and suffered stigmatization and economic harm.

The report calls for a prohibition on using informants to induce terrorism and implores the FBI to abandon "preventative" policing that facilitates the criminalization of those who "act Muslim," rather than policing criminal activity.

—Thomas Cincotta

### **Counterterrorism Since 9/11: Evaluating the Efficacy of Controversial Tactics**

*Nick Adams, Ted Nordhaus, and  
Michael Shellenberger*

*(New York: Science of Security, 2011).*

The Breakthrough Institute's study, *Counterterrorism Since 9/11*, evaluates questionable

counterterrorism tactics from the standpoint of whether they work to prevent terrorism. Given the weight of evidence against the effectiveness of controversial tactics, people promoting their use bear the burden of proving their efficacy. This report found that the most effective counterterrorism measures are also the least controversial, including denying terrorists safe haven, drying up funding channels, establishing multiple layers of port and border security, and preventing access to weapons of mass destruction. The authors warn that intelligence agencies are flooded with information to analyze. Controversial tactics like data-mining, secret searches, and racial/religious profiling increase the volume of useless background noise or decrease the volume of terrorist signals. Data mining to predict who will engage in terrorist activity is not likely to be helpful.

The authors make a strong argument against government programs such as Suspicious Activity Reporting, because there is little reason to believe that terrorists openly engage in measurable behaviors that are both substantially related to terrorism (that could be used to establish a signal, for example) and are clearly distinguishable from the common behaviors of billions of nonterrorists.

While the 9/11 Commission recommended reorganizing and centralizing the government's fifteen or more intelligence agencies to promote efficacy, it did not recommend more surveillance tools. New tools like warrantless national security letters have not led to the discovery of plots. Rather, citizen informants, well-deployed undercover agents, and tips from foreign intelligence agencies are largely responsible for successful terrorism investigations since 9/11.

Because the government depends on cooperative community relations to undermine terrorists recruitment efforts, disrupt their networks, and foils their plans, the Breakthrough Institute suggests that security agencies re-examine programs that risk escalating the unhelpful stereotyping of Muslim Americans and chilling their support.

—Thomas Cincotta

# Eyes RIGHT

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN “I”

In July, Republican presidential contenders Michele Bachmann and Rick Santorum infuriated Democrats by signing The Marriage Vow: A Declaration of Dependence on Marriage and Family. The vow is promoted by The Family Leader, which the reproductive justice blog RH Reality Check ([www.rhrealitycheck.org](http://www.rhrealitycheck.org)) describes as a “federally funded public advocacy organization associated with Focus On The Family.” In addition to requiring signatories to be faithful spouses and to take political positions such as supporting the Defense of Marriage Act, the vow outrageously asserts that a Black child born into slavery was “more likely to be raised by his mother and father in a two-parent household,” and is thus better off than a Black child today. It also goes out of its way to condemn what it calls “Sharia Islam.”

The Family Leader’s logo capitalizes the organization’s name—except for the “i” in FAMiLY. This is not just a typographical trick, says RH Reality Check writer Vycki Garrison. A footnote on the Family Leader’s website explains that the lower-case “i” in its logo symbolizes the group’s position that “self-centered adult egos and agendas in American families must be subordinated to the long-term interests of American’s children.” In fact, the “egos” to be subordinated are women’s. The Marriage Vow includes a clause stating that “robust childbearing and reproduction is *beneficial* [italics in the original]” to the U.S. This language and the small letter “i” signal support of the Quiverfull movement, which, says Garrison, “calls upon submissive wives to stay at home to conceive and birth large quantities of ‘foot soldiers for Jesus’ to advance the Kingdom of God on earth.” Garrison herself is a former Quiverfull mother who had seven children in her “biblical family.”

Although the Quiverfull movement may seem marginal, the Marriage Vow and Republican signatories such as Bachmann and Santorum are dragging its misogynist message into the mainstream.

## TAKE OFF THOSE HIGH-TOPS

In 1997, the radical filmmaker Michael Moore made the Nike athletic wear corporation infamous for exploiting its workers and exporting jobs. In his film *The Big One*, Moore confronted Nike CEO Phil Knight, who told him, “Americans don’t want to make shoes.” After years of protest by labor and human rights advocates, in 2001, Nike agreed to stop its sweatshop practices and instituted standards for its factories abroad.

According to the Associated Press (AP), Nike has usually met these standards in production of its brand-name products. This is not the case, however, with Converse sneakers, which Nike took over in 2003.

Indonesian workers who make the sneakers, “say supervisors throw shoes at them, slap them in the face, and call them dogs and pigs”—deep insults in the majority-Muslim country, says AP. And that is the least of it. Some Converse contractors’ treatment of their workers amounts to torture. At the PT Amara Footwear factory near Jakarta, “a supervisor ordered six female workers to stand in the blazing sun after they failed to meet their target of completing sixty dozen pairs of shoes on time. ‘They were crying and allowed to continue their job only after two hours under the sun,’” Ujang Suhendi, a warehouse worker the factory, told AP. An internal investigation by Nike, released to AP, discovered “serious and egregious” abuse. “Nearly two-thirds of 168 factories making Converse products worldwide fail to meet Nike’s own standards for contract manufacturers,” says the report.

Nike claims it cannot do much about the situation, because the arrangements with the contractors predate the corporation’s takeover of Converse, and because the contractors themselves subcontract the work to others.

## WESTERN CIV

In June, the right-wing group Youth for Western Civilization (YWC) held its first national conference in Washington, D.C. Although the group has about ten chapters around the country and has received media coverage on MSNBC, the conference itself attracted only 25 participants. However, said YWC president and founder Kevin DeAnna, the conference, and the group’s activities until that point, are “just prologue.”

The YWC website described the conference as “highly successful.” Participants received training in campus organizing, media relations, creating student publications, and right-wing activism from “top political minds,” said the website. One of the most important lessons: “Unless you are politically feared, you will not be politically respected.”

DeAnna founded YWC in 2001 together with Joseph Epstein, while both were students at the College of William and Mary. They were trained by the Leadership Institute, a conservative organization that once trained Karl Rove and Jack Abramoff. While in college, the two put most of their effort into a series of articles denying the reality of gender discrimination and campus rape, for *The Remnant*, a right-wing newspaper. In 2007, Epstein was convicted of a felony hate crime for attacking a Black woman in Washington, D.C. He was phased out of the organization, but only two years later, in 2009.

YWC chapters have brought speakers to campus such as the White nationalist Richard Spencer, and the group has close ties to right-wing figures ranging from Spencer to the anti-immigrant, former congressional representative Tom Tancredo. In May, Taylor Rose, from the Liberty University chapter of YWC, represented the organization at the the March for Freedom, an international anti-Muslim demonstration held in Cologne, Germany. “It would only make sense that a nation that stands for freedom would have a representative there, cheering on the advancing movement of the new European right-wing,” he said.

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