

WINTER 2014

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**The Adoption Crusaders
Target Indian Country**

Pete Seeger's Multitudes

The Progressive Era: Both Sides Now

The Right to Occupy?

The Gospel of James Baldwin

The Hammer of Justice

Pete Seeger's life as an activist lasted eight decades, beginning in the 1930s when he joined the Young Communist League and started roaming the nation with Woody Guthrie. He made one of his last appearances at the Farm Aid concert last September, apologizing that he didn't have much of a voice left but leading the crowd in a sing-along of "This Land is Your Land," just as he had countless times across the years.

Seeger, who was born in Manhattan in 1919 and died there in January, told *Mother Earth News* in a 1982 interview that "it's impossible to have education without controversy." He was often a radically divisive figure, charting a course that put him in conflict with the U.S. mainstream.

He always believed in communism, which he once defined simply as "no rich and no poor," though he later expressed regret for his ties to the Communist Party. He came from a deeply religious tradition, but the only divinity he worshiped was nature. He was deeply skeptical of the pitiless march of scientific progress and technological innovation. And he was, famously and from the outset, among the most eloquent and influential voices of the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements.

Seeger will be remembered primarily for his songs—for creating, or popularizing, social-justice anthems such as "We Shall Overcome" and "If I Had a Hammer"—but he never viewed the songs as ends in themselves, since he believed that social transformation isn't "accomplished with words, but with actions." He lived out that belief by devoting much of his energy over the last half-century to building the environmental movement in the United States.

Thinking globally and acting locally, he helped organize a group of residents in the Hudson River Valley to clean up the Hudson River. They built a sloop, raising money for it by holding concerts and bake sales in the small towns along the water's edge, and in 1969 they started sailing it up and down the river, conducting educational programs onboard and organizing festivals along the shoreline. The Hudson, an industrial waste dump in the 1960s, was transformed by the 1980s. After Seeger's death, the *Guardian* described his role in the project as his "greatest legacy." The environmental group that Seeger founded to organize and expand his Hudson River activism, Clearwater, carries on the work, and the sloop maintains a busy sailing schedule.

There is irony in the fact that, for all the hope, joy, and goodwill that infuse his songs, Seeger took a dim view of humanity's prospects, and he had doubts about what his efforts would add up to. In the 1982 *Mother Earth News* interview, he remarked, "There's maybe less than a 50 percent chance that the human race is going to be around a few hundred years from now." He described himself as an "optimist" nonetheless, because "I think there is a slim chance that the human race will survive."

Rather than dwelling on despair, though, he used his hammer of justice to change what he could. "Since love is lord of heaven and earth," as one of his lyrics goes, "how can I keep from singing?" The philosophy that Seeger lived by wasn't entirely consistent, perhaps. But it built and sustained a beautiful life.

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ISSUE 78

BY ROBERT D. JOHNSTON

Why Conservatives Care about the Progressive Era—And We Should, Too

Right-wing pundit and TV personality Glenn Beck claims to hate many people, but he reserves special contempt for Woodrow Wilson, who served as U.S. president from 1913 to 1921. Wilson earns the top spot on Beck's list of the "Top Ten Bastards of All Time," beating Pol Pot, Adolf Hitler . . . and even Keith Olbermann.

Beck and his fellow conservatives have declared war not only on Wilson but also on the entire Progressive Era. Over the past decade, a right-wing cottage industry has emerged that is devoted to rhetorically resurrecting and pummeling early twentieth-century reformers.

This obsession with the Progressive Era is new. Conservatives used to focus their hostility primarily on the New Deal and the cultural upheavals of the 1960s. Now their primary *bête noire* is the period of reform stretching roughly from the mid-1890s to World War I. According to one conservative scholar, it was a "catastrophe" during which everything went "terribly wrong."

How have the Progressives earned such condemnation? Textbooks typically describe them as well-intentioned reformers who pursued (and often passed) reforms that seem uncontroversial by today's standards: ending child labor, cleaning up the nation's food and drug production, fighting for women's suffrage, and establishing a system of national parks.

Beck and the scholars sympathetic to his critique argue that, to carry out these reforms, Progressives explicitly flouted the constitutional limits created by the Founding Fathers, laying the foundation for a dramatically expanded federal government. A writer for the *National Review*, Jonah Goldberg, summed up the Right's assessment of Progressivism in the title of his 2008 book: *Liberal Fascism*.

While conservatives obsess over the government's powers, though, they rarely discuss the accumulation of power by elites and corporations. But if we want to single out a period when "the one percent" truly came into its own, it was the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Business titans like Andrew Carnegie and John Rockefeller brutally suppressed strikes and used their fortunes to buy influence in Congress. Indeed, *Citizens United*—the 2010 Supreme Court decision that essentially allows corporations to finance the "democratic" political process—overturned campaign contribution laws that had been enacted during the Progressive Era, in an attempt to check the power of corporations. As Teddy Roosevelt—a Republican—declared, "There can be no effective control of corporations while their political activity remains." Imagine a U.S. president, of either party, uttering that sentence today!

We would be mistaken, though, to dismiss Beck and his ilk as completely wrong in their criticism of Progressives. Jonah Goldberg, for example, rightly points out that Progressive reformers were so intent on transforming society that they often abandoned certain democratic values. Prohibition was one example. Even more troubling was their support for eugenics. Many Progressives supported the movement to "clean up the race" by involuntarily sterilizing poor people, people of color, and those with cognitive or physical disabilities. And President Wilson unleashed a savagely repressive national security state during World War I. It violently criminalized almost any form of dissent, all in the name of fighting a "progressive" war on behalf of democracy.

What are the lessons here? One is that, instead of simply shunning our fellow citizens who get their news—and history—from Fox, we should work to engage them in full and respectful conversation. They might, on occasion, have something to say that we can learn from.

Another is that people who care about advancing social justice need to beat the Right at its own game. We cannot afford to neglect this history. Conservatives sure don't. For all its blemishes, Progressivism remains one of the most promising moments of reform in our history, and telling its story—in full—can still inspire us to strive for a fairer, more democratic, and inclusive society.

Robert D. Johnston is associate professor of history at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the director of its Teaching of History program, and a co-editor of the Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. An extended version of this essay will appear in the journal's July 2014 issue. Johnston's book, The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon (Princeton, 2003), seeks to redeem the populist politics of middling folks in U.S. history. He is currently working on a history of U.S. vaccination controversies.

The Adoption Crunch, the Christian Right, and the Challenge to Indian Sovereignty

While the demand for adoptable babies is increasing in the United States—driven in large part by evangelical Christians—the number of babies available for adoption is declining. Adoption agencies are now targeting tribal nations as a potential new source of babies to adopt, and forming alliances that threaten to undermine the sovereignty of Native American nations.

On September 23, 2013, a child-custody battle that was nearly five years in the making came to its conclusion in Oklahoma when an Army veteran from the Cherokee Nation, Dusten Brown, handed over his daughter, Veronica, to Matt and Melanie Capobianco, a White couple from South Carolina who had raised her for the first two years of her life.¹

Brown gained custody of four-year-old Veronica in December 2011, after a South Carolina court ruled that the adoption process had violated federal Indian law. Brown's attorneys also argued that Christina Maldonado—Brown's ex-fiancé and Veronica's biological mother, who is Latina—had deliberately concealed plans to let the Capobiancos adopt her.² As the custody decision was reversed following a 2013 Supreme Court ruling,³ and Veronica was tucked into the Capobiancos' car to return to South Carolina, the scene was broadcast across national and social media to two polarized camps.

Brown's supporters condemned the Capobiancos as baby-snatchers stealing an Indian child from her loving father, as tens of thousands of Native children had

been systematically removed from their families in decades past. The Capobiancos' supporters condemned Brown as a deadbeat dad who had given up his rights long ago and was hiding behind an obsolete law.

These battle lines, which had helped turn the case into headline news for much of the past year, reflected deeper tensions that involved a growing conservative Christian adoption movement and a global pattern of falling adoption numbers. The Baby Veronica case also provided a glimpse into a broad, high-stakes battle that pits the explosive growth in the demand for adoptable babies in the United States against legal protections for Indian parents. Some advocates for Indians fear that the assault on those protections—established relatively recently in response to a long history of White “civilizing” projects—is also evolving into a broader attack on the fundamental sovereignty of Native American nations.

GOING OVER THE ADOPTION CLIFF

In a phenomenon that has been described as the “adoption cliff,” international adoptions to the United States have fallen by nearly two-thirds over the last decade, dropping from an all-time high of nearly



23,000 in 2004 to under 9,000 in 2012.⁴ And the number is still falling.⁵

Domestic infant adoptions began dropping exponentially after the legalization of abortion and increased acceptance of single motherhood in the 1970s.⁶ International adoptions have followed suit more recently, in the wake of scandals that have shed light on systemic problems with adoption procedures in several countries. In Guatemala,⁷ for example,



Protestors outside the South Carolina Supreme Court in 2012. Photo courtesy of the Post and Courier.

strong Western demand for adoptable infants led to an influx of foreign cash, and unethical actors procured a supply—sometimes using coercion, payments, or outright kidnapping.⁸ Other countries, such as Russia, have closed their adoption programs recently as a form of political retaliation (and with professed outrage over real concerns about adoptees' post-adoption welfare in the United States).⁹ As a result, a number of adop-

tion agencies—including some of the largest—have been bankrupted or forced to close.¹⁰

The falling number of children available for adoption has not coincided with a drop in the number of prospective U.S. adoptive parents. In fact, that number seems only to have grown, due in part to the phenomenal rise of the Christian adoption movement. As I discussed at length in *The Child Catchers: Rescue, Traf-*

ficking and the New Gospel of Adoption,¹¹ a Christian adoption movement took hold among evangelicals over the past decade. Led by religious leaders like the megachurch pastor Rick Warren,¹² and by denominations like the Southern Baptist Convention,¹³ evangelicals have been encouraged to see adoption as a way to live out their faith and their pro-life principles. Although the U.S. government does not track adoption by religious af-

filiation, it is likely that tens of thousands of Christian prospective adoptive parents have responded to the call to adopt.

The movement hit a predictable bottleneck as long lines of would-be adoptive parents met the reality of a declining international adoption market. Among some adoption advocates, this bottleneck—and the frustration it caused among potential adoptive parents—has been described as the mobilizing force needed to compel reforms that make adoption easier.¹⁴

Craig Juntunen, founder of the adoption-advocacy group Both Ends Burning, told me that the “chokepoint” of frustrated prospective adoptive parents butting up against an adoption market in decline could become a strategic advantage for the adoption lobby, sparking popular outrage that could help pass adoption-friendly legislation. His organization hopes to simplify adoption regulations and increase the international adoption rate to the United States fivefold.

“So we’ve created this culture of adoption, and now more and more people want to participate in adoption and are left frustrated because they’re denied the opportunity to pursue what they want to pursue,” Juntunen explained. “Well, that’s where social change happens ... This culture of adoption, and this idea that more and more families are going to be raising their hands, that’s going to be the catalyst for change.”¹⁵

While evangelical Christians aren’t the only would-be adoptive parents hoping to adopt a child—nor the only constituency that can be willfully blind to adoption’s ethical complexities—they are increasingly the face of the organized pro-adoption movement. And the initiatives made to address falling adoption numbers tend to reflect primarily their perspectives.

Domestically, adoption-advocacy groups and sympathetic politicians have called for state-level reforms that would make the adoption process “better, cheaper and faster” for adoptive parents.¹⁶ In Texas, they propose to do so by demanding that women seeking abortions undergo hours of mandatory adop-

tion counseling.¹⁷ In Ohio, it’s by sharply reducing the time period during which biological fathers like Dusten Brown can register their paternity in order to contest an adoption.¹⁸

In September 2013, adoption advocates introduced an adoption bill in the U.S. Senate, Children in Families First (CHIFF).¹⁹ Critics believe it is an attempt to revive the failing adoption industry

The Baby Veronica struggle introduced a relatively new element to the story of rising demand and decreasing supply: how do adoptions from Indian Country factor into the equation?

with an injection of hundreds of millions of federal dollars.²⁰

Adoption-reform critics note that CHIFF follows on the heels of other, similar attempts in recent years to address the falling adoption supply through U.S. legislation. A previous bill, the Families for Orphans Act,²¹ was introduced in 2009 and received much publicity after the 2010 Haiti earthquake highlighted the challenges of international adoption. Adoption agencies received tens of thousands of inquiries about adopting Haitian children in the wake of the earthquake, and a media fixation on U.S. adoptive parents threatened to overwhelm coverage of the disaster itself.²²

The Families for Orphans Act would have created a special office dedicated to overseeing international adoptions—an office that its cosponsors suggest could have facilitated tens of thousands of additional adoptions from Haiti. It also would have provided development aid to countries that agree to U.S. standards of providing permanent care for children, including through their openness to international adoption.²³

Adoption-reform groups, including Parents for Ethical Adoption Reform²⁴ and Ethica,²⁵ worried that the bill would use financial aid to help determine other countries’ child-welfare policies, cast children who have living parents as orphans available for adoption, and favor international adoption to U.S. parents over local solutions.²⁶

Though the bill ultimately failed, the

campaign on its behalf represented the efforts of a broad coalition of interest groups that continues to work on this issue. The law was drafted by representatives from adoption-lobby groups and adoption agencies,²⁷ publicized by Christian and secular adoption groups, and spearheaded by a bipartisan group of legislators.²⁸

When CHIFF appeared last fall, critics noted the lack of voices from adoptees or meaningful contributions from birth families.²⁹ They argued that the adoption industry was once again rallying behind legislation that would save their

faltering business model.³⁰ As of mid-January, the bill had more than 50 cosponsors in Congress and had attracted wide ranging bipartisan support, from Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) to Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN).³¹ Religious organizations supporting it include Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church.

The dramatic struggle over Baby Veronica introduced a relatively new element to this story of rising demand and decreasing supply: how do adoptions from Indian Country factor into the equation?

BABY VERONICA

The case was complicated. In late 2008, Dusten Brown and Christina Maldonado got engaged, and shortly thereafter, Maldonado became pregnant. Brown pressed Maldonado to marry quickly, but she soon broke off the relationship by text message. Brown responded that he wouldn’t support the child if they didn’t marry. In an exchange that would inform much of the legal wrangling to come, Maldonado later texted Brown to ask if he would rather pay child support or relinquish parental rights to her. Brown replied that he would relinquish parental rights.³²

Brown’s threats to withdraw support unless Maldonado agreed to marry are inexcusable, but the situation wasn’t limited to just mother versus father. A third party was involved: the adoption system itself. Though Brown didn’t know it,

Maldonado's text messages were likely a deliberate part of laying the framework for an adoption, which is regulated at the state level. In states that are eager to make adoption as easy as possible for potential adoptive parents, there is often little regulation of how biological fathers are notified of an impending adoption and—many such fathers say—little opportunity for them to protect their right to parent their children. In some states, a text message like Maldonado's is often considered sufficient warning that the child will be adopted.

In Utah, which is notorious³³ for its intentionally difficult procedure to register paternity—and for its record of agencies bringing expectant mothers to deliver children under the state's laxer laws³⁴—a 1995 statute holds that “by virtue of the fact that he has engaged in a sexual relationship with a woman,” an unmarried man is considered “on notice” that an adoption may occur and that the burden of protecting his parental rights is entirely on him, relieving agencies of the need to seek consent.³⁵ South Carolina's laws, where birthfathers do not need to legally sign off on adoptions, seems to follow close behind.³⁶

Unbeknownst to Brown, Maldonado had begun consulting with a private adoption attorney in South Carolina, Raymond Godwin, about relinquishing her child for adoption, and she chose the Capobiancos as the adoptive parents.

Godwin is closely associated with a private adoption agency, Nightlight Christian Adoptions, where his wife, Laura Beauvais-Godwin, is head of South Carolina's state office. The agency helped with the adoption, compiling a “birthfamily” report on Brown and Maldonado.³⁷ Like the Christian adoption movement, Nightlight's own literature was infused with religious language, describing “intercountry adoption as a beautiful act that glorifies God, unites families, and enhances cultures.”³⁸

In an investigation, the (Charleston, SC) *Post and Courier* found that past clients of Nightlight have complained that the agency uses heavy-handed and coercive tactics to convince expectant mothers to relinquish babies for adoption.³⁹ And a guardian ad litem later assigned to Baby Veronica—a woman who reportedly had an ongoing professional relation-

ship with Nightlight—forcefully argued to Brown's family that the Capobiancos were better suited as parents because they could afford private school tuition, while, she allegedly argued, Native American culture offered only the advantages of “free lunches and free medical care and that they did have their little get-togethers and their little dances.”⁴⁰

Maldonado initially sought to omit Brown's identity from adoption paperwork, fearing his status as a Cherokee tribal member would impede the adoption.⁴¹ Adoptions of Indian children are governed by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), a federal law that gives tribes a say in Indian children's custody. Enacted in 1978, ICWA is intended to help keep Native children within their families by regulating child-custody procedures for children who are eligible to be registered members of recognized tribes.⁴²

Maldonado's lawyer (hired for her by the Capobiancos) ended up obscuring Brown's identity and sending pre-adoption forms to the Cherokee tribe, as ICWA mandates, but misspelled Brown's name and misrepresented his age, so that the Nation didn't recognize him as a member.⁴³ On a state form that later allowed Veronica to leave Oklahoma with the Capobiancos, she was identified as Hispanic—her mother's ethnic heritage—rather than Native American.⁴⁴

Four months after Veronica was born—and less than a week before Brown deployed for Iraq—Maldonado's lawyer requested that he sign some paperwork. Brown claims that he thought he was signing over full custody to Maldonado while he was in Iraq. But what he actually signed were adoption relinquishment papers. When Brown realized his mistake and tried to take back the papers, the server threatened him with arrest.⁴⁵

After Brown returned from Iraq, he successfully regained custody of Veronica in December 2011, when the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that the adoption process hadn't followed ICWA guidelines. But when the Capobiancos came to deliver Veronica, they didn't come alone. With the help of Jessica Munday, a friend of the family who worked for a PR firm, their lawyer had turned the case into a cause.⁴⁶

THE SUPREME COURT, THE ICWA, AND THE LOST BIRDS

Munday would go on to start a (now defunct) website as well as a Facebook group and “Save Veronica” petition drive. All were part of a campaign that took larger aim at ICWA for what it described as its ability to break up happy homes on the grounds of old, race-based laws. The Save Veronica campaign collected tens of thousands of signatures demanding that Congress revise the statute,⁴⁷ and an increasing number of adoption advocates picked up the case. Andrea Poe, a columnist at the right-wing *Washington Times*, argued that “Native American children who need permanent homes and families are at the highest risk if South Carolina's interpretation of the Indian Child Welfare Act stands.”⁴⁸

The case ultimately went to the U.S. Supreme Court as *Adoptive Parents v. Baby Girl*, where a lead attorney fighting Brown's custody claim argued that Veronica's own right to equal protection had been violated by ICWA because the statute itself was unconstitutional.⁴⁹ In their ruling, the justices didn't go so far as to agree, but they declared that ICWA didn't apply to Veronica's adoption, returning the case to the lower courts.⁵⁰ Within a month, a South Carolina court finalized the Capobiancos' adoption of Veronica and demanded that she be returned.⁵¹

Brown's and the Cherokee Nation's lawyers tried, without success, to secure a hearing in tribal courts or negotiate visitation with the Capobiancos. In late September 2013, having exhausted all options, Brown's lawyer relinquished Veronica to the Capobiancos in front of a national audience.

In early November, the Capobiancos filed a lawsuit against Brown and the Cherokee Nation for more than one million dollars in legal expenses for their formerly pro-bono team.⁵² To Indian advocates, it was more than insult added to injury. It read as a warning to other tribes that might contest adoptions of tribal children. “In our minds,” said Terry Cross, director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), “this is an attempt to have a chilling effect against any Indian parents or Indian tribe who would keep their child.”⁵³

Extreme as that assessment might

Beginning in the late 1800s, Native children were removed from their families en masse to boarding schools. In the words of the first school's founder, Richard Pratt, their mission was to "Kill the Indian . . . and save the man."



Students at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded by Richard Pratt, circa 1900. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

sound, it is rooted in a long, painful record of abuses inflicted by Whites on Native Americans, who remember all too well the history the Indian Child Welfare Act was designed to address. Beginning in the late 1800s, Native children were removed en masse from their families to boarding schools as part of a "civilizing" project that meant to assimilate them into White U.S. culture by separating them from any aspects of tribal culture. In the words of the first school's founder, Richard Pratt, their mission was to "Kill the Indian . . . and save the man."⁵⁴

In the 1950s and 1960s, boarding schools gave way to the Indian Adoption Project, which removed children from Native homes and placed them in foster care or adoptive homes. By the 1970s, an astonishing one-quarter to one-third of all Indian children in the United States had been taken away from their families, and 85-90 percent of them were placed in non-Indian families. The generation came to be known as the "Lost Birds."⁵⁵

"There were literally American Indian communities where there were no children," said Terry Cross. As the broader Native American community realized what was happening and began to collect testimony for Congress, other stories

and then given adoption papers to sign while recovering from the anesthesia of a C-section delivery. When she asked after her baby, the mother was then threatened with losing custody of her existing children. Her tribe didn't know about the baby, or the adoption, until she returned to Minnesota and had to be hospitalized.

Under the Indian Child Welfare Act, tribes can petition to have custody cases heard in tribal courts and can intervene in foster care or adoptive placements outside the child's tribe. The law holds that caseworkers—including those working on adoptions—must notify tribes of custody proceedings regarding Indian children, work to involve the tribe and the child's family, and make "active efforts" to prevent an Indian child being removed from his or her parent or guardian.⁵⁷

"Everything in the ICWA was meant to counterbalance something that was happening at the time," said Cross. "And things that are still happening."

ICWA is considered among the most important pieces of Indian law in U.S. history, affirming Native American sovereignty. It's unsurprising, then, that the threat the Baby Veronica case posed to ICWA mobilized Indians and non-Indian supporters in vocal defense of the law:

emerged: of Native American women pressured into relinquishing babies for adoption just after birth while still under the effects of anesthesia, and of women waking up to find that their babies were gone and, sometimes, that they had themselves been sterilized.⁵⁶

The abuses aren't all historical. Cross recalled a case from four years ago, in which a Native mother from Minnesota was flown to Utah to deliver her child

393 tribes, 18 state attorneys general, 18 child-advocacy organizations, and a group of religious organizations (including Quakers, Catholic orders, and mainline Protestants) all filed amicus briefs with the Supreme Court arguing that ICWA was a vital protection of Indian families.⁵⁸ Native American advocacy groups reported that the case elicited a more passionate response from tribal members than any they'd seen in recent years.

ANTI-ICWA AND ANTI-SOVEREIGNTY

But the case also mobilized another coalition of groups that seeks to overturn not only ICWA but also—some worry—the very foundations of Native American sovereignty.

In July, shortly after the Supreme Court issued its verdict, Christina Maldonado signed onto a lawsuit against the U.S. government and the Cherokee Nation, on the grounds that ICWA amounts to an illegal racial preference.⁵⁹ The law, the suit argued, was sweeping up children who had only a slight connection to their Indian heritage, whose mothers were not Indian, and whose choices should therefore not be bound by ICWA's provisions. Ten other anonymous (and one named), unmarried biological mothers of Indian children were listed as co-plaintiffs—women who had placed children for adoption with non-Indian parents and said they now feared that the adoptions wouldn't be finalized.⁶⁰ Legal experts believed that Maldonado's lawsuit will likely be dismissed as frivolous, but she was far from the only voice challenging ICWA.

One of the most vociferous voices is Elizabeth "Lisa" Morris. In 2004, Morris, a White woman, and her husband Roland, a member of Minnesota's Chippewa Tribe, started an ambiguously named group, the Christian Alliance for Indian Child Welfare (CAICW).⁶¹ Converts to evangelical Christianity, the couple decided that Roland's (and his family's) alcoholism was a result of cultural defects in Indian Country: a "lack [of] responsibility and accountability" that causes Indians "to blame all of life's ills on others."⁶²

Under the pseudonym "Beth Ward," Elizabeth wrote *Dying in Indian Country*, a book about her husband's life. The book

depicts life on reservations as a slow catastrophe of suicide, violence, drunkenness, and child abuse, which she attributes not to the historical damage done to Indian families, but rather to continued federal aid that undermines men's rightful role to provide for their families.

"Our current reservation system rewards dependence on federal government rather than on an individual's strength and God," the CAICW's website argued, echoing the old Reaganite "welfare queen" canard that people—mostly people of color—who receive public assistance are abusing the system and raking in a handsome living without working.⁶³ (If these tropes about poor people sound familiar, they should. These days, Morris's organization shares its events on Tea Party social media networks.)⁶⁴

The couple moved to Montana, and, after getting involved in a contested adoption case of an Indian child, and professing concerns about Lisa's custodial rights to her and Roland's grandchildren, began fighting against ICWA, which Lisa casts as a "sickening" and "racist" system that returns Native children to abusive parents. Much of CAICW's website is dedicated to tracking instances of physical and sexual abuse in Indian Country to drive home her argument that Indian children are often unsafe in Indian homes.

The Morrises began lobbying in Minnesota and in Washington, D.C., against "the reservation system" and against broader federal laws that acknowledge the sovereignty of Indian nations and their jurisdiction over some legal matters. Both Morrises became involved in an anti-sovereignty group called the Citizens Equal Rights Foundation (CERF, affiliated with the national group Citizens Equal Rights Alliance, or CERA): Elizabeth served on CERA's board for some period before 2002⁶⁵ and Roland served on the board of both groups before his death in 2004.⁶⁶ Today, CAICW's "honorary" board members include past CERF/CERA staffers,⁶⁷ and Elizabeth Morris has appeared at press conferences with CERF/CERA and has written for their publication.⁶⁸

To Indian advocates like Terry Cross of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the crossover activism against ICWA and sovereignty implies the current fight against ICWA could be used to

topple much of federal Indian policy.

"If you're anti-sovereignty then you might see that the ICWA is one of the very few places in federal legislation that actually delineates and protects tribal sovereignty," Cross said. "If you get that overturned, you could overturn perhaps 100 years of Indian law, and open up the gaming industry and get the tribes out of competition."

Cross and other observers were particularly concerned by the role played in *Baby Girl* of one attorney, Paul Clement, who represented the guardian ad litem assigned to Veronica, and who made the case to overturn ICWA. Clement, formerly George W. Bush's appointed Solicitor General, has become a well-known face of conservative causes at the Supreme Court, having argued there in support of the Defense of Marriage Act and against the Affordable Care Act. His other clients include a non-Indian gaming company that has fought Indian casinos in Massachusetts on the grounds that they benefit from a race-based violation of non-Indians' rights.⁶⁹

That's one issue among a number that have animated a small wave of anti-sovereignty groups like CERA, which have become more active since the early 2000s.⁷⁰ Originally composed of White residents who lived on or near reservations and who reacted against increased Native rights after the 1960s, these groups often use the language of civil rights and fairness to make an ahistorical call for "equal rights for Whites." They present White citizens affected by Indian law as oppressed minorities.

"You've heard of the Deep South," said John Dossett, general counsel for the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). "Well, there's an expression called the 'Deep North.' In towns across Washington, Idaho, and Montana, and in the border towns [near reservations], discrimination isn't aimed at African Americans or Hispanics, but at American Indians." Dossett suggested that the anti-sovereignty arguments reflect the logic of antigay groups that protest so-called "special rights" for LGBTQ people.⁷¹

The anti-sovereignty movement has expanded since its inception to include groups with an interest in the casino industry as well as individuals and corporations fighting tribal control of natural

resources, whether wildlife or oil and gas, accorded to them by treaty. In April 2013, CERF/CERA met in western Washington State, where a hotly contested plan to export U.S. coal to China has run into opposition from Lummi Nation Indians, who have treaty rights to ancestral fishing waters in the same location as the proposed coal terminal.

According to reporter Charles Tanner Jr., who attended the meeting, speakers advised "a recurring strategic theme: anti-Indian activists should mine federal laws and court cases for anti-tribal language that can be used to seek termination in the courts and 'educate' local and state officials."⁷² Among the cases that speakers suggested might work was the forthcoming verdict in *Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl*.

Cross worries that a variety of anti-sovereignty groups—each relatively minor by itself—has come together to form an unexpectedly powerful coalition: "a pretty lethal brew going after ICWA."

John Dossett agreed. "They are small groups, but they managed to mount a very large media and legal-fundraising campaign surrounding the Baby Veronica case," he said. He suggested, though, that the real power behind the coalition might be adoption attorney associations, whose members depend on private adoption fees (averaging \$30-50,000 per adoption) to stay in business.⁷³

"Most often, when you look at the anti-tribe folks, you find out that there is a financial angle to whatever they're arguing about," Dossett said. "Most of that has been over land and natural uses—efforts to take the land that the tribes are sitting on, with its timber forests, oil and gas. In this case it's not land and natural resources. It's children."

THE ADOPTION SCRAMBLE

To Dossett, the surprising popularity of the anti-ICWA campaign, which garnered support far beyond the limited appeal that anti-sovereignty issues usually command, was due to the fact that the anti-ICWA groups had tapped into something "unique to adoption," that is, people concerned about the declining number of adoptable babies. In this atmosphere of panic—fostered by an industry threatened with extinction and would-be

parents who are unable to adopt children and form families—new ties seem to be forming, and the anti-ICWA battle has been bolstered by people and groups with little awareness of the broader anti-sovereignty battle.⁷⁴

It probably doesn't hurt that anti-ICWA and anti-sovereignty arguments share common rhetoric. Adoption supporters often accuse adoption-reform advocates of being motivated solely by resistance

Given the chilling effect of the lawsuit now leveled against Dusten Brown and the Cherokee Nation, other tribes may feel pressured not to fight back.

to interracial families. Russell Moore—president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and a prominent Christian adoption leader—dismissed questions about widespread transracial adoption to White evangelical churches as the bigotry of “[George] Wallace’s progressive heirs ... standing in the orphanage door.”⁷⁵ Likewise, anti-ICWA activists have begun to condemn the law as racist persecution of White adoptive parents.

This agenda is already taking shape on the Facebook page of the anti-ICWA Coalition for the Protection of Indian Children (CPIC). In addition to promoting articles depicting Indian children as victims of abusive Indian families and culture, the group has recently begun posting articles about the broader troubles with international adoption, drawing parallels neatly back to Indian Country. Commenting on an article about the recent ban on adoptions from Russia to the United States, the group noted, “Simply replace ‘Russian’ with ‘Indian’ and that’s exactly what ICWA is doing to non-Indians providing loving homes to children. There’s no difference. Our national leaders need to have the same disappointment for ICWA that they have for Russia’s decision to block adoption.”⁷⁶ (Neither CPIC nor CAICW responded to interview requests.)

To Shannon Jones, Brown’s pro-bono attorney in South Carolina, this sort of advocacy is further evidence that the ultimate goal is procuring more adoptable children from Indian Country. In the *Post*

and *Courier*, Jones argued that the adoption industry was seeking out a “pool of babies” among Native American tribes to satisfy the growing demand.⁷⁷

NICWA’s Terry Cross agrees. “We believe that’s the motivation of the adoption attorneys involved,” he said, noting that Raymond Godwin, the attorney who had handled Veronica’s adoption, is now involved in another embattled adoption of an Indian child, “Baby Deseray.” In September 2013, Deseray was taken from her adoptive home in South Carolina and returned, by court order, to the

custody of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma.⁷⁸ Godwin has referred to men like Brown and Deseray’s father as “sperm donor[s]” whose biological ties to their children do not constitute parental rights.⁷⁹

While Laura Beauvais-Godwin, the South Carolina director of Nightlight Christian Adoptions and Godwin’s wife, has denied that her agency is involved in this case, and has downplayed its involvement with “Baby Veronica,” Nightlight’s dismissive approach to preserving biological families is clear. An agency position paper argues that “giving voice and power to the indigenous people means expanding intercountry adoption.”⁸⁰

With more and more countries reconsidering their international adoption programs, it’s easy to imagine the extension of this argument to Indian Country, and how the adoption industry may be bolstered by the recent Baby Veronica verdict. When I spoke to Cross in November, he had just fielded a call from an Alaskan tribe that had been fighting an adoption case for four years, but had now been told that ICWA did not apply to the claim because of the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Baby Girl*. In the last four years, NICWA has encountered 10 contested ICWA adoption cases, any of which could conceivably be affected by the new Supreme Court ruling.⁸¹

Considering the chilling effect of the lawsuit now leveled against Dusten Brown and the Cherokee Nation, NICWA worries that other tribes will feel the pres-

sure not to fight back.

As Shannon Jones told *Indian Country Today*, the lawsuit (which started at \$500,000 in September and rose to \$1.1 million by November) sends a message: “Don’t mess with the all-powerful adoption industry, and don’t even think about trying to enforce the Indian Child Welfare Act.’ ... They’re saying, ‘This is what’s going to happen to you if you try to protect your children.’”⁸² Jones added that after the first lawsuit was filed in September, the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, which has fewer than 4,000 tribal members left, became so concerned about being sued that it has expressed reluctance to litigate for Deseray’s return.

NICWA is pursuing ethical complaints against attorneys that it believes are advancing unethical cases to further the attack on ICWA, and Cross has also called on professional associations of adoption attorneys to police their own members. But John Dossett of NCAI suspects that anti-ICWA advocates could have yet more success in D.C., where politicians are loathe to support restrictions on adoption.

And that’s where the groups may be headed. In a press release in September, after Baby Veronica was returned to the Capobiancos, CAICW’s Lisa Morris wrote, “This case has opened eyes to the horror the Indian Child Welfare Act has been inflicting on children across the United States.” It said that CAICW would spend fall 2013 educating Congress about how ICWA harms multi-racial families—that is, White families with Indian children.⁸³ In October, Morris wrote a fundraising pitch for CAICW’s legal fund from a pool party at the Capobiancos’ home.⁸⁴

“NICWA and our organization [worry] that this was a well-organized and well-funded campaign to really come after ICWA,” Dossett said, “and there’s suspicion that they’ll try to do it again.” ☹

Kathryn Joyce is the author of The Child Catchers: Rescue, Trafficking and the New Gospel of Adoption (Public Affairs, 2013) and Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement (Beacon Press, 2009). Her work has appeared in the New York Times, the Nation, Slate, Mother Jones, the Atlantic, and many other publications.

The Right Hand of Occupy Wall Street

From Libertarians to Nazis, the Fact and Fiction of Right-Wing Involvement

The most successful mobilization on the Left in recent years—the Occupy movement—had ambiguously defined enemies and used an organizing model that was easily replicated. These strategies were key elements of its success, but they also enabled a significant level of participation by the Right. Though it is tempting to gloss over or deny that reality, the Left would benefit from beginning to grapple with it.

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) has often been portrayed as the Tea Party's ideological mirror image: a left-wing response to the

global economic crises that began in August 2007. Initiated with a tent city in Manhattan's Zuccotti Park in mid-September 2011, spinoff "Occupations" soon spread across the United States and then to cities across the globe. These protests, which targeted the federal government's cozy relationship with the banking interests that caused the economic collapse, channeled the mounting anger of those most devastated by the economic meltdown, especially debt-ridden students, the unemployed, and people who lost homes in the subprime mortgage crisis.

But this mainstream-media view tends

to gloss over the involvement of right-wing and conspiracist groups in Occupy. In the perception of many participants, the Right's presence was largely limited to a lone homeless man who paraded an-

talists like Tom Perkins have slandered Occupy, absurdly comparing its attack on wealth inequality to the Nazi persecution of Jews.¹ Because of this, many progressives plug their ears when they hear about right-wing groups and Occupy. (In this essay, OWS refers to the New York City occupation, while Occupy refers to the movement in general.)

Certainly, Occupy was always a largely left-leaning event. But right-wing participation has been the norm rather than the exception within recent left-wing U.S. movements—including the antiglobalization, antiwar, environmental, and animal rights movements—and Occupy was no exception.² Right-wing groups inserted their narra-

tive about the Federal Reserve into the movement's visible politics; used Occupy's open-ended structure to dissemi-



Occupy Wall Street on Nov. 15, 2011. Protestors were evicted from Zuccotti Park that morning. Photo courtesy of author.

tisemitic signs around Zuccotti, which became the basis of a right-wing "smear" campaign. More recently, venture capi-

nate conspiracy theories (antisemitic and otherwise) and White nationalism; promoted unfettered capitalism; and gained experience, skills, and political confidence as organizers in a mass movement that, on the whole, allowed their participation.

Ideally, none of these things should have happened. Advocates for social justice need to assess the motivations, extent, and substance of right-wing participation in Occupy—just as has been done with past movements. Despite the painful feelings it might evoke, it is time for this process to start.

THE PROBLEM OF FINANCE CAPITAL AND AMBIGUOUS ENEMIES

The original call for OWS from *Adbusters* magazine said the demonstrators themselves would decide on the “one demand” of the occupation, but this never materialized. Instead, the eminently populist slogan “We are the 99%” became their rallying cry. The one percent—often

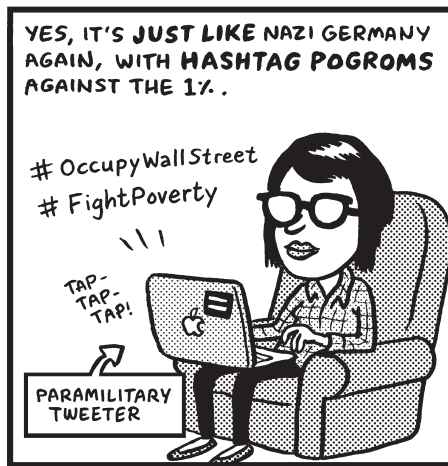
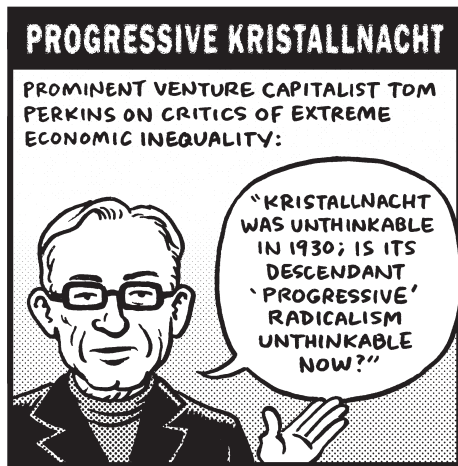
assumed to be those whose household incomes were over \$500,000—was obviously associated with “Wall Street,” the focus of the demonstration.³ But many people with that kind of income were not associated with Wall Street at all. And, in any case, what exactly was Wall Street: the New York Stock Exchange? Banks? Bankers? Global corporations? The Federal Reserve? And who were the one percent: Crony capitalists specifically? Capitalists generally? The rich? Political elites? The Bilderberg Group? The Rothschild family? Jews? Or—as one popular conspiracy theorist had it—our reptilian overlords?

Particularly at the beginning, Occupy embraced everyone, just as a number of organizers intended.⁴ If the goal was to unite “the 99%” against a tiny elite, after all, didn’t that require a Left-Right alliance? Many on the Right openly called for such an alliance, though the agenda they proposed usually offered little that the Left could get behind.

But in addition to this general, populist appeal for uniting the people against the elites, there was one specific piece of common ground. While few right-wing actors see capitalism as a system to be abolished, many are harsh critics of finance capital, especially in its international form. This critique unites anti-semites, who believe that Jews run Wall Street; libertarian “free marketers,” who see the Federal Reserve as their enemy; and advocates of “producerist” narratives, who want “productive national capital” (such as manufacturing and agriculture) to be cleaved from “international finance capital” (the global banking system and free-trade agreements).

Finance has become a larger part of the U.S. economy, and increasingly international, in the last few decades. As an industry, it produces comparatively few jobs, and it functions globally as one of the pillars of neoliberalism, exacerbating economic inequality. While economic downturns are an intrinsic feature of capitalism itself, it was the largely unregulated behavior of banks that caused the most recent crisis. Occupy was just one of many global demonstrations against austerity economics that have been populist in approach and politically amorphous, and, especially in Europe, these have a particular appeal to the Far Right.

In Occupy the most common demand of the various right-wing and conspiracy groups—especially those who openly called for Left-Right unity—was for the abolition of the Federal Reserve. Whether this is an issue actually shared by the Left, or just an attempt to get the Left to support right-wing policies, is another question.



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THE INITIAL CONTROVERSY OVER ANTISEMITISM

The Right’s participation was far from limited to a handful of antisemites, but it is nonetheless true that Occupy’s attacks on finance capital attracted many of them, since such attacks were easily integrated into their fantasies of Jews controlling the banking industry. (Rather than explicitly naming Jews as the villain, antisemites often instead demonize a subgroup that they identify as Jewish, such as Zionists, international

bankers, neoconservatives, “the Frankfurt School”—or Wall Street.)

Adbusters, the magazine that initially sparked OWS, has an especially troublesome past. Its editor and co-founder, Kalle Lasn, published an article in 2004 criticizing neoconservatives by invoking numerous antisemitic narratives. The article included a list of prominent neoconservatives with marks next to the Jewish names. Responding to widespread criticism, Lasn denied that he was antisemitic but showed no understanding of why the narrative of the article was offensive. More recently, the magazine has published articles by antisemitic writer and musician Gilad Atzmon.⁵ This certainly raises the question of whether *Adbusters*’s choice of Wall Street as a target may have been shaped by narratives influenced by antisemitism.

Some mainstream right-wing media attempted to discredit OWS as being primarily antisemitic from the outset. The catalyst was an October 2011 article in *Commentary* by Abe Greenwald. Relying on two antisemitic videos from Zuccotti—one of a homeless man who appeared daily with antisemitic signs, and the other of a random participant—Greenwald claimed that OWS “protesters are literally boasting of their Nazi credentials” and that the “point of Occupy Wall Street is to scapegoat fellow Americans. And wherever political scapegoating takes place, anti-Semitism is sure to follow.” In mid-October, the Emergency Committee for Israel released a broadcast ad implying that the OWS demonstrations were overwhelmingly antisemitic, and demanding that President Obama repudiate the incidents. Its evidence consisted entirely of the two videos.⁶

All of this created such a media uproar that more mainstream groups weighed in. The Anti-Defamation League’s Abe Foxman said that there was “no evidence that these anti-Semitic conspiracy theories are representative of the larger movement or that they are gaining traction with other participants.”⁷

Journalist Jonathan Chait summarized the situation by writing that the “ratio of outraged published reports or commentaries about anti-Semites at OWS to actual anti-Semites at OWS is probably about

ten to one.” Despite this, the Zuccotti General Assembly (GA) never passed a resolution specifically condemning antisemitism in its own ranks. (The GAs were the directly democratic gatherings where everyone could speak, and where OWS decisions were made.) In November 2011, the GA did pass a resolution condemning antisemitism in the abstract, though it involved an incident unconnected to Occupy.⁸

The result was that many Occupy protestors on the Left felt that they were being unfairly “smeared” as antisemites by the mainstream Right in an attempt to discredit the movement as a whole, and, furthermore, that these claims were without merit.⁹ This fear of subversion created an atmosphere of denial and a general consensus that there was no involvement in Occupy by those further to the Right than Ron Paul.

Right-wing and conspiracist participation in Occupy was nonetheless real, and it involved more than 20 groups, prominent figures, and media outlets. These included Ron Paul supporters, Alex Jones, Oath Keepers, David Icke, We Are Change, the Zeitgeist movement, Tea Party members, National-Anarchists, Attack the System, the Pacifica Forum, *American Free Press*, Larouchites, *Counter-Currents*, the American Freedom Party, American Front, David Duke, the American Nazi Party, White Revolution, and others. (A detailed account of their participation is available separately in my essay, “Twenty on the Right in Occupy.”)¹⁰ Their involvement included attending planning meetings, taking part in the encampments, making appeals directed to the Occupiers, and co-opting online resources. They fell into four overlapping categories: anti-Federal Reserve activists, conspiracy theorists, antisemites, and White nationalists/neo Nazis.

THE “END THE FED!” FACTOR AND THE CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

As Occupy Wall Street burgeoned, Ron Paul was campaigning for the 2012 GOP presidential nomination. Although

David Duke, an elder statesman of the U.S. White nationalist movement, made a video titled “Occupy Zionist Wall Street.” Writing on a popular White nationalist web forum, he declared, “Occupy is an opportunity . . . Grab this opportunity!”

there was no obvious mechanism organizing their participation, Paulists were at the OWS planning meetings, and they remained a fixture in the movement and appeared at almost all Occupations, though they were usually a small but vocal minority. (Paul himself made only guarded pro-Occupy comments.)

One of Paul’s central goals is to abolish the Federal Reserve (commonly known as “the Fed”), and he has popularized the slogan “End the Fed!” He believes that it fosters “crony capitalism”—big business working hand-in-hand with the federal government—and facilitates foreign wars. Abolishing the Fed will, he believes, both reduce U.S. militarism and make the federal social safety net impossible to sustain. In Paul’s utopian free market, the old, sick, and disabled would be left to suffer and die unless their families or others volunteered to help. Paul also opposes abortion and Social Security, and he has a long history of accepting support from and dialoguing with White nationalists.¹¹

The ambiguity of Occupy attracted a substantial number of Paul’s supporters, who in turn attracted a fair amount of media coverage for themselves. They gained general traction within Occupy because of their objection to the Federal Reserve’s bailout of the major banks after the financial collapse, and sometimes focused on its role in the subprime mortgage crisis. Counterintuitively for many, the lesson of the crisis for Paulists was the need for less—not more—fed-

eral involvement in the banking system.

Many others who wanted to abolish the Federal Reserve also became involved in Occupy; most supported Paul's candidacy. Alex Jones, one of the most popular U.S. conspiracy theorists (although not a consistent supporter of Occupy), attempted to crash the movement by calling for a national event on Oct. 6, 2011, to "Occupy the Fed." Jones said that, contrary to media portrayals of Occupy as left-leaning, "The people on the ground ... understand the Federal Reserve is the central organization empowering this world government system. This is a revolt against banker occupation."¹²

At the same time, the Oath Keepers organization, in concert with Jones and others, concocted a national push to insert "End the Fed!" rhetoric into Occupy under a call to "Occupy the Occupation!" (Oath Keepers, which holds armed marches, recruits current and former military and law enforcement employees who swear to "uphold the Constitution," and is driven by conspiracies about the coming One World Government.) It also helped establish an encampment in Occupy Los Angeles and attempted to recruit there.¹³

Another Fed critic was David Icke, known for his metaconspiracy theory that the global elite are descendants of reptilian aliens who seek to enslave humanity—a story that weaves in classic antisemitic narratives. His "Essential Knowledge For A Wall Street Protestor" video, which promotes anti-Federal Reserve and related economic conspiracies, has about 350,000 views. He also made an hour-long "ad-lib documentary" in Zuccotti Park just after the encampment was evicted by authorities.¹⁴ Icke's followers were active in both U.S. and U.K. Occupations.

Other conspiracists who worked in Occupy include We Are Change (WAC), an international 9/11 "Truther" group. Luke Rudkowski, the group's founder, is a prolific video blogger and is well-known for his paparazzi-style interviews. On site at OWS from the first day, he did extensive video coverage at Zuccotti Park and is also featured in David Icke's videos.

Members of WAC New York City, a splinter faction, were also active in

OWS, including Danny Panzella, a Tea Party activist who ran for state office in 2010. Even before OWS, Panzella organized demonstrations against the downtown Manhattan Federal Reserve, and he worked hard to refocus Occupy on an "End the Fed!" agenda. He appeared on the Fox News show *Freedom Watch*, in one of a number of the show's broadcasts that encouraged libertarians to attend Occupy events.¹⁵ Other members of the group who worked with OWS included Craig FitzGerald, a "National-Anarchist" who promotes Holocaust denial and endorses White separatism.

ANTISEMITES, WHITE NATIONALISTS, AND NEO-NAZIS

Attack the System—which promotes an alliance of racial separatists, theocrats, and Leftists against what it sees as an increasingly globalized, centralized, liberal "system"—also courted Occupy. The organization produced a video—"Power to the Neighborhoods (A Message to 'Occupy Wall Street')"—that called for Left-Right unity, offering a left-wing critique of contemporary problems while offering a classic right-wing solution: complete local control.¹⁶

Online, antisemites have continued to be connected to Occupy projects. The most popular is an imposter Facebook page that mimics the "real" main one—and posts blatantly antisemitic content. It has attracted nearly 650,000 followers. (By contrast, the page affiliated with the organization that arose from the Zuccotti encampment has fewer than 500,000 followers.) It is unclear who the secretive administrators of the imposter site are, or why it became so popular. Attempts to remove it have so far been unsuccessful.¹⁷

One of the Far Right's most enthusiastic Occupy champions was the *American Free Press*, an antisemitic weekly newspaper that is heir to Willis Carto's media empire. It promoted Occupy even before the initial action, and for months it printed numerous articles supporting the movement, including firsthand reporting from various Occupations.¹⁸

Lyndon LaRouche's Far Right sect was initially involved in OWS. It has long pushed for restoring Glass-Steagall, a New Deal-era act that limited the kinds

of investments that banks could make, which was repealed in the late 1990s. Many believe that it would have prevented the housing crisis had it remained in effect. During Occupy, two bills were in Congressional committee that would have restored its provisions, and it was a priority for many Occupy protestors on the Left, as well. LaRouche's followers were active in the OWS planning meetings, where Glass-Steagall's restoration was one of six initial proposals for the never-realized "one demand."¹⁹ LaRouche's organization even claimed credit for making its reinstatement "a leading demand of the movement."²⁰

Staff at *Counter-Currents*, a leading U.S. publisher of intellectual fascism and White nationalism, claimed to have attended the San Francisco and Oakland occupations, and they described the events as a valuable experience:

Given that the protestors are overwhelmingly White, Occupy Wall Street does provide opportunities for White Nationalists. There is nothing to prevent us from getting our ideas into the mix. However, there is no reason to think that our ideas will make any headway given the basic nature of the protests [that is, Occupy's General Assembly format]. A far more promising angle is for us to ponder how to frame an open-source protest movement that would serve our purposes rather than the establishment's.²¹

The most prominent figure on the Far Right to endorse Occupy was David Duke, a former Republican state representative from Louisiana and an elder statesman of the U.S. White nationalist movement. In a video from October 2011, "Occupy Zionist Wall Street," Duke denounced the "Zionist thieves at the Federal Reserve" and "the most powerful criminal bank in the world, the Zionist Goldman Sachs, run by that vulture-nosed bottom feeder, Lloyd Blankfein." The video has received more than 100,000 views to date. Duke later wrote on the White supremacist web forum *Stormfront* that "OWS is an opportunity. ... Grab this opportunity!"²²

White nationalists also participated in some of the movement's less high-profile iterations, such as Occupy Indianapolis

(OI). Matt Parrott of Hoosier Nation—the local branch of the White nationalist American Third Position Party, now called the American Freedom Party—attended OI, and made a video interviewing participants. He wrote: “Our experience was peaceful and positive, affirming my suspicion that the majority of the Occupy Indianapolis attendees were fed up with the same corporate and federal abuses the majority of the Tea Party protesters are fed up with.”²³ His colleague “Tristania” posted a comment on *Stormfront* saying that “it was a very good opportunity for outreach” and that “it’s about cherry picking people from those audiences and recruiting them to our side.”²⁴

Parrott posted his video on the OI Facebook page, which the Hoosier Anti-Racist Movement (HARM) took issue with. Although the video was removed, HARM eventually split from OI, claiming that it had “become a safe place for conspiracy-theories, antisemitism, racism, anti-worker sentiment, pro-sweatshop propaganda, and religious intolerance.” Other OI activists contacted HARM to complain of racial harassment at the Occupation itself.²⁵ (A representative from the OI Facebook page denied that the administrators were racists or antisemites, and said that because of splits in OI, the Facebook page had no connection to the physical occupation by the time of the racial incidents.)

American Nazi Party leader Rocky J. Suhayda wrote that Occupy was tailor-

made for Nazis and other White nationalists, since the “vast majority” of Wall Street bankers were Jewish. He urged his fellow activists to join the protests with “flyers EXPLAINING the ‘JEW BANKER’ influence”—but warned them not to wear anything hinting that they were Nazis.²⁶ Other neo-Nazis also became involved, such as Billy Roper, who

camp at night, prompting antifascists to kick them out and then set up a self-defense patrol. But in both cities, antifascists tangled with liberal Occupiers, who claimed that—as part of “the 99%”—the neo-Nazis had a right to stay.²⁸

WHY DID THEY PARTICIPATE?

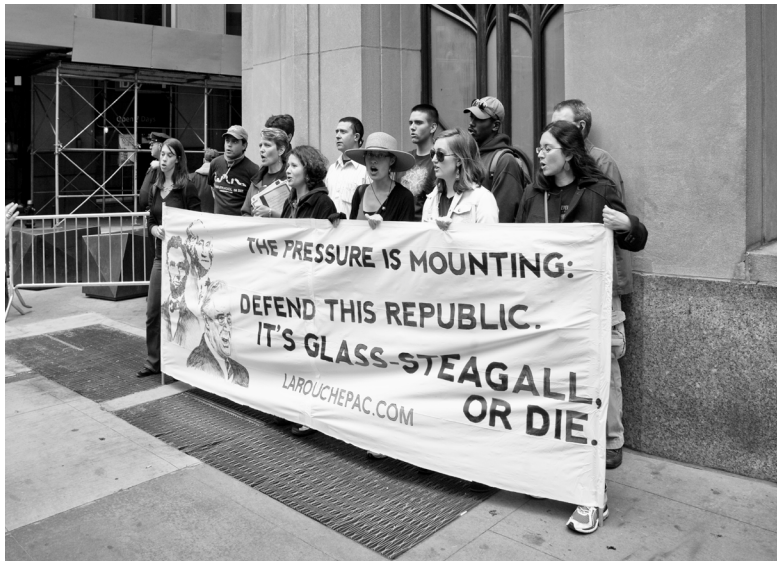
It is a mistake to view these right-wing groups and people as “infiltrating” Occupy, since in some cases they supported and helped organize it even before it started. Others were simply participating in a demonstration that loudly proclaimed that it was open to everyone and refused to define even its most basic concepts or demands.

Yet some on the Right *did* view their work as intentional co-optation. This is an intrinsic problem with the “franchise activism” model, or the practice of setting up a name and format that anyone can adopt and act under. While it allows for ease of replication and flexibility in action—one

of Occupy’s great strengths—it also allows a variety of political visions to be pursued under its banner. For example, almost no mechanisms are available to deem the “imposter” Facebook page as illegitimate in relation to the “real” one.

In addition, for decades, elements of the Far Right have been trying to concoct a strategy for a decentralized White nationalist movement.²⁹ One group tried to think up how it could set up a White nationalist version of Occupy, while another

Occupy highlights the extraordinary challenge facing popular mobilizations: how to create a strong movement that is open to “everyone” without becoming a forum for right-wing protest?



A performance by the LaRouche choral group. Lyndon LaRouche is a longtime leading figure of the U.S. Far Right. The photo was taken on Sept. 17, 2011—the first day of Occupy Wall Street. Photo courtesy of Tyko Kihlstedt.

wrote that Occupy represented people who were tired of the rich, the media, the banking industry and the Federal Reserve, and that among Occupiers, “More and more people are willing to name the Jew.”²⁷

National Socialist Movement member J.T. Ready came to Occupy Phoenix with his vigilante U.S. Border Guard, armed with AR-15 rifles, claiming that they were demonstrating their support for the Second Amendment. In Seattle, several neo-Nazis came into the Occupy

er praised the open organizational structure as a boon for spreading its ideas.³⁰

The point it is not so much that the Left was significantly damaged by the Right's presence in Occupy—though its presence did open the movement up to attacks in the mainstream media, which wasted the time and effort of organizers while turning off potential supporters. The deeper problem is that right-wing groups benefited from the Left's willingness to give them a stage to speak from and an audience to recruit from.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Many Leftists argue that mass organizing should occur in a Popular Front style, with the critique of capitalism as a system being the core politic and specific, popular grievances merely the focus of mobilizations—egregious examples to rally people around but not the actual cause. This organizing style requires either an ideologically cohesive coalition or a specific group behind the mobilization, controlling the messaging and serving as a gatekeeper against right-wing participation.

After the August 2007 crisis, however, the traditional U.S. Left was unable to lead a popular protest movement in this format, and it took OWS nearly four years to get off the ground using digital-age organizing, self-selected organizers, and ambiguous politics. It is unlikely that organizing along the former model would have ever succeeded, or that mainstream liberal pundits, who were instrumental in popularizing OWS, would have supported a more traditional, centrally organized leftist mobilization. The ambiguity of OWS politics, which let people hang their own hats on it, made Occupy possible—but also became a double-edged sword, since what helped the Left also enabled the Right.

As a result, the involvement of right-wing groups in Occupy raises questions about the dilemma of creating a movement that is open to “everyone” but must exclude certain elements if it is to

avoid becoming a forum for right-wing populist protest. The basic format of the demonstrations—a populist attack on finance capital with ambiguous formulations—harmonized quite well with the political vocabulary and framework of the Right and conspiracy theorists.

Successful mass protest movements around the globe have been leaderless and decentralized in recent years. With its critique of finance capital and financial elites, the Right will continue to try to profit politically from them.

Are there any practical steps, then, that activists on the Left can take to minimize participation by the Right?

The administrators at the Occupy-WallSt.org forum, the main online location of internal discussions, took one small step after they were deluged by conspiracy theorists and Far Right propagandists. In October 2011, they banned anyone who posted about Icke, LaRouche, Duke, or Jones.³¹

A more proactive first step would be to endorse an anti-oppression platform at the very start, such as the one created at Occupy Boston. Unlike the relatively vague statement from Zuccotti, Boston's statement explicitly named the types of oppression that it opposed, including White supremacy, patriarchy, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, anti-Arab sentiment, Islamophobia, and anti-Jewish sentiment.³²

A member of the Hoosier Anti-Racist Movement pointed out that if such a platform had been in place in Occupy Indianapolis, when racist sentiments were expressed towards people of color, there would have been an existing agreement to point to—and a basis for asking the larger group to intervene—rather than relying on nonexistent cooperation from the majority of the largely White participants. The HARM member also said that if racists had been confronted and expelled from the physical occupation, they likely would not have posted a positive video of their experience, felt welcome to continue to participate in the group's social media, or written about

their warm reception.³³ Not taking a proactive stance against antisemitism at Zuccotti led to significant bad press and much time and energy invested—often by Jewish participants—in putting out fires.

In truth, even if such measures are enacted, right-wing involvement in popular demonstrations that have traditionally been the province of the Left is likely to continue. The mass-based left-wing parties and unions in the West are rapidly losing their remaining influence

as state communism has collapsed in Eastern Europe; Keynesianism and social democracy are in eclipse; and neoliberalism illuminates the world with its triumphant calamity. The countries that remain in opposition are a handful of creaking authoritarian regimes and religious theocracies in the Middle East and Asia, along with a few left-leaning democracies in Latin America that, at least for activists in the West, have not generated the same inspiration that past revolutionary governments did.

On the ground, most successful mass protest movements of the last decade and a half in the West, North Africa, and the Middle East have been leaderless and decentralized. They have also had vaguer and vaguer goals. The Right—with its criticisms of finance capital and financial elites—will continue to try to profit politically from economic crises. In the last few years, fascists have been able to do this in Greece, Bulgaria, and, most recently, Ukraine—where they have been the most prominent faction in the weeks of street-fighting in Kiev.

Advocates for social justice would do well to have a plan to deal with them. ☹

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BY REV. OSAGYEFO SEKOU

The Gospel of James Baldwin: An Interview with Dr. E.L. Kornegay Jr.

Dr. E.L. Kornegay Jr. grew up in a military family, living on U.S. Army bases in several U.S. states and in France. The family's home base was in Kinston, NC. "I was bouncing back and forth between these different worlds," Kornegay said, "and going back and forth between two types of segregation, one racial and one based on rank."

Kornegay dropped out of college but returned in his mid-30s, earning a B.A. in English from North Carolina A&T. He later earned graduate degrees from McCormick Theological Seminary and Chicago Theological Seminary, becoming the first African-American male to earn a Ph.D. from the latter institution.

He was drawn to study the work of the writer James Baldwin (1924-1987) through a comment made by the founder of Black liberation theology, James H. Cone, who once said that Baldwin taught him how to write. Kornegay was intrigued: "That took me on this theological journey to discern exactly what that meant."

Baldwin was the son of a Christian minister who felt alienated from his family and church, in part because he was gay, and left



the faith in his late teenage years. Kornegay views him nonetheless as a religious writer. "Everything he writes is a religious conversation," he said. In his recently published book, *A Queering of Black Theology: James Baldwin's Blues Project and Gospel Prose* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), Kornegay uses Baldwin's work to probe the question of "how we reconcile sexualities with faith."

Kornegay is an adjunct professor at Chicago Theological Seminary and the founder, last year, of the Chicago-based Baldwin Delaney Institute for Academic Enrichment and Faith Flourishing, whose mission is "to teach successful critical-thinking strategies" and "critical social dialogue to youth, families, and non-traditional adult learners."

The following interview focuses on *A Queering of Black Theology* and was conducted by Rev. Osagyefo Sekou, pastor for formation and justice at First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain in Boston, MA. He is also a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, an organizer, documentary filmmaker, and the author of *God, Gays, and Guns: Essays on Religion and the Future of Democracy* (Campbell & Cannon, 2012).

The subtitle of the book is *James Baldwin's Blues Project and Gospel Prose*. The blues is an enduring narrative in the twentieth century. It seems that Baldwin's life is a blues narrative, given the [tragedy of] his relationship to his father, the relationship between him and the Black community, and as a writer being ignored. The blues is the soundtrack of exile and [creates] a multiplicity of narratives in your work.

Blues, as it is expressed as music, begins and ends with the issue of one's sexuality. It's a siren call of the spirit, related to love and the search for love, and the pain of love, that gets lost on us as we become spiritual or Christian creatures. I think that Baldwin captures that—the idea of being sanctified as being inclusive of who you are sexually.

The blues, for me, is a way of engaging the sacredness of Black bodies and the Black experience, in relation to Black religion and the church. It brings in the holy narrative of a

disparaged and abandoned people and gives a way for that expression to remain sacred, whether it's in the church or in the street. So the blues is a way to talk about everything at once without the separation of sacredness and profaneness seeping in.

You [write about Baldwin's lived experience of] exile in the Promised Land . . .

Baldwin was in Harlem at a time when the North was seen as a land of promise. Many folk migrated from the South into the North to end up in this space, where you could see the promise but not necessarily engage in it. So this is really an exilic sojourn, and the folk that end up in the ghetto spaces of Harlem, like Baldwin, are exiled socially, economically, and racially. Add to that the fact that, for Baldwin, his exilic experience also includes his sexuality.

There is a general consensus that Baldwin leaves the church. Inherent in that is the idea that the church left Baldwin. But it reemerges in these interesting ways: Go Tell It on the Mountain, Nobody Knows My Name, No Name in the Street, The Devil Finds Work. Those are religious phrases— notions that emerge out of songs and scripture. You are resituating Baldwin within the framework of the Black church and Christianity writ large.

It's important to understand when you read him—all the way up to *Just Above My Head* (1979) and *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985)—that Baldwin really takes on an apostolic calling. His texts are apostolic: he is doing what the gospel calls us to do, which is to go out and preach the gospel in Jerusalem, Ju-

Black manhood and Black masculinity are not monolithic. You can be masculine and homosexual, and you can be masculine and heterosexual. And if we want to end violence, we have to be willing to go beyond the model of masculinity that we have right now, to be able to look at it and critique it ... to be able to come together and to make Black masculinity over again.

dea, and Samaria, and to the outermost parts of the earth. And that is exactly what Baldwin does. Which is very different from what we see in the Black church, where we're proud to be sitting on the same pew, on the same end, for 37 years, and that is how we see ourselves as holy.

Though the text is dense in terms of its theological reading and its deployment of queer theory, I keep [remembering that] you're a country boy from Kinston, North Carolina. I imagine your mama, and Baldwin, and you, and a queer theorist—Judith Butler or somebody like that—sitting around, and your mama pouring a cup of coffee and giving them some pie. Situate your experience of Baldwin and your experience of being from North Carolina.

We've had many conversations about our upbringing and the centrality of the kitchen-table narratives that have shaped our thinking and our humanity. My mother was an avid reader. In fact, I think she even planted texts that were charged sexually [in our home]. As a genteel, Southern, Christian, Negro woman, things that she couldn't tell her son about being a man, or the choices that he was to face as a Black man in the world, or even the challenges that he was to face in that world—she couldn't tell me, but she could give me a text, or plant a text, for me to read. Along with reading, say, *Falconhurst Fancy*, and *Manchild in the Promised Land*, and *Invisible Man*, *Another Country* was planted. And so, around the time I was 12 or 13, that was one of the first novels that I read through, and it was charged with sexuality.

And also, my mother's kitchen table was queer, in context.

Old folk, differently abled folk, intellectuals, and homosexual men and lesbian women made up the inner circle of my mother's friends. Add to that the fact that, even though I'm a native of North Carolina and grew up in Kinston, with a dirt road beside the house, I was living in France when I was five and six years old, in Poitiers, and doing things that were different from other little Black boys and girls at that particular time, flying intercontinentally and sailing from New York to Germany and flying from Paris to New York. And then bounding from that kind of world down to a little town that was segregated.

So my experiences as a youth, up until I was 12, meant that I had to be able to navigate both of those spaces. That allowed for an expansive understanding of humanity and the choices that humans make, whether that's where they live, how they interact, and who they are sexually. And that is inclusive of this thing my sister said one time—that she felt like our mother herself was a lesbian.

When anybody gay came home, they would come by the house, and they would be full of laughter. I had this community that loved me, unconditionally, because they loved my mother. And so I grew up at this table, and it was a table full of radicals,

conservatives, straight folk, gay folk, church folk, gamblers, and that was what I experienced. And so that text, [Baldwin's book] *Another Country*, was really my entry point into the world of Baldwin, and into another world, very literally and figuratively. That was what I had experienced. I was a baby, five or six years old, in France, when Baldwin was probably having his first expat experience in Paris.

Given the moment we are in, at one level we see progress—over a dozen states allowing gay marriage—while the majority don't allow gay marriage. And so your text hits at an interesting time, because the Black church is slowly being torn asunder around sex and sexuality. And then the AIDS epidemic is once again rearing its ugly head. So, what's at stake for you in the text? What do you want a queering of black theology to say to the world?

I wanted to say to the world that Black manhood and Black masculinity are not monolithic. You can be masculine and homosexual, and you can be masculine and heterosexual. It's not about sexuality but about masculinity. And the kind of masculinity that we perpetuated, post-Civil Rights, is losing the battle against violence. And if we want to end violence, we have to be willing to go beyond the model of masculinity that we have right now, to be able to look at it and critique it, and to unburden our women from carrying it, and pick up that mantle ourselves, in a new way, that requires all of the brothers, heterosexual and homosexual, to be able to come together and to make Black masculinity over again. ☪

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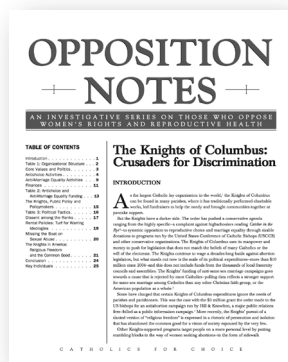
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The Knights of Columbus: Crusaders for Discrimination

opposition notes • catholics for choice, december 2013



The Knights of Columbus (KOC) is headquartered in New Haven, CT, a progressive city in a state whose entire Congressional delegation is Democratic. A recent report by Catholics for Choice reveals that the all-male fraternal order, which has 1.8 million members and is the world's largest organization of Catholic laity, pursues a deeply conservative agenda that is out of touch not only with the order's liberal neighbors but also with the American public—and even with most of the Catholics that it claims to represent.

Founded in 1882, KOC maintained “a strong social justice component” in its work, especially on economic issues, throughout much of its history. But since the 1990s, KOC has devoted the bulk of its organizing energies and financial resources to a conservative culture-war agenda. The order maintains that “abortion is never permissible under any circumstances” and has worked closely with antichoice crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs). KOC's campaigns against reproductive justice are sometimes covert and insidious, as in the case of CPCs. At other times, they are highly public and vociferous. Many KOC members, for example, help organize or participate in sidewalk protests (branded as “counseling” and “prayer vigils”) outside clinics, aiming to dissuade women from obtaining abortions.

KOC has been a prominent opponent of same-sex marriage—allocating nearly \$7 million between 2008 and 2012 to the issue—and sex education in public schools. It has also joined a growing chorus of conservative organizations trying to redefine “religious liberty” as a constitutional right to discriminate in the public sphere. It gives substantial funding, for example, to the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which is part of a coalition challenging the Affordable Care Act's contraception mandate at the Supreme Court. As the report argues, KOC's activism suggests its “[abandonment of] the common good for a vision of society espoused by the very few.”

While pursuing these culture-war aims, the organization has *not* used its prominent public profile to speak out against sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church. “They have supported priests and bishops in their moral bankruptcy and in their destruction of the bodies and souls of the victims of abuse,” said Rev. Tom Doyle, an advocate for victims of sexual abuse by clergy. “They have said and done nothing to support the victims.”

The report concludes by casting doubt on KOC's commitment to “charity”: “When the order works against rights for women and LGBT individuals, even under the guise of caring for them, they forfeit the use of the word ‘charity.’ ... In fact, there is little that is charitable about the Knights' approach to women, LGBT individuals, those who support access to a full range of reproductive healthcare services and believers in a healthy separation between church and state.”

-Rebecca Suldan

Raising the Federal Minimum Wage to \$10.10 Would Lift Wages for Millions and Provide a Modest Economic Boost

david cooper • economic policy institute, december 2013

The push to increase the minimum wage has gained momentum over the past year. Five states passed minimum-wage hikes, and in his January State of the Union address, President Obama called on Congress to raise the federal minimum to \$10.10. That was the number put forward in legislation proposed in 2013 by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA). The bill has attracted substantial media attention though it has made little headway in Congress. On February 12, President Obama took a first step by issuing an executive order to raise the minimum wage for federal contractors to \$10.10.

David Cooper's recently updated briefing paper lays out the reasons that raising the federal minimum wage would help the working poor, reduce gender-based income inequality, and boost the overall economy. As Cooper shows, the federal minimum wage has failed to keep up with inflation. In 2014, a full-time employee earning minimum wage falls below the poverty line for a family of two (one adult, one child). The Harkin-Miller bill would lift a family of three above the poverty line for the first time since 1968.

The paper also analyzes the demographics of the low-wage workforce. Cooper notes, for example, that women comprise a disproportionate percentage of minimum- and low-wage workers and that—contrary to conservative assumptions—people who make the minimum wage are typically not teenagers or part-time workers. Their average age is 35, and more than half work full-time. In the South, about two-thirds of people earning the minimum wage work full-time. And their income is not “extra” or supplemental: such workers account for half of their families' total income.

A standard argument against hiking the minimum wage holds that it increases unemployment and slows economic growth. But Cooper argues that the increased earnings could “provide a catalyst for new hiring,” encourage consumer spending, and spur modest economic growth. Public opinion seems to be on the side of these arguments, and there are grounds for at least guarded optimism about a federal minimum-wage hike in the near future. A November 2013 poll by Gallup found that 76 percent of respondents favored raising the minimum wage, up from 71 percent in a poll taken six months earlier.

-Owen Jennings

State of the States 2013

center for reproductive rights, january 2014



State of the States, a recent report by the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), paints a troubling picture of deteriorating reproductive rights and access to reproductive

health care in the United States. Documenting state-level strategies and campaigns, it offers evidence that the ongoing “assault on reproductive rights [continues] at an unprecedented level.”

In 2013, seven states approved targeted regulations of abortion providers—known as “TRAP” laws—that “place unnecessary restrictions on the qualifications of providers who perform abortions” and “drive providers of quality health care out of practice.” Seven more states have placed restrictions on the use of telemedicine, the long-distance sharing of information between medical providers using communications technology. Though telemedicine has helped expand access to safe, medical abortions—especially among low-income, rural populations—anti-choice activists often seek to characterize it as dangerous and have targeted it for increased restrictions.

Five states passed laws in 2013 that prevent their state health-care exchange from including plans that cover abortion, raising the total number of states with such policies to 24. The report also describes attempts in North Dakota and Arkansas to ban abortions after six and 12 weeks of pregnancy, respectively. CRR reports that “both bans have been preliminarily enjoined by a federal court.”

State of the States also highlights several important victories: CRR’s Bill of Reproductive Rights garnered nearly 300,000 signatures; courtroom victories challenged restrictive legislation in several states; and the Women’s Health Protection Act was introduced in Congress. As it looks ahead to 2014, the report concludes with a call to action: “Because of some states’ restrictions, a woman’s ability to make personal decisions about her reproductive health care currently depends on her zip code. Every pregnant woman ... must be able to make her own decisions.”

-Will Freeman

Out of Control: The Coast-to-Coast Failures of Outsourcing Public Services to For-Profit Corporations

david cooper • economic policy institute, december 2013

Conservatives often promote outsourcing public services to private companies as a cost-cutting measure. But a report by In the Public Interest argues that outsourcing tends to erode civic strength, lower wages, and diminish the quality of services as corporations prioritize profit over the community’s well-being.

The report illustrates these patterns through several case studies. One focuses on Truth or Consequences, NM, where the company that maintains the video of local city-commission meetings denied a woman’s request for recordings. It highlights several additional examples of private companies denying any obligation to comply with public-record laws—but notes that, even in the most flagrant cases, such companies often escape accountability.

The report also describes how outsourcing provides contractually guaranteed profits for many private corporations. In Chicago, for example, a 75-year contract restricts the city from expanding sidewalks or building bike lanes that would affect parking meters—and thus diminish the profits of the corporation that operates them. In Colorado, a 99-year contract for operating a parkway in Denver prevents the city from improving public roads, since free, high-quality roads will reduce revenue from private tolls. And a long-term contract between Virginia and a corporate consortium “puts Virginia taxpayers on the hook if too many carpoolers use the high occupancy lanes because it could adversely affect contractor revenues.” The contract requires the state to “reimburse the private companies whenever Capital Beltway carpoolers using the tolled high-occupancy lanes exceed 24% of the traffic, or until the builders make \$100 million in profits.”

Contrary to conservative ideology, public provision of services is often far more cost effective than outsourcing. A Florida prison that was “insourced,” for example, saved \$1 million in its first year of public operation—and its staff was given a pay increase. In many cities committed to competitive bidding, public workers have won on price and quality, such as the Minnesota Department of Transportation’s division of public striping, which repeatedly beats its private competitors.

The report recommends replacing uncontested contract renewals with legitimate cost-benefit analyses and competitive bidding protocols. Other recommendations—such as enacting a living wage and imposing regulations that improve auditing and accountability—aim to slow the trend toward outsourcing and ensure that the pursuit of profit does not come at the expense of transparency, accountability, and “shared prosperity.”

-Owen Jennings

Stay Ahead of the (Right) Curve!

PRA’s Eyes Right Blog tracks emerging strategies and trends on the Right. Check out these recent essays at politicalresearch.org/blog to find out where things are headed:

T. F. Charlton, “Accidental Activism and Redefining Religious Liberty”: *The Accidental Activist*, a film distributed at the 2013 Values Voter Summit, casts conservative Christians as the “victims of an intolerant cabal of ‘homosexual’ activists and liberal co-conspirators.”

Rachel Tabachnick, “Ted Cruz and ALEC: Seceding from the Union One Law at a Time”: U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) has developed a plan to prevent federal laws from being enforced in the states. The immediate target is the Affordable Care Act. But is unraveling the union the ultimate aim?

Frederick Clarkson, “The Stuff of Which Religious War is Made”: The Roman Catholic Archbishop of New Orleans recently “declared economic war on anyone who participates in the construction of a new regional Planned Parenthood facility” in the city. Is it a sign of growing radicalism on the Right?

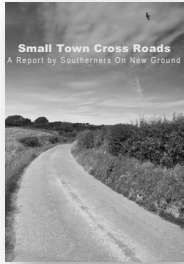
Small Town Cross Roads

hermelinda cortés • southerners on new ground, january 2014

Moving Up, Fighting Back:

Creating a Path to LGBTQ Youth Liberation

FIERCE, january 2014



In the January issue of *GQ*, Phil Robertson, a star on the reality show *Duck Dynasty*, answered a question about what he believes to be sinful. “Start with homosexual behavior and just morph out from there,” he said. “Bestiality, sleeping around with this woman and that woman and that woman and those men.” The network that the show appears on, A&E, took a major hit from both LGBTQ activists, who were outraged by the comments, and right-wing activists, who were outraged by Robertson’s subsequent suspension.

Robertson lives in the town of West Monroe, LA, and though the *Duck Dynasty* controversy has largely faded, its effects continue to be felt by those who live in, and love, the South—a region often branded as racist, sexist, homophobic, poor, and backwards. In *Small Town Cross Roads*, *Southerners On New Ground* (SONG) explores the realities and dreams of queer people who live in small Southern towns like West Monroe. The report raises up their experiences: how they’re waiting tables, fixing cars, teaching children, being parents, singing in choirs, cutting hair, growing tomatoes, gathering around kitchen tables, building community, and transforming the places they call home.

The report identifies some of the challenges of being queer in the South: isolation, criminalization, violence, and diminished resources. Yet it also highlights strategies that are producing positive results, and it offers recommendations for strengthening grassroots efforts that incubate and fortify cultures of resilience and revival.

SONG’s report was released in January at the annual Creating Change Conference, alongside another report produced by FIERCE, an organization of LGBTQ youth of color based in New York City. FIERCE’s report, *Moving Up, Fighting Back: Creating a Path to LGBTQ Youth Liberation*, shares results from a national survey and mapping project designed to identify key issues of the LGBTQ youth landscape and, like SONG’s report, suggests positive strategies for future work.

Key issues mentioned by survey participants include criminalization/policing, housing, immigration, and safety and violence (bias violence, school-based violence, and intimate/sexual violence). Many respondents called attention to a lack of adequate social services, including shelter space for gender non-conforming, cis-gendered male, and trans survivors of violence. Notably, though, the report calls for prioritizing community organizing and community-based responses over efforts focused only on the provision of social services. Moreover, it offers a critique of hate-crimes legislation and anti-bullying ordinances, which can exacerbate institutional violence experienced by queer youth of color.

Echoing SONG’s findings, FIERCE also lifts up challenges faced by LGBTQ youth in rural areas, whose needs are often unaddressed by mainstream LGBTQ groups. Such challenges include lack of access to financial aid for immigrants, sexual violence within the context of cruising/pickups, anti-LGBTQ school staff, and anti-trans violence.

Finally, the report highlights positive examples of organizing by queer youth in Denver, New Orleans, Chicago, New York City, and Seattle. These “case studies” are powerful examples of what Ana Conner describes as the mission of groups like FIERCE: “As LGBTQ youth of color, we have to create our own spaces where we are doing the talking and the leading, not just being the issue that’s talked about. Our allies must invest in supporting a youth-led movement that puts us at the center and recognizes our power.”

-Cole Parke and Rebecca Suldan

Public’s Views on Human Evolution

pew research center, december 2013



The American public remains deeply divided over the theory of evolution more than 150 years after Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*. A recent survey by the

Pew Research Center analyzes the polarization and suggests that it is becoming more, not less, entrenched.

The survey and accompanying report examine the percentage of Americans who believe that “humans and other living things have evolved over time” (60 percent) versus those who reject the idea of evolution (33 percent). The survey also found that many people who believe in evolution also believe that “God or a supreme being played a role in the process.” In fact, only half of the respondents who believe in evolution attribute it to “natural processes such as natural selection.”

The report finds that 64 percent of White, evangelical Protestants and 50 percent of Black Protestants believe humans have always existed in their present form. Republicans are less inclined than Democrats to believe that humans have evolved—43 percent versus 67 percent, respectively. Among political independents, the number is 65 percent.

These figures are largely unchanged among Democrats and independents over the past five years. But the number of Republicans who believe in evolution has declined since 2009, when it stood at 54 percent.

The Pew survey also found that younger adults and people with more years of formal schooling are more likely than older generations to believe that humans have evolved over time.

Evolution continues to be a potent culture-war issue, especially as it relates to public-school curricula. Last September, skeptics of the theory of evolution on the Texas Board of Education requested changes to a biology textbook, and creationists in Kansas filed a lawsuit to block the state from adopting a national set of science standards.

-James Lavelle

The Public Eye

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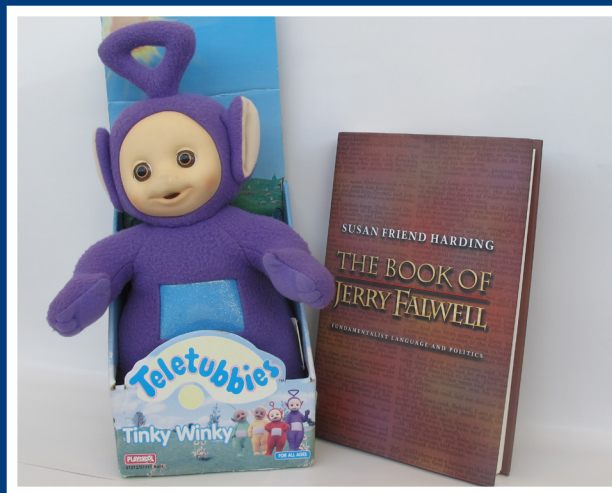
From the Archive

Since 1982, Political Research Associates has been collecting material by and about the Right—books and magazines, marketing appeals, posters, pamphlets, videos, and more. This series illuminates some of the more intriguing pieces in the collection. The library is available for use by qualified researchers; contact PRA for details.

A British television program that aired from 1997 to 2001, *The Teletubbies* featured four creatures. Each had an antenna on its head, a television screen on its stomach, and a distinct name, color, and personality. The show's intended audience was children two and under.

Tinky Winky, Laa-Laa, Dip-sy, and Po lived in a whimsical world and spent their days teaching children how to play well with others. But their happy-go-lucky days were numbered.

In February 1999, fundamentalist Christian pastor Jerry Falwell called out the show for promoting homosexuality. The main culprit? Tinky Winky: "He is purple—the gay-pride color; and his antenna is shaped like a triangle—the gay-pride symbol." Falwell also noted that, despite Tinky Winky's male voice, he carried a red purse. "As a Christian," Falwell elaborated, "I



Tinky Winky: a friendly television character, or a dangerous role model for "the gay lifestyle?" Photo by Cole Parke.

feel that role modeling the gay lifestyle is damaging to the moral lives of children."

A spokesperson for the show explained that Tinky Winky's accessory was in fact a "magic bag," and sought to quell the controversy by saying that "to think we would be putting sexual innuendo in a children's show is kind of outlandish."

The incident became part of Falwell's legacy. When he died in 2007, CNN remembered him not only as the founder of Liberty University and a leading figure of the resurgent Christian Right, but also for his condemnation of

the purple star of toddler television. In 2012, more than a decade after the show had ceased production, a former *Teletubbies* actor made headlines by denying that the show was "laced with gay innuendo." Thanks to Falwell, the culture wars had invaded the playpen.

—Ben Schmidt and Rebecca Suldan

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