

Debunking Centrist/Extremist Theory

How a Discredited Theory Undermines Civil Liberties and Progressive Social Change

by Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons

In the United States the political center routinely demonizes dissidents on the Political Left and Political Right by labeling them “extremists.” As a label, the term extremism is elastic enough to cover everything from nonviolent nuns committing civil disobedience to neonazis gunning down their enemies to terrorist attacks on public facilities.

Rhetoric about “extremists of the left and right,” “religious political extremists,” “lunatic fringe,” “wing-nuts,” etc., undermines civil liberties, civil rights, and civil discourse by demonizing dissent and veiling the complicity we all share in institutionalized forms of oppression in our society including racism, sexism, heterosexism, antisemitism, Arabophobia, and Islamophobia.

In contemporary usage Centrist/Extremist Theory is used to:

- Criminalize and harass political dissidents on the Political Left, especially antiwar activists, radical environmentalists, and left-wing anarchists. This primarily involves government law enforcement

and anti-terror agencies and right-wing ideologues.

- Stigmatize right-wing dissidents in the Patriot and Libertarian movements as involved in illegal anti-government activities. This primarily involves government law enforcement and anti-terror agencies and Liberal ideologues.
- Marginalize Muslims and Arabs as prone to terrorism and involved in the widespread formation of secret terror cells in the United States. This primarily involves right-wing ideologues, the Christian Right, neoconservatives, and some public and private anti-terror agents and trainers.

The use of the term “extremist” became popular in public debates with the rise of an academic analytical model we will call “Centrist/Extremist Theory” in the 1960s. This usage, however, has important consequences in terms of protecting civil liberties, defending the right to dissent across the political spectrum, encouraging vigorous public policy debates, and expanding opportunities for progressive social change.

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Jerome L. Himmelstein, professor of sociology at Amherst College, argues the term “extremism” is at best a characterization that “tells us nothing substantive about the people it labels,” and at worst the term “paints a false picture”.¹

While civil disobedience often involves a minor criminal act, it is not the same as an act of terrorism. Given the way the term “extremist” is sometimes used, it can serve as a justification for state action that is repressive and undermines Constitutional guarantees.

The false framing of a broad range of dissidents as potential terrorists gained widespread public acceptance following the terror attacks on September 11, 2001. Law enforcement agencies now are using the label “extremist” in a way that blurs the distinction between ideologies and methodologies, and suggests that radical ideas inevitably produce violent acts when no such direct causal relationship exists. The vague threat of “extremism” is being used to warn about “Violent Radicalization,” and “Homegrown Terrorism” as part of a campaign to justify the further erosion of civil liberties. Thus a discredited social science model fuels efforts to expand government surveillance, infiltration, and disruption of protected First Amendment activities.

Centrist/Extremist Theory (sometimes called “Classical Theory” or the “Pluralist School”), lumps together non-violent political dissidents, populists of the left and right, supremacists and terrorists into an undifferentiated irrational lunatic fringe threatening society.

The traumatic shocks of the Oklahoma City bombing and the attacks on 9/11 created an unusual dynamic regarding legislative oversight of government policies related to political violence and terror-

ism. According to Haider-Markel and O’Brien, when “anti-paramilitary laws arise out of a perception of the threat posed by armed far-right groups, conservative Republicans, faced with a constituency that supports some issues raised by paramilitary groups, appear to try to limit the scope of anti-paramilitary laws”.²

On the other side of the political aisle, when liberal elites and elected Democratic Party politicians fear the threat of violence more than the threat to civil liberties, they tend to retreat from the normal oversight functions, allowing more repressive actions by the federal government.³ Prior to 9/11, civil libertarians were pushing for an end to “sacrificing civil liberties in the name of national security.”⁴ After 9/11 the fear of more terror attacks by Islamic militants led many conservatives to support even more repressive measures. At the same time many liberal and Democratic Party elites were also scurrying away from challenging repressive measures.

The image of a core group of elites guarding the vital center against irrational dissidents and populists has appealed strongly to many defenders of the status quo, but as a reading of US political traditions it is strikingly twisted and inconsistent. Centrist/Extremist Theory denies the structural oppression at the core of US society; it obscures this country’s long history of brutality and genocide; it lumps popular movements that fight oppression and supremacy with those that reinforce it.

Centrist/Extremist Theory is an outgrowth of “Countersubversion Theory” used during the Cold War Witch Hunts from the late 1940s to the early 1960s to isolate and demonize liberalism and the Political Left. Centrist/Extremist Theory and Countersubversion Theory both tend to wrongly assume there is criminal intent and activity behind all mass

movements that are critical of the government. Both theories wrongly assume widespread surveillance can preemptively discover criminal intent of individuals hiding within mass movements that are critical of the government.

In this study we begin by tracing the development and use of Countersubversion Theory. Then we explore the rise of Centrist/Extremist Theory as a response to the demands of social liberation movements on the Political Left. We examine how government abuses of power are bolstered by these flawed analytical models, and how historic government abuses have flowed from these flawed analytical models. We review how liberals, conservatives, and neoconservatives can sometimes become collaborators with the Political Right in justifying state repression against immigrants and left-wing dissidents.

Countersubversion Theory

Countersubversion Theory was influenced by the nativism of the 1800s and took shape as a form of government repression during nineteenth century industrial struggles and early twentieth century scapegoating of immigrants.⁵

Faced with a rising tide of militant labor activism, corporate elites and state agencies blamed the unrest on a few ringleaders conspiring to foment criminal subversive activity and eventually armed revolution. Following WW1 and the Bolshevik revolution there was a backlash against immigrants to the US from Italy, Russia, and other countries. These immigrants—seen as diluting the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant essence of the culture and nation—were scapegoated for purportedly bringing subversive “alien” ideas such as socialism and anarchism into the country and thus threatening law and order and even national security.⁶

Countersubversion Theory emerged as the analytical model favored by corporate elites and private security firms to enlist state agencies in an effort to repress strikes and civil unrest aimed at industrial worksites and mines. Countersubversion Theory later expanded beyond its early focus on alleged labor agitation and organizing by communists and anarchists to see all dissident social movements arising not from any real social or economic conditions, but as the creation of outside agitators who comprise a cadre at the epicenter of the movement. These leaders use the movement as a front to hide their plans for criminal subversive activity and eventual violent armed revolution.⁷

A key feature of countersubversion identified by historian and civil liberties attorney Frank J. Donner was the focus on individual ringleaders, outside agitators, foreign agents, hidden conspirators, and master manipulators. “The emphasis on individuals—*cherchez la personne!*—plays another quite separate role in the intelligence schema. It personalizes unrest and thus detaches it from social and economic causes. Under this view the people are a contented lot, not given to making trouble until an ‘agitator’ stirs them up. As soon as he or she is exposed or neutralized, all will be well again.”⁸ The solution is to use widespread surveillance and infiltration to penetrate to the core of the movement, expose the criminal cadre, and restore order as the larger movement collapses without the manipulators to urge them to press their grievances which were never significant to begin with.

Countersubversion has been used to guide government intelligence agency policy, provide a mission for organizations and groups, and as an ideology that mobilizes a mass movement. Countersubversion Theory, for instance, has been a guiding ideology of

the FBI in its campaigns against the left, and in its occasional efforts to investigate the far right.

Conspiracist State Repression

Conspiracism is a worldview based on the premise that world history is shaped by a handful of secret conspirators. That conspiracism has flourished episodically throughout US history is well documented.⁹ When conspiracism becomes a mass phenomenon, persons seeking to protect the nation from the alleged conspiracy of subversives gnawing away at the entrails of the society form counter movements—thus the term countersubversion. David Brion Davis noted that movements to counter the “threat of conspiratorial subversion acquired new meaning in a nation born in revolution and based on the sovereignty of the people,” and that in the US, “crusades against subversion have never been the monopoly of a single social class or ideology, but have been readily appropriated by highly diverse groups.”¹⁰

Donner perceived an institutionalized culture of countersubversion in the United States “marked by a distinct pathology: conspiracy theory, moralism, nativism, and suppressiveness.”¹¹ This countersubversion hysteria is linked to government attempts to disrupt and crush dissident social movements in the United States.¹²

The most influential conspiracist theory in the US during the twentieth century was the fear of the Red Menace. Donner argued that the unstated yet actual primary goal of surveillance and political intelligence gathering by state agencies and their countersubversive allies is not amassing evidence of illegal activity for criminal prosecutions, but punishing critics of the *status quo* or the state in order to undermine movements for social change. A major tool used to justify

the anti-democratic activities of the intelligence establishment is propaganda designed to create fear of a menace by an alien outsider. The timeless myth of the enemy “other” assuages ethnocentrist hungers with servings of fresh scapegoats. As Donner noted: “In a period of social and economic change during which traditional institutions are under the greatest strain, the need for the myth is especially strong as a means of transferring blame, an outlet for the despair [people] face when normal channels of protest and change are closed.”¹³

Donner summarized the basic premise:

=== “The American obsession with subversive conspiracies of all kinds is deeply rooted in our history. Especially in times of stress, exaggerated febrile explanations of unwelcome reality come to the surface of American life and attract support. These recurrent countersubversive movements illuminate a striking contrast between our claims to superiority, indeed our mission as a redeemer nation to bring a new world order, and the extraordinary fragility of our confidence in our institutions.

=== “This contrast has led some observers to conclude that we are, subconsciously, quite insecure about the value and permanence of our society. More specifically, that American mobility detaches individuals from traditional sources of strength and identity—family, class, private associations—and leaves only economic status as a measure of worth. A resultant isolation and insecurity force a quest for selfhood in the national state, anxiety about imperiled heritage, and an aggression against those who reject or question it.”¹⁴

Donner used the term “subversification” to describe the process by which dissidents are made out-

laws. In order to justify the continued health of the intelligence empire, new movements would have to go through subversification to “fuel backlash charges that our national security is endangered by a sinister conspiracy of dissidents who have deliberately depleted our intelligence resources to prepare the way for a takeover. Since no evidence of such a conspiracy will emerge, the accusers will exploit, as in the past, its non-existence: Is it not obvious that a cover-up was part of the conspiracy and that the absence of proof demonstrates its effectiveness?”¹⁵ There is also evidence that during these periods of repression, propaganda campaigns seeking to demonize dissident movements are adopted by the mainstream media and serve to insulate the repression from public discussion or criticism.¹⁶

According to Donner, “Intelligence in the United States serves as an instrument for resolving a major contradiction in the American political system: how to protect the status quo while maintaining the forms of liberal political democracy.”¹⁷ Donner explained that “intelligence institutions have in the past acquired strength and invulnerability because of their links to two powerful constituencies: a nativist, anti-radical political culture and an ideological anti-communism, identified with Congress and the executive branch respectively.”¹⁸

Central to rationalizing surveillance and disruption was the fear of revolutionary violence. Donner observed that “appeals relating to collectivism and statism have little power to stir mass response. But the charge of violence, however mythic it has become, is the rock on which the intelligence church is built. It accommodates repression to democratic norms that exclude violent methods.”¹⁹

William R. Kintner's 1950 book *The Front is Everywhere* claimed that the primary communist style of subversion was through a “Communist Fifth Column” involved in otherwise legal “political activity.” According to Kintner, “The Communist plan, as fashioned by Lenin, is always to ‘carry on work that is possible,’ work that will finally end in ‘commencing and carrying out the **national armed insurrection**’”²⁰

Kintner argued that since the ultimate goal of communist subversion is armed revolution and the destruction of the democratic state, it is a national security necessity to ferret out the presence of communists in organizations involved in non-criminal political activity.

Implicit in the rationalizations and justifications for political repression is a package of right-wing countersubversion beliefs with roots deep in xenophobia and nativism. Two key countersubversive theories could be called the theories of the “Slippery Slope” and the “Onion Ring.”

The Slippery Slope Theory of Subversion

According to this countersubversive theory:

- Global liberation movements are not prompted by a genuine response to social conditions but by outside intervention, most often by communists or their proxies.
- Domestic social change movements are not fueled by a genuine response to social conditions but by outside agitators, most often revolutionaries or those under the control of revolutionaries.
- Liberalism is the crest of a slippery slope which leads downhill to the Welfare State, then Socialism, and inevitably to Communism or Totalitarianism.

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- Dissent is provoked by subversion. Subversion is a terrorist movement. Terrorism is criminal.

For the true believers who advocate this view, patriotism equals unquestioning obedience to authority and undying resistance to social change. Surveillance and infiltration are justified to stop the spread of subversion. It's all a plot. Slippery Slope theorists generally also believe in the Onion-ring theory as well.

The Onion-Ring Theory of Subversion

According to this countersubversive theory:

- Subversive cadre bore into the core of all social change movements both at home and abroad.
- To uncover the cadre who are engaged in subversive criminal activity, an informant must work step-by-step from the outside onion ring of non-criminal free-speech activity through several rings of hierarchy toward the center core where the criminal activity lurks.
- Honest though naive activists are often unaware they are being manipulated, and therefore should welcome attempts to expose the core of crafty covert criminal cadre.

The Onion Ring theory is less extreme than the Slippery Slope theory in its concession that some members of radical and liberal political movements are sincere, and not sliding towards totalitarianism. Nonetheless, its advocates also justify surveillance and infiltration to stop the criminal activity at the core of groups exercising their free speech rights.

In fact, in order to insure that at least some agents or informants succeed in penetrating to the criminality at the core, an extraordinary level of invasion becomes not only legitimate, but essential. On-

ion-ringers advocate infiltrating every group, spying on every member, and keeping track of all persons even tangentially involved in all social change movements. Alas, for the domestic political activist, the end result of both the Slippery Slope and Onion Ring theories is the same: political surveillance and infiltration.

While some in the intelligence and law enforcement community clung to the countersubversive model, others adopted a more sophisticated justification, the centrist/extremist model.²¹

During the Cold War, activism by any left group was attributed generally to an alleged global communist conspiracy. Meanwhile rightwing groups were largely excluded from serious scrutiny because they were not perceived to be part of a subversive global revolutionary movement. Acts of right wing violence were consistently treated as isolated occurrences rather than part of a larger pattern. Far right groups such as the Ku Klux Klan were seldom targets of widespread surveillance for political repression—even when violent—but were monitored “primarily for crime prevention purposes,” according to Donner.²²

In some cases state tolerance of right wing violence spilled over to active support. This double standard objectively made “a special contribution to conservative politics,” said Donner, since social change movements of the left could be smeared as agents and fellow travelers of the violent revolutionary global red menace, while activists of the right could escape blame for the criminal excesses of a few reactionary and fascist zealots.

Since evidence of actual wrongdoing is scarce, Donner suggested the intelligence community anticipated threats by relying on “ideology, not behavior, theory not practice. During the Cold War, “The Bureau’s primary intelligence targets [were] various

Marxist persuasions and their adherents.” Now, although the targets are more varied, “the basis for this priority” remains the same. “The selection of targets for surveillance, operations such as informer infiltration and wiretapping, and file storage practices reflect what may be called the politics of deferred reckoning, the need to know all about the enemy in preparation for a life or death showdown” with anti-government forces. “Domestic countersubversive intelligence is,” Donner continues, “in theory, future-oriented: ‘Subversive’ activities are, in the language of the FBI, those ‘aimed at’ a future overthrow, destruction, or undermining of the government, regardless of how legitimate these activities might currently be or how tenuous the link between present intentions and ultimate action.”²³

As targets shifted, the institutionalized procedures remained remarkably constant, merely made more efficient with the advent and advances of computer technology. Most far right activists during this period did not represent a challenge to entrenched systems of power, but in fact defended those systems. This dynamic shifted in the 1990s after the collapse of Soviet communism as large sectors of the conspiracist right targeted alleged subversive traitors in the government and their allies in the UN as the new enemy, helping to justify a new wave of state repression in the form of “anti-terrorist” legislation.

In fact, a transition was taking place. The basic themes of Countersubversion Theory were developed to fight the red menace, but it was increasingly difficult to argue that a subversive leftist network was undermining the country. Far right groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the vigilante *Posse Comitatus* now openly targeted the government as the enemy. As the

Cold War evolved, so did the language used to describe the threat,

In the genesis of witch hunts, subversive begat extremist, which begat terrorist. Donner noted the addition of the term “extremist” to the countersubversive arsenal of demonizing language, and he discussed how the Reagan Administration and the New Right used the term terrorist to marginalize dissident groups and justify targeting them.²⁴ While some in the intelligence and law enforcement community clung to the countersubversive model, others adopted a more sophisticated justification, the centrist/extremist model.²⁵

Centrist/Extremist Theory

Prior to the late 1970s, many academic discussions of right-wing and left-wing popular movements routinely portray such movements as bizarre fringe phenomena fundamentally at odds with the political “mainstream.”

Generally the premise is that the US political system has an essence of democracy and freedom, but that this essence is threatened by “extremists” of one variety or another.

Centrist/Extremist Theory was formulated in the 1950s by liberal and moderate intellectuals such as Daniel Bell, Richard Hofstadter, Nathan Glazer, David Riesman, Seymour Martin Lipset, Earl Raab, Peter Viereck, and Alan Westin.

It was built on several psychological theories about the “authoritarian personality” and the work of Eric Fromm. It borrowed from the work of Hannah Arendt on totalitarianism and mirrored the ideas of Eric Hoffer on the “True Believer.”

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The work of Hofstadter and Arendt have stood up much better over time than the work of most of the other authors of the period.

Many of these authors were members of the circle that would later evolve into the neoconservative intellectual movement. Many of them were former Marxists who had rejected the Popular Front and embraced a militant Cold War anticommunism, yet they defended the New Deal and criticized the “excesses” of Joseph McCarthy’s red-baiting. In books such as Bell’s anthology *The New American Right* (1955) and its expanded edition *The Radical Right* (1963) they glorified the political center against “extremists” at both ends of the spectrum.

Centrist/Extremist theory, especially as outlined by Lipset, Raab, Viereck, and Bell, sees dissident movements of the left and right as composed of outsiders—politically marginal people who have no connection to the mainstream electoral system or nodes of government or corporate power. Social and economic stress snaps these psychologically fragile people into a mode of political hysteria, and as they embrace an increasingly paranoid style they make militant and unreasonable demands. Because they are unstable they can become dangerous and violent. Their extremism places them far outside the legitimate political process, which is located in the center where pluralists conduct democratic debates. The solution prescribed by Centrist/Extremist Theory is to marginalize the dissidents as radicals and dangerous extremists. Their demands need not be taken seriously. Law enforcement can then be relied upon to break up any criminal conspiracies by subversive radicals that threaten the social order.

Centrist/extremist theorists portrayed the political mainstream as an “open democratic market place”²⁶

where a rich array of interest groups competed freely and fairly, and where “the sources of power” were “difficult to locate.”²⁷ The center was a realm of political civility, pragmatism, rationality, and tolerance. The extremes were the opposite of all this: absolutist, moralistic, unrestrained, irrational, and paranoid. “[T]he extreme right,” wrote Hofstadter, “stands psychologically outside the frame of normal democratic politics, which is largely an affair of compromise.”²⁸ The difference could be expressed as one between “*interest politics*, the clash of material aims and needs among various groups and blocs; and *status politics*, the clash of various projective rationalizations arising from status aspirations and other personal motives.”²⁹

From this perspective, differences between the “radical right” and the “radical left” blurred or disappeared altogether. To Bell, far right conspiracy thinking was “cut from the same cloth as vulgar Bolshevik explanation...”³⁰ To Alan Westin, the politics of the John Birch Society were “remarkably similar” to those of the Popular Front in 1945-48.³¹ To Peter Viereck, a centrist conservative, McCarthyism was “actually a leftist instinct behind a *self-deceptive* rightist veneer.”³² A central tenet in the school’s conception of McCarthyism, in fact, was that its roots were not really (or not primarily) conservative, but lay rather in the agrarian radicalism of the 19th-century Populists.

Supposedly the Populists and McCarthy represented the same rural and small-town resentments, centered in the Midwest, against the urbane, intellectual and cosmopolitan East—a crude and dangerous egalitarianism steeped in old-time religion and isolationism. In *The Age of Reform* (1955), Hofstadter depicted Populism as a backward-looking movement obsessed with banker conspiracies—the fount of

20th-century antisemitism in the United States,³³ McCarthyism, centrist/extremist theorists argued, turned this same conspiracy thinking against “alien” ideas instead of “alien” people. In McCarthyism, they argued, “the status-insecure old-family American middle class” was joined by “status-striving minority ethnics” (especially Catholics) anxious to prove their loyalty to the United States.³⁴

Popular movements in general were seen as a threat to freedom because the lower orders lacked the civility and “democratic restraint” of the elites.³⁵

Riesman and Glazer asserted that “civil liberties are protected, not by majority vote (which is overwhelmingly unsympathetic), but by traditional institutions, class prerogatives, and judicial life-tenure.”³⁶ Viereck saw liberty being defended by “tiny, heroic natural-aristocracies and by the majesty—beyond mob majorities—of moral law.”³⁷

Misplaced Focus on Individual Aberration

Over time Centrist/Extremist Theory has created the impression that dissidents are psychologically maladjusted extremists. In the same way racism and antisemitism are seen as primarily a problem of militant supremacists who are psychologically maladjusted—mainly a lunatic fringe of ignorant bigots primarily composed of working-class Whites who are labeled “rednecks.” Similarly, the countersubversion rhetoric of right-wing populist movements is dismissed as reflecting irrational hysteria on the margins of society. These ideas reflected the centrality of individualism and psychological explanation prevalent in the postwar period.

Factor One

In the 1950s the American Jewish Committee sponsored a five-volume *Studies in Prejudice* where the “Nazi Holocaust became a paradigm for all intergroup conflict,” and prejudice was explained as largely a matter of psychologically-determined personality types.³⁸ The keystone of this approach was codified by Theodor W. Adorno and his colleagues in *The Authoritarian Personality*. Two other influential studies commissioned by the AJC included *The Dynamics of Prejudice* by Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz, and *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder* by Nathan W. Ackerman and Marie Jahoda.³⁹ These studies pioneered descriptions of a variety of psychological disorders and categorized different forms of prejudice and discrimination, but wrongly implied that psychological disorders caused prejudice and discrimination, and that authoritarian personalities explained the Political Right.⁴⁰ These ideas popularized the notion of prejudice as primarily “an emotional disorder,” while “[i]ntergroup conflict became a simple matter of ignorance or malice.”⁴¹

Factor Two

Second, the contributors to Bell’s anthologies (and other authors) bridged these psychological theories into history, sociology, and political science. Hofstadter’s essay “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” contains useful descriptions of the content and patterns of conspiracist allegations popular on the US right, but in this and other essays he relied on the AJC studies and wrongly located the phenomenon as primarily a “persistent psychological complex” and “a mentality to see the world in the paranoid’s way” resulting in a “pseudo-conservative revolt” reflecting a “largely unconscious hatred of our society” by ex-

tremist persons who manifested Adorno's "authoritarian personality."⁴² After the centrist/extremist school established its dominance, many analysts went off looking for purely psychological explanations of right-wing behavior.⁴³

Factor Three

Third, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith sponsored several studies of right-wing movements whose members displayed varying degrees of antisemitic and racist beliefs. These books, by Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, accomplished much groundbreaking investigative reporting, and took seriously the institutional networks of what they called the radical right and extreme conservatives.⁴⁴ As their books progressed through the years, however, they increasingly adopted core tenets of centrist/extremist theory, and began losing some of their earlier nuance and shading; reducing their originally complex analysis of conservative, reactionary, and fascist movements to monitoring "the hostility of the Radical left, the Radical Right, pro-Arab groups, black extremists, and a malingering anti-Jewish hatemongering apparatus," as one cover blurb proclaimed.⁴⁵ What most people remember about the Forster and Epstein series are the terms "extremist" and "radical right." One unrelated 1969 study sponsored by ADL concluded that antisemitism was a problem associated with "unenlightened culture."⁴⁶

Centrist/Extremist Theory paved the way for the neoconservative movement, which allied with the Right on issues such as affirmative action, military spending, and gay rights.⁴⁷ Daniel Patrick Moynihan was among the early chief theoretical figures in the neoconservative movement, and his report *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, popularly

called *The Moynihan Report*, set the stage for the backlash against the civil rights movement and women's movement by blaming problems of African Americans on Black family structure.⁴⁸ As Carl Ginsburg points out:

"Sometime toward the end of 1964, as the civil rights movement was losing steam, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an ambitious assistant secretary in the Department of Labor, came forward with a revelation. It appeared to him that black poverty was no longer the result of "external forces," such as general economic conditions, but rather that the black family had inflicted upon itself its own demise such as to render it "disturbed." The structure of the poor black family, rather than of corporate society—its ruling elite, economic organization, social isolation, and racial discrimination—became the focus of understanding black poverty. The problem *became* the black family structure."⁴⁹

Similarly, a prevailing pattern of neoconservatism became the redefinition of social and economic issues in individualized terms.⁵⁰ Centrist/Extremist Theory and neoconservatism reinforced each other while rephrasing conservative and reactionary critiques of social problems in more palatable language. The early emphasis on prejudice as the result of personality disorders by analysts working with the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee flowed easily into the neoconservative point of view, and was circulated widely through AJC's *Commentary* magazine.⁵¹ There were diverse sources of similar analyses, and a resultant was a growing mainstream consensus that social problems were largely the fault of individual character flaws. Racialized imagery was frequently a subtext of the debate, and throughout there was, according to Lucy A. Wil-

liams, a “continuing framing of subtle themes and twisting of information to appeal to white working class resentment of the gains of the civil rights movement and fears of inflation.” Michael Lind notes this diverts “populist anger from Wall Street and the Rich.”⁵²

Scholarly Criticism of Centrist/Extremist Theory

Centrist/Extremist Theory remains the dominant paradigm for discussion of dissidents in the popular media even though numerous historians, political scientists, sociologists, social psychologists, psychologists, and activists have thoroughly undermined its underlying assumptions.⁵³

Criticism of Centrist/Extremist Theory gained significant attention in academia with the publication of Michael Rogin’s 1967 book *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter*.

In a 1987 book, *Ronald Reagan, The Movie: and Other Episodes in Political Demonology*, Rogin picks apart the underlying assumptions in Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab’s 1970 book, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970*, the most ambitious study of the far right written from a centrist/extremist viewpoint. Many specific discussions within this work are intelligent and perceptive, but the overall structure of the book gives a deeply distorted picture of US history.

Rogin, for example, notes that by “emphasizing mobility, interest conflict, immigrant-native rivalries, and status anxiety,” Lipset and Raab obscured the United States’ major divisions of race, class, gender, and institutional power. Thus, states Rogin, the book by Lipset and Raab :

“...not only makes the anti-Catholic, an-

ti-Jewish 1920s Ku Klux Klan into its emblem of countersubversion and ignores that Klan’s anti-Negro predecessor; it also treats the abolitionists as extremists but avoids pro-slavery agitation; it attends to the late nineteenth-century anti-Catholic American Protective Association but is silent on antilabor and anti-Chinese violence in the same period; it expatiates on alleged Populist anti-Semitism while burying the Red scares that swept through the country between 1877 and World War I; it discusses McCarthyism but not the development of a countersubversive state security apparatus; and it has nothing at all to say about women and Indians. Claiming to cover right-wing extremism as a whole, the authors actually attack movements of which they disapprove that were neither right-wing nor extremist, and they cover up a countersubversive tradition that cannot be reduced to religious prejudice, ethnic conflict, and status anxiety.”⁵⁴

Rogin pointed out the status anxieties of the contributors to *The Radical Right* themselves, their sense of vulnerability in the face of McCarthyism and nativism, their tendency to turn “their own autobiographies into American history” while neglecting the structural forces that did not threaten them.⁵⁵ These men were Eastern intellectuals, mostly children of immigrants, many of them former Marxists—squarely in Joe McCarthy’s line of fire. They had strong incentives to embrace and glorify the vital center. The Red Scare came on the heels of the Brown Scare of fascism, and “the great fear of the liberal intellectuals,” as Kazin puts it, was that “social movements of the ill-educated could destroy what made America such a good place in which to live.”⁵⁶ This fear was tied to the understanding that there had been mass support—or at least acquiescence—for the Na-

zi genocide of Jews. Many of those who developed Centrist/Extremist Theory had Jewish backgrounds and had legitimate historic reasons to be suspicious of some mass movements. “And a mere decade after the Holocaust,” Kazin suggests, “there could be no greater fear for Jewish intellectuals than the spread of mass intolerance associated with demagogues on the Right.”⁵⁷ The lesson to those who developed centrist/extremist theory, many of whom would later form the neoconservative movement, was that democracy was too fragile to be trusted in the hands of the people, and it was up to elites and their institutions to preserve a vital center against the waves of maladjusted extremists from both the left and right.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, while this view was convenient for centrist intellectuals and elites, it was overly self-congratulatory. As historian Leo Ribuffo put it:

“...polemical convenience conflicted with historical accuracy. Grafting Brown Scare themes onto Cold War premises, authorities on extremism assumed that their political *prescription*, a center untainted by far right and far left, was also an accurate *description* of past politics.”⁵⁹

Ribuffo noted that the postwar “centrists suffered from inflated expectations regarding elites. While repeating the truism that persons threatened economically and psychologically were more likely than their comfortable neighbors to assail scapegoats, leading students of extremism missed the connection between far right activists and irresponsible, intolerant elites.”⁶⁰ For instance, interwar far right leaders “borrowed their antiradical rhetoric from presidents, senators, attorneys general, corporate executives, and labor leaders,” according to Ribuffo, who suggested that proponents of the “vital center” romanticized elites as much as those on the left who romanticized

“The People.”⁶¹ It’s striking, for instance, that Daniel Bell offered Theodore Roosevelt, of all people, as a prime example of the center’s “pragmatic give-and-take” politics.⁶² This was the same Roosevelt who called for labor organizer Eugene Debs to be “placed before a stone wall and shot,” denounced White women refusing to have children as “criminal[s] against the race,” and praised the “fighting instinct” of “the mighty civilized races,” “which by their expansion are gradually bringing peace into the red wastes where the barbarian peoples of the world hold sway.”⁶³ Theodore Roosevelt would doubtless have applauded Bell’s assertion that, “The politics of civility...has been the achievement of only a small group of countries—those largely within an Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian political tradition.”⁶⁴

In praising Teddy Roosevelt as a model of tolerance and compromise, Bell was referring to Roosevelt’s behavior toward other affluent White men. Roosevelt’s treatment of workers, women, and “barbarian peoples” did not need to be considered in assessing his political demeanor because, in Bell’s framework, these groups were of marginal importance. Not being full players in the centrist game of give-and-take, they were outside the realm of “real” political action.

The very categories centrist/extremist scholarship used to distinguish the center from the extremes were arbitrary and inconsistent. If “irrationality” and failure to understand practical limits are the marks of the extremist, then anyone who preaches the Horatio Alger myth of upward mobility would surely qualify.⁶⁵ If “paranoid” conspiracy thinking is the test, then Franklin Roosevelt was an extremist, since he believed that bankers secretly controlled the US government.⁶⁶ Similarly, when the patrician conservative

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Henry Cabot Lodge described William Jennings Bryan's 1896 presidential campaign as "a well-drawn and carefully thought out scheme based on socialistic and anarchistic theories imported from Europe" he showed that conspiracist paranoia has been very much at home in the political center.⁶⁷

At the same time, the image of right-wing extremism as an irrational popular movement obscures the fact that rightist movements generally embody concrete, "rational" interests, and that elites often play a key role in them. For example, Bell and his colleagues saw McCarthyism as a pathological mass revolt against democratic institutions and leaders. But as Rogin pointed out, "the masses did not levy an attack on their political leaders; the attack was made by a section of the political elite against another and was nurtured by the very elites under attack."⁶⁸ Hofstadter, Lipset, and others, arguing that economic and political factors could not account for McCarthyism, turned to "status anxiety" and other psychological explanations. In the process, they hid the perfectly normal power struggle involved—particularly a comeback effort by rightist business forces against the Eastern elite liberals who had unseated them in the 1930s.⁶⁹ Centrist/Extremist Theory insulated the state, corporate interest, and bipartisan elites from criticism.

Sara Diamond is critical of Centrist/Extremist Theory for erroneously labeling the intra-elite power struggle during the McCarthy period as populist, and then labeling as "extremist" the electoral right-wing social movements that emerged after the McCarthy period:

"Popular right-wing groups like the John Birch Society emerged only in the late 1950s, well after political elites had turned the pursuit of "communist subversion" into a

national religion. By then, polite society was keen to depict wild-eyed Birchers as "extremists," even as they played by democratic rules and helped win the [1964] Republican [presidential] nomination for Barry Goldwater."⁷⁰

Demographic and attitudinal studies of Birch Society members and Goldwater supporters showed they were not marginal misfits but had above average education and income and were over-represented with professionals such as doctors and lawyers.⁷¹ Himmelstein argued that right wing organizing drives "were not episodic eruptions of mindless anger and pain. They were part of the sustained growth of a continuous social movement with a clear, systematic ideology that led ultimately to the New Right and the New Religious Right."⁷²

Centrist/Extremist Theory ignores real power struggles in the society. It stifles a healthy public debate over how to unravel systems of oppression, allows individuals to ignore their own complicity in oppressive behavior, and obscures the supremacist forces woven into our society's central institutions. Racism, sexism, homophobia, and antisemitism—along with other forms of supremacist ideology—are not the exclusive domain of marginal and militant organized hate groups, but are domiciled in mainstream culture and politics.

James A. Aho points out how easy it is "to dismiss racism and religious bigotry as products of craziness or stupidity," but that such a view is not accurate. According to Aho, "Evidence from field research on Pacific Northwest racists and bigots shows that in the main they are indistinguishable from their more conventional peers, intellectually and educationally."⁷³ Aho also observes that with the exception of those who engaged in politically-motivated mur-

ders, the racists and bigots he studied “appear within the bounds of normal, psychologically.”

The centrist/extremist approach to the racist Right has not “abolished the movement, nor diminished racism in general, and may, in fact, unwittingly support racist beliefs,” suggests Abby L. Ferber. “While the focus is on the fringe, mainstream, everyday racism remains unexamined.” Ferber argues that a discussion is needed on the “points of similarity between white supremacist discourse and mainstream discourse,” especially since “White supremacist discourse gains power precisely because it rearticulates mainstream racial narratives.”⁷⁴ Raphael S. Ezekiel agrees, noting that organized White racism exploits feelings of “lonely resentment.”⁷⁵ It does this by weaving together ideologies already present in mainstream culture: “white specialness, the biological significance of ‘race,’ the primacy of power in human relations” along with “the feeling of being cheated.”⁷⁶

The continued uncritical reliance on Centrist/Extremist Theory has hampered the development of new and more effective ways of understanding and challenging prejudice, discrimination, and oppression; especially given the development of new and more sophisticated strategies and tactics by groups promoting ethnocentrism, xenophobia, supremacy and fascism.

At the same time, Centrist/Extremist Theory has directed attention away from the long tradition of countersubversion in government agencies such as the FBI. Rogin, a key critic of centrist/extremist theory, considered the “development of a countersubversive state security apparatus” an important feature in US society. Richard O. Curry and Thomas M. Brown noted that “Sociological and psychological interpretations...used by scholars to explain the appeal of anti-

conspiracy crusades...are open to the objection that they make fears of conspiracy solely the work of an extremist, usually right-wing fringe of society,” when such “(f)ears of subversion are very much a part of mainstream politics.”⁷⁷

If you were to ask the average law enforcement officer or prosecutor whether or not they subscribe to Countersubversion Theory or Centrist/Extremist Theory you would most likely get a quizzical stare. Within government circles these analytical models are not known by name, they are described as representing “common knowledge.” Political troublemakers are “extremists” out to subvert the legitimate government by “rabble-rousing.” That there is a history or ideological content to these notions is seldom, if ever, examined. Yet these analytical models play a powerful role in how prosecutors develop their theory of the case and their reconstruction of the events that led to the defendant being in court facing charges.

In many ways Centrist/Extremist Theory was a sophisticated re-statement of the earlier Countersubversion Theory, with slightly less reliance on authoritarian measures and slightly more reliance on other forms of social control such as mass propaganda to build a centrist consensus.

The Value of Social Movement Theory

Emerging as a criticism of Centrist/Extremist Theory and Countersubversion Theory is a collection of newer theories which include the “political process model,” “resource mobilization theory” and “new social movement theory, among others.”⁷⁸

As analysts who are exploring new ways to study dissent, we see mass movements as composed of people motivated by a sense of grievance—

legitimate or illegitimate—who mobilize to seek redress of their grievances through a variety of methods including, but seldom limited to, the electoral process. This view sees most participants in social and political movements as being able to organize others using rational and effective strategies and tactics—even if their mobilization is based on grievances that are primarily irrational and conspiracist, illegitimate and prejudiced, or in defense of disproportionate access to power, wealth, and privilege.

A basic point of departure for our study is our view that right-wing movements are a normal part of US political traditions, that they are subject to the same basic dynamics as other movements, and that their members are for the most part regular people motivated by a combination of material and ideological grievances and aspirations.⁷⁹ We see dissidents on the left following the same pattern.

One synthesis of various social movement theories developed by John C. Green of the Ray Bliss Center at the University of Akron, Ohio, argues that all mass movements of dissent arise through a combination of four factors:

- A discontented group of politicized persons who have grievances they wish addressed.
- A core group of strategic leaders and local activists that effectively mobilize the politicized persons using available resources.
- The recruitment of politicized persons into the movement through pre-existing social networks.
- The availability of opportunities in the social and political environment exploitable by movement leaders and activists. 80

These new ideas about social movements contradict both Countersubversion Theory and centrist/extremist theory, and call into question

longstanding government assumptions about the essentialist criminal nature of dissident movements. When litigating against government prosecution of dissidents, attorneys should resist prosecution attempts to offer briefs, evidence, or witnesses that would bring these flawed notions into the courtroom; and be prepared to counter these ideas and arguments.

How Historic Government Abuses Flow From Flawed Analytical Models

Repressive Aspects of Centrist/Extremist Theory

Intelligence Requirements for the 1990's: Collection, Analysis, Counterintelligence, and Covert Action edited by Roy Godson⁸¹ was a collection of hard-line recommendations which provided what academic Diana Reynolds calls a “blueprint for creating a virtual U.S. police state”. This shopping list for the guardians of post-Constitutional America is a sequel to the equally-onerous *Intelligence Requirements for the 1980's* which was used as a guide by the Reagan administration. Godson authored a 1993 report *Assessing Accusations That U.S. Journalists Worked For Moscow: Criteria for Testing “Agents of Influence” Charges*. Godson, an associate professor at Georgetown University, coordinates the Consortium for the Study of Intelligence, a group devoted to finding rationalizations for perpetuating the primary role of intelligence agencies in our country's foreign and domestic policy debates. The Consortium spawned the Working Group on Intelligence Reform which publishes reports such as “The FBI's Changing Missions in the 1990's.”

Covert Cadre: Inside the Institute for Policy Studies by S. Steven Powell .⁸² demonstrates that right-wing paranoid conspiracy theories continue to be treated seriously in some circles. Here a Washington-based left-leaning think tank, the Institute for Policy Studies, was portrayed as a den of communist subversives plotting with KGB agents to bring down the government.

The Bush Administration continued the domestic counter-subversive intelligence policies of the Reagan Administration, and there was little reason to believe the situation would change under the Clinton Administration.

There are many influential groups and individuals that use Centrist/Extremist Theory as an analytical model, although many are unaware of the basis of their views given the way Centrist/Extremist Theory has established itself as the dominant paradigm.

When President Bill Clinton spoke about the “vital center,” he is echoing centrist/extremist theory. When the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith justifies its private collection of surveillance files it is based on the concepts of centrist/extremist theory. When the Southern Poverty Law Center supports intrusive federal probes of the racist right, it is relying on criminalizing aspects of centrist/extremist theory. When women’s rights and pro-choice groups support the use of the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) to prosecute militant anti-abortion protesters, they are endorsing the repressive aspects of centrist/extremist theory.

The Patriot and Armed Militia Movements of the 1980s & 1990s

Based on countersubversion myth and the false portrayal of all members of the armed militia movement as extremists—even terrorist neonazis, the Clinton administration pushed through the “Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996,” called by civil liberties activists a “draconian” piece of legislation “which places the Bill of Rights and other constitutional protections at grave risk.”⁸³ This repressive legislation received support from several leading human relations groups that argued it would help curb the threat of violence from the militias. There was no evidence to support this claim, and the bulk of the legislation had been written and rejected prior to the Oklahoma City bombing. The legislation was supported by politicians pointing to militia involvement in the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City and the terrorist bombing of the TWA flight that exploded near New York while en route to Paris. There is no current evidence to tie militias to the Oklahoma City bombing or terrorists to the crash of the airplane.

Groups that have consciously and unconsciously adopted the countersubversion model promoted by Centrist/Extremist Theory were quick to call for increased government power to fend off the perceived threat to law and order posed by the armed militia movement. Calls to unleash the FBI were especially strident following the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City.

A typical example was a *Wall Street Journal* column by Max Boot who reached back to the countersubversion scapegoating of earlier times. Boot

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suggested that a wave of serious anarchist terrorism began with opposition to US participation in World War One. According to Boot, “From 1914 to 1917, anarchists set off a number of blasts in New York and Boston. Most didn’t cause any major injuries, but a 1917 explosion in Milwaukee killed 10 policemen,”⁸⁴ Boot then implied that the widespread government repression of the post-WWI period was at least mitigated by what Boot sees as the successful crushing of the dangerous subversive anarchist terror movement. He then draws parallels to right-wing militias of today and suggests their potential for terror can best be handled by granting the government sweeping powers of surveillance and infiltration. But reliable accounts of the period after WWI differ with Boot’s description of events. He is using a popular countersubversion myth to justify new state repression.⁸⁵

Even Louis F. Post, the Labor Department official who signed the deportation order for anarchist Emma Goldman after the Palmer Raids in 1919-1920, later wrote a book where he argued that no evidence of a widespread subversive conspiracy among anarchist immigrants ever emerged:

“It seemed to me at the time, and the impression has been deepened by subsequent developments, that if there were any alien conspirators in the United States who were at all dangerous to its institutions, its free institutions, the detectives of the Department of Justice did not ‘hit their trail’....Cases in which there was substantial proof of any unlawful act with sinister intent or guilty knowledge were exceptions—very rare exceptions.”

Of course, even if the government had found a criminal conspiracy among so-called “aliens” the

broad draconian dragnet of the Palmer Raids would still have been a civil liberties nightmare.

Embracing the conspiracist countersubversion myth woven into Centrist/Extremist Theory justifies state repression. It encourages us to look the other way when militant rightists are gunned down without benefit of trial by law enforcement officers. This has happened repeatedly in recent years, not only with the Weaver family at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992 and the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, in 1993, but also in a series of killings of rightists starting with the farm crisis in the 1980s. These included Gordon Kahl, a rightist tax protester who became a *Posse Comitatus* organizer, killed in 1983; and Robert Mathews, a leader of the violent White Supremacist group The Order, killed in 1984.⁸⁶ Both these people were despicable racists and antisemites, but that did not justify the government’s gross misjudgments and casual use of deadly force that resulted in their deaths.

There has also been the use of questionable legal tactics, such as the prosecution on charges of seditious conspiracy of White supremacist leaders in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. The witnesses who testified about the alleged conspiracy were so dubious that the case was rejected by jurors who found the defendants not guilty.⁸⁷ During the McCarthy period charges of criminal seditious conspiracy were used in the political witch hunt against communism. When the government announced the sedition trial of White supremacists in Fort Smith, Arkansas, one person to object was Arthur Kinoy, a well-known leftist civil rights attorney and respected constitutional scholar who has argued cases before the US Supreme Court. Kinoy, who had defended persons charged with communist sedition in the 1950’s, agreed the White supremacists in the Ft. Smith case were “disgusting,” but he said

“I’m worried about the charge of sedition against anyone.” Kinoy expressed concern with the legal charge of sedition, noting its historical use by the government to attack all dissent, especially on the left.⁸⁸

Silverglate agreed:

“I know it is a tricky and emotional issue, but sedition is a very serious charge, and to bring it in the Aryan Nations case at Fort Smith was patently absurd. You can’t be cheering when the government brings a charge of sedition against the Aryan Nations crowd and then be complaining when they bring it against your friends.

We must recognize that fear of government repression is not just paranoia. Government officials to this day refuse to admit that negligent bureaucratic brutality at Ruby Ridge, Idaho against the Weaver family and at Waco, Texas against the Branch Davidians could cause any citizen to be distrustful or cynical about government. These were clear examples of government misconduct and abuse of power. The answer to the resurgent right should never be allowing the government to curtail civil liberties. It is wrong philosophically, and it gives the government a huge new club to beat up on leftwing dissidents—the more typical victims of government repression.

RICO and Anti-abortion Terrorism

The Supreme Court in 1994 expanded RICO by allowing its use by the National Organization of Women (NOW) in a lawsuit against anti-abortion zealot Joseph M. Scheidler. Jeff Builta is Director of Analytical Studies at the Office of International Criminal Justice, a law enforcement research and training facility based at the University of Illinois at Chicago. As Builta observes:

“The government has been hailed by many in and out of the pro-choice movement for taking a tough stance on the issue by using RICO and FACE legislation and opening conspiracy investigations. Others say such measures infringe on Constitutionally protected rights to freedom of assembly and free speech, and that the government actions are making martyrs out of those convicted, and militants of those with strong beliefs.”

A number of individuals and groups from the peace and social justice community joined with anti-abortion activists to condemn the ruling as repressive. An ad in *The New York Times* (which included endorsements by Erwin Knoll, editor of *The Progressive*, peace activist Liz McAlister of Plowshares, and Leonard Peltier of the American Indian Movement) condemned the “draconian” potential of the decision:

“An amicus brief filed by animal rights activists, homeless advocates and environmentalists, warned that an overbroad interpretation of RICO would surely precipitate an unwarranted interference in political and social advocacy, interference never intended by Congress when it enacted RICO.”

“Prosecutors and civil plaintiffs opposed to social change, or to a particular social conviction, now possess an ominous weapon for silencing unpopular causes...[w]e have no doubt they will use this weapon....The application of federal racketeering laws against protesters is a frightful assault against First Amendment guarantees of free speech.”

The irony here is that when the political tide shifts, RICO will inevitably be used against some of the same groups now championing its use against the Political Right.

The San Francisco Spying Scandal

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith has maintained close relationships with law enforcement intelligence units nationwide for many years. This is consistent with the organization's reliance on Centrist/Extremist Theory which assumes criminal intent on the part of militant dissidents. This analytical model, coupled with the increased influence within ADL of neoconservative political ideology, led ADL to engage in data collection practices that reflected a serious disregard for civil liberties and privacy rights.

In 1993 it was revealed that an ADL operative in San Francisco, Roy Bullock, collected and traded information in a covert spy network involving the San Francisco police, some 20 other California police departments, and police departments outside of California.⁸⁹ Bullock began working for ADL in 1954, and became a paid informer in 1960. Over 30 years Bullock compiled a huge computerized data bank including files on close to 1,000 groups and 10,000 individuals. Bullock provided information to the FBI, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and sold information on anti-apartheid activists to both South African agents and ADL. One Bullock source, former San Francisco Police Intelligence Unit detective Thomas Gerard, had also worked for the CIA in El Salvador, and provided information to South African agents.⁹⁰

It was shown that Bullock had not just monitored bigots, but political adversaries such as leftists and critics of Israel.⁹¹

“There is evidence that Bullock had compiled “pinko” files on hundreds of liberal social action organizations with no relationship to bigotry, including

Greenpeace, the NAACP, Act Up, New Jewish Agenda, and the Center for Investigative Reporting.”⁹²

ADL's first response was to claim the charges were overblown and being exploited by antisemites to hamper its work. This stance intentionally conflated the complaints of bigots with issues raised by legitimate civil libertarians and principled political critics.⁹³ ADL later implied that the case was thoroughly investigated, and that ADL was not found to have engaged in any wrongdoing.⁹⁴ This is simply false. ADL agreed to a settlement in the case where it was not forced to admit guilt, but accepted an injunction against certain data collection practices, which is hardly the same as being found innocent.⁹⁵ That the charges were never seriously investigated was documented in a scathing report, *A Conspiracy of Silence: San Francisco's Failure to Address Police Intelligence Abuses*, by ACLU attorney John M. Crew.⁹⁶

ADL's leadership defends centrist/extremist theory, its reliance on the countersubversion model, and its partnership with intelligence agencies.⁹⁷ This isolates many on its own staff who are deeply committed to both civil rights and civil liberties, and who produce excellent reports on topics such as skinhead violence and Holocaust revisionism.⁹⁸ In some instances, local ADL offices have ignored directives from the national ADL office, and joined broad-based community coalitions in fighting bigotry. Yet the national leadership defends data collection practices and covert information trading networks with government law enforcement agents that appear to circumvent Congressional attempts to limit the intrusion of government surveillance into protected First Amendment activities of dissidents.

ADL's role in the San Francisco spy scandal was hardly unique. The organization has long bragged about its close working relationship with many government intelligence agencies. Many of these agencies have a history of back-door information-trading relationships with right wing countersubversion groups.⁹⁹ A good example of how networking takes place in this shadowy world is to show how ADL crossed paths with right-wing spymaster John Rees.

The John Rees Network

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Rees, and his wife, Sheila Louise Rees, coordinated a network of informers who spied on peace and social justice groups (sometimes even pilfering files and internal documents from groups such as the National Lawyers Guild). The informers turned the information over to Rees who publishing it in his *Information Digest*, a secret newsletter sent to clients ranging from the New York State Police to the FBI to the John Birch Society.¹⁰⁰ In the 1980s Rees helped create the information-gathering apparatus for the Western Goals Foundation, later sued by the ACLU for one of Rees' projects: creating a computerized database indexing files on leftists stolen from the LA police.¹⁰¹ During Reagan's first term, ADL joined a network of conservative and Christian Right groups and government intelligence agencies to covertly plan and carry out a domestic propaganda campaign to bolster public support for Reagan administration Central America policies.¹⁰² This effort was part of a larger campaign designed by CIA director William Casey, Oliver North, and others to use private groups, such as the Western Goals Foundation, to carry out domestic propaganda functions to support foreign covert intelligence operations.¹⁰³

After Western Goals folded in 1983, Rees and his associates pursued a close working relationship with ADL staff through several countersubversive organizations including Mid-Atlantic Research Associates and The Maldon Institute, which in 1993 publicized the fact that it received financial support from "public-spirited foundations including the Allegheny Foundation, The Carthage Foundation, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith..."¹⁰⁴ The Maldon Institute's Advisory board included a number of key right-wing countersubversives, including:

- Dr. D. James Kennedy, a leading Christian right activist and co-founder of the Moral Majority. Kennedy endorsed a book that alleged the Illuminati Freemasons and Jewish bankers were behind US liberalism's attack on morality;¹⁰⁵
- Raymond Wannall, past president of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers and a former assistant director of the FBI. Wannall led a campaign to justify the acts of government agents charged with illegally spying on the left;¹⁰⁶
- Robert Moss, a journalist who gained fame suggesting that Soviet agents controlled a variety of left and liberal groups;¹⁰⁷

ADL's participation in the right-wing countersubversion network has specific consequences. ADL does not maintain a single research library or repository of information open to the general public, and progressives are routinely denied access to the same private ADL archives usually opened to conservatives and government agents.¹⁰⁸ ADL's embrace of centrist/extremist theories has not only allied it politically with neoconservatism, but shifted its analysis of bigotry to the right.¹⁰⁹ At times ADL has soft-peddled allegations of bigotry against Republicans and anti-communists,¹¹⁰ while red-baiting other social crit-

ics,¹¹¹ even attacking another human relations watchdog group, the progressive Center for Democratic Renewal.¹¹²

Because ADL is the largest and most-quoted human relations group in the US, it continuously legitimizes the flawed analytical model of Centrist/Extremist Theory while covertly engaging in the intrusive surveillance activities justified by the analytical model of countersubversion.

Liberal & Neoconservative Cooperation with State Repression

The dynamic of state repression based on countersubversion and centrist/extremist analytical models involves not only conservative and reactionary forces but the periodic cooperation of their liberal and neo-conservative allies.

Neoconservatism is a political movement of former liberals who rejected the methods (and many of the demands) of the social liberation movements and the New Left in the 1960's and 1970's.

Centrist/Extremist Theory gives an excuse for liberals and neoconservatives to tolerate state repression as a necessary last resort to protect democracy from the mob. So when mass movements form that challenge elite control of various social and political institutions, the reactionaries, conservatives, neoconservatives, and liberals find themselves as strange (and fickle) bedfellows. So not only does Centrist/Extremist Theory insulate the political system from criticism, but its concept of irrational subversives undermining the idealized center helps provide a justification for state repression.

It is important to recognize that the US Political Right is complex and not monolithic. William B. Hixson, Jr. noted the fluid and complex nature of the

US Right, pointing out that “[T]here are many conflicts in which ‘elites’ and ‘masses’ both divide, with segments of each interacting with those among the other with whom they agree.”¹¹³ Sara Diamond argues there are distinct sectors of the right that are sometimes system supportive and sometimes system oppositional and they form shifting alliances based on shared goals that vary across time and topic.¹¹⁴ When “system supportive,” right wing countersubversion movements are often embraced by the state, in part because they spread conspiracist scapegoating in defense of the status quo.

William W. Keller argues that in times of widespread social unrest, liberals retreat from their oversight function as protectors of civil liberties and allow authoritarian methods to restore order and defend the state.¹¹⁵ While we question the overall track record of liberals on civil liberties, we agree that liberals show less commitment during certain periods of social crisis. The way this works depends on the historic moment and the nature of the social unrest.

- When right-wing groups become system oppositional, they are no longer allies of the state but enemies of the state. Liberals then rally behind the state and tolerate (or openly support) repressive measures to limit the system-oppositional activity of the rightists.
- During periods when liberals and radicals share a criticism of the state that is not shared by rightists, law enforcement agencies often forge ties with system-supportive right wing groups (even clandestine paramilitary units) in extralegal campaigns against progressive and radical movements that shift the momentum of the criticism toward liberal reforms or simply crush dissent to buttress the status quo.¹¹⁶

- When progressive or radical left forces gain a mass following for demands that would radically transform the existing economic or political system, liberals often rally behind the state and tolerate (or openly support) repressive measures to limit the system-oppositional activity of the leftists. The same is true when left and right both raise criticisms of the state.

The embrace of Centrist/Extremist Theory by mainstream groups such as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), Southern Poverty Law Center, and Simon Wiesenthal Center, helps to explain why these groups develop close ties to law enforcement and intelligence agencies in the US.

This overly close and often covert relationship with law enforcement limits criticism by some human relations groups of institutionalized forms of prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. This is especially true with police misconduct that frequently involves racism.¹¹⁷ Some human relations groups engage in questionable activities such as the collection of names and auto license plate numbers of dissidents attending meetings. This information is then made available to law enforcement and intelligence agencies that generally are prohibited from collecting such data without evidence of criminal intent.

Post 9/11

Huntington's Clash of "Civilizations"

\\Islamophobia has become a ubiquitous with its nadir in trade books such as *Infiltration: How Muslim Spies and Subversives have Penetrated Washington*.¹¹⁸ The scholarly version of this genre is often traced to Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civiliza-*

tions and the Remaking of World Order.¹¹⁹ Communitarian Amitai Etzioni depreciated this and later work by Huntington, describing him as a "systematic and articulate advocate of nationalism, militaristic regimes, and an earlier America in which there was one homogenous creed and little tolerance for pluralism".¹²⁰ Harsher critics use terms such as xenophobia, nativism, racism, and chauvinism.

\\Tony Perkins linked liberal evildoers with Islamic extremists.¹²¹

This linkage of liberalism with a failure to confront terrorism is effective. Cass R. Sunstein in the *New Republic* points out that by "by stoking fear, Republicans gain an edge over Democrats." Sunstein reports:

===The London air terrorist plot has touched off endless debate, much of it centering on politics: Will it help Republicans or Democrats in 2006 and beyond? Republicans say that national security is a winning issue for them; Democrats say the same thing. Social science evidence strongly suggests that the Republicans are right, because the politics of terrorism touches a chord that produces much more support for them than for Democrats: our own mortality. A crucial question is whether Democrats will be able to change the underlying dynamics.¹²²

And this brings us back to the Culture Wars and its intersection with Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis, which provides grounds for a coalition between the Christian Right and the Neoconservatives over Middle East policy, the war on terrorism, and suspicion of Islamic movements. This binds both sectors of the Right to support of the Bush Administration. In addition, a significant number of conservative Christian Evangelicals are Christian Zionists

who view Islamic terrorism, the struggles in the Middle East, and Israel through the lens of apocalyptic millennialism, in which all too often, Islam is portrayed as a false religion in league with the Satanic Antichrist in the End Times.¹²³

Ray Taras studies how “in western Europe the rise of xenophobia is nearly synonymous with the anti-immigrant backlash,” especially against non-Europeans and “people who are not racially Caucasian or religiously Judeo-Christian.”⁴¹ Taras traces the development of “phobias” built around ethnic hierarchies in which prejudice against immigrants—especially asylum seekers—is notably high. He sees great anxiety produced by the transition from Old Europe to New Europe.⁴² Berezin sees in New Europe forms of right-wing populism emerging to craft new stable identities which are themselves a reaction against immigration which brings strange people and foreign ideas—the very root of the term xenophobia.⁴³

In the United States similar anti-immigrant movements which grew stronger in the 1990s focused their antagonism primarily towards Mexicans.⁴⁴ According to Doug Brugge, an “important ingredient in the success of the Right’s anti-immigrant campaign is its ability to deflect anger about any negative effects of the U.S. economic, environmental or cultural situation onto the scapegoat of immigrants. This tactic nests within a larger goal of capturing political gain by exploiting a popular issue.”⁴⁵

In both Europe and the United States antipathy towards Muslims remains high.⁴⁶ Fear of Muslims in the United States predates the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, with a prime example being *The Clash of Civilizations* by Samuel Huntington.⁴⁷ Centrist communitarian Amitai Etzioni criticized Huntington for being a “systematic and articulate advocate of nationalism, militaristic regimes, and an earlier America in which there was one homogenous creed and little tolerance for pluralism.”⁴⁸ Others simply condemn the late Huntington as an Islamophobe. Anti-Muslim

sentiments in the United States are primarily produced by the neoconservative intellectual movement and the Christian Right.⁴⁹

Chairman Lieberman’s “War on Terror”

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the Independent Democrat from Connecticut who is closely affiliated with neoconservative-led advocacy efforts to push an expansive “war on terror” in the Middle East, is using his position as chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security to push hardline U.S. foreign and domestic counterterrorism policies that undermine First Amendment rights for dissidents across the political spectrum—and could have potentially far ranging implications for how the United States prosecutes the “war on terror” abroad.

Lieberman, whose advocacy of hawkish Mideast policies also includes support for aggressive Israeli unilateral action in struggles with Palestinians inside and outside current borders, has been stage-managing a one-sided theatrical presentation of witnesses at committee hearings for the past year, with the cast primarily consisting of hardline counterterrorism experts warning of new threats of Islamic terrorism targeting the United States. In this effort Lieberman has allied himself with neoconservatives and appears to be not only supporting the hard line of the current Bush administration, but engineering public policy discussion to influence the next administration in the White House, whether it is occupied by a Republican or Democrat.

On May 8, 2008, Lieberman’s Committee on Homeland Security publicly released a report, “Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorism Threat.”¹²⁴ As the title indicates, the

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committee is concerned with “how violent Islamist terrorist groups like al-Qaeda are using the Internet to enlist followers into the global violent Islamist terrorist movement and to increase support for the movement, ranging from ideological support, to fundraising, and ultimately to planning and executing terrorist attacks.”

The committee is not alone in worrying about what it calls a “dangerous trend” in threats from both within and outside the United States. Its report cites February testimony by Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell, who said at a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence: “Over the next year, attacks by ‘homegrown’ extremists inspired by militant Islamic ideology but without operational direction from al-Qa’ida will remain a threat to the United States or against U.S. interests overseas. The spread of radical Salafi Internet sites that provide religious justification for attacks, increasingly aggressive and violent anti-Western rhetoric and actions by local groups, and the growing number of radical, self-generating cells in Western countries that identify with violent Salafi objectives, all suggest growth of a radical and violent segment among the West’s Muslim populations.... The al-Qaida-propagated narrative of an ‘us versus them’ struggle serves both as a platform and a potential catalyst for radicalization of Muslims alienated from the mainstream U.S. population.”¹²⁵

Dubiously, the report claimed to have discovered how “to fully identify the best way to combat this threat” by outlining the “the process by which individuals or groups of individuals are radicalized to become violent Islamist extremists.” As evidence, the report cited New York City Police Department (NYPD) “research into homegrown terrorism cases in

the United States and around the world” and testimony by Marc Sageman, Foreign Policy Research Institute fellow and NYPD “scholar in residence” on the subject of terrorism. The theories of the NYPD and Sageman, however, have been widely criticized as flawed and even sloppy.¹²⁶ Concluding that, “there is no cohesive and comprehensive outreach and communications strategy in place to confront this threat,”¹²⁷ the report’s apparent subtext is to impose a narrow and faulty analytical model across the entire set of federal agencies concerned with foreign policy and terrorism and encourage them to export this misguided model in future outreach and propaganda efforts.

A broad array of critics immediately condemned the report, complaining that its analysis was dangerously thin, that it stereotyped Muslims, and that it threatened freedom of expression, civil liberties, and civil rights. Said the ACLU, “Though the need to prevent criminal acts of violence is unquestionable, targeting communities based on religious beliefs is unacceptable and unproductive. We will only end up stigmatizing the Islamic community and creating a nation of Islamophobes. We should not be legislating against thought and we should certainly not be regulating religious or unpopular thought.”¹²⁸

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and Muslim Advocates sent the committee a letter critical of the report, asking for a dialogue.¹²⁹ “Given that only one of nineteen witnesses before the Committee represented the American Muslim community,” the letter writers noted, “we also urge you to include representative American Muslims at future hearings on Islam or the American Muslim communi-

ty.” The letter argued that the report sabotaged its own goals: “Unfortunately, the Committee’s report undermines fundamental American values (as well as its own stated recommendations) by encouraging alienating suspicion of several million Americans on the basis of their faith. Contrary to Secretary [Michael] [Chertoff]’s recommendations, it thus exacerbates the current climate of fear, suspicion and hate mongering of Islam and American Muslims.”¹³⁰

American Muslims have also launched a campaign to encourage more precise language when linking Islam and terrorism, which the committee’s report fails to do. According to Religion News Service, “In March, the National Counterterrorism Center drafted a memo for the State Department urging diplomats to drop words like ‘jihadists’ or ‘mujahedeen’ (those engaged in jihad) when describing terrorists because it ‘unintentionally legitimizes their actions.’”¹³¹

In fact, in January the Department of Homeland Security suggested, “We should not concede the terrorists’ claim that they are legitimate adherents of Islam,” according to a memo obtained by the Associated Press.¹³²

A Partisan Report?

The report was drafted solely under the direction of Lieberman and ranking Republican Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME). Democratic senators who sit on the committee—Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Thomas R. Carper (D-DE), Carl Levin, (D-MI), and Barack Obama (D-IL)—had no role in writing the report, according to their Senate office spokespeople.

Senator Collins’s Washington, D.C. office, however, argued that, “It was never a full committee report” and that its cover (which mentions only Lieberman and Collins) and text made that clear. De-

spite the apparently partisan nature of the report, Collins’ spokesperson told the author, “There is a lot of cooperation on this committee; it is very bipartisan.”¹³³

A committee spokesperson said that there was “zero truth” to assertions that the report was motivated by partisan political objectives. “We held six hearings going back for over a year, there were multiple drafts, it was a long process, the staff worked hard on it, there was never any consideration of the political impact.”¹³⁴ In an election season when “even the weather is being interpreted through a political lens,” such speculation is common, but regrettable, she said. The report resulted from Lieberman’s interest in the topic and was issued when it was finished, the spokesperson said.

Lieberman has long been a security hardliner and associates with many hawks. He was active with the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq (CLI), founded in late 2002 by Bruce Jackson, a director of the neo-conservative Project for a New American Century (PNAC) and a former vice president of defense contractor Lockheed Martin. At CLI, Lieberman was allied closely with members Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) and conservative policy analyst Randy Scheunemann. Other CLI members included Eliot Cohen, Robert Kagan, Bill Kristol, former Secretary of State George Shultz, as well as former Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-NE), who called CLI “a group of people who will talk to Americans about why the liberation of Iraq is something the United States ought to do.”¹³⁵ Scheunemann is now a major foreign policy advisor on the McCain election team.

The Democratic Party is reluctant to criticize Lieberman because the Senate is home to 49 Republicans and 49 Democrats, with two Independents

(Lieberman and Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont) who line up with the Democrats in caucus, thus giving the Democrats a voting majority and senior status on Senate Committees. If Lieberman moves to caucus with the Republicans, it would mean the Senate was evenly divided, sending more tie votes to Vice President, Dick Cheney who serves as the president of the Senate. In addition, if Lieberman defected to the Republicans, the Democrats would no longer unilaterally control the chairs of all Senate committees and would have to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement with Republicans.

Lieberman's staff also insists that there is no connection between the committee's report and a flawed legislative bill stalled in Congress, titled the "Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007," even though the legislation and the hearings reinforce each other.¹³⁶ One section of this proposed Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act drew special attention to online communications: "The Internet has aided in facilitating violent radicalization, ideologically based violence, and the homegrown terrorism process in the United States by providing access to broad and constant streams of terrorist-related propaganda to United States citizens."

The Lieberman-Collins report was largely ignored by the mass media, but Lieberman stayed on-message in highlighting the terrorist threat supposedly posed by the internet, demanding that video website YouTube remove scores of videos that he claimed promoted Islamic terrorism. YouTube yanked some videos that violated its policies but refused the senator's blanket request. Lieberman had created another needless civil liberties confrontation based on flawed analysis.

Flawed Counterterrorism Analysis by Sageman & Others

All of this political maneuvering is driven by policy advice from four self-described experts on Islam and counterterrorism. Two of these experts, Daniel Pipes, and Stephen Emerson and, have become polemicists who repeatedly drift into stereotyping of Islam, yet are regularly featured on network talk shows and are champions for the political right. The other two, Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman, are in the midst of a very public dispute over whether future acts of domestic terrorism by Islamic militants, such as those carried out on 9/11, will be generated by the international Qaeda network (which Hoffman contends) or by homegrown terrorism, planned by Muslims living in the United States (which Sageman argues).

Hoffman negatively reviewed Sageman's recent book, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, in the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs*, calling it a "brusque dismissal of much of the existing academic literature on terrorism in general and terrorist networks in particular" and assessing his arguments on jihadists as "devoid of evidence," among other complaints.¹³⁷ Sageman responded in the following issue, claiming that Hoffman was "ignoring all of [*Leaderless Jihad's*] main points while making up others."¹³⁸ The debate has since spilled over into the *New York Times* and other publications.

Testifying before the Committee on Homeland Security in June 2007, Sageman claimed, "Over the past two or three years, face-to-face radicalization is being replaced by online radicalization. It is the interactivity of the group that changes people's beliefs,

and such interaction is found in Islamist extremist forums on the Internet. The same support and validation that young people used to derive from their offline peer groups are now found in these forums, which promote the image of terrorist heroes, link them to the virtual social movement, give them guidance, and instruct them in tactics. These forums, virtual market places for extremist ideas, have become the virtual ‘invisible hand’ organizing terrorist activities worldwide.”¹³⁹

Yet there is no evidence that this is true outside of Sageman’s analysis and the claims of the NYPD. In addition, Sageman in his book claims that these types of “leaderless social movements,” in order to survive, require: “a constant stream of new violent actions to hold the interest of potential newcomers to the movement, create the impression of visible progress toward a goal, and give potential recruits a vicarious experience before they take the initiative to engage in their own terrorist activities.”¹⁴⁰

Not only was this idea lifted by Sageman from the work of policy analyst Simson L. Garfinkel, but it mistakenly attributed violence to a broad range of dissident social movements rather than the narrowly defined terrorist underground cell structure being analyzed by Garfinkel. In Sageman’s erroneous analysis, anyone joining a street-level affinity group or collective would be considered prone to violence and a potential terrorist.

Accurate descriptions of targeted terrorist formations and potential terrorists, especially their ideology and methodology, are crucial for the government to effectively understand, predict, and prevent acts of domestic terrorism while abiding by constitutional safeguards. Police and intelligence agencies justify as appropriate different investigative techniques, with

different levels of government intrusiveness, depending on the specific ways different potential terrorist cells set up their organizational command structure.

Not only do civil liberties hang in the balance, but so too does national security policy. Based on faulty analysis, Lieberman is taking what should be a serious policy debate and ratcheting up a campaign of cynical fear-mongering. The notion that future counterterrorism policy could emerge from ill-supported theories is a dangerous one indeed.

Conclusions

Every time the government uses the term “extremist” it helps justify political repression against political opponents. Every time the term “extremist” is used to describe a political opponent, it marginalizes political dissent across the political spectrum. Every time liberals and leftists use the term “extremist” it undermines the movement for progressive social change.

Analysts use the term “extremism” in a way that implies that ideas and methodologies are always linked. This is not the case. We need to separate ideology from methodology.

We need to use terms that are more precise. We need to analyze people and groups that promote supremacy, prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry. We need to stand up against people and groups that use intimidation and violence against a targeted group or individual based on their perceived identity. This language teaches people to see the dynamics of societal oppression, rather than allowing them to dismiss acts of ethnviolence as caused by not-like-us “extremists” from “hate” groups.

Centrist/Extremist Theory creates a Potemkin village where there is a marginalized lunatic fringe of ex-

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tremists attacking idealized democracy upheld by a vital center of elites. This view logically then relies on government crackdowns to protect us from the zealots. Centrist/Extremist Theory hides the oppression and inequality institutionalized throughout US society; the frequent links between right-wing movements and economic and political elites; the complex mix of legitimate and illegitimate grievances underlying the paranoid-sounding conspiracism of right-wing populism; and the danger of increasing state repression.

Why should we fear the government? Ask a Japanese American held at an internment camp during World War II. Ask a target of McCarthy era witch hunts who lost a job. Ask a civil rights activist or a Vietnam war protester spied upon or arrested unfairly. Ask a member of the American Indian Movement, the Black Panther Party, or a Puerto Rican independence group who has friends that were shot by government agents during a raid. Ask an anti-interventionist monitored and harassed by the FBI during its probe of CISPES in the 1980s. Ask a young African-American male driving through a wealthy White suburb.

There is a tragic irony in allowing the use of authoritarian or repressive methods to fight supremacy and violence. We should not have to choose between fighting intolerance and bigotry, and protecting constitutional liberties.

We should not ask law enforcement agencies to step into this sphere of civil society unless there is evidence of criminal intent or action. Law enforcement needs to be concerned with individuals and organizations that use intimidation or violence against a targeted group or individual based on their perceived identity. It is methodology not ideology that matters.

The First Amendment protects the free flow of ideas—even those that we find reprehensible. The proper role for law enforcement is to pursue crime, not police the boundaries of “radical” dissent. There is a clear government role for officials and politicians who are not directly involved in criminal investigations to decry dualism, scapegoating, demonization and conspiracism—the tools of fear (Berlet, 2009). And those of us who promote human rights and civil society also must play a role; and we need to use precise language that exposes the dynamics of societal oppression.

More precise language and distinction is needed in a society that claims to be a democracy.

It’s time to reject the use of the term “extremist” altogether.

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¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xix.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

²⁰ F Kintner, *Front*: p. 225. Emphasis in the original

²¹ Sometimes called the "pluralist" school of thought in academia.

²² *Ibid.*, p.17.

²³ Donner, *Age*, pp. 4-5.

²⁴ Donner, *Age*, pp. xv, 5, 455-460.

²⁵ Sometimes called the "pluralist" school of thought in academia.

²⁶ Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 428.

²⁷ Daniel Bell, "Interpretations of American Politics," in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 55.

²⁸ Richard Hofstadter, "Pseudo-Conservatism Re-

- visited: A Postscript,” in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 102.
- ²⁹ Richard Hofstadter, “The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt,” in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 84.
- ³⁰ Daniel Bell, “The Dispossessed,” in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 10.
- ³¹ Alan Westin, “The John Birch Society,” in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 261.
- ³² Peter Viereck, “The Revolt Against the Elite,” in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 163.
- ³³ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Random House, Inc., 1955), pp. 78-81.
- ³⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Sources of the ‘Radical Right,’” in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 339.
- ³⁵ Lipset and Raab, pp. 432-33.
- ³⁶ David Riesman and Nathan Glazer, “The Intellectuals and the Discontented Classes,” in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 126.
- ³⁷ Viereck, p. 172.
- ³⁸ J. J. Goldberg, *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment*, (Reading: MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996), p. 133.
- ³⁹ Ibid. The three AJC studies cited by Goldberg as influential are: Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950); Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz, *The Dynamics of Prejudice*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1950); Norman W. Ackerman and Marie Jahoda, *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1950).
- ⁴⁰ Additional challenges to this early emphasis on personality and psychology are discussed in many recent studies.
- ⁴¹ Goldberg, *Jewish Power*, p. 133.
- ⁴² Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, pp. 38-40, 43-46.
- ⁴³ Hofstadter never claimed the paranoid style could be explained *solely* through a psycholog-

ical approach, and many claims about paranoid extremists seem to be made by persons who remembered only the title of Hofstadter's study, and not his many qualifications of the term.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *Cross-Currents* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/ADL, 1956); Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *Danger on the Right: The Attitudes, Personnel and Influence of the Radical Right and Extreme Conservatives*, (New York: Random House/ADL, 1964); Benjamin R. Epstein, and Arnold Forster, *The Radical Right: Report on the John Birch Society and Its Allies*, (New York: Vintage Books/Random House/ADL, 1967); Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism*, (New York: McGraw-Hill/ADL, 1974).

⁴⁵ Forster and Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism*, dust cover fly-leaf blurb.

⁴⁶ Selnick and Steinberg, *The Tenacity of Prejudice*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 168-169.

⁴⁷ Diamond, *Roads*, pp. 178-202; Peter Steinfels, *The Neo-Conservatives, The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). Louis A. Coser and Irving Howe, eds., *The New Conservatives: A Critique from the Left*, (New York: New American Library, 1976); Lawrence B. Joseph, "The Continuing Crisis of Pluralist Democracy: Neo-Conservatism and Revisionist Liberalism," *Pol-*

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⁴⁹ Carl Ginsburg, *Race and Media: The Enduring Life of the Moynihan Report*. (New York, NY: Institute for Media Analysis, 1989), p.5.

⁵⁰ Lucy A. Williams, "The Right's Attack on Aid to Families with Dependent Children," *The Public Eye*, Fall/Winter 1996; pp. 4-10.

⁵¹ Diamond, *Roads*, pp. 178-202, 279-283.

⁵² Williams, "The Right's Attack..." p. 10; citing Michael Lind, *Up From Conservatism: Why the Right is Wrong for America*, (1996) p. 2; and Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, (1980), pp. 250-51.

⁵³ In addition to Rogin, *Intellectuals*, pp. 261-282; see also Richard O. Curry and Thomas M. Brown, eds., "Introduction," *Conspiracy: The Fear of Subversion in American History*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), pp. vii-xi; Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right*, pp. 237-257; Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), pp. 46-51 179-190; Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To The Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press,

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- ⁵⁴ Michael Paul Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, The Movie: and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 278.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- ⁵⁶ Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, p.191.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ A. James Gregor, *The Fascist Persuasion in Radical Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), the author concludes that differences between fascism and communism are “singularly superficial,” p. 419.
- ⁵⁹ Ribuffo, *Old Christian Right*, p. 241.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.
- ⁶² Bell, “Interpretations,” p. 71.
- ⁶³ Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, *Labor’s Untold Story*, 3rd ed. (New York: United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, 1980), p. 179; Linda Gordon, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Viking Press, Grossman Publishers, 1976), p. 136; Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), p. 232.
- ⁶⁴ Bell, “Dispossessed,” p. 2.
- ⁶⁵ Rogin, *Intellectuals*, p. 54.
- ⁶⁶ William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 80.
- ⁶⁷ Rogin, *Intellectuals*, p. 55.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 217.
- ⁶⁹ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. II, The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp.109-17.
- ⁷⁰ Diamond: “How ‘Radical’ Is the Christian Right?” *The Humanist*, (Watch on the Right column), March/April 1994.
- ⁷¹ Fred W. Grupp, Jr., “The Political Perspectives of Birch Society Members;” and James McEvoy, III, “Conservatism or Extremism: Goldwater Supporters in the 1964 Presidential Election;” both in Robert A. Schoenberger, ed., *The American Right Wing: Readings in Political Behavior*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969). Charles Jeffrey Kraft, *A Preliminary Socio-Economic & State Demographic Profile of the John Birch Society*, (Cambridge, MA: PRA, 1992).
- ⁷² Himmelstein, *To The Right*: p. 5.
- ⁷³ James A. Aho, “A Library of Infamy,” *Idaho*

Libr. Vol. 41 No. 4, p. 86; citing to his then forthcoming book, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism*, (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1990).

⁷⁴ Abbe L. Ferber, “Reconceptualizing the Racist Right,” in Ward, *Conspiracies*.

⁷⁵ Raphael S. Ezekiel, *The Racist Mind: Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen*, (New York: Viking (Penguin), 1995), p. 321.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 321.

⁷⁷ Curry & Brown, eds., “Introduction,” *Conspiracy*, p. x. The author’s list of unanswered questions about how conspiracist movements function (p. xi) is as pertinent today as when published in 1972.

⁷⁸ Social movement theory is a broad popular term for a collection of analytical models rooted in dialectical analysis and power structure research which examines the mobilization of groups of people seeking to change the social or political system. The term “social movement theory” is used in the generic sense to encompass the basic elements of several academic schools including, “New Social Movements Theory,” “Resource Mobilization Theory,” and the “Political Process Model,” among others.

⁷⁹ We reject narrow definitions of what constitutes a social movement applied by some academics. Social change organizers helped build social movements in many varieties before the term was used in academia to describe only the most volatile phenomenon.

⁸⁰ The four elements of social movement theory described here are based on language developed by John C. Green of the Ray Bliss Center at the University of Akron, Ohio, and presented as a paper in New York City in 1995 at a symposium hosted by Lumiere Productions.

⁸¹ [F Godson, Roy, ed. *Intelligence Requirements for the 1990's: Collection, Analysis, Counterintelligence, and Covert Action*. Lengton Books/D.C. Heath, \]\]](#)

⁸² F Steven, Powell, S. *Covert Cadre: Inside the Institute for Policy Studies*. Green Hill Publishers, 198

⁸³ G. Flint Taylor, “Supreme Court Review: 1995-1996 Term,” *Police Misconduct and Civil Rights Law Report*, July-August, 1996, p. 37; “The Bill of Rights at Risk,” brochure, National Committee Against Repressive Legislation, 1996.

⁸⁴ Max Boot, “Fighting Terrorism, Then and Now,” *Wall Street Journal*, 5/8/95, Sec A, p. 14.

⁸⁵ Louis F. Post, *The Deportations Delerium of Nineteen-Twenty* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1923), p. 209.

⁸⁶ Ken Stern, *A Force Upon the Plain*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 50-56;

⁸⁷ Raphael S. Ezekiel, *The Racist Mind, Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen*, (New York: Viking/Penguin, 1995), pp. 28-29.

⁸⁸ A thoughtful study devoted to this dynamic of state repression against White supremacists is

William Karl Ziegenhorn, “No Rest for the Wicked: The FBI Investigations of White Supremacist Groups, 1983-1988, Masters Thesis, Dept. of History, San Jose State University, May 1995.

⁸⁹ Robert I. Friedman, “The Anti-Defamation League is Spying on You,” *Village Voice*, 5/11/93, pp. 27-32; Jane Hunter, “Who Was the ADL Spying For?” *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, May, 1993; John M. Crew, *A Conspiracy of Silence: San Francisco’s Failure to Address Police Intelligence Abuses*, American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, Police Practices Project, August 30, 1993; Kim Malcheski, “Summary of the 700+ pages released by the San Francisco District Attorney’s office regarding spying activities of R. Bullock, Fact Finder for the Anti-Defamation League and Tom Gerard, retired police officer from the San Francisco Police Department,” litigation research memo for civil lawsuit, no date, on file at PRA.

⁹⁰ Friedman, “The Anti-Defamation League is Spying on You.”

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Dennis King and Chip Berlet, “ADLgate,” *Tikkun* magazine, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 31. See also: Dennis King and Chip Berlet, “The A.D.L. Under Fire: It’s Shift to Right Has Led to Scandal,” *The New York Times*, May 28, 1993, p. A29 (Op-Ed).

⁹³ Jeremy Kalmanofsky, “Defaming the Anti-Defamation League,” *Moment*, August 1993, pp. 38-43, 62-64; Abraham H. Foxman, “It’s a Big Lie, Hailed by Anti-Semites,” *The New York*

Times, May 28, 1993, p. A29 (Op-Ed); Irwin Sull, Mira Boland, “Anti-Defamation League Investigates Extremists of All Stripes,” Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times*, June 19, 1993, p. 20; Abraham H. Foxman, “The Big Lie,” *The Jewish Journal*, May 21-27, 1993.

⁹⁴ Abraham H. Foxman, “L’Affaire San Francisco,” *The Jewish Journal*, November 19-25, 1993, p. 6;

⁹⁵ Dennis J Opatrny and Scott Winokur, “DA Drops Spy Case Against ADL: Jewish rights group accepts injunction, denies misconduct.,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/16/93, p. A1.

⁹⁶ Crew, *A Conspiracy of Silence*.

⁹⁷ Dennis King’s book, *Get the Facts on Anyone*, (New York: Prentice Hall, 1992) began when, as a consultant to ADL, he wrote a manual on investigative techniques to encourage ADL staff to stop relying so heavily on biased law enforcement data.

⁹⁸ See, for example: *Hitler’s Apologists: The Anti-Semitic Propaganda of Holocaust “Revisionism.”* Anti-Defamation League. (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, 1993); *Sounds of Hate: Neo-Nazi Rock Music from Germany* (1992); *Neo Nazi Skinheads: A 1990 Status Report*, (1990).

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- ¹⁰¹ Gelbspan, *Break-Ins*, pp. 165, 169-171. Doug Birch, "Master of the Politics of Paranoia," *The Baltimore Sun*, magazine, June 5, 1988, pp. 24-27.
- ¹⁰² Diamond, *Roads*, p. 218. Gelbspan, *Break-Ins*, pp. 171-173.
- ¹⁰³ Gelbspan, *Break-Ins*, pp. 171-173.
- ¹⁰⁴ Informational sheets and reports from Mid-Atlantic Research Associates, *Early Warning*, and The Maldon Institute, on file at PRA. Conversations with Mira Boland of ADL and John Rees in the 1980's. The LaRouche organization's published treatments of these issues involving ADL and Ms. Boland have been grotesquely vicious and antisemitic, and we explicitly distance ourselves from their bigoted analysis.
- ¹⁰⁵ Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare*, p. 60. On endorsement, see back cover of William T. Still, *New World Order: The Ancient Plan of Secret Societies*, (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1990).
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