

TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION  
Volume 70

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This book series is dedicated to the radical love and actions of Paulo Freire, Jesus “Pato” Gomez, and Joe L. Kincheloe.

## TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy's (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity—youth identity in particular—the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some “touchy-feely” educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.

# Cold Breezes and Idiot Winds

*Patriotic Correctness and the Post-9/11 Assault  
on Academe*

Valerie Scatamburlo-D'Annibale  
*University of Windsor*



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## **DEDICATION**

*This book is dedicated to my husband, John D'Annibale*

*In the words of Bon Jovi, Thank you for loving me*



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*Valerie Scatamburlo-D'Annibale  
LaSalle, Ontario, August 2010*



## INTRODUCTION

### *Liberal Hunting in the Promised Land*

Liberal Hunting Permit: No Bag Limit—Tagging Not Required. May be used while under the influence of alcohol. May be used to Hunt Liberals at Gay Pride Parades, Democrat Conventions, Union Rallies, Handgun Control Meetings, News Media Association, Lesbian Luncheons and Hollywood Functions. May Hunt Day or Night With or Without Dogs. *{sic}*

When contemplating college liberals, you really regret once again that John Walker is not getting the death penalty. We need to execute people like John Walker in order to physically intimidate liberals, by making them realize that they can be killed, too. Otherwise, they will turn out to be outright traitors.<sup>1</sup>

If you're against the president and his policies, you're unpatriotic and rooting against America.<sup>2</sup>

The bumper sticker “permit” quoted here has been around for quite some time—circulating, for the most part, among the fringes of the far right. Yet, the odium that animates such sentiments has, for some time, been making its way to a broader mass audience. One need only sample the diatribes authored by conservative “luminaries”—including Ann Coulter’s *Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism*; Sean Hannity’s *Let Freedom Ring: Winning the War of Liberty over Liberalism* and *Deliver Us From Evil: Defeating Terrorism, Despotism and Liberalism*, Bill O’Reilly’s *Culture Warrior* and Glenn Beck’s *Arguing with Idiots: How to Stop Small Minds and Big Government*—to see the hateful rhetoric at work.

This type of rabid anti-liberalism is the lifeblood of a right-wing media/culture apparatus that has been established over the last 30–40 years. Over the airwaves, millions of “Dittoheads” delight in Rush Limbaugh’s tirades against “femi-Nazis,” “long-haired dope smoking peace pansies,” wimpy “limousine liberals” and “leftist terrorist sympathizers” whose sordid politics allegedly crystallized during the murky mayhem of the 1960s. Others rely on the likes of Laura Ingraham and Michael Savage for their daily dose of talk-radio liberal-bashing; Savage has called liberalism a “mental disorder” and written books rebuffing the liberal/left “assault” on the nation’s schools, faith and military.

On the Fox News Channel, smear merchant Bill O’Reilly routinely entertains his sycophants with Banshee-like screeching about loony leftists and berates, with autocratic homilies, those few guests he does invite on his show who prove to be formidable opponents as was the case when he warned Port Authority worker Jeremy Glick to “get out of my studio before I tear you to fucking pieces.” Glick, whose father perished in the 9/11 attacks, had criticized O’Reilly for continually invoking “9/11” to rationalize everything from domestic plunder to imperialist aggression.<sup>3</sup> Combining his trademark self-congratulatory belligerence and Stygian anger, O’Reilly often offers smug sermons about “girly men” and “immoral”

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liberals—this even after he narrowly escaped becoming “the Pee Wee Herman of the Right” by settling a lawsuit filed by a co-worker who alleged that he “harassed her with conversations of masturbation, vibrators, and invitations to participate in pornographic sex.”<sup>4</sup> And Glenn Beck, the grand poobah of paranoid conspiracy theorists, has assumed a professorial persona, complete with chalkboard in tow, in order to “educate” citizens about the ills of liberalism and the dangers associated with American universities that, according to Beck, “teach garbage.”<sup>5</sup>

One may be inclined to dismiss the bumper-sticker bile and quasi-fascistic rants of the aforementioned authors and their ilk as symptoms of unstable minds. And, at some level, that is perhaps the case. However, such a flippant stance is somewhat naïve given the frosty climate that emerged in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11. Although not all conservatives agreed with Ann Coulter’s outrageous call to physically intimidate college liberals (an invitation that came as no shock to anyone remotely familiar with her; after all, some have suggested that if she “had been around for the Third Reich Ice-Cream Social, Eva Braun wouldn’t have stood a chance”), after 9/11 far too many on the right-wing of the political spectrum were quick to dub liberals (let alone leftists) as unpatriotic scoundrels who were jeopardizing the very foundations of the ‘American way of life.’<sup>6</sup> While they may not have advocated threatening their liberal and left opponents, many actively lobbied for their symbolic eradication and the silencing of their dissident voices. For conservatives, “liberal” has become an epithet—the approximate counterpart to the godless communist of an earlier era; anti-liberalism has replaced anti-communism as the rallying cry of the right.<sup>7</sup>

This truculent posturing was not limited to the aforementioned bevy of bellicose blowhards; it was apparent in the uppermost echelons of the no less bellicose Bush administration which employed a rhetorical strategy that was both opportunistic and mendacious for it essentially cast its critics as terrorist supporters as the quote from former Vice-President Dick Cheney cited above demonstrates. Such posturing was also on display in 2005 in Midtown Manhattan courtesy of Karl Rove—also known as Turdblossom and Bush’s brain—who insinuated that those who disagreed with the President’s impetuous cowboy foreign policy were giving comfort to the “enemy.”<sup>8</sup> Speaking at a fundraiser for the Conservative Party of New York State, Rove claimed that:

Conservatives saw the savagery of 9/11 and the attacks and prepared for war; liberals saw the savagery of the 9/11 attacks and wanted to prepare indictments and offer therapy and understanding for our attackers. In the wake of 9/11, conservatives believed it was time to unleash the might and power of the United States military against the Taliban; in the wake of 9/11, liberals believed it was time to submit a petition ... Conservatives saw what happened to us on 9/11 and said: We will defeat our enemies. Liberals saw what happened to us and said: We must understand our enemies.<sup>9</sup>

Rove’s message was unequivocal—liberals are pantywaists, incapable of the moral clarity needed to combat the “enemy” and protect the “homeland,” and weak in the face of “evil.” Rove’s incendiary remarks were, of course, designed to score political

points and they created a mild furor among many Democrats, some of whom demanded an apology. Not surprisingly, right-wing columnists lavished Rove with praise for speaking the “truth” while others shrugged off his comments as merely partisan. But Rove’s anti-liberal rhetorical flourishes were more than partisan tripe for they represented a reincarnation of a style of politics that was eerily reminiscent of McCarthyism. Although columnist E.J. Dionne Jr. characterized Rove’s version as a “kinder, gentler” form of McCarthyism, his assessment would be much too charitable particularly if applied to the tactics that Rove’s fellow conservatives employed in other contexts. Nowhere were these egregious tactics more visible than on the campuses of American universities.

In April 2005, the editors of *The Nation* astutely noted that

[t]he suppression of ... dissent, a disconcerting feature of political life since the Bush administration took power, has been most sharply felt on college campuses ... Not since the McCarthy era have American campuses felt such a cold breeze—make that an idiot wind. And the new campus McCarthyism is made of much of the same ingredients: thuggish intimidation, the circulation of specious rumors and ... that least venerable of American traditions, anti-intellectualism.<sup>10</sup>

Examples of the “cold breeze,” some of which are explored up in the following chapters, were plentiful across the country post-9/11. They ranged from efforts by right-wing student groups to suppress campus dissent, attempts to introduce legislation that would police the content of courses offered in universities and target professors critical of U.S. foreign policy (especially in the Middle East), to calls for the outright dismissal of faculty members who failed to robotically sanction Bush’s “war on terror.” These and other examples unmistakably revealed that the idiot wind spawned a new form of PC—patriotic correctness.

The notion that 9/11 “changed everything” became an oft-repeated and widely circulated cliché and there is little doubt that the events of that day had a dramatic and immediate impact on the political landscape. Yet, one thing that did *not* really change was the right’s long-standing contempt for the “liberal/left” professoriate. Conservative criticisms of the academy as a citadel of radicalism are, after all, hardly new. They have a long and ignoble history in the United States, dating back to nineteenth century attacks launched by religious zealots and the anti-communist witch-hunts undertaken in the 1920s, 1930s, and most famously in the 1950s under the auspices of Joe McCarthy who led the government inquisition that resulted in the firing and blacklisting of dissident intellectuals both in and out of the academy.<sup>11</sup> In 1964, Ronald Reagan was pontificating about the long-hairs at Berkeley; twenty-seven years later, George H.W. Bush was chastising the ‘political correctness’ of tenured radicals in an infamous University of Michigan address.

The public perception of universities as bastions of ‘political correctness’ where conservative views are marginalized and/or censored was burnished in the public mind in the early 1990s at the height of the “culture wars” as right-wing custodians of the “Western tradition” and media cognoscenti managed to paint a picture of campus life reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch’s vision of hell. Back then, it was

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asserted that left-wing vigilantes and burned-out Sixties hippies-turned-academics were running amok at the nation's universities. The Left—a catch-all phrase that encompassed feminists, multiculturalists, deconstructionists, postmodernists, and others—was vilified as a coterie of propagandists; as Orwellian dragoons of group-think intent on silencing free expression and imposing the diktats of ideological correctness. In a paradoxical shift, it was claimed that those who had once marched for the right to free speech were vigorously creating mini ‘ministries of truth’ that were springing up like noxious weeds and choking out the flowers of free expression on campuses. As an ideological code, “political correctness” operated as a device that mediated perception in the relations of public discourse—progressive intellectuals were cast as social oddballs, elements of a radical fringe, and politically threatening extremists.

Of course, the brouhaha over “political correctness” eventually subsided, the headlines waned, and assaults on liberal/left scholars were, for a time, consigned to opinion columns penned by conservative garrisons such as Thomas Sowell, professional academe-basher George Will, and the pages of right-wing academic “journals.” Nonetheless, the broader “culture war” bluster persisted and, in many ways, informed the attacks on the Clinton White House. Clinton—hardly a man of the ‘left’—was projected as the Sixties personified, a product of that decade who smoked pot, dodged the draft and whose wife Hillary evidently represented the epitome of feminism gone awry. During the Clinton presidency, rightist rage was mainly focused on “Slick Willie’s” libido and his indiscretions that were, of course, routinely attributed to his “liberal” promiscuity. As a result of the obsession with various “gates,” Monica Lewinsky, cigars and a blue dress, academe itself was *temporarily* spared.

However, after the September 11 attacks, a motley crew of right-wing rabble-rousers, religious firebrands, and militant neoconservatives donned their culture war armor, capitalized on widespread angst for “national security,” and found a scapegoat in the serious domestic “threat” posed by liberal/left professors. This posse sanctimoniously summoned Bush’s bromidic binarism, “you are with us or against us;” the “war on terror” quickly gave way to a war on dissent and the academy was once again thrust into the spotlight. Many of the same tiresome themes and hackneyed charges that were bandied about in the early 1990s were simply repackaged for post-9/11 America; rightists, draped in the Stars and Stripes, seized the moment to resuscitate the “culture wars,” thwart any criticism of the Bush administration, U.S. foreign policy and imperialist military aggression and, especially, the nobility of American capitalism. James Piereson, a contributor to the *Weekly Standard*, captured the right’s post-9/11 sentiment quite well when he grouched about academics who were “both anti-American and anticapitalist.”<sup>12</sup> Predictably, many of the same personalities, right-wing foundations, and think tanks that helped to popularize and finance the backlash against political correctness were once again at the center of post-9/11 efforts to liken legitimate dissent to treason.

What *was* different and profoundly more disturbing was that the hyperbole was ratcheted up significantly. The liberal/left professoriate was no longer just a post-modern, deconstructionist nuisance; it was identified as a subversive “fifth column.”

Moreover, the tactics employed by conservatives who called for the figurative heads of those who strayed from the patriotically correct line which they espoused went well beyond those used in the 1990s. Long before the talking heads on the Fox News Channel made former University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill their poster-boy for intellectual repression and coercion, the right used the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)—an organization co-founded by former Second Lady Lynne Cheney—to launch a crusade against rebellious academics who were described as barbarians hell-bent on dismantling “Western civilization” itself. Not long after the attacks, ACTA produced a report that documented more than 100 examples of “anti-Americanism” on college campuses and posted it online. The hit list included the names and affiliations of academics that were, according to ACTA, insufficiently patriotic and averse to teaching students about the “virtues” of the Western political order. The document was rife with inaccuracies, distortions, and outright fallacies but the stench of McCarthyism was irrefutable.

Then there was the right’s favorite red diaper baby—David Horowitz—who created a website exhorting students to complain about licentious liberal professors and leftist lunatics who were presumably trying to poison their young minds with anti-American ideologies. And through his vast empire, he amassed a brigade of collegians who were dispatched as shock troopers to intimidate (sometimes physically) campus liberals from coast to coast. Horowitz, who literally drips with the ooze of blacklisting, even went so far as to claim that universities were a base for terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

In 2005, at the University of California, Los Angeles, Andrew Jones, a former campus Republican operative and one-time protégé of Horowitz tried to garner support for patriotic correctness by offering to pay UCLA students to surveil professors critical of the Bush administration. He subsequently led the charge in creating a website “exposing” the “Dirty Thirty”—a list of liberal/left educators who were supposedly, among other things, collaborating with radical Muslims to undercut the war on terror. These are just a few of the more flagrant examples of rightist efforts to coerce campus progressives; many more are explored throughout this treatise.

The “right-wing efforts and demands to reform higher education” that emerged after the terrorist attacks took a decidedly dangerous turn that “far exceeded the threat posed by the previous “culture wars.”<sup>14</sup> Arguably, the post-9/11 campaign against the academy was even more serious than the one witnessed during the McCarthy era for it reached directly into the classroom. In contrast to the McCarthy era, powerful private organizations and corporate-funded think tanks, rather than the government, were behind the attempts to “quarantine dissent,” dominate the “framing of public discourse” and “rechannel the flows of knowledge production.”<sup>15</sup> In the “name of establishing intellectual diversity,” forces on the right tried to “impose outside political controls over core educational functions like personnel decisions, curricula, and teaching methods.” Such interference not only endangered the “faculty autonomy that traditionally protects academic freedom,” it also threatened the very “integrity of American higher education.”<sup>16</sup> It is therefore necessary to consider the forces that advanced patriotic correctness as a strategy to intimidate the liberal/left and devalue critical thought. However, before doing so, it is necessary to define how the phrase “patriotic correctness” is being used in this context.

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### PATRIOTIC CORRECTNESS

Patriotic correctness (hereafter PC), refers to a multifaceted and multileveled discourse that was promoted as a form of public pedagogy after 9/11 by an ideological coalition of religious fundamentalists, militant neoconservatives and think tank mandarins. Given the enormity of the tragedy and its overwhelming impact on the collective consciousness of the country, culture war veterans, opportunistic demagogues and right-wing campus tyros worked to produce a set of unambiguous and implied rules for what constituted “acceptable” forms of thought, speech and deed. The moral panic surrounding the meaning of patriotism in post-9/11 America produced much confusion that was easily leveraged by proponents of PC who sought to control the ‘bounds of the expressible’ and advance a very specific worldview—one that emphasized, among other things, notions of American “exceptionalism” and innocence, the “Christian” foundations of the nation, the supremacy of the American “free market” and the perils of “liberalism.” Of course, many of these ideas existed prior to 9/11 but afterwards they coalesced into a “grand narrative” of sorts—one that was militaristic, hyper-masculinist and intensely anti-intellectual.

Patriotism is an abstract concept that has taken different forms over the course of the nation’s history and there is no doubt that a *general* patriotic mood did in fact sweep the country after the attacks. However, PC advanced what could arguably be called “superpatriotism” which suggested that uncritical assent to governmental authority was synonymous with loving ‘freedom’ and that dissent was tantamount to supporting terrorism. Superpatriotism also rests on the “dubious assumption that the United States is endowed with superior virtue” and that it has a “unique history and special place in the world.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, the belief in America’s “exceptionalism” was at the heart of PC. Of course, this exceptionalism has a long history; it is deeply rooted in the “discourse of early American preachers” and has powered many “citizens’ visions of manifest destiny, which animated the U.S. history of expansion and imperial vision.”<sup>18</sup> But, after 9/11 it manifested itself in new and particularly powerful ways. Exceptionalism defines America as a “model” for the rest of the world and is rooted in the conviction that the U.S. is a benevolent entity in world affairs that is motivated not by avarice and power but by the greater global good; that American military force is directed only towards noble purposes and laudable goals and that American foreign policy is a civilizing force for the benefit of dispossessed and disenfranchised people throughout the world. Stemming from these beliefs, PC also implied that the military embodied all that was “good” and “righteous,” that war-making abroad was ordained by the Almighty as inherently just and that it had to be supported unquestioningly. Allegiance to the homeland was demanded at all costs, regardless of the facts.

Many of these convictions were epitomized in the declaration made by George W. Bush on May 1, 2003 when he issued a decree in honor of Loyalty Day, a legal American holiday that was established in 1958.<sup>19</sup> In his proclamation, Bush said:

Today, America’s men and women in uniform are protecting our Nation, defending the peace of the world, and advancing the cause of liberty. The world has seen again the fine character of our Nation through our military as

they fought to protect the innocent and liberate the oppressed ... [t]heir service and sacrifice ... are a testament to their love for America ... [and] reaffirms our Nation's most deeply held beliefs: that every life counts, and that all humans have an unalienable right to live as free people. These values must be imparted to each new generation. Our children need to know that our Nation is a force for good in the world, extending hope and freedom to others. By learning about America's history, achievements, ideas, and heroes, our young citizens will come to understand even more why freedom is worth protecting.<sup>20</sup>

This particular statement was one among many that captured the pedagogical vision preferred by the right—one that imparts a sanitized version of history and obfuscates from view the “value system disorder” that lies at the heart of American empire including “US logistical and financial support of death-squads, terrorist networks and so-called “wars of liberation” that systematically fomented chaos around the globe, long before the thundering collapse of the Twin Towers.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, PC evoked an “amnesiac claim of political innocence, a guise of national blamelessness” that philosopher Cornel West referred to as America's “Peter Pan complex.”<sup>22</sup>

Typically, in times of war, themes of sacrifice are common in presidential orations and Bush undoubtedly drew on them when speaking about military service. However, more pronounced was the way in which he and other conservative politicians such as Rudy Guiliani encouraged what could be called free market patriotism. For example, the importance of an orderly restoration of trading was repeatedly accentuated; panic was deemed unpatriotic as Americans were told that if they ceased to work or lost faith in the market that this would signal a victory for the terrorists. Those who fought terror through pledging allegiance to the market were assimilated as heroic foot soldiers in the emblematic war against evil at home. By late September 2001, Bush was being dispatched to press events across the country to tell people to “get on board,” to do their patriotic duty by traveling and going shopping. In identifying consumption as a panacea for all that ailed a traumatized nation and as a way to “fight back” against the nation's enemies, the Bush administration was coaxing citizens to find solace in the world of goods and to display their patriotism through the purchase of clip-on symbols and kitschy artifacts. After 9/11, “citizens were patriots, and patriots were consumers” and individuals were beseeched, especially by the corporate media, to buy assorted paraphernalia to express their love of country; consumerism “became both a public act of patriotism and a symbolic act to thwart the terrorists.”<sup>23</sup>

Among the objects that Americans purchased en masse in the first week or two after 9/11 were flags, which quickly sold out across the country, and which were prominently displayed on cars, SUVs, trucks and homes. T-shirts, many of which were, ironically, made in China, emblazoned with the stars and stripes and others sporting the phrase “Never Forget” added to the super-patriotic imagery that flooded the visual landscape; teddy bears were also ubiquitous as part of the kitsch culture that emerged. The “kitschification” of 9/11, allowed for, if not facilitated, the means by which the tragedy was “exploited for particular political agendas and incorporated into a continuum of kitsch political discourse.” Kitsch objects address “consumers

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within a particular emotional register” (including sympathy, sadness, and comfort). On one level, these objects “skirt anger, since they are couched in terms of empathy and reassurance” but these forms of consumer culture also “enable a political acquiescence, in which consumers signal their ‘categorical agreement’ through the purchase of tokens.” When tokens such as teddy bears are “circulated as ‘universal’ symbols of comfort,” the teddy bears essentially say “we are innocent, and, by extension, the nation is innocent too.”<sup>24</sup>

Sturken notes that this melding of consumerism and patriotism discouraged people from thinking critically about the attacks and what may have precipitated them. Kitsch consumerism and its concomitant commoditization of grief is deeply connected to a sense of national identity and a version of American history that is fundamentally based on a “disavowal of the role played in world politics by the United States not simply as a world power, but as a nation with imperialist policies and aspirations to empire.”<sup>25</sup> Such consumptive practices functioned to reinforce the concept of American innocence and were useful to opportunists seeking to cultivate a culture of compliance and conceal the involvement of the U.S. “in the troubled global strife of the world.”<sup>26</sup> American innocence, a central trope of PC, was promoted so as to avoid “any discussion of what long histories of U.S. foreign policies had done to help foster a terrorist movement specifically aimed at the United States.”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, this comfort, kitsch culture had significant political repercussions insofar as it made possible the propagation and acceptance of “beautifying lies”—i.e. “a ‘spread of democracy’ that often bolsters its opposite, a ‘march of freedom’ that often liberates people to death, a ‘war on terror’ that is often terroristic, and a trumpeting of ‘moral values’ often at the cost of civil rights.”<sup>28</sup>

Manufacturing consent for imperial military misadventures involved multifarious maneuvers that encouraged not only the consumption of patriotic artifacts but the consumption of spectacles as well. Two months after the attacks, Karl Rove summoned forty of the top television and movie executives to the swanky environs of the Beverly Hills Peninsula Hotel to explore how the entertainment industry could assist the administration in making war more palatable to the American public. Rove, with a power point presentation on hand, asked the Hollywood moguls to consider how they might contribute to “educating” the public about the virtues of the war on terror and helping to boost morale at home. In mid-December 2001, the industry unveiled its “first response on more than ten thousand movie screens—a quarter of all American cinemas—and in classrooms across the country.”<sup>29</sup>

*The Spirit of America*, a 3-minute film, featured clips from 110 American movies that its creator, Oscar-winning director Chuck Workman, felt captured and celebrated the essence of the country. Befitting the presidency of George W. Bush, whose favorite prop was his Texas ranch where he was often photographed clearing brush, the film began and ended with scenes from John Ford’s 1956 classic western *The Searchers* that starred none other than America’s quintessential cowboy and symbol of masculinity, John Wayne. This was hardly surprising since talk about the ‘return’ of John Wayne had been circulating among the conservative chattering class months before the film was released. “Welcome Back, Duke” was the title of an article authored by former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan wherein she gushed about

“a certain style of manliness” that was rising from the ashes of the Twin Towers and the “rubble of the past quarter century.”<sup>30</sup> This thrilled Noonan who had been saddened by Wayne’s metaphorical death at the hands of “feminists,” “peaceniks,” “leftists,” and “intellectuals.”<sup>31</sup> Post-9/11 was no time for girly men and nerdy professors who would rather “talk about everything and do nothing.”<sup>32</sup>

PC was steeped in the sort of hyper-masculinity that had Noonan swooning like a twelve year-old girl at a Justin Bieber concert as rightists viewed the post-9/11 atmosphere as an opportunity for cultural remasculinization. PC reflected the “tough guy” talk of George W. Bush who had claimed that “terrorist attacks” were not caused by the “use of strength” but rather were “invited by the perception of weakness” while at the same time renewing one of the right’s most redundant themes—liberal spinelessness.<sup>33</sup> The age of Reagan’s rugged sentimentalism introduced the country to “war wimps” and ever since liberal lily-liveredness has been a prominent motif in conservative political discourse; however, with the rise of the Bush gang, the bully boy behavior reached unprecedented heights. Many on the right (including David Horowitz) insinuated that Bill Clinton was to blame for the attacks because he had not been punitive enough in dealing America’s adversaries and after 9/11, Bush, Cheney, Rove and Rumsfeld’s various attempts to cast critics of their war-mongering as inferior were often couched in a feminized discourse. Liberal pansies were simply too impotent for the cowboy masculinity necessary to undertake the war on terror. What’s more, virtually all other subsidiary criticisms that emanated from the patriotically correct right—whether they were targeted at social programs (they keep individuals dependent on the teat of big government), environmental protections and taxes (manifestations of the nanny state) tended to exploit traditional gender stereotypes and reinforce the theme of liberal wimperiness.

In the discourse of PC that brimmed with bravado, American might equaled right; obtrusive, intimidating tactics were valorized as displays of moral fortitude and cries for old-fashioned ass-kicking (in the words of country music star Toby Keith) courtesy of the red, white and blue were preferred over rational political dialogue. The right-wing celebration of “manly men” eventually found its way into mainstream popular culture as *People Magazine* named Donald Rumsfeld one of the sexiest men alive in 2002—a gesture which amounted to saluting the post-9/11 spirit of patriarchal vitality. As a poster boy for PC, Rumsfeld embodied the ultimate union of militarism and macho. In the *People Magazine* spread, quotations from media outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal* describing Rumsfeld as a “virtual rock star” and a “beltway babe magnet” were particularly telling as was President Bush’s reference to the former Secretary of Defense as “Rumstud.” Linking the studly septuagenarian’s perverse national sex appeal to the fact that he exercised absolute, raw, ruthless power and “enjoyed” it, the article noted that Rumsfeld “with his worn brown shoes and rumpled grey suits” had put a new spin on Henry Kissinger’s maxim: “Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac.”<sup>34</sup>

In press conferences covering the Iraq war—the neocons’ ultimate wet dream—Rummy, with a backdrop of visuals demonstrating the awesomeness of American weaponry, spoke orgasmically about U.S. firepower and military capacity to wreak havoc on the “enemy” like an advertisement for a pornographic film—in effect

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amending Kissinger's phrase to read: "Inflicting death is the ultimate aphrodisiac." In associating the power to orchestrate the death and destruction of countless lives with mass sexual arousal, the raping of Iraq and its resources was depicted as a cause for celebration—a sign of potent manhood.<sup>35</sup> Eros and Thanatos were dressed in stars and stripes jumpsuits and united in the sublime service of imperial spectacle.

Bush's main handler, Karl Rove, made hyper-masculinity pivotal to the construction of the president's public persona which bristled with an almost cartoonish machismo. Indeed, one need only be reminded of Bush's impersonation of the fictional character Pete "Maverick" Mitchell, immortalized on screen by Tom Cruise in *Top Gun*, on the day of his "Mission Accomplished" propaganda spectacle that was jarringly evocative of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. With a mass of sailors who had been lined up like an assembly of tin soldiers, Bush swaggered across the flight deck of the *USS Abraham Lincoln* after a choreographed tail hook landing in what was arguably the mother of all photo-ops.<sup>36</sup> In a snug fitting flight suit; his tautened groin accentuating straps strung salaciously between his legs, Bush displayed a distinctly bulbous crotch that had conservatives salivating. The presidential appendage became an object of adulation among those discussing his manly attributes after the carefully contrived exhibition. In an interview on MSNBC's *Hardball*, host Chris Matthews and guest Gordon Liddy were absolutely giddy and the latter could hardly contain his admiration for Bush's padded panache:

And here comes George Bush. You know, he's in his flight suit, he's striding across the deck, and he's wearing his parachute harness. You know, and I've worn those because I parachute—and it makes the best of his manly characteristic... You know all those women who say size doesn't matter – they're all liars...check that out...what a stud.<sup>37</sup>

Even though the president's "military drag performance" was in obvious contrast to his real personal history as he had never "scuffed his snakeskin boots in combat," Bush's phallic photo-op was widely revered on the right primarily because it signified an "unstoppable hypermasculine empire" that had long been the fantasy of neconservatives.<sup>38</sup>

This phallic fascination was also evidenced by the rapid selling of George W. Bush action figures manufactured by *Talking Presidents*. The 12" doll came complete with a visor, goggles, oxygen mask and an anatomically, exaggerated penis underneath its little flight suit. The penis was constructed from a life-like silicone material making it clear that the company realized that Americans needed to know that the president was not a genitally-challenged Ken doll but rather a leader with *cajones* who was only too happy to brandish his big stick on the world stage.

However, perhaps most deserving of a patriarchal prize for over-the-top patriotically correct paeans to revived manhood was a special issue of *The American Enterprise* (a publication associated with the "scholarly" institute discussed in chapter two) entitled "Real Men: They're Back" published in September 2003. A "delirious right-wing strut fest" that defied "parody," included "inspirational articles such as 'The Return of Manly Leaders and the Americans Who Love Them,' 'Why We Need Macho Men,' 'The Car and the Man,' 'Me Man, Me Hunt' and

‘The Manliness of Men.’<sup>39</sup> The issue also contained a “research” article that compared the “manliness of Republican and Democratic male members of Congress” and which ultimately concluded that “GOP=GUY.”<sup>40</sup> The hyper-masculinity of PC was not merely symbolic; it reflected the kind of governance long favored by the right and think tanks such as the AEI—a lean, mean authoritarian state that would do away with any last vestiges of New Deal liberalism and an aggressive foreign policy hatched by neoconservatives to spread free market fundamentalism to every corner of the globe.

Undoubtedly, a large majority of American citizens consider themselves Christians; however, PC was, and is, rooted in a right-wing interpretation of Christianity that is more of a political ideology than a religion. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the Christian faith as a whole and the authoritarian, even fascistic, impulses of Christian nationalism which glorifies the white male power structure, fancies the dissolution of church and state, conflates patriotism and “American-ness” with Christianity, and which fiercely perpetuates the historical myth of America as God’s chosen agent and messianic savior of the planet. For many on the religious right, the history of the U.S. is deeply providential and they see themselves as moral stewards of a country preordained by God to save humanity. This form of religious fundamentalism despises secularism and is fervidly anti-liberal. Armies of flag-waving Christians view themselves as soldiers in a war against America’s enemies; the enemies are both foreign and domestic but an emphasis is placed on neutralizing the alleged destructive tendencies of the home-grown threat. The true locus of evil, according to PC, is represented by the kind of liberalism that engendered the New Deal, government regulation of corporate excess, the civil rights and feminist movements, the anti-war protests of the 1960s, and environmental protections, among other things. The liberal media and the liberal academy are both culprits for the role they have played in fostering moral corruption, denigrating the Judeo-Christian foundations of the nation, and preaching anti-capitalism.

PC forges a bond between social conservatism and neoliberalism insofar as it favors a form of unbridled capitalism that has been promulgated by generations of Milton Friedman acolytes—something that is explored in more detail in Chapter One. The Christian right’s influence is far-reaching, in part, because of its ties to American corporate power and its unwavering commitment to the so-called free market.<sup>41</sup> And, the appropriation of Christianity in the service of the American imperialist/globalization project was particularly evident in the Bush administration. In the post-9/11 context, proponents of PC peddled an ideologically-laden narrative which suggested that free market capitalism was the best economic system in world history and that countries around the world should all fall in line with the “Washington consensus.” Indeed, on September 20, 2001, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick announced that the Bush administration would seek to counter “terror with trade” and in the name of “fighting terror,” he called for the “passage of a series of corporate globalization agreements—including negotiations to expand the WTO and Fast Track authority—which had already been the topic of serious Congressional debate and conflict.”<sup>42</sup> The agreements were designed to expand the rights of multinational corporations and lessen regulation in accordance with the Friedman

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free market bible. Such enthusiasm for the magic of the market, however, ignored the negative effects of neoliberalism and the fact that for millions of people around the world the real source of “terror” was, and continues to be, American-led globalization as Eduardo Galeano has convincingly argued.<sup>43</sup>

PC also implied that the mantra ‘there is no alternative’ (TINA) should be read as ‘there is no alternative to American empire;’ it embraced the views of warmongers who promoted the idea that the world’s only choice was between their version of *Pax Americana* and the axis of ‘evildoers.’ And since the United States was apparently called upon to defend the ‘hopes of all mankind,’ the saving grace of all humanity was presumably to be found in the religion of neoliberalism and a commitment to American economic hegemony. In short, the only alternative was to embrace the manic logic of American capitalism dipped in the patina of “democratic” platitudes. The ‘war on terror’ also provided ideological cover for the Bush administration to pursue, even more vigorously, the Friedman trinity of privatization, deregulation and skeletal social spending at home; in effect it amounted to domestic ‘shock and awe’ in the service of a corporate agenda and wealthy interests.

PC both operated in, and reflected, a landscape dominated by a military-industrial-media complex whose main function was to serve up spectacles that reinforced the Manichaeism favored by neocons and domestic ayatollahs. Perhaps most insidious was that PC preferred image and spin to ‘reality;’ it discouraged people from thinking, from asking too many questions, and from looking beyond the surface of the manufactured images. It dealt in powerful tools of fiction; in images that both pleased and deceived. It was a world of dramatic visual effects, counterfeit emotions, and preconceived spontaneity. Appearances were preferred over reality and “truth” was that which could be sold by PR hucksters and image consultants. In the post-9/11 context, the “big lie” was able to circulate all the more freely, often without contestation as the “collapse of the distinction between truth and fiction” opened the “way to totalitarian occupation of consciousness.”<sup>44</sup> Drawing comparisons between old and new forms of totalitarianism, McMurty argued that,

in the old totalitarian culture of the Big Lie, the truth is hidden. In the new totalitarianism, there is no line between the truth and falsehood to embarrass the lies. The truth is what people can be conditioned to believe. In a cultural field where corporate symbols and roles, commodities, ads and PR campaigns dominate, what used to be called ‘lies’ are no longer an issue. Ronald Reagan is a cultural icon of this *fin de siecle* politics ... Reagan’s media triumphs for eight years set the stage of the new culture of no line left between truth and falsehood.<sup>45</sup>

Arguably, the former Bush administration took stagecraft and image politics to a level unimaginable to even the savviest of Reagan’s spin doctors. In fact, one of Bush’s presidential aides once spoke sarcastically of the “reality-based community” to author Ron Suskind. The aide, in typical Rovean fashion, added that a “judicious study of discernible reality” was “not the way the world” really worked anymore and explained that since the U.S. was an “empire,” the Bush White House could create its “own reality.”<sup>46</sup> In a cultural environment inundated by manufactured

visual imagery, issues of truth and falsity are relegated to the sidelines in favor of assessments that hinge upon whether the images presented are likeable or not (i.e. aesthetically pleasing). The realm of logic is superseded by the realm of PR-driven aesthetics; all of life becomes nothing more than a media show, a spectacle to be consumed rather than contemplated. In such a world, the precepts of rational inquiry—so central to academe—are rendered superfluous and anti-intellectualism is idolized. Sophistry is valued over pedagogical rigor and reason; acceptance of feel-good images, sound bites and spectacles by large gullible audiences is the goal. The right-wing populism that provides ideological scaffolding for PC depends precisely on such forms of anti-intellectualism.

The concept of “liberal” dominance or bias, particularly in the media and institutions of higher learning, is vital to PC. Part of the right’s strategy to “take back” the academy was based on the myth of the liberal campus—a narrative that paralleled the myth of the liberal media which has become one of the most enduring and influential fictions in modern American history and one which has empowered conservatives to frame and control debate in the United States.<sup>47</sup> For years, rightists have reveled in telling harrowing tales about the bias of the media. From the pages of the late William F. Buckley, Jr.’s *National Review* and William Kristol’s *Weekly Standard* to the reactionary rants of Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, and Bernard Goldberg, complaints of the mainstream media’s liberal slant and its attendant suppression of conservative viewpoints abound.

Such assertions, however, are not supported by the evidence garnered through various studies that have shown that most journalists consider themselves “centrist” on social issues with many more describing their views as conservative on economic issues.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the very notion that the media’s messages can be boiled down to the personal biases of individual journalists is profoundly reductionist for it ignores the fact that the media system is composed not merely of individuals but also of institutions, organizational structures, and economic interests. Beyond personal preferences, when the very structures of the media and the many and varied factors which impinge upon the *creation* of the news are considered; when we acknowledge that the almighty profit motive often determines the content of the news, the idea of a liberal media reveals itself to be that which it is—a myth. If anything, mainstream media have an in-built corporate bias which is attributable to their concentrated ownership by mammoth conglomerates and wealthy tycoons, something which Ben Bagdikian has chronicled in five editions of his book *The Media Monopoly* dating back to 1983. And, in reality, “most media are owned by Republican conservatives.”<sup>49</sup>

What’s more, an honest survey of the contemporary American mediascape clearly demonstrates the existence of a rabidly right-wing communications apparatus comprised of the Fox News Channel, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Times* among others. Additionally, conservatives are “extremely well represented in every facet of the media”—including outlets that are not as fiercely partisan as those mentioned above. Even the so-called liberal media, whose leading beacon is apparently the *New York Times* (the *NYT* basically led the charge to the war in Iraq) are “not so liberal” and they are certainly “no match—either in size, ferocity, or commitment—for the massive conservative media structure that, more than

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ever, determines the shape and scope of our political agenda.”<sup>50</sup> David Brock alerts us to the fact that even dyed-in-the-wool right-wingers acknowledge this:

The ‘liberal media’ mantra aside, if one looks and listens closely to what the right wing says when it thinks others may not be paying attention, there should be no doubt that it has made potent political gains not despite the media but *through* it. Rush Limbaugh says his program has ‘redefined the media’ and refers to the ‘Limbaugh echo chamber syndrome,’ by which messaging originating on his show drives the twenty-four-hour news cycle. ‘The radical Left,’ he says, is ‘furious that liberals no longer set the agenda in the national media’ ... Conservative *New York Times* columnist David Brooks has written that the conservative media have ‘cohered to form a dazzlingly efficient ideology delivery system that swamps liberal efforts to get their ideas out’ ... Commenting on the media while interviewing Ann Coulter about her book *Reason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism*, right-wing radio host Sean Hannity crowed, “We’ve basically taken over!” Coulter, who had made millions off the charge of ‘liberal media bias’ while maintaining a career as perhaps the most biased right-wing voice in the media, laughed in agreement.<sup>51</sup>

Long before the likes of Limbaugh, Brooks, Hannity and Coulter began boasting about the right-ward shift of media, William Kristol practically admitted that the liberal media claim was little more than a rhetorical strategy employed by conservatives to move national discourse even more to the right and to make the media more hospitable to movement conservatism.<sup>52</sup> At its very core, the liberal media “campaign” was “a political battering ram to make the regular media more conservative.”<sup>53</sup> And it was indeed a campaign—one abundantly funded by right-wing foundations and think tanks for decades. Though little, if any evidence was ever adduced to support the charge of the liberal media, it was a Big Lie that not only took hold but one which was internalized—even by many “liberals” and the mainstream media.<sup>54</sup>

The claim of liberal bias in the academy is principally a fiction based on the same sort of ideological contrivances, selective and questionable analyses; this is not to suggest that liberal professors and campuses do not exist for they do—as do conservative professors and campuses—but as I note in subsequent chapters, studies that purportedly demonstrate academe’s liberal/left leanings tend to focus disproportionately on the humanities and the social sciences and more particularly on women’s studies, ethnic studies, and sociology departments where more progressive oriented thinkers tend to be housed. Rightists are generally not interested in exploring the political dynamics of economics or business departments which tend to be inherently conservative. For example, a recent article from *The Nation* clearly demonstrates the stranglehold that Milton Friedman’s laissez-faire philosophy continues to have on the field of economics. Critics of neoliberalism and unfettered free markets within the discipline are marginalized as are those who challenge the very foundations of Friedman’s formulations. One “heterodox” economist, Michael Perelman described the mainstream members of his profession as a “mafia,” which vigorously attempts to police the parameters of allowable discourse with regard to economic theory

and policy.<sup>55</sup> This form of orthodoxy, however, does not seem to trouble conservatives; nor are they particularly concerned with studying “the political orientation of engineering professors or biogeneticists.”<sup>56</sup>

It is also the case that universities are generally chartered corporations ruled, like other corporations, “by a self-appointed, self-perpetuating board of trustees composed overwhelmingly of affluent and conservative businesspeople” who have a great deal of influence on matters pertaining to funding, investment, budgets and even “the academic curriculum.”<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the corporatization of the academy that John Dewey warned about in the 1940s has only accelerated as the tenets of neoliberalism, which have permeated the top administrative ranks of the university, and the commercialization of knowledge work in tandem to create a “culture of conformity” which is “decidedly hostile to the university’s traditional role as a haven for informed social criticism.”<sup>58</sup>

#### PLAN OF THE BOOK

The post-9/11 blitzkrieg on democracy was supported by an alliance of Christian nationalists, intransigent free-market fundamentalists, and assorted ideological mullahs who were determined to impose a campus culture where critical faculties could be lulled into slumber and where anti-intellectualism and mind-numbing conformity could reign supreme. Although a new round of culture wars may have been precipitated by the events of 9/11 and while PC may have represented a more combative, updated brand of “cultural conservatism,” the most recent assault on the academy is indubitably the product of a four-decade-long campaign undertaken by a network of right-wing think tanks, campus organizations, policy institutes and media outlets to delegitimize scholarly contemplation, silence voices of dissent and create an environment that is less and less hospitable to the kind of rational, informed dialogue that is central to a properly functioning democracy.

The groups that were, and are, still involved in efforts to “take back” the university are not ideologically homogeneous; nor are they of one mind when it comes to strategy. However, the conservative, patriotically correct among us all tend to share an intense hatred for the so-called liberal/left elite. Moreover, they are all generously funded, very well-organized, politically connected and unified in their attempts to protect capitalism and shield conservative hegemony from the threat posed by critical thought. The ultimate aim of this alliance is to effect lasting political change that limits freedom of speech to ensure a rigid social and moral order; a conformist atmosphere in which the boundaries of expression are demarcated in accordance with an ideological barometer that ranges from the right to the far right.

Each of the following chapters addresses the malevolent attacks on the academy, the reactionary right-wing agenda, and the ideological infrastructure that has been constructed to advance PC, in overlapping ways. The first chapter briefly examines the broader pre-9/11 political climate—a time in which the country was deeply divided after the rancorous 2000 election and a time in which the embattled President’s right-wing, pro-corporate policies were being challenged on numerous fronts—in order to better contextualize the post-9/11 milieu and the way in which

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the “culture of fear,” engendered by the tragedy, fueled by the Bush administration, and amplified in the corporate media, enabled the opportunistic forces of PC to enact their radical agenda on both the foreign and domestic fronts under the guise of the “war on terror.”

Chapter Two provides an historical account of movement conservatism with a focus the right’s “sugar daddies,” namely four foundations (Scaife, Olin, Bradley and Smith-Richardson), often referred to as the “four sisters” that have funded myriad missions targeting the liberal/left professoriate and, liberalism more generally, for decades. The labyrinth of think tanks, campus student organizations and media outlets that have long fed at this trough and which used foundation lucre to portray the post-9/11 academy as a sanctuary for unpatriotic malcontents is explored as are the links between these groups. Some of the more recent patriotically correct, anti-democratic campaigns are also discussed.

Chapter Three charts the emergence of David Horowitz’s empire and the way in which he used his assortment of disinformation outlets to exploit 9/11 and peddle a particularly pernicious brand of pitch-fork anti-intellectualism; he enlisted armies of right-wing student mercenaries to carry out a war designed to “smoke out” opposition to the Bush administration and the radical right in general. His attempts to exile critical intellectuals and quash dissent through mechanisms such as the Academic Bill of Rights and the Student Bill of Rights are fodder for this chapter as are his more current Tea-Partying and “teach-in” activities. ACTA’s history and its various McCarthy-esque crusades to vilify academics, weed out “subversive” thought, and intervene in university affairs are also taken up in this chapter.

Chapter Four begins by appraising the Bush era media environment and the ways in which it imperiled democratic principles. It then elaborates on the role that right-wing media played in boosting PC by disseminating to mass audiences hysterical anecdotes of leftist indoctrination and fables about professors who provided intellectual cover for American-hating ne’er-do-wells. Specific attention is paid to the Fox News Channel (FNC) and some of its most prominent spokespeople including Sean Hannity and Bill O’Reilly who, contrary to Fox’s “fair and balanced” slogan, essentially served as ideological ventriloquists for the right and helped to popularize the backlash against the academy. But more than this, these media attack dogs not only provided succor to the well-orchestrated campaigns of Horowitz, ACTA and others, they themselves were part of the broader alliance seeking to re-define America according to the edicts of PC. Indeed, the high-octane anti-liberalism and antediluvian nostalgia for an America dominated by white, conservative Christian males that is the hallmark of the FNC is central to the ongoing efforts to “mainstream” PC and demonize liberalism. Far from being a reputable news network, the FNC is a pillar of the right’s ideological infrastructure.

To a certain degree, the more brazen assaults on academe have abated as the right has recently set its sights on sabotaging the presidency of Barack Obama (who is hardly a leftist!). Now that the cannons of conservative calumny have been redirected to the ‘socialist,’ ‘closet’ Muslim in the White House, it appears as though the ivory tower has been granted a temporary reprieve. No longer subjected to the white-hot glare of the media spotlight it would be easy for progressive intellectuals

to retreat to their seminar rooms, comfortable in the fact that right-wing witch-hunters have seemingly refocused their wrath. They would do so at their own risk; the campus project for “cultural conservatism” is very much alive. It lives on in Horowitz’s new “teach-in” campaign, the “9/11 Never Forget Project” started by the Young America’s Foundation, and the 2009 unveiling of the overtly racist “Youth for Western Civilization” to name just a few initiatives. As such, retreat cannot be an option; the struggles to defend academic freedom, civil liberties and critical thought must not be abandoned.

Moreover, increasingly perilous strains of anti-intellectualism are contaminating the larger body politic. While many heralded Obama’s election as a decisive turning point in American politics and suggested that his overwhelming victory signaled the death knell of conservatism, the broader based campaign for PC has, arguably, intensified since he took office. Aspects of PC continue to play a significant role in the nation’s public dialogue and are, in fact, contributing to its increased toxicity. Its characteristic disdain for rational debate, exaltation of white patriarchy and right-wing Christianity, and its allegiance to big business principles informs most—but not all—members of the contemporary Republican Party, animates the Tea Party “movement” and the right-wing media machine. Its venomous anti-liberalism, channeled through talk radio, the FNC and a network of think tanks, has contributed to the dramatic rise in right-wing hate groups and the reemergence of anti-government militias since 2008.

The patriotically correct are fuelling fear, paranoia, racism and nativism in the aftermath of another tragedy which has affected more lives than the events of 9/11—the economic meltdown precipitated by corporate greed and the runaway capitalism that they themselves have championed for decades. As people lose their jobs, homes and life savings, the anger on the ground is palpable but many unscrupulous rightists are redirecting that understandable rage so that liberals and minorities are made the fall-guys for a mess that was created by the very economic philosophy that conservatives doggedly pushed for more than forty years—often under the guise of “culture wars.”

We must remind ourselves that the foundations, right-wing research factories, campus organizations, media outlets and pressure groups of various kinds which have led the charge against the liberal/left academy and liberalism in general are guided by two main objectives—to dismantle any remaining traces of the New Deal and to extinguish, once and for all, the heritage of democratic openness and social reform that dates back to the 1960s. For these reasons, this apparatus and its reactionary agenda must be exposed, confronted and vigorously contested.

