

Horowitz's campus jihads

By Bill Berkowitz
workingforchange.com | October 10, 2004

At Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, “WANTED” posters with a headshot of Professor Abel Alves appeared on campus a few weeks back; a student who took Associate professor David Gibbs’ “What is Politics?” class at the University of Arizona claimed that Gibbs “is an anti-American communist who hates America and is trying to brainwash young people into thinking America sucks”; a political-science professor at Metropolitan State College of Denver in Colorado says she has been the target of death threats and hate e-mail in the wake of the recent debate in the state over an Academic Bill of Rights; a University of Georgia professor is being investigated after allegations he bullied a conservative student. Revenge of the Nerds? Twenty-first century Gipper brigades? No, and No. It’s the Horowistas — a small, hearty and growing band of followers of right wing provocateur David Horowitz and his Students for Academic Freedom.

Since 9/11, spying in the name of homeland security has become as American as baseball, cherry pie and listening to a Cat Stevens record. According to a recent report in the San Francisco Chronicle, a relatively unknown branch of the Defense Department called the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is employing its state-of-the-art aerial imaging equipment in service of homeland security. Closer to home, David Horowitz and the Independent Women’s Forum are scanning the nation’s college campuses in the name of homeland security.

Horowitz, the head of the Los Angeles-based Center for the Study of Popular Culture, and the conservative women at the Washington, DC-based Independent Women’s Forum are focusing their homeland security spying on a much more specific target, liberal academics. Together Horowitz and the IWF have been cranking out advertisements and placing them in a number of student newspapers across the country encouraging conservative students to scan their campuses for so-called anti-American academics.

According to Pacifica Radio’s Democracy Now!, the advertisements running in student newspapers charge universities with being dominated by liberal or left-wing professors. The

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ads “are paid for by well-funded groups like Students for Academic Freedom — a Horowitz group — and the Independent Women's Forum,” Democracy Now! reported.

Two of the campaign's first victims are Ball State's Professor Alves and David Gibbs, an Associate professor of History and Sociology at the University of Arizona, who last spring taught a course entitled “What is Politics?”

On the Ball State University campus, posters “announcing that history professor Abel Alves was ‘WANTED’” was put up by Amanda Carpenter, a senior, who said she put up the posters in order to attract attention to her website, the Muncie, Indiana Star Press reported. The professor's “alleged offenses include indoctrinating freshmen with liberal books, such as Fast Food Nation, and guest lectures by the Humane Society.”

According to the newspaper, another Professor, George Wolfe, who teaches peace and conflict resolution, was recently the target of a profile in Horowitz's online publication, FrontPage Magazine. The story “accused Wolfe of giving students extra credit for going to Washington to protest the war in Iraq and lowering the grade of a student who argued in favor of a military response to the Sept. 11 attacks.” The university denied that any credit had been given for merely attending an anti-war demonstration.

On September 27, David Gibbs told Amy Goodman, the host of Democracy Now! that his largely freshmen class “focuses on propaganda and deception,” and he “emphasize[s] incidents of the government lying and things like that.” When he taught the class last spring, “the Independent Women's Forum... put into the local student newspaper, an advertisement that basically argued that there's a kind of left wing domination of the universities and students should fight that with the strong implication they should monitor their professors and report them, at least that's how I read it.”

When Gibbs received student evaluations, “a student who said I'm anti-American communist who hates America and is trying to brainwash young people into thinking that America sucks,” said that “I should be investigated by the FBI, and the FBI has been contacted.”

Later on, “another student on a web log during the summer said he took my class and also said that he didn't like my politics and suggests that students shouldn't take my class but should drop by and try to disrupt it. There have been a number of instances like that which I hadn't had before.”

Although Gibbs said that he wasn't sure or worried about whether the FBI was contacted, he acknowledged that he thought it was “indicative of a larger national trend, which is conservative activist groups with lots of money and connections to the Republican Party trying to encourage and even to some extent orchestrate students and local conservative groups like those at the University of Arizona to go and basically harass

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faculty if they don't like their politics.”

Goodman pointed out that the full-page ads, similar to ones placed in other college student newspapers, says: “Top ten things your professors do to skew you. They push their political views, liberal opinions dominate, they don't present both sides of the debate, conservative viewpoints practically non-existent. Classrooms are for learning, not brainwashing. They force you to check your intellectual honesty at the door. They make you uncomfortable if you disagree. Grading should be based on facts not opinion. Education? More like indoctrination.”

Horowitz's mission

Refresher: David Horowitz, and his writing partner Peter Collier, were well-known lefties in the 60s. Horowitz was a Black Panther supporter and editor of Ramparts magazine, the premier left-wing publication of the period. He and Collier, a co-founder of the Los Angeles-based Center for the Study of Popular Culture, came out as Reagan Republicans in a highly controversial 1985 Washington Post article called “Lefties for Reagan.” Since then, Horowitz has blended Dr. Laura-like pomposity with an extraordinary ability to fund raise and self-promote.

In one of his first campus-wide advertising campaigns, Horowitz launched an anti-reparations campaign aimed both at thwarting what was becoming a hot button issue — reparations for African Americans — and drawing attention to his activities. His effort was highlighted by attempts to place full-page advertisements headlined “Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Slavery is a Bad Idea—and Racist Too,” in college newspapers across the country. What started at the University of California, Berkeley, on the last day of Black History Month, evolved into a full-blown promotional and fundraising project for his organization.

Since 9/11, Horowitz has been a dynamic organizer. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks, he lambasted California Congresswoman Barbara Lee for having the temerity to be the only congressperson to vote against giving President Bush a blank check for his war against terrorism. In a column called “The Enemy Within,” Horowitz branded Lee an “anti-American communist who supports America's enemies and has actively collaborated with them in their war against America.”

In late October 2001, Horowitz spent three hours on the radio program of Dr. Laura Schlessinger — America's erstwhile pop psychologist before Dr. Phil took the reins — denouncing the “so-called Peace Movement.” As part of the “National Call to SUPPORT the WAR,” Horowitz told Dr. Laura's audience that “campus leftists hate America more than the terrorists.” The reason for this, said Horowitz, is campus radicals view “The enemy of my enemy is my friend. They are thrilled that the symbols of America were destroyed.”

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Horowitz then launched another advertising effort, the “Think Twice” campaign — a name seemingly derived from his “Second Thoughts” project of the 1980s — which was aimed at convincing students on college campuses not to protest against Bush’s war on terrorism. In “An Open Letter to the “Anti-War” Demonstrators: Think Twice Before You Bring The War Home,” Horowitz urged students to “think again and not to join an ‘anti-war’ effort against America’s coming battle with international terrorism.”

In 2002 he launched the National Campaign to Take Back Our Campuses, and in a booklet titled “Political Bias in America’s Universities,” Horowitz described “what’s wrong in academics today,” and the “steps you and I can take to restore sanity to our colleges and universities.”

Horowitz’s campus jihads could not take place without well-stuffed coffers. His first post-conversion project, which he co-directed with Peter Collier, was called “Second Thoughts.” Between January 1986 and January 1990, this project raised \$950,000. As president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, he has profited even more handsomely: According to mediatransparency.org, between 1989 and 2002, Horowitz’s outfits received 115 grants accounting for more than \$12,700,000. Right-wing philanthropic partners include the Allegheny Foundation, Castle Rock Foundation (the Coors Family), the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Scaife Family Foundation, the Sarah Scaife Foundation, the Olin Foundation.

Independent women?

Founded in 1992, as a direct response to the Clarence Thomas hearings, the Independent Women’s Forum Mission Statement aims “to affirm women’s participation in and contributions to a free, self-governing society.”

In a May 2002 piece for the Chicago Tribune, Chris Black wrote: “The conservative women at the Independent Women’s Forum are cheering the return of the guy. From their standpoint, the terrorist attacks on the United States turned the feminist tide and brought back traditional values, a retreat to home and hearth, and an appreciation for the manly man.”

Between 1994 and 2002, the Independent Women’s Forum received more than 70 grants worth more than \$5 million dollars from the Randolph, Castle Rock, JM, Sarah Scaife, the John M. Olin Foundation and others, according to mediatransparency.org.

David Horowitz told the Muncie Star Press that he “completely deplore[d]” the “WANTED” poster, and that he doesn’t “demonize these professors. I want them (professors) to do the right thing. I’ve never called for the firing of a professor and wouldn’t.” And in a bit of Rumsfeld-speak, Horowitz added that “When you deal with students, you’re

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dealing with students.”

In lieu of “WANTED” posters, Horowitz’s Students for Academic Freedom provides students with a manual that gives an example of a poster asking, “Is Your Professor Using the Classroom as a Political Soapbox?” The manual also provides “advice on how to create Web sites, get publicity, file complaints, and spot abuses of academic freedom, such as using university funds to hold one-sided, partisan conferences, and inviting speakers to campus from one side of the political spectrum,” the Muncie Star Press reported.