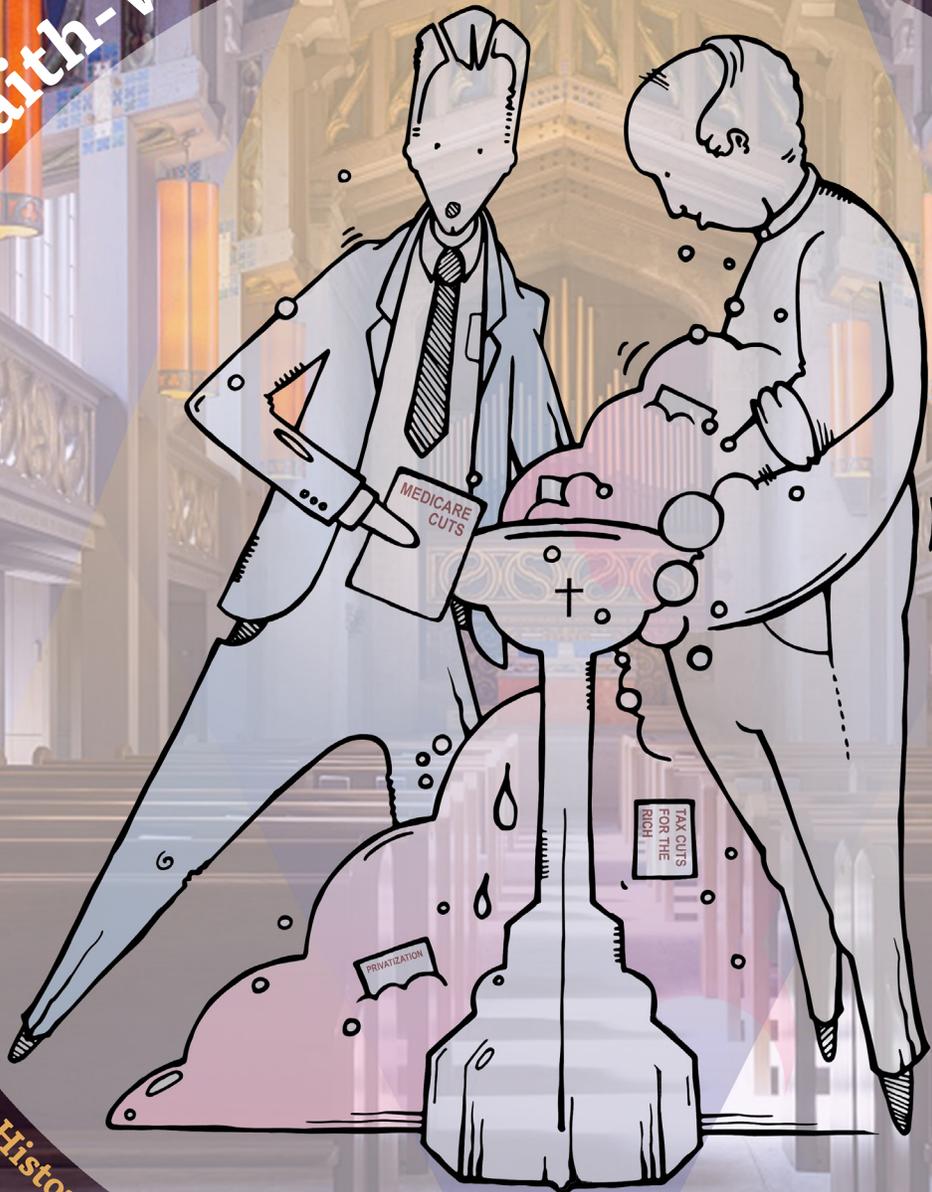


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# The Public Eye

*“Faith-Washing” Right-Wing Economics*



*Also: The History Wars Continue • Policies That Make People Disappear • Reports in Review*

As the presidential primary campaign is underway this fall, some conservative candidates are racing each other to the bottom of the barrel, scapegoating immigrants and poor people for all the nation's woes. But alongside the dangerous demagoguery of a Donald Trump lies a less obvious threat: the renewed and growing efforts of a coalition of Christian and Corporate Right figures to rebrand Republicans' approach to poverty.

In this issue's cover story, "**Faith-Washing Right-Wing Economics**" (page 4), PRA Economic Justice Researcher Mariya Strauss details how "compassionate conservatism" has been updated for 2015, using progressive language about social justice and Christian rhetoric about "the least of these" as fig leaves for policies aimed at gutting long-established social protections. While business-friendly leaders publicly talk about "declaring peace on the social safety net," behind closed doors billionaire donors are funding Christian theologians and social scientists to come up with scripture-based arguments to contain popular anger over the economy—arguments that prescribe free-market capitalism, individual charity and "the dignity of work" to alleviate poverty, and which cite Calvinist hierarchies (wherein everyone succeeds or fails according to their talents) to justify income inequality. This kinder, gentler face of free-market capitalism has as many potential victims as Trump's "makers and takers" Producerism, but, as Strauss writes, it's not the only way.

In our second story, "**The History Wars Continue**" (page 3), PRA program coordinator Gabriel Joffe and author Katherine Stewart team up for an in-depth look at the ongoing battle over Advanced Placement U.S. History (APUSH) curricula. For the last several years, conservatives have taken aim at the course's inclusive approach to exploring "the 'why' of U.S. history," warts and all, casting the course as a primer on civil disobedience that would leave most students "ready to sign up for ISIS." Joffe and Stewart explore how the seemingly grassroots opposition to APUSH is actually a well-coordinated national campaign that, this summer, succeeded in getting the curriculum's authors to revise the course along more conservative lines. They also explore the deeper questions at stake in the debate, namely whether history education should be a fact-based reckoning with our country's past, or a means of inculcating ideas about citizenship and unified national identity.

In this issue's **Q&A** (page 11), journalist Dani McClain speaks with New Orleans housing justice activist Shana griffin on the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. In 2005, after Katrina left more than 1,800 people dead, and displaced hundreds of thousands of others, some politicians saw a silver lining. The storm left them with a blank slate that "cleaned up" public housing and cleared the way for redevelopment initiatives that would massively alter the face of the city. Ten years later, the new New Orleans is whiter, richer, and more corporate-friendly than ever before. But griffin and her non-profit, the Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative, are fighting back.

Lastly, in **Reports in Review** (page 18), we look at some notable new publications and studies from the past year, covering topics such as right-wing groups who oppose government control of public lands; the effects of mass incarceration on families; the "Say Her Name" campaign to center women in the national movement for Black lives and discussions around police brutality; and a new data report on LGBTQ people's legal rights in the South, the Midwest, and the Mountain States.

We hope you enjoy this quarter's *Public Eye*, and look forward to bringing you the Winter 2016 edition, which will be a special issue themed around anti-Black racism and African American resistance.

Best,  
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BY GABRIEL JOFFE AND KATHERINE STEWART

# The History Wars Continue

## How Right-Wing Pressure Influenced the APUSH Curriculum Update

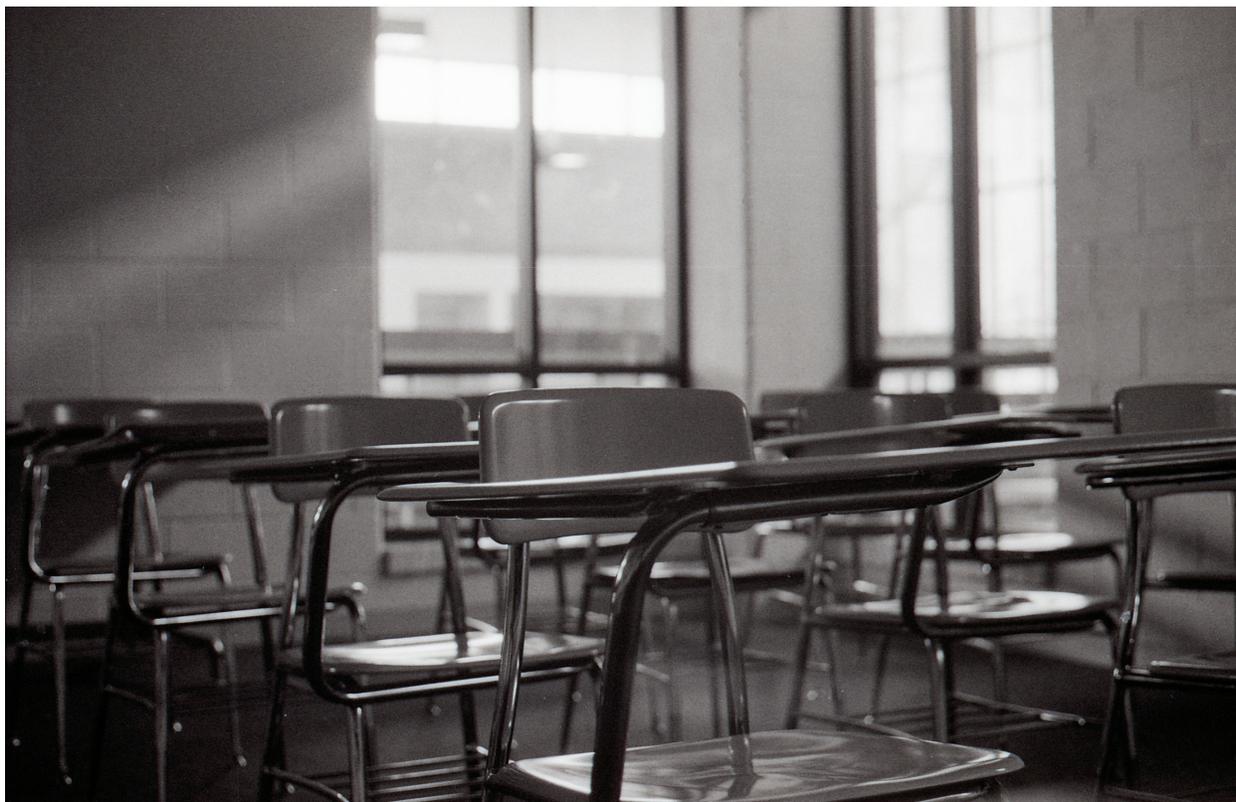


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On July 30, 2015, the College Board, creators of college-level curricula and testing for high school students, released an update to its Advanced Placement U.S. History (APUSH) course.<sup>1</sup> The revision came after what had already been a two-year battle and was quickly criticized by all sides. Digital news outlet *Quartz* published an article detailing “All the ways the new AP U.S. history standards gloss over the country’s racist past,”<sup>2</sup> while conservative media sites like *The Daily Caller* quoted conservative “experts” who groused that the changes were merely cosmetic and still don’t adequately emphasize “American Exceptionalism.”<sup>3</sup> But as to why the changes had been undertaken in the first place, the media consensus was, as *The Washington Post* put it, that “Conservatives convinced College Board to rewrite American history.”<sup>4</sup> Were these headlines just clickbait or had there been mounting pressure on the College Board to appease right-wing critics?

Jeremy Stern, an independent historian who had consulted on the College Board overhaul,<sup>5</sup> cast the revision in a more positive light, telling *The Christian Science Monitor*, “This is a major success for an unpolitical look at American history.”<sup>6</sup> However, there was nothing “unpolitical” about the events preceding the revisions.

The fight over APUSH had been simmering ever since the College Board released its new version of the framework in 2012; it boiled over in several states after the new curriculum was implemented for the 2014-2015 school year. The original redesign of the course—in the works since 2006—was intended to reflect an ongoing shift in history classrooms from rote memorization to critical thinking skills.<sup>7</sup> As the authors of the new curriculum explained in *Education Week*,<sup>8</sup> they’d been motivated by the concerns of AP teachers who felt the existing APUSH curriculum “prevented them and their students from exploring in any depth the main events and

*Joffe and Stewart, continued on page 14*

# “Faith-Washing” Right-Wing Economics

## How the Corporate and Christian Right Are Marketing Medicare’s Demise

If you have worked all your adult life and are now receiving Medicare health benefits, you may be vexed to find that the third-largest federal program<sup>1</sup> may not cover everything you need. Indeed, as PBS reported in July, “Medicare certainly does not cover long-term custodial care in nursing homes or other institutional settings.”<sup>2</sup> Despite its limitations, the federal benefit program remains among the most popular government initiatives in U.S. history, even among Tea Party Republicans, who found a rallying cry in one South Carolina man’s infamous 2009 demand to establishment politicians: “Keep your government hands off my Medicare.”<sup>3</sup> A 2011 Marist poll showed that 70 percent of those identifying themselves with the Tea Party opposed any cuts to Medicare.<sup>4</sup> More recently, an April 2015 poll from Reuters/Ipsos showed that 80 percent of all Republican voters opposed cutting either Medicare or Social Security.<sup>5</sup>

Medicare’s broad popularity presents a problem for conservative candidates who are racing each other to eliminate the program as we know it. Some politicians want to cut Medicare as a means of shrinking the welfare state; others want to redirect Medicare’s vast payroll deduction revenues into the hands of private corporations. (Private contractors already administer at least one category of Medicare benefits.<sup>6</sup>)

Either way, following the demise of Mitt Romney’s 2012 presidential campaign—helped along by Romney’s mocking of poor and working class voters as “entitled” “victims”<sup>7</sup>—conservatives from across the ideological spectrum have been in search of a new marketing strategy: one that downplays the take-from-the-poor, give-to-the-rich foundations of their policies. Whether and how factional disputes between the Tea Party’s “Free-

dom Caucus” and the GOP leadership in the House of Representatives can be managed remains to be seen. As William Greider recently wrote<sup>8</sup> in *The Nation*, “The party can’t deal with the real economic distress threatening the nation as long as rebellion is still smoldering in the ranks. Of course, that suits the interests of the country-club and Fortune 500 wing of the party—the last thing they want is significant economic reform.”

In the throes of this turmoil, the free market or “country-club” conservatives are test-marketing a new brand: a Christian-inflected, contemporary remix of the 1980s’ and ’90s’ “compassionate conservatism.” Even as candidates like Jeb Bush (who wants to “phase out” Medicare<sup>9</sup>), Sen. Marco Rubio (a Florida Republican who has said he wants to raise the retirement age<sup>10</sup>), and former candidate Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker (who proposed cutting \$15 million from his state’s Medicare program<sup>11</sup>) sharpen blades to slash retirement security, a chorus of voices preaching Christian love and generosity toward the poor is rising from two groups whose connections with each other are not widely understood—the Christian Right and what we might call the free market fundamentalists.

Though this new brand may be meant to appeal to those—including many Christians—uncomfortable with rhetoric that demonizes vulnerable people, conservative groups pushing this new poverty narrative aren’t breaking with free market and Christian Right leadership. They have no plans to redress income inequality. Instead, responding to internal pressure from both the Tea Party Producerist Right (whose “makers and takers” frame blames both the undeserving poor and liberal elites as drivers of a system that takes from “real,” productive Americans) and external pressure from

the economic populist Left, the Christian Right and free market fundamentalists are changing the packaging on their long-shared policy agenda<sup>12</sup> of cutting the government benefits on which vast numbers of people rely.

During this primary season, right-wing populists such as Donald Trump and Sarah Palin have grabbed headlines with the racist implication that everyone who isn’t a “maker” is to blame for keeping the United States from greatness. From a public relations standpoint, this sort of unrestrained demagoguery—dangerous as it is—could polish the shine on the relaunch of compassionate conservatism. But when we turn down the volume on these deliberately offensive antics, it becomes easier to recognize how the new right-wing slogans about poverty pose a serious threat.

This isn’t an entirely new phenomenon. Neoliberal conservatives like Bush, neoconservatives such as Rubio, and free market libertarians like Walker benefit from the decades-long Christian Right re-education of Evangelical voters, around half of whom now believe that capitalism is a Christian system.<sup>13</sup> These politicians make the demolition of seniors’ retirement security seem like a tragic inevitability, as uncontrollable as the weather, rather than the political choice that it is.

An early election-season example of this narrative came from Jeb Bush in a July 22 interview, in which he argued that Medicare should be preserved for those already receiving the benefit, but “we need to figure out a way to phase out this program for others and move to a new system that allows them to have something—because they’re not going to have anything.”<sup>14</sup>

But Jeb’s concerns amount to crocodile tears. As Trump parades through city after city, spewing hate-filled rhetoric,

Bush coolly explains how he will enact policies that will cause millions of future seniors to become destitute. By the standards of progressive economic populists, there are no “good guys” among the current roster of conservative candidates. They may differ on message and tactics, but as historian Geraldo Cadava wrote of Bush in a September essay in *The Atlantic*, “do not mistake his moderate tone, performance of goodwill, or marketability to Latino voters for an entirely different message than his cruder primary opponents.”<sup>15</sup>

*Washington Post* political commentator E.J. Dionne; and President Barack Obama.<sup>17</sup> But Brooks did not mean to express approval of direct government benefits such as Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, TANF, and food stamps. Instead, his declaration of “peace” was the opening gambit for a broader argument to weaken these highly popular government programs.

“The safety net should be limited,” Brooks said, “to people who are truly indigent, as opposed to being spread around in a way that metastasizes into

“welfare queen.” (“Poor, uneducated, single teenaged mothers,” he wrote, “are in a bad position to raise children, however much they may love them.”) Brooks’ comparison of government aid to metastatic cancer echoed those earlier waves of AEI antagonism.

It also underscored an implied threat. Brooks went on: “If you don’t pay attention to the macro-economy and the fiscal stability you will become insolvent. And if you become insolvent you will have austerity. And if you have austerity the poor always pay.” Such statements help make the increasingly precarious middle class fear that government direct aid programs that help their fellow citizens will lead to an economic tailspin. And if Brooks and his peers can effectively frighten the middle class away from defending the social safety net, there will be no constituency left that is strong enough to defend it.

But what will certainly remain are the largely invisible government aid programs for the wealthy and corporations: the billions in public subsidies that allow businesses to profit. That’s the cruel irony at the heart of free market fundamentalism. As political scientist Suzanne Mettler wrote in her 2011 book, *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies*



President Barack Obama participates in a discussion about poverty during the Catholic-Evangelical Leadership Summit on Overcoming Poverty at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., May 12, 2015. From left, moderator E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Washington Post* columnist and professor in Georgetown’s McCourt School of Public Policy; President Obama; Robert Putnam, professor of public policy at the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government; and Arthur Brooks, president of AEI. White House photo courtesy of Pete Souza.

#### WHOSE SAFETY NET?

“It’s time to declare peace on the social safety net,” announced Arthur C. Brooks, president of the free market think tank American Enterprise Institute (AEI), at Georgetown University’s May 12 Catholic-Evangelical Leadership Summit on Overcoming Poverty, before calling the social safety net “one of the greatest achievements of free enterprise.” Sharing the stage with Brooks were Robert Putnam, a best-selling author and Harvard political scientist whose latest book examines the diminishing prospects for economic mobility in the U.S.<sup>16</sup>; veteran

middle class entitlements and imperils our economy.” Brooks did not mention that AEI scholars spent the 1980s, ‘90s and 2000s publishing commentaries and reports pillorying people who apply for public assistance.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most famous of these scholars is AEI’s W.H. Brady Scholar Charles Murray (coauthor of the noxious 1994 tome *The Bell Curve*), whose 1984 book, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980*, provided the intellectual basis for the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, which effectively ended the federal welfare system. Murray’s arguments helped shape the myth of the

*Undermine American Democracy*, privatizing social welfare programs can appear like a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars, and, as such, part of a Reaganite reliance on market-based policy. “Yet, in fact,” she wrote, “such policies function not through free market principles of laissez-faire but rather through public subsidization of the private sector.”<sup>19</sup> Because the gigantic subsidies Mettler describes primarily benefit the wealthy corporations that support conservative think tanks such as AEI, conservative intellectuals like Brooks never talk about cutting them.

### CLOAKING CRUELTY WITH CATCHPHRASES

Brooks' threat of austerity may appear less directly racist than the "bad parent" attacks on African Americans that Murray and others used to pass welfare reform during the 1990s.<sup>20</sup> Instead of demonizing the poor outright, this time around Brooks melds Christian rhetoric with economic-speak to offer a more paternalistic, "colorblind" characterization.

"Every one of us made in God's image," he said, "is an asset to develop."<sup>21</sup> Brooks is vague about how poor Americans (whom he describes as "the least of these, our brothers and sisters") can become "assets" in a capitalist sense. But he seems convinced that free enterprise will save them from poverty. Brooks concluded his Georgetown remarks, "That's a human capital approach to poverty alleviation." In his recent book, *The Conservative Heart: How to Build a Fairer, Happier, and More Prosperous America*, Brooks expands on this Christian-lite evangelizing about the sacredness of work: "Work with reward is always and everywhere a blessing."<sup>22</sup>

So, instead of welfare or government jobs, Brooks is proposing that work in the private sector will help poor people lift themselves out of poverty. Jeb Bush expressed a version of this idea at a Republican women's event in late September, saying, "Our message is one of hope and aspiration...It isn't one of division and get in line and we'll take care of you with free stuff. Our message...says you can achieve earned success."<sup>23</sup> But this strategy has already spectacularly failed, particularly for communities of color. In a May 2015 *New York Times* article, Patricia Cohen reported how African Americans who used to be able to make a middle-class living at government jobs have increasingly fallen into more precarious economic situations as their agencies have been privatized.<sup>24</sup>

Brooks' use of "brothers and sisters" and "the least of these," is just one example of how neoliberals have been adapting their language to better appeal to conservative Christians in recent years. The Christian Right has become such an important part of the conservative firmament that other factions of the Right are often obliged to cast their arguments in religious terms, weaving religious ideas directly into mainstream policy debates.

And the most glaring example of this shift is that, whenever the public discourse turns to a criticism of income inequality, Corporate and Christian Right intellectuals turn to their new narrative: one that laments the existence of poverty while at the same time prescribing mythic free market capitalism—rather than jobs programs or tangible government supports such as Medicare—as its cure.

market the Corporate and Christian Right policy goal of dismantling retirement security and health coverage for seniors. But many conservative donors want more than a catchphrase; they also expect a return on their investment in politics. They also want access for themselves to the largesse of the state. Christian Right groups have been working with free market groups since the 1980s to shrink government programs for the needy and



Arthur Brooks speaking at the 2015 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in National Harbor, Maryland. Photo via Wikimedia.

### THE BILLIONAIRES' CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS

Conservative billionaires who have invested hundreds of millions in the U.S. political system, such as the Koch brothers, the Kern family, the DeVoses, and others, now fund a caravan of Christian social scientists, theologians, and scholars to serve as their free market evangelists. The most high-profile of these wealthy backers are the Koch Brothers; not only has AEI received funds from both the Charles Koch Foundation and Donors Trust (a dark-money organization that allows wealthy donors to give anonymously to conservative causes<sup>25</sup>), but David Koch also served on AEI's National Council as recently as 2014.<sup>26</sup>

Brooks and other Christian free market surrogates use biblical language sanctifying the "dignity of work" and the entrepreneurial spirit, and craft slogans to

move the funds from these programs into the hands of unaccountable, private religious charities.<sup>27</sup>

Writers in this magazine and elsewhere have documented this trend of ending direct government aid to the poor and elderly in favor of private charity, starting with the 1996 Welfare Reform Act and continuing to the "compassionate conservatism" that *WORLD* magazine editor Marvin Olasky helped brand for President George W. Bush.<sup>28</sup> As Bill Berkowitz wrote for *The Public Eye* in 2002, "Stripped of alliteration, 'compassionate conservatism' is the political packaging of the Right's long-term goals of limited government, privatization, deregulation and the creation of a new social contract."<sup>29</sup>

One tool that "compassionate conservatives" invented for redirecting state

funds into private hands was the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. PRA has reported on this office's funneling of federal grants to religious nonprofits under Bush, and on its continued lack of transparency and accountability under Obama.<sup>30</sup>

#### CHARITY VS. COLLECTIVE ACTION

Free market neoliberals from both sides of the aisle have not historically concerned themselves with the problems of the poor. Indeed, as the late political scientist Jean V. Hardisty and North-eastern University law professor Lucy A.

central tenet of Christ's teachings, and free market ideologues know that even the most profit-motivated Christian has been taught to give back a percentage of his or her income and time to those in need. Christian Reconstructionism<sup>33</sup> and its "softer" counterpart, Christian Dominionism, the intellectual movements that undergird much of the Christian Right,<sup>34</sup> offer a set of solutions for how a Christian government should treat the poor. As religion scholar Julie J. Ingersoll writes in her 2015 book *Building God's Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction*, many of these "solutions," which are rooted in a strictly literal interpretation of God's law in the Bible, have filtered into the policy platforms of conservative political figures, most notably Ron Paul, Mike Huckabee, Ted Cruz, and Rick Santorum.

According to the Reconstructionist and Dominionist worldview, only the elect, or God's chosen few in the church, get to govern.<sup>35</sup> These elect see it as their duty, Ingersoll writes, to "transform every aspect of culture to bring it in line with [the] Bible."<sup>36</sup> This follows from a Calvinist interpretation of the Bible, which posits that only the elect will get into Heaven.

A recent example of this vision came in a July 6 video interview that self-styled Tea Party "historian" David Barton gave,<sup>37</sup> in which he helped amplify the conservative chorus for cutting Medicare. "Retirement is not a Biblical concept," Barton said. "That is a pagan concept." Barton seems to be in favor of doing away with



Occupy D.C. protesters outside the 2012 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, D.C. Photo via Flickr / www.GlynLowe.com. License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

In the Georgetown panel discussion with Obama and Putnam, as well as in his book *The Conservative Heart*, Brooks updated compassionate conservatism to draw a sharp divide between what he considers the legitimate "safety net" and the abuse of it in "middle class entitlements." "Help should always come with the dignifying power of work," Brooks said.

Perhaps hearing Brooks' remarks as yet another version of the Right's attack on government assistance programs, Obama responded with a defensive question, asking, "What portion of our collective wealth and budget are we willing to invest in those things that allow a poor kid, whether in a rural town...in Appalachia or in the inner city, to access what they need both in terms of mentors and social networks, as well as decent books and computers and so forth, in order for them to succeed?"<sup>31</sup> Obama was giving Brooks a chance to show his support for equality of opportunity for all people, not just for corporations. Brooks offered no response.

Williams pointed out in their 2002 essay, "The Right's Campaign Against Welfare," the New Right coalition that brought Ronald Reagan to power popularized the idea that there were fewer people living in poverty than government data showed, and that anyone still in need of aid after Reagan's implementation of supply-side economic policies, such as tax cuts for businesses, was simply abusing the system. "As a result of a decade of message development," Hardisty and Williams wrote, "the Right was able to augment the justification for the elimination of federal social programs; they should be defunded not simply because they tax our paychecks, but because they destroy recipients' character."<sup>32</sup>

But conservative Christians have a more complex relationship to poverty. Care for the poor is unquestionably a

**"Retirement is not a Biblical concept," Barton said. "That is a pagan concept."**

retirement altogether. But despite this hardline—and surely unpopular—position, Barton's political star appears to be on the rise. In September, Texas senator and GOP presidential candidate Ted Cruz hired Barton to lead his superPAC. Time will tell whether Barton can parlay his grassroots Tea Party network into votes for Cruz.<sup>38</sup> But with Barton granted such an influential platform, other Christian

Dominionists will likely be emboldened to promote their version of biblical government.

#### FAITH-WASHING INEQUALITY

Since even a shrunken, limited government would have to remain as part of a Dominionist transformation, in recent years the Christian Right has had to address the sticky question of how govern-

ment should behave toward the poor—especially within the context of unfettered global capitalism. In other words, how can the Christian Right reconcile Christ's admonition in Matthew 25:40 to care for "the least of these" with a system of global capital that allows the one percent to hoard trillions while 16.4 million U.S. children are living in poverty?

**Koch-funded theologians have developed scripture-based arguments to address populist anger over economic inequality, blending traditional Calvinist hierarchies with an economically Darwinist framework that says it is just for wealth to accrue to those who manage it best.**

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Enter the Koch brothers and Christian free enterprise. As Peter Montgomery wrote in *The Public Eye's* Spring 2015 issue, "The Koch brothers, who describe themselves as libertarians uninterested in social conservatives' culture wars, are more than willing to use Christian Right voters as well as mountains of cash to achieve their anti-government, anti-union ends."<sup>39</sup> Through the use of obscurely-named trust funds such as Themis, ORRA, and EvangCHR4,<sup>40</sup> the fossil-fuel tycoons have established the Christian free market think tank Institute for Faith, Work and Economics (IFWE), which has set about resolving this area of potential tension between the Corporate and Christian Right.

Beyond advocating simple charity, IFWE theologians have developed a scripture-based argument to address populist anger over economic inequality, blending the Christian Right's traditional Calvinist hierarchies—the preordained,

saved "elect" vs. the rest of us<sup>41</sup>—with an economically Darwinist framework that says it is correct and just for wealth to accrue to those who manage it best. IFWE's Anne Rathbone Bradley, an economist and former advisor to Charles Koch,<sup>42</sup> offers the fullest version of this argument, writing in a recent paper, "Why Does Income Inequality Exist?,"<sup>43</sup> that people are simply "created differ-

ently, and some of us will earn higher incomes than others."

Much of Bradley's theological justification for this claim rests on her Calvinist interpretation of the Bible's "Parable of the Talents," and how it provides for what she calls "a diversity in income."<sup>44</sup> Also known as The Parable of the Bags of Gold, Matthew 25:14-30 tells of three servants and their master, who, before departing on a journey, leaves the servants to guard his wealth. To the first, he gives five bags of gold. To the second, he gives two. And to the third, only one—"each according to his ability." Upon his return, he finds his first two "good and faithful" servants have invested and doubled the amount of gold that each was given. The third buried his master's gold in the ground and naturally retrieved only what was given to him. This servant, who merely saved the money, was chastised as wicked and lazy, and sentenced to be thrown "outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnash-

ing of teeth."

Bradley sees in this parable a lesson about God-granted "diversity in abilities," which in turn justifies and normalizes income inequality. Those who gain wealth have done so because they applied their God-given abilities. Those who have not lack the ability to do so. Bradley's interpretation also rationalizes the perpetuation of income inequality because, had the master "given each man an equal amount, putting equality over ability," Bradley writes, "he would have squandered his resources" by limiting his potential profits. (AEI's Arthur Brooks echoed this point in a July interview with *The Christian Post*, saying, "I think Christians, in particular, can design their own thinking about politics around the 25th Chapter of Matthew,

and thinking about people with less, and especially people with less power."<sup>45,46</sup>)

Using the Parable of the Talents to inform policy decisions is just the latest in a long series of Christian and Corporate Right intellectual projects. Marvin Olasky emphasized the importance of the business-faith alliance in a 2010 essay titled "Prophets and Profit," in a Heritage Foundation anthology called *Indivisible: Social*

*and Economic Foundations of American Liberty*. "Social conservatives who revere the Bible can learn much about how to apply it from economic conservatives

**People are "created differently, and some of us will earn higher incomes than others."**

who share a realistic outlook," he wrote. "Economic conservatives also can learn from biblically motivated conservatives the importance of ethical and other non-economic factors in determining economic success."<sup>47</sup>

And for those who find themselves on the short end of the "talents"- and profits-stick? For those, Bradley and fellow IFWE theologian Art Lindsley prescribe char-

ity, citing Proverbs 14:30 in their book, *For the Least of These: A Biblical Answer to Poverty*: “whoever is kind to the needy honors God.” But they make clear that the Bible’s instructions for people don’t apply to governments, or government aid.<sup>48</sup> Such arguments help set the table for political debates that devalue the role of government and make it easier for conservative politicians to carve into programs such as Medicare.

Christian free enterprise has thus made significant inroads in policy circles. The “bad guys” in their poverty narrative may have changed; they are no longer the “welfare queens” of the Reagan era so much as liberals accused of a “lack of civility”<sup>49</sup> for calling free market capitalists greedy, or progressives labeled fiscally irresponsible for refusing to cut Medicare. But the narrative follows a familiar formula—one that Jean Hardisty identified in her 2000 book *Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence from the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers*: “skillful leaders recruiting discontented followers by offering simple explanations, complete with scapegoats, for their resentments.”<sup>50</sup> We can see the progress this new coalition has made when even the President of the United States is compelled to defend the country’s continued investment in established public benefits on a stage with the head of the American Enterprise Institute.

#### MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

Christian Right politicians sometimes acknowledge a personal wish to help the poor. Former Virginia Congressman Frank Wolf, speaking at an AEI event in May 2013, offered such a platitude: “I am compelled because of my faith,” he said, “to have compassion for the weak and vulnerable in our midst.”<sup>51</sup>

Working class and poor people form a diverse grassroots base that can mobilize to win political power; they may not be quite as “weak and vulnerable” as Wolf supposes. Leaders on the Right have in some ways learned to harness this power. While the 2008 economic crash led, on the Left, to the Occupy movement and the Wisconsin pro-labor uprisings of 2011 and 2012, the Tea Party used populist anger over the economy to marshal White working-class voters to sweep the state and federal legislatures in

#### Jay W. Richards: The free market’s culture warrior

One of the “skillful” leaders—as PRA founder Jean Hardisty characterized right-wing strategists who mobilize conservatives’ resentment against poor people and communities of color—who has gone largely unremarked in the mainstream press is Jay W. Richards, a conservative Catholic who currently holds an assistant research professorship at The Catholic University of America’s School of Business and Economics. Richards has been a guest lecturer at the anti-choice, anti-LGBTQ Family Research Council as well as a former visiting fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation. Richards, who earned his Ph.D in philosophy and theology from Princeton Theological Seminary, has also worked stints as a fellow at other right-wing think tanks, including the anti-evolution Discovery Institute, where he edited a book defending creationist curricula. He has authored around half a dozen other books, including the 2009 *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism Is the Solution and Not the Problem*.<sup>62</sup> From his current perch at Catholic University, Richards now focuses on the Christian defense of free market capitalism.

When he isn’t building bridges between the Corporate and Christian Right, Richards is a culture warrior. He expresses transphobic, homophobic, and anti-abortion views on his social media pages. On April 10, he posted an article bearing a photo of concrete gargoyle-demons on his Facebook and Twitter pages with the caption, “The subject few are willing to broach: The Attack on Marriage Is Diabolical”—a suggestion that the devil is behind the push for same-sex marriage. On May 24, he snarked on Facebook and Twitter about the news of the Boy Scouts allowing gay troop leaders by commenting, “Sticking a crow bar in the Overton Window” next to the article title, “Be Prepared’: ‘Gay Men’ with Boy Scouts in Tents,” equating openly gay Scout leaders with sexual predators entering Scouts’ tents.

More recently, though, Richards has shifted his emphasis from social and cultural sniping to economic and political issues. The Christian Right is increasingly turning to Richards as a thought leader on reconciling biblical economics with homophobic, white nationalist-tinged Producerism.

2010. But after Mitt Romney’s defeat in the 2012 presidential campaign, following his tone-deaf comments about working Americans “who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it,”<sup>52</sup> conservative candidates are working harder than ever to appeal to working-class voters.

As historian Bethany Moreton, author of the 2009 book *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise*, has observed, Tea Party leaders gained ground by building a voter base through local town hall events and involvement with White cultural institutions such as conservative churches and corporations like Walmart. Because

Tea Party populism included Christian free market principles among its broadly shared core values, it has been difficult for dissenting Left groups such as the union-backed Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart) and the Fight for 15 movement to disrupt Tea Party populism with a call for better treatment of workers. Thanks to Walmart’s cultural innovation of “blending Christian service ideals with free market theories,” Moreton has written,<sup>53</sup> the company has given rise to an entire low-wage workforce in the retail sector that prefers Christian ideas about charity to collective action or government reform. “The same retail workers that progressive unions sought to organize,” writes Moreton of Walmart’s exponential growth in the 1970s and ‘80s, “report that they are

more likely to turn to God for help on the job than to a union, a feminist organization, or a government agency.”

But where there are still unions, the grassroots political power of the working class still militates toward the Left. In the face of a jobless recovery and historic inequality, economic justice arguments are making an impact. The 2009-2014 de-

#### WHOSE VISION WILL PREVAIL?

Industrialist donors are not waiting around for the Christian Right to step in and help them sell their policy agenda of dismantling government benefits. Instead, as demonstrated above, they have begun recruiting—and funding—experienced Christian scholars and public

**In a world where the Parable of the Talents justifies regressive economic policy, those who lack property are left to fend for themselves.**

cline in median wages across all income groups,<sup>54</sup> along with high-profile demonstrations by low-wage workers, has left the Corporate Right politically vulnerable. An August Gallup poll showed that one in five U.S. workers worry they will have their hours and wages cut at work (up from the teens before the 2008 recession).<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, the rich keep getting richer: between 2009 and 2012, one study showed that the top one percent captured 95 percent of total income growth.<sup>56</sup>

Even in non-union regions and sectors of the workforce, movements for economic justice have gotten more sophisticated, sometimes with an analysis that appeals to Christians. The North Carolina-based Moral Mondays movement, for example, has built a robust activist base through progressive pastors and faith leaders calling for broad-based economic justice, investment in public education, and an end to inequality. Further, about a year ago, the Fight for 15 fast-food campaign began involving home care workers,<sup>57</sup> who represent a workforce, two million strong, of mostly low-wage women, immigrants, and people of color. Although home care workers' campaign for public support—a moral appeal called Caring Across Generations—has been underway for years, they had never before combined forces strategically to stand with other low-wage workers. The marriage of a bad mood among the voting public with effective economic justice organizing has created a moment of opportunity for mass political mobilization.

relations experts to make their case in the media and on college campuses. The Koch-funded IFWE is one center for this activity; so is the Foundation for Economic Education, a project of the ultra-conservative Mackinac Center for Public Policy run by libertarian leader Lawrence Reed<sup>57</sup>; and the Institute on Religion and Democracy, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that takes aim at mainline churches with funding from neoconservative and Christian Right groups.<sup>58</sup>

But their victory is by no means assured. Communities of color who were pilloried and thrown off the welfare rolls under President Bill Clinton's Welfare Reform Act were, it turns out, the canaries in the coal mine. Now, most of the White workforce finds its wages cut; many have had to go on food stamps or apply for other benefits. Indeed, 40.2 percent of 2013 food stamp recipient household heads were White<sup>59</sup>; in addition, more than half of 2013 Medicare beneficiaries were White in all states except Hawaii and the District of Columbia.<sup>60</sup>

Now, while Producerist right-wing populists like Trump demonize immigrants and liberal elites as moochers (and worse<sup>61</sup>), some Corporate and Christian Right leaders are offering another line: that everyone flourishes according to his or her talents. This approach could appeal to those conservative Christians unconvinced by market logic and resistant to the mean-spirited attacks of Trump and the Tea Party.

Christian Right and Corporate Right

thought leaders like Barton, Bradley, and Brooks may use gentler language that strikes a chord with some conservatives, but the policies they promote bespeak a different vision. The elitism that undergirds their collaboration is fundamentally at odds with the equality of economic opportunity that liberals, and even some Republicans, hold as a core value.

The coalition of Christian conservatives and free market fundamentalists promotes a vision that elevates property rights—rather than human rights—to the level of sacred principle. With wages continuing to fall even as the business world recovers from the Great Recession, it is clear that enacting policy according to this principle leads to profit for a few, and suffering for many.

In a world where the Parable of the Talents justifies regressive economic policy, those who lack property are left to fend for themselves. But there is another way. It is not enough for those who desire economic justice to ridicule or denounce the overtly racist rhetoric of a Donald Trump. Politicians also need to hear a full-throated rejection of the narratives that treat poor people, immigrants, and people of color as “the least of these” or “assets to develop.” Such messages infantilize everyone who may one day rely on widely supported social safety nets; they are also portents of the broader benefit cuts that conservatives hope to enact. Now that billionaires have already purchased many of the mechanisms of democracy, people who do not want a future without programs such as Medicare and Social Security must act quickly to join and strengthen the collective movements that can defend them. <sup>62</sup>

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*Jaime Longoria contributed research and reporting to this article.*

BY DANI MCCLAIN

# Policies That Make People Disappear

## Activist Shana griffin on Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans

To mark the 10-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina this August, a conservative member of the *Chicago Tribune's* editorial board, Kristen McQueary, wrote that she wished that a similar "swirl of fury," "a real storm," would whip through Chicago and prompt a citywide "rebirth."<sup>1</sup> While 1,833 people died, and more than 400,000 others were displaced by Katrina—many permanently—McQueary found a silver lining in the catastrophe: slashed city budgets and mandatory unpaid furloughs; the demolition of old housing stock, labor contracts, and teachers' unions; and the rise of "the nation's first free-market education system."

"That's what it took to hit the reset button in New Orleans," McQueary wrote. "Chaos. Tragedy. Heartbreak."

Although McQueary was forced to walk back her language after commenters nationwide pilloried her callous "prayer," she was merely repeating a powerful narrative that's been created over the past decade. Just weeks after the hurricane made landfall, *The New York Times'* longtime conservative columnist David Brooks wrote:

The first rule of the rebuilding effort should be: Nothing Like Before. Most of the ambitious and organized people abandoned the inner-city areas of New Orleans long ago, leaving neighborhoods where roughly three-quarters of the people were poor.... If we just put up new buildings and allow the same people to move back into their old neighborhoods, then urban New Orleans will become just as rundown and dysfunctional as before.<sup>2</sup>

Dreams of a blank slate on which to carry out a market-driven recovery weren't confined to op-eds. Government officials began speculating about how the storm and the area's subsequent evacuation would change New Orleans' demographics. Alphonso Jackson, HUD Secretary to President George W. Bush, urged against rebuilding the Lower Ninth Ward and told the *Houston Chronicle*, "Whether we like it or not, New Orleans is not going to be 500,000 people for a long time. New Orleans is not going to be as black as it was for a long time, if ever again."<sup>3</sup> Rep. Richard H. Baker, a Republican congressman from Baton Rouge, was quoted as telling lobbyists in September 2005, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did."<sup>4</sup>

Democrats got on board with the blank slate narrative as well. The efforts to get rid of large swaths of the city's public housing units couldn't have been successful without the unanimous support of New Orleans' largely Democratic City Council. Arne Duncan, the Obama administration's secretary of education, expressed a kind of gratitude for the devastation, telling an interviewer, "I think the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina. That education system was



Thousands of working-class, African American families were displaced by the Housing Authority of New Orleans in favor of corporate development after Hurricane Katrina. Photo via Flickr and courtesy of Culture: Subculture Photography. License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

a disaster, and it took Hurricane Katrina to wake up the community to say that ‘we have to do better.’”<sup>5</sup>

Now, 10 years later, the results of this enthusiastic promotion of a new New Orleans—one rebuilt along corporate-friendly, neoliberal lines—are clear. A recent *New Orleans Advocate* article<sup>6</sup> describes the city as being “smaller, whiter and wealthier” than it had been prior to Katrina. New Orleans has 79 percent of the population it had in 2000, according to Census data. The city has lost almost a third of its Black population since 2000, but only about eight percent of its White population.<sup>7</sup> White residents made up about a quarter of the city’s population before the storm. Now they make up just under a third.<sup>8</sup> (See also our 2010 report, “The Long Hurricane.”<sup>9</sup>)

Shana griffin (lower-case intentional), an activist and New Orleans native, spends much of her time thinking about how the changes of the past decade fit into a longer history of discriminatory housing policy and displacement. As cofounder and board president of the Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative (JPNSI), a hybrid community development non-profit and advocacy organization, she implements solutions she hopes will keep the city affordable for longtime residents. The organization’s first development, a renovated four-unit historic building in the Mid-City neighborhood, is scheduled to open this fall.

I spoke with griffin about how not-in-my-backyard attitudes toward public housing residents and housing voucher recipients, weak laws protecting tenants’ rights, and recovery policies that favored homeowners with high property values—conceived of in right-wing policy circles, but embraced by a bipartisan coalition of pro-business politicians—have all contributed to changes in New Orleans’ makeup since Katrina.

**Rep. Richard H. Baker, a Republican congressman from Baton Rouge, was quoted as telling lobbyists in September 2005, “We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn’t do it, but God did.”**

***In the years since the storm, four of the city’s 10 public housing developments have been demolished.<sup>10</sup> Those 5,000 units were replaced by just more than 600 units. The number of housing vouchers, which are often promoted as a way to de-concentrate poverty, tripled from 2000 to 2010.<sup>11</sup> How are changes to federal and local housing policy related to changes in the city’s demographics?***

We had Rep. [Richard] Baker (R-La.) making the comment that, “We could not clean up public housing, but God did.”<sup>12</sup> The idea [being that] those who occupy public housing were dirty, a social ill that the state, in its paternalistic role, could not deal with, but God did. And seeing Hurricane Katrina as a metaphor, something that cleaned up this problem where the government had struggled to.

I grew up in public housing here in New Orleans called Iberville. I resided in public housing almost 23 years, almost half of my life. I grew up always feeling extreme shame about where I lived. I cringed when people would ask me where I lived. It caused an extreme level of anxiety to say I live in the projects. Just to say “public housing” was basically saying that you’re dirty, you’re bad, you’re dumb, you’re lazy, you’re a problem. I have these memories of extreme shame. As I got older, I realized that shame wasn’t based on my family or me or people who live in public housing being bad, dirty, dumb, lazy, or ugly people; it was based on the fear of being blamed for something that we didn’t cause.

I think that’s what we see now when I think about the demolition of public housing in New Orleans. It’s like these are people that you can blame. It’s like if we have social problems, it has to be the people that are utilizing public assistance; it has

to be people living in public housing; it has to be kids going to public schools. There’s something that’s almost inherently bad about anything public. It’s like these people are problems, so if you get rid of them, “the problem” goes away.



January 15, 2007 - Martin Luther King Day. St Bernard Public Housing Development. New Orleans, LA. Four to five hundred people assembled on St. Bernard Avenue to force an entry into the St. Bernard Public Housing Development.

Photo via Flickr and courtesy of Culture: Subculture Photography. License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

These are policies that make people disappear. You don’t see the remnants of what once was public housing. When the buildings are gone, the assumption is the people are gone.

**You've written<sup>13</sup> about the specific impact of such policies on women and girls. Did the displacement in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina have a disparate impact on low-income women?**

Housing is not a gender neutral issue. Public and subsidized housing programs are disproportionately utilized by women of color and poor women. Black women represent a vast majority of leaseholders within public housing, and the same is true for voucher holders. So you see the ways in which gender and racial inequality came together to deny black women in the city a right to return home.

If you see an advertisement for housing that says, "Blacks not welcome," that's an obvious violation. If you see, "Children are not welcome," that's a clear violation as well. But whenever you see "No Section 8"—and you see that all the time—that is not a violation. Those who are likely to be poor and who are receiving Section 8 housing vouchers are women, and in the context of New Orleans, Black women.

Women's perceived fertility rates are often used as an underpinning for affordable housing opposition. It's this typical, unfortunate thing when there are articles around public housing or affordable housing in the local newspaper, and it's seen also nationally, when you read the comments section, there are always comments about, "These women are having too many kids. They're breeding criminals."

In 2008, John LaBruzzo, Louisiana state representative, Republican, made statements about exploring legislation to pay poor women, those who are on welfare and in public housing, \$1,000 to be sterilized because they're having so many kids they can't afford to take care of.<sup>14</sup> He made the statement in the context of people evacuating because of Hurricane Gustav, but also during the same week that the House of Representatives overwhelmingly denied support of President Bush's \$700 billion dollar stimulus plan.

#### **How have homeowners fared in the wake of Katrina?**

Under the [federal] Road Home program [which provided funds that could be used to rebuild homes], Black homeowners' properties were devalued compared to White homeowners and many White homeowners received more Road Home funding. The formula that was used [to determine who got grants] was based on homes' pre Katrina value, not on the destruction that the homes suffered through Hurricane Katrina. The disparities were obvious and resulted in several lawsuits [which led to a \$62 million settlement].<sup>15</sup>

In general, the policies that were enacted did not show any investment or commitment to supporting people's right to return home, and also sent a clear message in terms of who was wanted, who can come back, who can't come back.

**The lack of affordable housing in New Orleans seems to be caused by a number of factors, including soaring rents, stereotypes about low-income residents, and policies such as the federal Road Home program that left out both renters and Black homeowners. What solutions are you working on?**



New Orleans after Katrina  
Photo via Flickr / drp and courtesy of The Times-Picayune of New Orleans.  
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JPNSI creates the opportunity, rather than waiting for something to occur. We're not just advocating for this, we're also developing affordable housing in our communities.

When I think about the housing crisis in the city, I see the community land trust model as being one of many avenues to address the problem. At JPNSI we put a particular focus on permanent affordability as well as advocacy to improve equitable forms of development and resident-controlled development.

But a community land trust is not a silver bullet. You can create permanent affordability in an area like New Orleans and still be able to put somebody out of a unit. Affordability loses its strength in markets where you have poor tenant rights laws. Inclusionary zoning, a rental registry [to address blight through code enforcement], and tenant rights unions all need to play a role in broader strategy.

**This spring, your organization broke ground on a four-unit development that you've said will be the first permanently affordable apartment building owned by a community land trust in New Orleans. In Mid-City, the neighborhood where this project is located, 79 percent of residents rent and rents have increased 44 percent since 2000.<sup>16</sup> The need is so great and yet you've decided to start small.**

The scale of the project may seem small, but it's characteristic in terms of New Orleans neighborhoods. It's these small neighborhood projects that have seen the least of the funding and attention. Our effort to explore different possibilities to turn the tide is really important.

These small-scale projects are important and have a big impact on people. They feel like, "I can see a change." ©

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### **Joffe and Stewart, continued from page 3**

documents of U.S. history.” They sought greater opportunities for their students to “understand the ‘why’ of U.S. history,” and to “make its deeper meanings come alive to students.” The 2014 redesigned APUSH was greeted warmly by academic associations, including the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the National Council for Social Studies, and the National Council for History Education.

But the College Board’s attempt to change how students learn U.S. history was greeted by conservatives as a revision of *what* U.S. history is.<sup>9</sup>

Education has long been a front in the U.S. culture wars. In particular, con-

as well as by AP examinations. Eventually, Tea Party hero Ben Carson, author of *One Nation: What We Can All Do to Save America’s Future*, went so far as to say that “most people” who complete the course would then be “ready to sign up for ISIS.”<sup>17</sup>

#### **“LITTLE REBELS”**

In 2014, the fight received national media attention when nearly 400 high school students in Jefferson County, Colorado, engaged in an unusual form of political theater. A newly elected school board was attempting to create a “curriculum committee”<sup>18</sup> that could review any course’s instruction materials, starting with APUSH. Its review criteria held

headlines. But it was just one in a string of conflicts over APUSH curricula taking place nationwide over the last few years, in Oklahoma, Georgia, Texas, and North and South Carolina. While the vehement state battles appeared to be driven by local personalities and agendas, there was a larger, national strategy at work.

The opposition to APUSH occurred on two levels. The first, as in Colorado, concerned control of local school boards and school communities. A second prong of the attack focused on legislation at the state level, bolstered by a resolution passed by the Republican National Convention denouncing the course and urging Congress to withdraw funding to the College Board.<sup>24</sup> Policymakers in the Carolinas agitated to eliminate or doctor APUSH at the end of 2014. In Texas, a state that represents 10 percent of the College Board’s market,<sup>25</sup> the infamously right-wing State Board of Education passed a resolution in September 2014 to request that the College Board revise the APUSH framework.<sup>26</sup> In February 2015, Oklahoma state representative Dan Fisher introduced a bill that would bar funds from being used on AP History, although public outcry effectively killed the bill within a month.<sup>27</sup> And in March 2015 in Georgia, a lobbyist from the American Principles Project, a right-wing think tank based in Washington, D.C., reportedly showed up urging legislators to adopt anti-APUSH legislation, resulting in a bill that passed the state Senate in March<sup>28</sup> (but ultimately stalled in the House).

The American Principles Project (APP), which has been advocating against APUSH since at least the Jefferson County protests, was founded in 2009 by Princeton University professor and Catholic neoconservative Robert P. George in order to ensure that the “dignity of the person” is reflected in local and national policies. Some of the APP’s best-known work has been produced in the fight against Common Core, but its leadership is invested in a broader slate of culture war issues. After the publication of the Manhattan Declaration in 2009, *The New York Times* called George “the country’s most influential conservative Christian thinker.”<sup>29</sup> George was the primary author of the Declaration—part of an effort to unify conservative Catho-

**Ben Carson said that “most people” who completed the APUSH course would be “ready to sign up for ISIS.”**

servatives have argued for at least two decades that secular progressives have taken over history studies to inculcate students with a negative view of the American past and present.<sup>10</sup> Thanks to a concerted effort from members of the State Policy Network,<sup>11</sup> such as the Boston-based Pioneer Institute and the Chicago-based Heartland Institute,<sup>12</sup> high school history has remained a controversial subject on a national level.

The APUSH controversy of the past several years is reported to have started when Larry Krieger, a retired high school history teacher who had started each year with the theme of American exceptionalism,<sup>13</sup> slammed APUSH in numerous articles,<sup>14</sup> including several written for the Heartland Institute,<sup>15</sup> a conservative think tank known for its role in promoting climate-science denial. The Republican National Committee picked up the beat and condemned APUSH as “radically revisionist.” Peter Wood, President of the right-leaning National Association of Scholars and a critic of environmentalism and LGBTQ equality, penned an extensive piece criticizing the APUSH redesign last year,<sup>16</sup> using the term “Bowdoin Syndrome” to describe what he called the “intellectual arrogance” fostered by that college

that “Materials should promote citizenship, patriotism, essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system, respect for authority and respect for individual rights. Materials should not encourage or condone civil disorder, social strife or disregard of the law.”<sup>19</sup> A Colorado school board member, Julia Williams, summed up this sentiment in an interview with a local TV news station, saying, “I don’t think we should encourage our kids to be little rebels.”

In protest of the school board’s attempt to write civil obedience into the curriculum, the students dressed themselves up as historical figures, including Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., and sundry founding fathers, and staged a walk out. Some county schools were closed when too many teachers failed to show up for work in protest.<sup>20</sup> Jefferson County Board of Education President Ken Witt dismissed the students as “political pawns”<sup>21</sup> for the teachers’ unions, but the walkout succeeded in stalling the school board’s plan to change the curriculum<sup>22</sup> and helped garner support for the recall of three board members.<sup>23</sup>

#### **LOCAL BATTLES, NATIONAL STRATEGY**

The Jefferson County history battle was colorful enough to capture national

## APUSH, Old and New

<b>APUSH Thematic Learning Objective - Comparison</b>	
<b>2014 Edition</b>	<b>2015 Edition</b>
<p><b>IDENTITY</b> - “This theme focuses on the formation of both American national identity and group identities in U.S. history. Students should be able to explain how various identities, cultures, and values have been preserved or changed in different contexts of U.S. history, with special attention given to the formation of gender, class, racial, and ethnic identities. Students should be able to explain how these subidentities have interacted with each other and with larger conceptions of American national identity.”</p>	<p><b>AMERICAN AND NATIONAL IDENTITY</b> - “This theme focuses on how and why definitions of American and national identity and values have developed, as well as on related topics such as citizenship, constitutionalism, foreign policy, assimilation, and American exceptionalism.”</p>

<b>APUSH Concept Outline – Comparison on Native American History</b>	
<b>2014 Edition</b>	<b>2015 Edition</b>
<p><b>P 42:</b> “During and after the colonial war for independence, various tribes attempted to forge advantageous political alliances with one another and with European powers to protect their interests, limit migration of white settlers, and maintain their tribal lands.”</p>	<p><b>P 41:</b> “Various American Indian groups repeatedly evaluated and adjusted their alliances with Europeans, other tribes, and the U.S., seeking to limit migration of white settlers and maintain control of tribal lands and natural resources. British alliances with American Indians contributed to tensions between the U.S. and Britain.”</p>

<b>APUSH Concept Outline – Comparison of “Manifest Destiny”</b>	
<b>2014 Edition</b>	<b>2015 Edition</b>
<p><b>P 55:</b> “The idea of Manifest Destiny, which asserted U.S. power in the Western Hemisphere and supported U.S. expansion westward, was built on a belief in white racial superiority and a sense of American cultural superiority, and helped to shape the era’s political debates.”</p>	<p><b>P 53:</b> “Advocates of annexing western lands argued that Manifest Destiny and the superiority of American institutions compelled the United States to expand its borders westward to the Pacific ocean.”</p>

*Information in this chart was compiled from the 2014 and 2015 edition of the College Board’s AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description.*

APUSH Concept Outline – PERIOD 1: 1491–1607 Comparison	
2014 Edition	2015 Edition
<b>P 34:</b> “With little experience dealing with people who were different from themselves, Spanish and Portuguese explorers poorly understood the native peoples they encountered in the Americas, leading to debates over how American Indians should be treated and how “civilized” these groups were compared to European standards.”	<b>P 28:</b> “Mutual misunderstandings between Europeans and Native Americans often defined the early years of interaction and trade as each group sought to make sense of the other over time, Europeans and Native Americans adopted some useful aspects of each other’s culture.”
<b>P 34:</b> “Many Europeans developed a belief in white superiority to justify their subjugation of Africans and American Indians, using several different rationales.”	<b>P 28:</b> “Extended contact with Native Americans and Africans fostered a debate among European religious and political leaders about how non-Europeans should be treated, as well as evolving religious, cultural, and racial justifications for the subjugation of Africans and Native Americans.”

APUSH Concept Outline – PERIOD 4: 1800–1848 Comparison	
2014 Edition	2015 Edition
<b>P 50:</b> “Many white Americans in the South asserted their regional identity through pride in the institution of slavery, insisting that the federal government should defend that institution.”	<b>P 44:</b> “Regional interests often trumped national concerns as the basis for many political leaders’ positions on slavery and economic policy.”

lics and evangelicals around a three-part agenda, which they described as “life, marriage, and religious liberty”<sup>30</sup>—but other APP figures are also proven culture warriors. APP chairman Sean Fieler also heads the Chiaroscuro Group, whose radio ads attacking a pro-choice politician once featured a talking fetus; the APP’s board president, Francis Cannon, coauthored a post-2012 report on “Building a Winning GOP Coalition”;<sup>31</sup> and other board members include anti-marriage equality activist Maggie Gallagher and Luiz Tellez, cofounder of the anti-LGBTQ and anti-abortion legal advocacy group

the Witherspoon Institute (which helped fund a thoroughly debunked 2012 study by conservative sociologist Mark Regnerus suggesting negative outcomes for children of same-sex couples<sup>32</sup>).

In their 2015 lobbying document,<sup>33</sup> APP charged that APUSH “requires American History to be taught through a leftist, revisionist lens.” According to APP, the course gave “special attention to the formation of gender, class, racial and ethnic identities” and “presents American business in a consistently negative light.”

This type of accusation is an old one,

dating back to at least 1994, when Lynne Cheney, former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities (and wife of former Vice President Dick Cheney) condemned the National Standards for U.S. History as revisionist political correctness in her now-famous *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, “The End of History.”<sup>34</sup> Over twenty years later, Cheney, currently a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, resumed the attack in another *Journal* op-ed, “The End of History, Part II,” arguing, “The [APUSH] curriculum shouldn’t be farmed out, not to the federal government and not to pri-

vate groups. It should stay in the hands of the people who are constitutionally responsible for it: the citizens of each state.”<sup>35</sup>

### WHOSE HISTORY?

At the core of this debate over “revisionist” versus “traditional” history is the question of whether U.S. history curriculum should be about facts or a primer on civic duty and citizenship. The College Board’s new curriculum already had to stand the test of certain state laws such as North Carolina’s Founding Principles Act, which since 2011 has required that high school students pass a course on the “Founding Principles” (because “the survival of the republic” depends on students being better “guardians of its heritage”).<sup>36</sup>

A professor of history at the University of Oklahoma asserted that the 2014 “framework represents a shift from national identity to subcultural identities” and warned, “We will not be able to uphold our democracy unless we know our great stories, our national narratives, and the admirable deeds of our great men and women. The new AP U.S. History framework fails on that count, because it does not see the civic role of education as a central one.”<sup>37</sup> (Scholars of Native American history pushed back on this, arguing in *Indian Country Today* that, “American Indian history is part of the fabric of the state of Oklahoma and who we are today...therefore all of that history is American history.”<sup>38</sup>)

In September 2014, the Board had responded to critics, writing in a memo, “At the root of current objections to this highly regarded process is a blatant disregard for the facts...the most vocal critics have prioritized their own agenda above the best interests of teachers, students, and their families.”<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, the force of the pushback was enough to convince the Board to solicit public feedback on their course, which they did through their website from late 2014 through early 2015.<sup>40</sup>

In the end, with no sign of the debate relenting, the College Board agreed to another revision, which was released this July. News coverage pointed to the pressure the College Board had received using phrases such as “gives in” and “caves to.”

Zachary Goldberg, Director of Media Relations for the College Board, objected to these characterizations, saying that inaccurate media reports about the revision had misled many readers into thinking the Board had removed numerous mentions of slavery from the course. Not only was that incorrect, he wrote, but the revision was hailed as a success “by historians and teachers representing a range of political views [for] presenting a richer and more balanced view of American history. This was achieved not by reducing or minimizing the important narratives of underrepresented groups, but by adding to those

**“At the root of current objections...is a blatant disregard for the facts”**

narratives and including other important themes and concepts that the 2014 edition was rightly criticized for having minimized.”<sup>41</sup>

Whether or not the curriculum was rightly criticized, and the College Board was simply “responding to legitimate criticism while avoiding excessive overcompensation” (as consultant Jeremy Stern put it),<sup>42</sup> the events preceding the revisions appear to suggest that APUSH, like much school curricula, has been politicized by a right-wing agenda.

The areas of the curriculum that the College Board noted had received the most criticism—the treatment of the founding fathers, founding documents, free enterprise, and America’s role in wartime victories—underwent the most significant changes and expansions.<sup>43</sup> And a side-by-side comparison of the two versions of the course shows concrete examples of right-wing influence—some blatant, and some more coded.

Analysis of White racial identity and power as an undercurrent of U.S. history is all but erased. Mention of “white superiority” as a component of Manifest Destiny was stripped from the 2015 revision, along with any mention of “white resistance” to desegregation. From 2014 to 2015, the coverage of Native American history under colonialism shifted

from describing indigenous people’s attempts to “forge advantageous political alliances” in order to “maintain their tribal lands” to having “repeatedly evaluated and adjusted their alliances” in order to “maintain control of tribal lands and natural resources”—a subtle tweak that seems to speak more to contemporary conservative complaints about Native American control of natural resources on sovereign lands than an impartial reassessment of what happened during colonial times. Where the issue of White racial identity was added, it often seemed intended to mitigate injustices perpetuated against Blacks, by linking the experience of White indentured servants and poor White sharecroppers with the experience of enslaved Africans and impoverished African Americans in the Jim Crow South.

While Goldberg argues that “The struggles and challenges experienced—and that continue to be experienced—by minorities as America seeks to live up to its ideals in no way are minimized in the new edition,” many complexities of those struggles seem to have been lost in the Board’s new revision. Quoted in a September article in *Indian Country Today*, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, a member of the Mvskoke/Creek Nation and a professor at Arizona State University, pointed to the consolidation of “Latino, American Indian, and Asian American movements” into one statement in the course as an example of how the newest curriculum is “once again erasing indigenous sovereignty and sliding American Indians in as just another piece of the so-called racial-ethnic mix.”<sup>44</sup>

To *The National Review*, which was pleased with the revision, the changes amounted to “a good rewrite,” and “balanced handiwork.” But the biggest question about teaching U.S. history remains: how can you balance coverage of a heritage that was never based on equity? ☹

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## Going to Extremes: The anti-government extremism behind the growing movement to seize America's public lands

center for western priorities, august 2015



The 2014 high-profile standoff between Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over Bundy's refusal to pay fees for grazing his cattle on public land is just one example of a growing movement to seize control of America's public lands at the state and local level. The Center for Western Priorities' August report is a roundup of the extremist ideology supporting this movement and the links between far-right groups and public officials opposing government control of these lands.

The crux of this ideology is the belief that the federal government promised to turn public lands over to state governments when those states joined the union.

Another ideological lynchpin for this movement is the concept of "County Supremacy"—the idea that the highest level of law enforcement should be the county sheriff and that the federal government therefore has no right to administer public lands. This often coincides with the Posse Comitatus movement, which claims that the federal government has no legitimate authority to enforce the law, and that citizens are empowered to form "posses" to defend their interpretation of the Constitution, through violence if necessary.

The Posse Comitatus movement gets its name from a law passed in the post-Reconstruction South to limit the federal government's use of military in the region, and was invigorated during the 1950s when federal troops were sent into the South to enforce school integration. These trends are also linked to the Sovereign Citizens movement, whose supporters believe they are not citizens of the United States and do not have to follow its laws. These groups, which often attract White supremacists, have grown particularly strong in the West, and have resisted the federal government through a range of tactics, from refusing to pay taxes to threatening and even killing law enforcement officers.

Many of these groups experienced growth in the 1980s and '90s, and a decline in the 2000s. However, the election of the first Black president seems to have inspired a resurgence, and the movement has gained the support of some western legislators. There are indications that this ideology has begun to enter the mainstream. Last year, the Republican National Committee endorsed the transfer of public lands to willing Western states in its official platform, and several Republican presidential candidates have supported land transfers in the Senate, including Senators Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Rick Santorum.

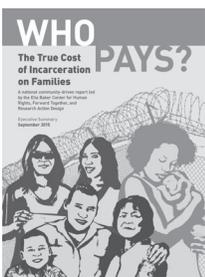
PRA's own research in "Terror Network or Lone Wolf" (*The Public Eye*, Spring 2015), which examined the disparate treatment of Muslim and non-Muslim defendants in the criminal justice system, revealed that in 2014 federal law enforcement officials rated Sovereign Citizen extremists as the top terrorist threat in the United States. However, that threat is still often treated as highly individualized instead of being linked with broader political and social movements. That is partly due to the success of mainstreaming Sovereign Citizen ideology, which makes linking the movement to domestic terrorism come with a heavier political cost, even when Sovereign Citizens kill law enforcement officers.

This report identifies Utah State Representative Ken Ivory as one of the key actors in bridging these extremist groups and more mainstream politicians. His efforts mean that the future of public lands will continue to be a major political flashpoint.

-Laura Muth

## Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families

the ella baker center for human rights, forward together, and research action design, september 2015



Mass incarceration is an expensive business, involving both obvious and hidden costs. The United States devotes \$80 billion each year to imprison more than 2.4 million people, which equates to 22 percent of the prisoners across the globe (an egregious proportion considering the U.S. only represents 4.4 percent of the world's population). More than 60 percent of those in prison in the U.S. are racial and ethnic minorities, with one in three Black men facing incarceration in their lifetime.

But when a person is sentenced to prison, they're rarely the only one who pays. A new report released by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Forward Together, and Research Action Design in September 2015 found that the families of incarcerated people also find themselves

punished in ways that are rarely recognized. As families lose partners, parental figures and providers, the economic fallout can be severe. Nearly two-thirds of families with an incarcerated loved one surveyed for this report were unable to meet their basic needs, with 70 percent of those families including children under 18; almost 20 percent of families were unable to afford housing because of a member's incarceration. In 63 percent of cases, family members were saddled with court costs related to their loved one's incarceration—often totaling more than \$13,000—and 83 percent of those family members primarily responsible for paying the debt were women. The costs associated with visiting or arranging phone calls from prison compounded the financial burden, as some families went into debt trying to maintain communication with loved ones. (Contact with incarcerated loved ones reduces the outcome of recidivism, which is crucial for the well-being of families and the development of children, who are often traumatized by the loss of their parent.)

A loved one's release doesn't mean the end of hardship. Twenty percent of surveyed people said they were denied public benefits like food stamps after they left prison, and nearly 80 percent were unable to afford housing. Ten percent of survey respondents were evicted from their current housing after an incarcerated loved one rejoined their family. Five years out of prison, 67 percent of individuals represented in the report were unemployed or underemployed, and 60 percent were unable to afford to return to school (with 25 percent denied educational loans because of their conviction).

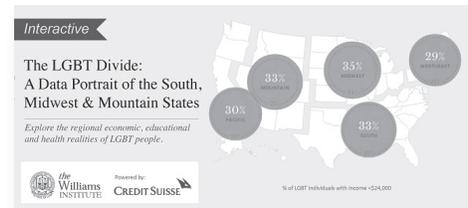
Communities suffer as a whole as well, as money that could be used to support local education, housing, and health centers, for example, instead is diverted towards a (sometimes privatized) prison industry that disproportionately incarcerates the very communities that most lack those resources. According to The American Prospect, "confinement costs have claimed an increasing share of state and local government spending. This trend has starved essential social programs—most notably education," which explains why "between 2010-2011, 1,069 public schools closed, primarily in urban communities of color across the nation." The money it takes to imprison these people could be better used by the communities themselves to strengthen social services and to support formerly incarcerated individuals after their release. (See also *Public Eye's* Fall 2014 report, "Beyond Prisons, Mental Health Clinics: When Austerity Opens Cages, Where Do the Services Go?")

These are systemic problems that are not easily fixed, but "Who Pays" focuses on three reforms to the criminal justice system and solutions that can help stabilize and support families, communities, and formerly incarcerated persons. The first requires a restructuring and reinvestment in social services for vulnerable populations: states need to draft responsible policies that reduce the number of prisoners, reinvest funds into working social services to reduce recidivism, and shift their focus to accountability, safety, and healing, rather than punishment. The second requires the removal of resource public benefit barriers: housing and employment opportunities must be prevalent in order for incarcerated individuals to gain economic stability. The third calls for increased opportunities that restore family bonds with previously incarcerated individuals, addressing the financial, emotional, and physical burdens placed on families of incarcerated loved ones by providing holistic support.<sup>1</sup>

-Cassandra Osei

## The LGBT Divide: A Data Portrait of the South, Midwest & Mountain States

the williams institute, december 2014



Living in one of the 29 states where employment anti-discrimination laws do not cover sexual orientation can have a serious impact on the health and economic and social well-being of LGBT individuals. A report released last December by the Williams Institute analyzed social climate, demographic, economic, and health indicators among the LGBT population (not all of the research in the report specifically included transgender populations) in these states and found a marked difference between them and the 21 states where anti-discrimination laws do include sexual orientation in their protections. Some of these issues were compounded for African-American LGBT people, who face discrimination on at least two fronts and who were found to be more economically vulnerable and more likely to experience employment discrimination in non-state law states (states that do not have employment discrimination laws that include sexual orientation).

Analysis of LGBT discrimination issues often highlights the South, but the report found that health, economic, and social disparities could be just as significant in the Midwest and Mountain regions, which include states like Kansas, where earlier this year the governor issued an executive order removing anti-discrimination protections for LGBT state employees,<sup>2</sup> and Idaho, which does not include sexual orientation or gender identity in its hate crime legislation.<sup>3</sup>

While there were some commonalities across all these regions, such as lower rates of social acceptance for LGBT/T<sup>4</sup> people and lower numbers of LGBT individuals with health insurance, the report also highlighted unique problems in each region. The South had the lowest score for social acceptance of LGBT/T people and the highest rates of new HIV infections among men who have sex with men (MSM). Only

25 percent of LGBT southerners have health insurance, compared to 84 percent in the general population. The Midwest, however, experienced the highest rates of food insecurity among LGBT people, who are 82 percent more likely to be food insecure than the non-LGBT population. In the Mountain states, MSM HIV prevalence is more than 50 times the average for the general population and same-sex couples were significantly more likely to have a household income below \$24,000 a year than couples in heterosexual marriages.

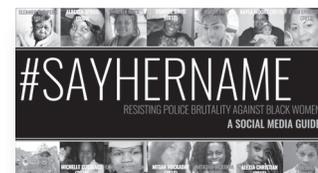
The authors write that the differences in social climate for LGBT people in the non-state law states may be both a cause and an effect of the lack of legal protection. Laws that protect LGBT individuals are less likely to pass in regions with low social acceptance of the LGBT community, but the lack of legal protection can also contribute to a less accepting social environment. Further research into each of these regions could provide a better idea of the challenges and opportunities to build more inclusive societies there.

-Laura Muth

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## Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women

african american policy forum, july 2015



Gabriella Nevarez, Aura Rosser, Michelle Cusseaux, Alexia Christian, Meagan Hockaday, Mya Hall, Janisha Fonville, and Natasha McKenna—why aren't we saying the names of these victims of police brutality? And why have they become shadows within the social justice movement for Black lives? While the killings of Mike Brown and Eric Garner ignited mass protests, the deaths of Alesia Thomas—who was kicked repeatedly while detained—and Jonisha Fonville—who was shot by Charlotte police after a domestic violence complaint—did not result in the same public outcry. The “Say Her Name” report, released by the African American Policy Forum in July, lifts up the stories of Black women's lives and provides data and media tools to counter the silence that has too often greeted their deaths.

Black woman and girls are equally—if not more—vulnerable to state violence as Black men, but too often their stories are left untold. In New York City in 2013, 53.4 percent of Black women and 55.7 percent of Black men were stopped by police, indicating that Black women are targeted just as frequently for racial profiling as are men.

But in the current narratives around the police brutality and extrajudicial killings of Black people, women's stories are routinely absent. They are often missing from media tallies of police killings, but also are missing from the story lines shaping both the movement and the national conversation around police violence and racial injustice. When statistics related to the killing of Black people are cited in the media, they're sometimes rewritten to suggest that they only relate to the killing of Black men—literally erasing the deaths of Black women (especially those of Black transgender women).

As a counterbalance, authors Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Andrea J. Ritchie have gathered in this report the stories of a number of Black women who were victims of police brutality, broadening the frame of the movement for Black lives to include ways in which gender, sexuality, class, health and other identity factors emerge as part of the pattern of police violence. There are women killed for “Driving While Black”; those killed against the backdrop of intense socioeconomic inequality; women who became casualties of the war on drugs, castigated as “drug mules”; those dealing with mental health crises who met violence instead of treatment; Black women who were subjected to inhumane treatment because law enforcement officials viewed them as “superhuman,” and incapable of feeling pain; women labeled “collateral damage” of law enforcement's “real target” in Black men. The list goes on.

The report is not a comprehensive accounting of police violence against Black women—given the absence of accurate data on police killings, that's currently an impossible task, note Crenshaw and Ritchie—but rather an attempt to correct media misrepresentations of law enforcement brutality as something that affects Black men alone. “Our goal is simply to illustrate the reality that Black women are killed and violated by police with alarming regularity,” they write.

“Say Her Name” powerfully argues that a more complete understanding of police violence must center and include Black women in the dialogue (across differences in gender identity, sexuality, age, ability, and class). Anti-Black violence impacts all spheres of the Black community, including LGBTQ women. Not recognizing intersectionality within the Black community and the ways police violence also affects Black women and LGBTQ individuals weakens that community, undermines its representation in the media, and neglects to consider how incidents of police brutality against Black women ripples out to their families and neighborhoods.

The report recommends the adoption of a “Gender-Inclusive Agenda” that addresses anti-Black state violence at the local, state, and national levels while acknowledging the unique forms of violence against women and girls. The report provides an opening for the conversation within and outside of communities that is crucial if all Black lives are to matter.

-Cassandra Osei

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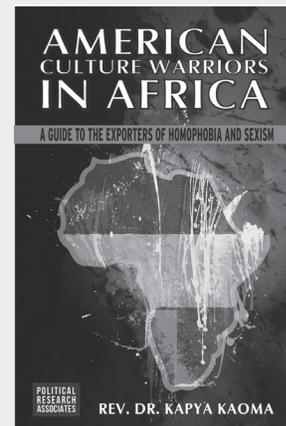
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PRA released a new book! Written by PRA researcher Rev. Dr. Kapya Kaoma, *American Culture Warriors in Africa* profiles the top U.S. culture warriors advancing the persecution of sexual minorities and women in Africa. Learn what you can do to interrupt the Right's neocolonial agenda!

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## The Art of Activism

*Spotlighting the efforts of artists and organizations who are engaged in the struggle for social justice and are helping build the movement through their work.*

Amelia Spinney, a visual artist and arts educator in the greater Boston area, created the cover image for this issue of *The Public Eye*. Spinney describes being politicized as an artist and a person in two particular moments. When they were a child growing up near Nashville, Tennessee, their friend's house was burned down by a group of White people.

"I remember turning to my father, a Baptist pastor from Georgia, and asking if it had happened because my friend's family was Latino," Spinney said. "The answer was 'yes.'"

Coming out as queer to their conservative evangelical family, and the subsequent years-long struggle within the family, was the second experience to shape their identity, worldview, and the topics they address in their artwork.

Spinney's artwork has always been informed by identity, and as a queer Latinx, they aim to ensure their work is intersectional and can speak to multiple aspects of identity. "I want to make expansive art that always references or is aware of more rather than less," they said.

Spinney began creating art during college, developing a style that almost always incorporates hand-drawn images with layers of photographic reference. Spinney went on to earn an MFA in Printmaking at Northern Illinois University and an ED.M. in Arts in Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. They currently serve as a teaching fellow for Harvard University's Vi-



"Triumph" 13"x20" screenprint on paper

sual and Environmental Studies/Art department.

Spinney's work often approaches serious issues—such as religion, sexuality and identity—informed by their own experiences; their style is a mix of dark topics and more humorous innuendos. "I enjoy making visual puns with my images, and I frequently incorporate a light-hearted aesthetic."

This approach can be seen in Spinney's current favorite collection of work, their "Privilege Proverb" screenprints series, wherein each print spins off from "a somewhat offensive, but commonly heard phrase," like "I have a friend like you"—scripted on a background of gazing eyes, encircled by chains, and reading at the bottom, "This message is brought to you by the current racial, religious, and sexual majority groups of America"—or "I miss the good old days."

When asked about the connection between their art and activism, Spinney said, "My art primarily investigates issues of queerness at the moment. I'm very invested in cultural production—whether or not it appears to possess an immediate focus on tangible change—because I think that to create cultural matter [and] art is to partake in a huge force that can work to shift our society over time."

Additional examples of Spinney's work can be found at their website, [www.ameliaspinney.com](http://www.ameliaspinney.com).

—Laura Muth

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