

The State of Hate in America: The Growing Conflict Between Identity Politics and Multiculturalism

Mark Potok

It is an honor and a delight to speak here in the auditorium of Vienna's Academy of Fine Arts, not least because an Austrian who did his best to send my father to Auschwitz some sixty years ago once held sway in this beautiful city. Times certainly do change.

I would like to begin this presentation on the American radical right by saying that ten days from now, there will be a trial in Alabama that has to do with the bombing of a black church in Birmingham about forty years ago, at the height of the American civil rights movement. Two men are scheduled to be tried on that date, men who are now in their sixties and seventies and in rather ill health. At around the same time, Timothy McVeigh, convicted of bombing the Oklahoma City federal building in 1995, will be put to death in a federal execution chamber.

I mention these two cases to point up the fact that there is a significant difference between the old radical right in the United States and the contemporary radical right. The comparison between Bobby Frank Cherry, allegedly one of the bombers of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham who killed four little black girls in 1963, and Timothy McVeigh, who murdered 168 people in Oklahoma, is instructive. For one thing, of course, there is the difference simply in the body count in the two cases. The fact is that the contemporary radical right is willing to murder people who have absolutely nothing to do with the state, with the FBI, with law enforcement agencies, with any of their perceived enemies. That was not true in the past. In fact, the murder of the four little girls in Birmingham appears to have been an accidental byproduct of a bombing that was supposed to "merely" frighten black people back into submission.

There are other differences as well. Until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the radical right in the United States was all about opposition to communism and supporting "100% Americanism." It was, in effect, a restorationist movement, aimed at bringing back what was seen as a golden era of the past. What the extremists sought to restore was white supremacy, the Jim Crow laws of the South that held blacks in legal chains, the oppression of black people in the United States. Today, we are looking at a movement that is completely revolutionary, not restorationist in any sense. It is anticapitalist and anti-idealist. And that is quite the opposite of the past.

The contemporary radical right — in America and in Europe — is also antiglobalization. There is a struggle going on across the Western hemisphere between the forces of globalization and those who favor localism and identity politics. In the words of one writer, Benjamin Barber, this struggle boils down to the battle of "Jihad vs. McWorld." On the one hand, we see forms of tribalism characterized by exclusionary attitudes toward "the other"; on the other hand, multiculturalists who essentially view the world as a single place — who favor integration, interaction among different peoples, multiracialism.

Let me pause here for a moment to say a few words about the Southern Poverty Law Center, where I work. The Center, which is now thirty years old, was set up to seek social and racial justice, work having to do with poverty and with class and race issues. Lawyers at the Center have brought a number of lawsuits that forced the integration of the Alabama state police and increased black representation in legislatures across the South. We have done a lot of prison work and a great deal of anti—death

penalty work, much of it focused on the fact that there is a huge racial disparity in the way the death penalty is imposed in the United States — quite apart from the barbarism of the death penalty to begin with. We also monitor, and maintain the largest database on, extremist groups and individuals. In addition, the Center has been involved for years in educational efforts to teach our children the importance of tolerance.

Through the lens of my specialty, the radical right, I will explain some of the reasons for the recent rise of neofascism in the United States, then discuss the Center's response to these problems.

Throughout its history, the American radical right — far more than extremists in most European countries — has been driven by conspiracy theories: extremely far-out ideas like the weather machine that is supposedly hidden away in a basement somewhere in Brussels and used by clandestine global elites to destroy American crops and American farmers. Despite this fondness for the wacky, I want to stress the point that these people — even the craziest among them — are often motivated by real sociopolitical phenomena, and it is a mistake to simply label those who comprise the radical right as lunatics outside the parameters of society and reason. To do this misses the social and political realities undergirding the movement, what is driving it and therefore how to combat it.

That said, let's go back to the 1980s, when the most important group on the radical right was the Posse Comitatus (Latin for "the power of the county"). The Posse was the first fairly broad-based group in the United States to specifically identify Jews as the principal enemy. But more important to our discussion, the Posse was quite successful for a time, for a period of seven or eight years in the Midwest, operating in the heart of the American farm belt. The Posse Comitatus gained adherents during the 1980s in the context of huge numbers of farm bankruptcies, with literally tens of thousands of farmers losing their land for a variety of historical reasons. One of them was the embargo on grain shipped to the Soviet Union imposed by President Jimmy Carter. In addition, farmers had been very strongly encouraged by federal officials to expand their holdings and turn small family farms into agribusinesses by borrowing. The third important factor was a very sudden and sharp jump in interest rates that made borrowing money extremely expensive. The upshot was that tens of thousands of people lost livelihoods and land that had been in their families in many instances for four, five, six, even seven generations. The fury generated by this situation, a deep-seated and legitimate anger in the heart of the United States, was virtually ignored in the corridors of power. No one in Washington, D.C., made any effort either to help farmers who were losing their land or to provide an explanation as to why this was happening. It was an invisible disaster. The silence emanating from Washington created a breach, and into this breach stepped the organizers of the Posse Comitatus.

Before the Posse arrived, farmers had already begun to build a movement — a movement that was not opposed to the government but, on the contrary, was asking that the government increase price supports. The Posse came in and, like a virus, injected its poison into the situation, suggesting that Jewish cabals, blacks, and others were the culprits attacking American farmers. So what began as an essentially progressive movement — one that asked the government to help its citizens survive — became a wildly anti-Semitic and white supremacist movement that inspired a number of people to murder Jews, homosexuals, police officers, and others.

Ultimately, the Posse died off. It acquired such a bad reputation, was involved in so many murders, that in the end it could not survive. But the important point is that, in the absence of a competing explanation for what was happening to those farmers, ideologues of the radical right were able to twist a fundamentally progressive movement into an anti-Semitic, racist, backward-looking, and very

violent one. My argument in general is not that the rise of neofascism or of radical racism is a direct product of economic hardship. But economic instability can create openings for the propagandists of the extreme right.

With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, the situation of the radical right all over the Western hemisphere changed dramatically. The bogeyman of Communism, the lifelong enemy of the hard right, was no more. So as the 1980s came to a close and the 1990s began, there was a shift to a focus on the federal government as the chief enemy. It was no longer the aim of the radical right to defend "100% Americanism," to defend the flag. Suddenly, we had the shocking spectacle of radical rightists — rather than leftists — burning that flag.

It was in this context that the American militia movement was born. In a very real sense, it began with a 1992 incident in Idaho. A white supremacist named Randy Weaver, who was being sought by the police on illegal weapons charges, holed up with his family in a cabin on top of a mountain known as Ruby Ridge in an eight-day standoff with the FBI. An FBI sniper shot and killed Weaver's wife as she held a baby in her arms. His fourteen-year-old son was also killed, as was a federal agent. Although Ruby Ridge did not get a lot of press in the United States, it absolutely energized the radical right, which saw the incident as a classic example of what the government does to dissidents, especially those on the right: it murders them in their own homes. Shortly afterward, in late 1992, there was an important meeting, variously called "The Gathering of Christian Men" or "The Rocky Mountain Rendezvous," in which 160 of the leaders of the extreme right came together to formulate a response to the Ruby Ridge incident. Some very specific ideas gained currency at that meeting, including the idea of largely abandoning explicit racism in favor of building a mass movement around opposition to the federal government. The gist of the new strategy was, "Let's not talk about black people, let's not talk about the Jews, let's instead talk about gun rights and the dictatorial power of the federal government." And, of course, the issue of gun rights has a powerful appeal in the United States, with its frontier history, particularly in the rural areas of the country. As people left the meeting armed with a fresh plan and eager to mobilize a mass movement, suddenly in Waco, Texas, there erupted a confrontation between a cultlike religious group known as the Branch Davidians and the government, which was seeking to serve warrants on the group of about a hundred people for amassing all kinds of illegal weapons, including machine guns and other lethal equipment.

The confrontation began with a shootout between federal agents and the Davidians, and was followed by a siege lasting fifty-one days. More than eighty people remained inside the Davidian compound when the FBI tried to flush them out with teargas. The building caught fire and burned, killing all but a few of the Davidians inside. Despite claims of government-sponsored murder, the Davidians in fact set their own building on fire, committing mass suicide. I say this authoritatively because I was there, covering the Waco siege and later the trial of the surviving Davidians as a reporter. There is no question that the government did not burn down the compound, nor did it shoot people fleeing the fire, as the conspiracy fabulists insist. Sadly, many Americans believed, and still believe, that the federal government set that fire. In other words, in their view, *The State of Hate in America* 199 the government was perfectly willing to murder eighty men, women, and children in order to crush the gun-toting Davidian dissidents.

Waco set the radical right on fire, so to speak. More than any other event in the last quarter of a century, it brought extremist ideas — in particular, hatred of the federal government — into the mainstream. As a result, over the next few years, the militia movement experienced phenomenal growth. Tens of thousands of Americans — if not hundreds of thousands, or even, by some estimates, millions — joined up, seeing in Waco the hallmark of a government gone mad. It did not matter that much of the popular understanding of Waco was false, and derived directly from right-wing

conspiracy theorists. The militia movement largely succeeded in portraying the events in Texas as the acts of a government willing to go to any lengths to suppress dissent — especially if the dissent involved heterodox religion and the amassing of weapons.

The April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was specifically conceived as revenge for Waco — payback in the horrifying currency of children's ripped and shredded bodies. As I mentioned earlier, it also established a new standard of terrorist attack — a standard that allowed for no innocent bystanders, only those for or against the enemy. The fact that the vast majority of the 168 people murdered in Oklahoma had nothing to do with any conceivable enemy of the radical right was irrelevant. All that mattered was the body count.

And that legacy remains with us to the present day. Since 1995, terror from the radical right eclipses almost all of the attacks predating Oklahoma City — both in number of attacks and in the ambitiousness of their scope. Prior to the bombing, the FBI typically carried about a hundred incidents of suspected domestic terrorism as part of its caseload. Today, the average number of cases is about a thousand at any given time. Certainly, most people in the United States thought that after Oklahoma, terrorism of that sort from domestic forces would surely diminish. Who, after all, would be willing to follow in the bloody footsteps of McVeigh and Terry Nichols? In fact, quite the opposite has occurred. There have been twenty-nine or thirty major domestic terrorist plots in the United States since Oklahoma, none successful, but enormous in scope. The authors of these plots contemplated, among other things, blowing up an elementary school along with 10,000 other people in Texas; bombing Internal Revenue Service buildings as well as various other private and government buildings; and assassinating people, including several on the staff at the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Oklahoma City bombing changed the landscape in the United States in other ways too. One of these has to do with law enforcement. Over the decades, many law enforcement personnel have been sympathetic to the radical right. In the 1950s and '60s, law enforcement was as often as not involved in the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups. But two things have happened since then. Policing in general has become more progressive, certainly among chiefs and other high-ranking officers. And secondly, in Oklahoma City, the victims were children, Social Security recipients, working people dropping their children off for day care, men and women with no relation to any perceived enemies of the extreme right. And if any sympathy for the radical right remained among police, it surely dissipated after the 1998 murder of a police officer outside an abortion clinic in Birmingham, Alabama.

For all of these reasons, there has been a major crackdown by law enforcement on radical right groups in the United States. This crackdown has nothing to do with speech, or with members of these groups Sieg-heiling or wearing swastikas on their sleeve or saying unkind things about Jews or blacks or others of their enemies. Those things are all considered free speech and, as such, are protected by the Constitution's First Amendment. The crackdown is about crime, as defined in American legal terms — murder and other forms of violence, gun violations, threats against officials including judges. A survey conducted a few years ago found that as a result of threats made by right-wing extremists, one-third of American judges were carrying weapons into their courtrooms. This should give you an idea of the atmosphere prevailing in the United States in the years since the Oklahoma bombing.

Let me briefly describe where I think we stand today. As we enter the new millennium, a number of new trends are shaping contemporary extremism. One of them is that the radical right movement in the United States has been Nazified. Now the enemy is not nearly so much the black man or even the homosexual — the enemy is the Jew. The Southern Poverty Law Center does an annual count of

extremist groups, and in the last year we have seen the emergence of fifty new neo-Nazi groups. At the same time, the militia movement — made up of much “softer”-line groups which in general are not explicitly racist — has been declining steadily since its peak in 1996. So while soft antigovernment groups are on the wane, the number of very hard-line, revolutionary, fascist groups is rising. We are also seeing attempts by extremists to take over churches in the American South and to instill in them a profoundly antidemocratic ideology. At the same time, although to date the issue of immigration has not figured strongly in extremist rhetoric, the economic downturn will probably change that situation. In other words, anti-immigrant violence is bound to rise in coming years.

Another trend is the internationalization of the radical right movement. Until recently, the Center focused exclusively on American hate groups. We were not concerned with groups outside of our borders because they did not have an impact on local problems. This is no longer true. It is impossible to monitor and investigate the American radical right without tracking European groups as well. For example, white power music — which is probably the single most important factor in the recruitment of youth to the radical right movement — and the neo-Nazi skinhead phenomenon were exported from Europe to the United States. Now, unfortunately for Europeans, US extremist groups are returning the favor by hosting large numbers of websites in European languages for Europeans. The German government, for instance, says that 80 percent of German-language neo-Nazi sites are now hosted on American computer servers. In addition, there is a great deal of networking among leaders of these groups, so that we quite often see Nick Griffin, head of the British National Party, or American rightists visiting Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of France’s Front National.

Another trend that began in Europe but seems to be making its way across the ocean is a kind of convergence of left and right, of the radical left and the radical right. Of course, the US does not have much of a radical left anymore. But this convergence, which is well established in Europe, does seem to be beginning in America. A recent example: a group called the Earth Liberation Front, a left-wing ecoterrorist organization that has burned down a number of new buildings in the name of environmentalism, announced that it was henceforth targeting federal buildings. The reason I find that so remarkable is that federal buildings are precisely the same target selected by Timothy McVeigh and others on the radical right. My point is that the enemy for both the far left and the far right is in many ways the same. The left may call it “transnational capitalism” while the far right complains of the “New World Order,” but they are basically talking about the same thing.

In its latest count, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 602 hate groups operating in the United States, a number that rose steadily over the latter part of the 1990s. In a healthy economy, we would normally expect to see a decline in hate-group and white supremacist activity, which has been historically true in the United States. But during the 1990s, in the context of extremely low unemployment and almost zero inflation, the opposite occurred. From 1997 to 2001, the number of hate groups jumped from 400 to over 600. Why has this happened?

One key reason is changing demographics. By the year 2050, minorities — blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and others — will outnumber the white population for the first time in America’s modern history. In August 2000, the white population of California, the largest state in the country, dropped below 50 percent. In the next thirty or forty years, state after state will lose these white majorities, which have run the country for most of its history. As a result, the politics of state after state are changing significantly. This has generated fear among many whites, a fear exploited by the radical right. “Listen white man,” the white supremacist organizer declares, “you are losing your country. This is not the white Christian nation that your forefathers built.” That kind of argument resonates for many Americans.

Thirty years of effective organizing has also contributed to the numerical rise of the radical right. The movement learned a lot during the Posse Comitatus days in the Midwest. And most of the organizers are not what one might expect. They are not stupid men. The leader of the principal neo-Nazi group in the US, for instance, a man named William Pierce, is a former university physics professor.

Another important factor is the Internet. It must be said that the role of the Internet has been overblown in many cases, particularly in Europe. I do not think that every time a teenage boy visits a neo-Nazi website, he mutates into a National Socialist. This is a ludicrous claim with no evidence to back it up. However, the Internet has been important in unifying the movement and giving it a sense of momentum. In America, the typical white supremacist twenty years ago was a man who sat alone in his living room shaking his fist at the ceiling, a person afraid to go down to the corner bar and express his ideas because he might very well be punched in the nose. The Internet has changed all of that. Now there is a venue in which people can talk to each other, where new people can be brought into the movement very rapidly, where people leaning toward radical right ideas can explore them without having to attend a Klan rally, where kids can easily become involved in this kind of ideology without their parents' knowledge. It is a very private world.

Another factor is the recasting of Nazism in a religious framework. In the United States, unlike Europe, Nazism has been hooked up with the extremist theology known as Christian Identity — a violently racist, anti-Semitic, and heretical reading of the Bible wherein whites figure as the lost tribes of Israel. The person responsible for this linkage was George Lincoln Rockwell, the founder of the American Nazi Party and a man who made hate holy. Knowing that Americans are far more religious than most people, certainly more than Europeans, Rockwell gave his ideology a theological basis that appealed directly to Americans. Just as important, especially in a nation of immigrants, Rockwell also redefined what it is to be white: one no longer had to be classically Aryan to fit the bill. One could be Greek, Italian, Spanish, even Iranian and be considered white within this new, broader definition. It bequeathed the Aryan ideal to the vast majority of Americans, not merely an elite Germanic subgroup. Finally, the advance of Holocaust denial has helped to make Nazism respectable. After all, twenty years ago, the average Klansman's father had fought the German Nazis and did not take kindly to hearing them described as heroes. Now, the idea that the Holocaust is a myth created by the Jews to fool the rest of the world has become firmly entrenched on the extreme right. And, of course, it helps that this kind of propaganda is not illegal in the United States.

A perceived loss of national sovereignty has spawned its own peculiar set of anxieties. In the US, for instance, the radical right inflamed fears that the United Nations was going to rob America of its power and independence. The typical conspiracy scenario is that one day soon the UN's blue helmets will be marching into Iowa and Ohio to impose martial law and send all good Americans to concentration camps or worse. Similar ideas are circulating around Europe. The radical right in England, for instance, is going crazy over the idea of losing the pound note, of losing that picture of the Queen on every piece of currency.

Ultimately, the most important reason for the rise of hate groups in recent years does go back to the economy. Throughout the 1990s, we were repeatedly told that the economy was doing well, and in some ways that was true. But the deeper reality is that, over the last fifteen or twenty years, the United States has seen the development of a two-tiered economy in which the number of professional, upper-middle-class jobs has shrunk while the pool of low-skill service sector jobs — in fast food restaurants, hotels, etc. — has expanded. The upper working class and the lower middle class have been under tremendous pressures as jobs move abroad and other structural changes in the economy occur. So there are a great many Americans who, for instance, made \$50,000 working in steel mills or auto plants fifteen years ago, and who today are managing a fast food restaurant in western

Pennsylvania and making \$18,000 a year. My father's generation were pretty much guaranteed a decent job in a factory; their wives would not have to work and their children would be taken care of. That is patently not true anymore, and the sense of betrayal felt by many working people is a breeding ground for the toxic ideology of the radical right.

In many ways, the struggle has shaped up as a kind of battle between competing visions: one of a multicultural, democratic, multiracial world, and the other a kind of ethnic nationalism, an identity politics marked by parochial tribalism. This latter phenomenon is manifested in the United States in a variety of ways. Recently, we have witnessed the emergence of a strong new movement, what I have called the "neo-Confederate movement," made up of "pro-South" groups that want to reconstitute the Confederacy, the old South. Basically, these groups are saying, "Slavery really wasn't so bad, and anyway it was all sanctioned by God in the Bible," that racial segregation was not really such an onerous thing, just a system to protect the integrity of both races, and so on. These kinds of ideas circulate principally among white supremacists but find a parallel in a number of black supremacist groups, in particular the New Black Panther Party. The differences between the new and the original Black Panther Party are revealing. The original Panthers were very much old-style leftists, building coalitions with white leftists, Puerto Rican leftists, and others to oppose police brutality and address other forms of social injustice. The New Black Panther Party is chiefly interested in proclaiming the guilt of the Jews. According to the new Panthers, the Jews ran the slave trade, the Jews are the invisible hand guiding the destruction of blacks in the United States. These kinds of ideas seem to be animating more and more ethnic groups around the Western hemisphere, fueling ethnic hatred and opposition to globalism and multiracialism.

So what is to be done? First, let me address a major conflict in this regard between European governments and the US, not to mention antiracist organizations on both sides of the Atlantic. Certainly the great debate in Europe has to do with the criminalization of speech. At virtually every international conference, the Americans, no matter what their politics, left or right, have defended the First Amendment and argued that censoring speech is not useful. But the Europeans — and apparently most of the rest of the world — seem to agree that the Americans are naive, if not foolish, for making a distinction between speech and conduct. There is little chance that Americans will change their view, or that the US Constitution will be amended. In any case, there is no evidence whatsoever that suppressing this kind of speech undermines the radical right. In fact, it is the very countries that have most criminalized speech which have the most serious problems with extremism. If the Germans ban the NPD, they will instantly create a group of criminals, people who have little to lose by taking up the gun. In Germany, too, there have been a large number of raids in which white power music CDs were snatched up and a few people thrown in jail. The unfortunate but very real side effect has been that the Germans are helping to finance the radical right. These illegal CDs have become hot merchandise, more lucrative to move than selling hashish, according to Interpol. A group like the Hammerskins — a truly frightening neo-Nazi organization operating in both Europe and the United States — can now finance itself for decades to come.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has developed a variety of strategies for combatting the radical right. The Center became known mainly for its legal work, but first I would like to say a few words about my own work there. My background is in journalism. I spent twenty years at large newspapers in the United States, and what I do now at the Center is edit a quarterly magazine called the *Intelligence Report*, which covers the American radical right. The *Intelligence Report* is circulated to Center donors, police officials, and reporters, but is not sold on newsstands. We do not compete with journalists, which means that much of the press has come to rely on the Center and its magazine to inform their own stories. Because many of the more prominent American hate groups are adept at masking their racism and anti-Semitism, passing themselves off as mainstream conservatives, and

because information about the radical right is hard to come by, there has turned out to be a genuine need in the United States for a magazine that specializes in investigative journalism exposing these groups. Sometimes, these exposés can be devastating.

Not long ago, for instance, we discovered that the leader of a neo-Nazi group called the Knights of Freedom had in fact changed his name. He was known among his brethren as Davis Wolfgang Hawke, which had a nice Aryan flavor to it. But it seems that until Mr. Hawke went away to university, he had been Andy Greenbaum, son of Hyman Greenbaum, who is Jewish. Although some may consider it a low tactic, we published that fact without hesitation, fully aware of what the outcome would be. And to be sure, the group imploded. What was supposed to have been a mass march on Washington produced a turnout of four pathetic young neo-Nazis.

Another major exposé involved a group called the Council of Conservative Citizens, an outfit that claimed mainstream credentials. Using a variety of sources, we revealed what the group and its leaders were all about when not on television defending themselves. We also exposed the links between Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, that is, the leader of the Republican party in the Senate. Lott had been playing ball with the leaders of this white supremacist group for several years. We reproduced pictures showing the Majority Leader posing with members of the Council in his Senate offices. The story was picked up by virtually every major newspaper in the United States.

Among the Center's legal cases, probably the best known are civil lawsuits brought against white supremacist groups in the United States. We have done this by using a new legal technique devised by lawyers at the Center that some people have termed "vicarious liability." In essence, the technique relies on the lower standards of proof required under US civil law, and aims to hold groups and their leaders financially accountable for the criminal acts of their members. A high-profile example is the civil suit brought against the Aryan Nations, the most infamous neo-Nazi compound in the United States with a long history of violence. The Center had been waiting for an appropriate case through which to challenge the group. That opportunity finally came a few years ago when a woman named Victoria Keenan and her nineteen-year-old son were driving by the Aryan Nations compound and stopped their car because the boy had dropped something out of the window. After retrieving the item, they restarted the car and it apparently backfired. And the Aryan Nations people, certain they were being attacked by "the Jews," went crazy. Heavily armed Aryan Nations security guards jumped into a pickup truck and chased the woman and her son for about two miles, all the while shooting at them. They forced them into a ditch, pistol-whipped her, and threatened to kill them. The Keenans escaped when another car came down this lonely road in the middle of the night. The Center sued the Aryan Nations on behalf of Victoria Keenan and her son.

Cases such as this are commonly misunderstood as speech cases. In fact, they are analogous to a civil liability case brought against a department store. In the Aryan Nations suit, we argued that the leader of the group, Richard Butler, hired people fresh out of prison and armed them to the teeth with semi-automatic weapons. He provided no training, no supervision, no policies to follow as to when to use force — the normal kinds of things that an employer is required to do in supervising armed security guards. And then he set them loose on the community, telling them the Jews were coming to get them. Had a department store known that a delivery truck driver in its employ was an alcoholic and allowed him to drive until the day he mowed down a crowd of schoolkids, the liability would be enormous. And that was exactly our argument in the Aryan Nations case. Richard Butler did not supervise his employees in any kind of rational way and ought to be held liable. The court obviously agreed, awarding the largest judgment in history against a hate group — \$6.3 million.

Another legal strategy employed by the Center is to allege a type of civil conspiracy. A few years ago, we brought a case against a group called the Christian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. What we showed was that, although the leader of the group had not specifically instructed his Klansmen to burn down a particular black church, he had talked in general terms about how black churches ought to be burned down and he had talked in specific terms about how he hated “those people down the street.” He had suggested that should one of his Klansmen burn the church, he would take care of him, protect him from law enforcement.

In addition to investigative journalism and legal challenges, the Center also sponsors a major educational initiative called Teaching Tolerance, which creates materials for teachers and children aimed at producing a better, more tolerant world. Among other things, Teaching Tolerance publishes a high-quality magazine in which teachers can find strategies for inculcating democratic values in kids. Teaching Tolerance also produces videos, for instance, *Starting Small*, which challenges the concept of “whiteness.” One of our videos, in fact, received an Academy Award.

Overall, the Center’s goal has been to do high-impact work. The Center is financed almost entirely from individual donations, mainly through direct-mail fundraising, and it has managed to build an endowment, a war chest, of well over \$100 million. That kind of money makes possible the kinds of cases our lawyers take on, and the publication of high-quality magazines like the *Intelligence Report*. We are not a grassroots organization in the sense that we do not work on the community level. Hundreds of organizations in the US do that type of work very well, and we try to act as a national resource to these groups. We want to put the *Intelligence Report* into the hands of people who are doing antiracist work. We want to put the *Teaching Tolerance* magazine into the hands of teachers who are instructing kids, because, after all, our children are ultimately the answer to the problems we are facing. To go back to the idea of making it illegal to deny the Holocaust, I would suggest again that the answer is not censorship — it is in dealing with our children, the inheritors of our planet, honestly and forthrightly. Given the choice between criminalizing Holocaust denials or teaching our kids about what really occurred, I think the answer is obvious. The problem with the Holocaust is not that it has been talked about too much. It is that it has been discussed too little.

Mark Potok. The State of Hate in America. In: Okwui Enwezor, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash, Octavio Zaya (ed.): Democracy Unrealized. Documenta11_ Platform1. Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit. 2002, pp. 195-207.