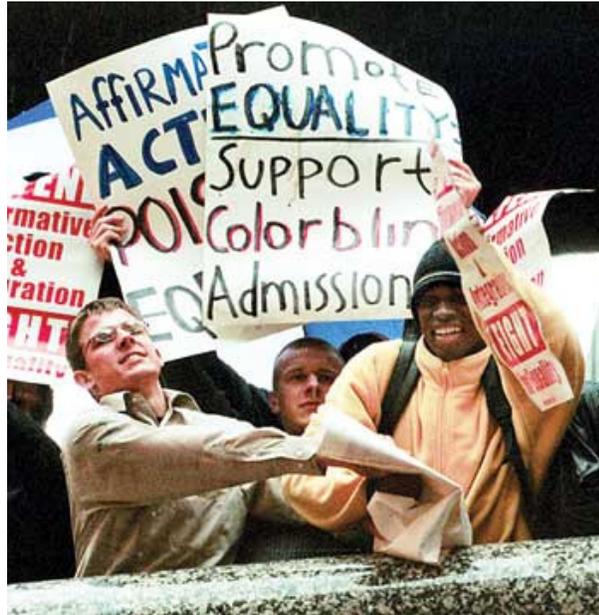


The Racist Roots of the Anti- Immigration Movement

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by Lee Cokorinos

It is true that growing immigrant populations are transforming the United States, but one ancient aspect of Americana remains intact: racial supremacist dreams of a "white" nation. The notion that the United States was and should forever be a White Man's Country - once the accepted creed and rationale of the Republic - resurfaces in hysterical form and very prominent places in the national discourse. In academia, electoral politics, mass media, and revived racist movements on the ground, corporate-funded anti-immigrant forces combine with age-old anti-Black formations to rally against diversity as "a dire threat to 'the core culture.'" White "nativist movements" are once again called forth to confront the "mortal danger" posed by The Other.



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"Two broad strains of anti-immigrant racial supremacism, one based on culture and the other on heredity and genetics, seem to be converging."



Prominent leaders of the anti-immigration movement would have us believe that not an ounce of racism lies behind their efforts. The most media-visible figures in this camp, such as Lou Dobbs, Pat Buchanan, Tom Tancredo and Victor Davis Hanson may argue the case for restricting, deporting, rounding up and cutting off public services to those

"illegals" stigmatized as culturally backward, unhealthy potential terrorists. But they protest that their motives for doing so are as pure as the driven snow.

In their writings and media appearances, the leaders of the anti-immigration movement claim their politics are based not on a hatred of the racial Other but on their commitment to the rule of law, the integrity of "our culture," the objective findings of social science, or better employment prospects for American workers.

On page after page of *In Mortal Danger*, Tom Tancredo's diatribe against non-European immigrants and multiculturalism, the presidential candidate and congressman repeatedly complains that he and his colleagues have been unfairly painted as racist or had their arguments misconstrued as racist.

"Tancredo's book drips with cultural condescension toward Mexican-Americans, Muslims and African-Americans."

But alongside these complaints Tancredo's book drips with cultural condescension toward Mexican-Americans, Muslims and African-Americans. While he claims that illegality is the problem, Tancredo soon moves past this and calls for revoking the legal citizenship of what he terms Mexican-American "anchor babies." Conjuring up racist and sexist imagery, he declares that "gravid wombs should not guarantee free medical care." One wonders whether Tancredo, both of whose grandparents immigrated to the U.S. from Italy, would apply such terminology to his parents, and thus forfeit his own citizenship.

"Clarity of Thought"

Beset by a "malignant multiculturalism," the "vast majority of Americans" are, according to Tancredo, forced to deal with its "raging intolerance of traditional America." This leads to such outrages, he tells us on the following page, as Vanderbilt University renaming its Confederate Memorial Hall dormitory to Memorial Hall just "because the word 'Confederate' made some people uncomfortable."

It apparently doesn't make him feel uncomfortable. Tancredo addressed a meeting bedecked with Confederate flags and promoted by the neo-Confederate [League of the South](#) last year. Dr. Michael Hill, the League of the South's president, has warned that the U.S. faces the prospect of "being overrun by hordes of non-white immigrants."

In his book, Tancredo also reaches back into history to embrace the crudest forms of colonial racist rhetoric. He points to what he calls a "very poetic speech" delivered in 1899 by Winston Churchill against Muslims' "degraded sensualism," "fearful fatalistic apathy," "improvident habits," "slovenly forms of agriculture," etc. These, of course, are exactly the kinds of taunts that the racial nativists of the American past directed at Tancredo's Italian forebears when they reached the U.S.

"Tancredo reaches back into history to embrace the crudest forms of colonial racist rhetoric."

Casting about for more current action heroes, Tancredo settles on "noted constitutional attorney" Ann Coulter. Coulter, a former staffer with the Center for Individual Rights, has defended Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*, which links race and IQ, and regularly heaps racist abuse on Muslims and others, as in "I believe our motto should be after 9/11: Jihad monkey talks tough; jihad monkey takes the consequences. Sorry, I realize that's offensive. How about 'camel jockey'? What? Now what'd I say? Boy, you tent merchants sure are touchy. Grow up, would you?"

Although Tancredo claims that individuals should be judged on their actions and merits rather than their group identity, he takes up Coulter's proposal that everyone from "suspect countries" should be immediately deported. Tancredo has also proposed wholesale deportation of undocumented immigrants. "If only our political leaders possessed" Coulter's "clarity of thought," he writes.

The Suburban Plantation

Victor Davis Hanson, author of *Mexifornia: A State of Becoming* and another prominent think tank/TV talking head in the immigration debate, also argues for a radical cutback in Mexican immigration and vigorous efforts to root out multicultural thinking. At the core of his approach is an imperious demand that immigrants conform to his narrow, Anglicized view of American culture.



He also abuses his progressive critics for allegedly falsely charging the anti-immigration movement with racism. "To discuss the issue rationally," he claims, "is to expect charges of racist and nativist." He then blithely condemns American schools for promoting "the fiction of cultural equality."

Hanson, a senior fellow at the right wing Hoover Institution, comes from a long line of California Central Valley growers and occupies a special niche in the firmament of reaction, providing a philosophical bridge to earlier forms of anti-immigrant ideology. One of the more enduring mythical themes in the cultural history of white supremacy in the United States has been the idyllic nature of the Southern plantation, where everyone knew his or her place in the racial pecking order. In exchange for accepting this social order the laboring classes, according to this mythology, would be rewarded with a stable existence, leading to a "natural" harmony.

"Hanson condemns American schools for promoting 'the fiction of cultural equality'."

This thinking was championed by mid-20th century adherents of the so-called "Southern Agrarian" movement such as Richard M. Weaver, one of the founding intellectual figures of modern conservatism. Skirting around the questions of slavery and Jim Crow lynching, they romanticized the supposed gentility and "small is beautiful" values of "civilized"

southern life. Hanson extends some these Agrarianist themes, such as the dignity of manual labor, to the farms and ranches of the southwest, worked largely by immigrant workers from Mexico.

While he does not embrace the philosophy of antebellum plantation idealism, Hanson's writings, particularly the early chapters of *Mexifornia*, are filled with misty Agrarian school images of the alleged nobility and order of a fading rural California farm life (e.g., his nostalgia for "the good times of our agrarian past").

In southern California the Agrarian mythological tradition has played out in odd and sinister ways (a eugenics movement was part of it, as [Matt Garcia](#) recounts), combining misplaced nostalgia for social relations on the small commercial farm and, in its more recent incarnation, a celebration of the bucolic white suburbs as the pinnacle of civilization.

For Brian Janiske, Hanson's Claremont Institute colleague, "the seemingly quiet and bland order of the California suburb is, in effect, a metaphysical affirmation of the revolutionary core of the American regime."

Needless to say, an intense and sometimes nasty struggle for cultural hegemony and economic and political power is taking place in the California suburbs between a shrinking and resistant white population and a growing Latino community. Journalist Roberto Lovato reports that one participant at an Anaheim city council meeting said California is becoming "ground zero for America's second civil war."

"Imperatives to be Honored"

This rural/suburban reality sits rather incongruously with Hanson's shifting claims that racism is either no longer a big deal (it "belongs largely to the past") or is immutable ("mankind by its very nature is prone to be murderous, racist and sexist"). "Today's Big Lie," he tells us, is that "racism, discrimination [and] labor exploitation" have been "the burdens of the Mexican-American experience."

"Ward Connerly and Glynn Custred have jumped on the anti-immigration bandwagon by linking it with their assault on affirmative action."

Such arguments, of course, have long been directed at African-Americans, and have a strong appeal for right wing opponents of a strong and effective government role in promoting racial justice. As they pour out of the think tanks and media outlets of the right, they are feeding increasingly coordinated populist assaults on African-American and immigrant communities.

Veterans of the Prop 209 campaign in California, such as Ward Connerly and Glynn Custred, and others now backing [Connerly's "Super Tuesday"](#) multistate campaign, have also jumped on the anti-immigration bandwagon by linking it with their assault on affirmative action.

On the back cover of *Mexifornia* Linda Chavez of the misnamed Center for Equal Opportunity, which has been waging war for years against the gains of the civil rights movement in law, education, employment and fair housing, dutifully endorses Hanson's view of what she calls "disturbing trends among Mexican immigrants."

This despite the fact that Chavez seems to have had her own misgivings about anti-Mexican bias among her right wing colleagues. She specifically calls out "a fair number of Republican members of Congress, almost all influential conservative talk radio hosts, some cable news anchors - most prominently, Lou Dobbs - and a handful of public policy 'experts' at organizations such as the Center for Immigration Studies, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, NumbersUSA, in addition to fringe groups like the Minuteman Project."

Those who thought these words might signal a welcome move toward multiculturalist rationality among the anti-diversity crowd were soon to be disappointed. Chavez quickly retracted them.

Praising Hanson's book in the *Wall Street Journal* for its "highbrow, agrarian outlook," Chavez' sidekick Roger Clegg offers his own racialized and imperious endorsement of "the core values that define American citizenship," such as "don't demand anything because of your race or ethnicity" and "don't view working hard and studying hard as 'acting white.'"

These are not a matter of choice for free individuals in a democratic society, but, he sternly instructs us (acting white?) "habits to be inculcated and imperatives to be honored."

Clegg's "core values" are an open book. "I have a lot of sympathy," he tells us, "for those who want to recognize the heroism of Confederate soldiers, and even more for those who have a reflexive and negative reaction to the NAACP's pronouncements these days. My father's parents were from Mississippi, and my parents and I are Texans, and in all my years growing up and playing army I can never remember choosing to be a Yankee rather than a Rebel."

Racial Nationalism and Immigration



Pat Buchanan, a veteran figure in anti-immigration politics, has a substantial following among the "pitchfork brigade" at the grassroots of the populist right, and is also a regular presence on MSNBC. His sister Angela "Bay" Buchanan served as chair of Tom Tancredo's Virginia-based Team America PAC, which promotes anti-immigration candidates, and has now joined

his presidential campaign team. Bay Buchanan and Tancredo attended the Tombstone, Arizona kick-off rally of the Minuteman Project in April 2005.

Although he pays lip service to the legal changes brought about by the civil rights movement from the mid-1950s onwards, in his book *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America*, Pat Buchanan deplors what he calls America's "national guilt over racism."

Buchanan believes this guilt is leading toward national and racial suicide ("demography is destiny"), a theme once championed by Theodore Roosevelt that has a long history in the American nativist movement. In attempting to explain this guilt phenomenon, he points to the "seminal" work of Peter Brimelow, who argues that America's alleged obsessive guilt about racism was caused essentially by an overreaction to the genocidal crimes of the Nazis.

"Pat Buchanan deplors what he calls America's 'national guilt over racism.'"

By committing to "cleansing itself from all taints of racism and xenophobia," Buchanan quotes Brimelow, the "U.S. political elite" eventually "enacted the epochal Immigration Act of 1965," which did away with a quota system based on national origins that favored European immigration.

Brimelow, an English immigrant who runs VDARE, a website filled with white supremacist and anti-Semitic material, has called the Pioneer Fund, a foundation that has backed racial eugenics research, a "perfectly respectable institution." Buchanan writes a regular column for VDARE, for which Tom Tancredo has also written.

In the acknowledgments section of *State of Emergency*, Buchanan singles out the late Sam Francis (who edited the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens' paper, *The Citizens Informer*) and Brimelow as the vanguard of the anti-immigration movement. And while he praises the leaders of the anti-immigrant think tank infrastructure, such as Roy Beck of NumbersUSA, Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies and Dan Stein of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), he cites a slew of VDARE columnists in the book and thanks James Fulford of VDARE for help with the manuscript.

The racist roots of the anti-immigration movement run deep. In his important study of American immigration politics up to the 1920's, *Strangers in the Land*, John Higham identifies two broad strains of anti-immigrant racial supremacism, one based on culture and the other, with the rise of Social Darwinism, based on heredity and genetics. These trends now seem to be converging, and are being mainstreamed into the American media through Buchanan's high visibility.

Nativism Goes to Harvard

As Higham points out, anti-immigrant racial nativism was not restricted to populist



demagogues who directed their appeals to poor and working class whites (e.g., an anti-immigrant Minute Men organization was formed in 1886 in New York). Powerful strains of racially-charged propaganda directed at immigrants have also emanated from the political elite and top universities.

Henry Cabot Lodge, Sr., stood up in the Senate in 1896 and warned in a debate over imposing literacy tests on immigrants that America's national character was in danger of being "bred out." Francis A. Walker, the president of MIT, developed a theory in the late 1890s that "beaten men from beaten races" were, with their higher birthrate, dooming white

America.

Books such as Madison Grant's 1916 *The Passing of the Great Race*, proclaimed that "democracy is fatal to progress when two races of unequal value live side by side." The book helped spur a nativist movement, backed by the Ku Klux Klan, that contributed to the passage of draconian restrictions on immigration in 1924. The new nativist movement of today has also spurred a resurgence of the racist Klan.

Grant, a lawyer and president of the New York Zoological Society, was vice president of the Immigration Restriction League, which was, Higham tells us, "born at a meeting of five young blue bloods in the law office of Charles Warren, later a noted constitutional historian." All five had attended Harvard together in the 1880's and had gone on to do graduate work at Harvard's Lawrence Scientific School or its law school.

"The new nativist movement of today has also spurred a resurgence of the racist Klan."

The IRL, which eventually turned to eugenics and briefly considered renaming itself the Eugenic Immigration League, quickly developed close ties with the leading nativist factions and lobbyists in Congress and went on to fight immigration under the direction of prominent attorney Prescott Hall and Harvard professor Robert DeCourcy Ward.

"Pat Buchanan with Footnotes"

A century after the formation of the IRL, the tradition of highbrow panic about the perils of immigration still finds a home at Harvard. In *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, Samuel P. Huntington, arguably the leading political scientist in the U.S., strikes the very same themes that Buchanan, Tancredo and Hanson do in their less footnoted (or in the case of Hanson, non-footnoted) nativist diatribes: white Protestant culture, which forms the core of America's identity, is being marginalized by immigration, multiculturalism, and (Huntington adds) the "denationalization" of American elites.



For good measure, he produces a lengthy section on how affirmative action has contributed to the "deconstruction of America" through its alleged abandonment of the intent doctrine, starting with the labor department's enforcement of the anti-discrimination provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and continuing through the Supreme Court case *Griggs v. Duke Power* (401 U.S. 424, 1971).

Huntington's notion that the intent doctrine has been abandoned would surely come as a surprise to those who see it as a major legal impediment to challenging racial discrimination. Nevertheless, he writes that affirmative action, along with "the challenge to English" has contributed to the rise of "subnational identities" (African-Americans and Latinos) that are posing a dire threat to "the core culture."

"Hispanization," he tells us, echoing the rhetoric of the Minutemen, is threatening a "demographic reconquista" of the southwest U.S. America's unity, which he falsely sees

as based on "Anglo-Protestant" culture, is being undermined by largely Mexican influences. But Huntington, while steering clear of racist pseudo-science, goes beyond the argument about culture to suggest that "white nativist movements are a possible and plausible response" to the prospect that whites may someday become a minority in the U.S.

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As Boston University political scientist Alan Wolfe has remarked, "the word 'plausible' catches the eye. To say that something is possible or probable is to make a prediction; to call it plausible is to endorse it." Huntington's argument, "at times bordering on hysteria," is "Pat Buchanan with footnotes." Huntington's tacit nod to the white populist movement has been reciprocated by Peter Brimelow, who describes him as "a friend of VDARE."

Racial Nativism and the Conservative Infrastructure

Ideological advocacy has played an important role in the resurgence of racial nativism in the anti-immigration movement. But the conservative think tank and foundation infrastructure has played an important part in this revival, both by mainstreaming its ideas through books, op-eds and media appearances and by supporting the organizations promoting the demographic and other research that has fed it. This intellectual infrastructure feeds this movement at the base.

Charles L. Heatherly, one of the architects of the Heritage Foundation's model for furnishing right wing politicians with actionable policy ideas as editor of several of its *Mandate for Leadership* handbooks, provided a "priceless contribution" to *In Mortal Danger*, Tom Tancredo writes. A former staffer for Tancredo, Heatherly now works as a senior aide to the congressman (see his appearance on Tancredo's behalf on YouTube).

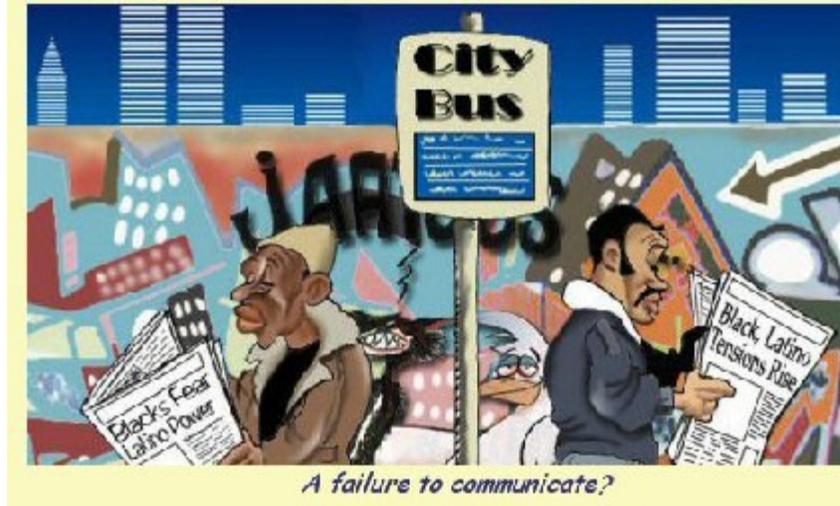
Victor Davis Hanson's *Mexifornia* was written at the suggestion of Peter Collier, the founding publisher of Encounter Books, which has been backed by the Koch, Bradley and Olin Foundations. It is an expanded version of an article published by Hanson in *City Journal*, the Manhattan Institute's flagship publication. Myron Magnet, the journal's editor, helped edit the article and book.

"This intellectual infrastructure feeds this movement."

According to Mediatransparency.org, the Olin foundation provided \$100,000 in funding for VDARE through Sally Pipes' Pacific Research Institute. Olin also funded the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, of which Samuel P. Huntington is the founding director. The Smith Richardson and Bradley foundations provided support for Huntington's *Who Are We?*

Bradley also provided support for the Center for Immigration Studies. A report advocating the mass deportation of illegal immigrants, "The Economics of Immigration Enforcement," has been published by Henry Regnery's Georgia-based National Policy Institute. The Pioneer Fund lists the National Policy Institute as its largest grant recipient on its 2005 federal tax return.

Fighting Wedge Politics



The right wing political infrastructure has also fed strategic initiatives designed to polarize the African-American and Latino communities over immigration. The Minuteman movement, which has spread across the country and experienced two major splits, has prominently featured Ted Hayes, an African-American immigration opponent at its rallies. Rosanna Pulido, a Latina, heads the Illinois Minuteman Project, based in Skokie. The Federation for American Immigration Reform, co- founded by John Tanton, the Michigan-based leader of a dense network of anti-immigration organizations, attempted to form a front called Choose Black America in May 2006.

The good news is that efforts to counter the wedge politics of the Minuteman movement and national groups such as FAIR are gaining ground. The Equal Justice Society, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Latino Issues Forum, Greenlining Institute and Centro Legal de la Raza have begun the process of encouraging much-needed dialogue (<http://tinyurl.com/2rqg9s>) on immigration issues.

In the South, with a growing Latino population, critically important organizing and advocacy initiatives to counter the wedge politics of the right are being led by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Highlander Research and Education Center Institute for Immigrant Leadership Development (INDELI), Black Alliance for Just Immigration and the Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network. If adequately funded and supported, this infrastructure can engage the racial nativist movement where it counts most - at the grassroots level and in the media.

Lee Cokorinos conducts political research on right-wing movements and organizations. He is the author of The Assault on Diversity: An Organized Challenge to Racial and Gender Justice (Rowman & Littlefield), and Target San Diego: The Right Wing Assault on Urban Democracy and Smart Government, and can be reached at rightnotes@earthlink.net.