

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM *of the* ROCKIES

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Seminar 1: Rediscovering the Principles of the American Founding

Seminar 2: The Problem of Slavery in the Founding

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Massachusetts Constitution:

The end of the institution, maintenance, and administration of government, is to secure the existence of the body politic, to protect it, and to furnish the individuals who compose it with the power of enjoying in safety and tranquility their natural rights, and the blessings of life: and whenever these great objects are not obtained, the people have a right to alter the government, and to take measures necessary for their safety, prosperity and happiness.

The body politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: it is a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good. It is the duty of the people, therefore, in framing a constitution of government, to provide for an equitable mode of making laws, as well as for an impartial interpretation, and a faithful execution of them; that every man may, at all times, find his security in them.

Colorado Constitution:

Section 1. VESTMENT OF POLITICAL POWER

All political power is vested in and derived from the people; all government, of right, originates from the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted solely for the good of the whole.

Section 2. PEOPLE MAY ALTER OR ABOLISH FORM OF GOVERNMENT

The people of this state have the sole and exclusive right of governing themselves, as a free, sovereign and independent state; and to alter and abolish their constitution and form of government whenever they may deem it necessary to their safety and happiness, provided, such change be not repugnant to the Constitution of the United States.

Section 3. INALIENABLE RIGHTS

All persons have certain natural, essential and inalienable rights, among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; and of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness.



Why American Colleges Are Becoming Anti-American

By THOMAS L. KRANNAWITTER | Monday, August 20, 2007 4:30 PM PT

Kudos to Hank Brown, president of the University of Colorado, and the CU Board of Regents for doing the right thing and firing Ward Churchill.

Unfortunately, what most riled public opinion about Churchill — the patent disdain for America in his reference to 9/11 victims as “little Eichmanns” — isn't confined to one cultural studies professor with a penchant for academic fraud. Rather, his anti-American comments reflect much of the design and purpose of modern academia.

MULTICULTURALISM

If there is one word that captures the intellectual and political agenda of the modern academy it is “multiculturalism.” Multicultural centers and departments continue to spring up on college campuses, and many schools have added multiculturalism to their mission statements.

There is reasoning that informs this push, and by thinking it through, we can understand why some academics utter some of the most virulent anti-American invective.

Multiculturalism is a formulation of Western philosophy that, despite its internal differences, agrees on balance that there is no objective truth, especially no moral or political truth, to be discovered by human reason.

This modern view assumes that human nature is changeable. Like plastic, it bends and conforms to the cultural forces around it. Therefore, human nature varies from culture to culture, time to time. Instead of one objective truth that applies to all human beings, multiculturalists claim there are only diverse “perspectives” that inform a diversity of “prejudices.”

But if multicultural education isn't burdened with a concern for *truth* (Churchill just shrugs off the multiple indictments of academic dishonesty), what does it mean to be *educated* in the multicultural sense?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE EDUCATED?

Any thoughtful multiculturalist understands that he gets himself into an intellectual pickle if he argues that his views are true. He stands, after all, on the ground that there is no truth. The keystone of multiculturalism is the hypothesis that what ordinary people believe to be “true” is nothing but their own cultural prejudice. The real test of multicultural education, therefore, is whether one has freed one's mind from the trappings of one's culture—especially if one's culture happens to be, like American culture, more powerful and prosperous than others.

Celebrating foreign cultures and rejecting America are two sides of the same multicultural coin; it's the way American multiculturalists demonstrate their own multicultural sophistication to each other. From their perspective, the most *anti-American* Americans are the most *educated* Americans.

Multiculturalists fail to understand, however, that the United States is more than mere culture. America's foundation is much firmer: the self-evident truth that every human being possesses an equal natural right to his/her own person and property, the very premise of constitutional government by consent and the free society that American professors of multiculturalism enjoy.

An American multiculturalist might woo and wow fellow multiculturalists by denouncing the United States or besmirching the U.S. flag or national anthem, but he dares to speak that way only in the free United States where he can duck for cover under Constitutional protections for free speech. (Let's see a multiculturalist stand in Tehran and denounce Iran!)

FIGHTING RELATIVISM WITH NIHILISM

Some conservatives, David Horowitz most notably, oppose the prevailing multiculturalism of our schools by pushing for an “academic bill of rights,” in part to ensure greater “intellectual diversity,” and also as an effort to remove politics from education. But in his emphasis on “diversity,” Horowitz concedes the most important ground to the multiculturalists, namely that there is no objective truth.

In a recent public debate between Horowitz and Churchill, Churchill argued explicitly that there is no truth, that all supposed knowledge is nothing but political “ideology,” nothing but irrational cultural prejudices. For Churchill, it's impossible to remove politics from education because political prejudices provide the content of education.

In response, Horowitz never challenged Churchill's premises of moral relativism and philosophic nihilism; he seemed to agree with Churchill that moral and political opinions are mere cultural

prejudices and nothing more. Horowitz, in other words, seems to agree that there is no objective truth. The difference is that Churchill wants his multicultural, progressive prejudices to continue dominating American education while Horowitz seeks more “diversity” of prejudices in the classroom.

CHEERLEADING VERSUS THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

Horowitz wants to break up the monopoly liberals have on academics today, and I applaud him for that. But his complaints ring hollow unless he can defend some kind of principles as *true*, something he seems reluctant to do.

If all beliefs are mere cultural prejudices and all cultural prejudices are equally *irrational* and equally *untrue*, then why does it matter if students are exposed to one irrational prejudice or a “diversity” of irrational prejudices?

The political goal of our institutions of higher education is not to give irrational cheerleaders for America equal billing with irrational America haters. Ensuring that students encounter a “diversity” of dogmas is no substitute for pursuing truth.

The goal of our institutions of higher education should be to teach American students the truth about their country, beginning with the self-evident truths that form the core of political justice and the American experiment in self-government.

If we muster the nerve and the intelligence to teach those truths without blushing, we’ll find that Ward Churchill and the countless academic nihilists like him, parading as multiculturalists, are but symptoms of educational institutions that have abandoned their mission. The question is whether Americans have the resolve to set their own institutions of higher education back to the hard and good work for which they were originally created.

LEADING FOUNDERS ON SLAVERY

George Washington:

There is not a man living who wishes more than sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of [slavery].

John Adams:

Every measure of prudence, therefore, ought to be assumed for the eventual total extirpation of slavery from the United States...I have through my whole life held the practice of slavery in abhorrence.

Benjamin Franklin:

Slavery is...an atrocious debasement of human nature.

Alexander Hamilton:

The laws of certain states give an ownership in the service of negroes as personal property.... But being men, by the laws of God and nature, they were capable of acquiring liberty—

and when the captor in war thought fit to give them liberty, the gift was not only valid, but irrevocable.

James Madison:

We have seen the mere distinction of color made in the most enlightened period of time, a ground of the most oppressive dominion ever exercised by man over man.

Thomas Jefferson, Original Draft of Declaration of Independence:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of INFIDEL Powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce. And that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people on whom he also obtruded them: thus paying off former crimes committed against the LIBERTIES of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the LIVES of another.

Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia:

The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present.

But, generally, that is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances.

Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia:

Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Henri Gregoire:

Be assured that no person living wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a complete refutation of the doubts I have myself entertained and expressed on the grade of understanding allotted to [black slaves] by nature, and to find that in this respect they are on a par with ourselves. My doubts were the result of personal observation on the limited sphere of my own State, where the opportunities for the development of their genius were not favorable, and those of exercising it still less so. I expressed them therefore with great hesitation; but whatever be their degree of talent it is

no measure of their rights. Because Sir Isaac Newton was superior to others in understanding, he was not therefore lord of the person or property of others.

Northwest Ordinance of 1787:

Art. 6: There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted: *Provided, always,* That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid.

See Also:

- United States Constitution, Article I, Section 2 (Three-Fifths Clause)
- United States Constitution, Article I, Section 9 (Slave Importation Clause)
- United States Constitution, Article IV, Section 2 (Fugitive Slave Clause)
- *The Federalist Papers* #54



Race, Slavery, and American Exceptionalism

By THOMAS KRANNAWITTER | Friday, August 22, 2008 4:20 PM PT

Barack Obama launched his presidential campaign from Springfield, Ill. He was to announce his vice-presidential running mate on Saturday from Springfield as well. Why Springfield?

Obama is clearly trying to capitalize on the legacy of America's most captivating president, Abraham Lincoln, for whom Springfield was as much of a home as he ever knew.

But in a 2005 feature essay in *Time* magazine, Obama distanced himself from what he called Lincoln's "limited" views on race. So, it seems, Lincoln leaned more toward bigotry than justice, at least for Obama.

What about America?

As we learn more about candidate Obama, many are troubled by Obama's attraction toward William Ayers, member of the terrorist Weather Underground organization, the God-damning-America Rev. Jeremiah Wright, and Saul Alinsky, founder of the socialist Industrial Areas Foundation, all of whom share utter contempt for the principles and practices of the United States.

From his statements and affiliations, it's hard not to assume that Obama thinks America is racist and immoral, just like its most famous president. But if Obama paid less attention to America haters and

more to America and its foremost defender, Lincoln, he might begin to understand the true ground of American goodness.

It might sound strange at first, but the problem of slavery in America best reveals America's goodness. Throughout history, slavery was a common practice that few, if any, thought to condemn much less try to end. But in America, slavery became a problem, one that would not go away without blood. This fact alone tells much about the goodness of America.

America was destined for some kind of moral and political confrontation over slavery because, and only because, America was founded on the principle of human equality, a truth that is diametrically opposed to slavery.

When Americans today ask why their forefathers of 1776 did not immediately abolish slavery, they are asking the wrong question. The right question is: Why did they establish a new regime on the idea that the rights of Americans are rooted in human nature, which they share with all human beings everywhere?

No people, anywhere, had ever attempted such a thing. Not in Africa, nor Europe, nor Asia, not in the peaks of Roman or Greek civilizations, not anywhere else was there a model of establishing a self-governing republic and trying to combine justice with the consent of the governed, all out of dedication to the principle that all men are created equal.

The American Founders did more than abstractly declare the principle of equality. They understood with perfect clarity the injustice of slavery, taking every measure against it that prudence would allow. When the famed black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, studied the compromises made over slavery in the original Constitution, he concluded that it was nothing less than a "glorious liberty document."

From 1776 through the early 1800s, America witnessed the greatest anti-slavery movement ever, as half of the original states abolished slavery and active anti-slavery societies sprang up elsewhere, the importation of African slaves was outlawed, and the spread of slavery was prohibited.

Nineteenth century changes in technology and economics, political theory and Christian theology gave rise to a defense of slavery and a corresponding rejection of the Founding principles. But Lincoln would not let those principles fade. Instead, he presided over America's most horrific struggle, the Civil War, in order to preserve them. His reward was a bullet blasted through his brain.

When Obama complains that he "cannot swallow whole the view of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator" because "as a law professor and civil rights lawyer and as an African-American, I am fully aware of his limited views on race," what more would Obama have advised Lincoln to do?

The equal protection of equal rights is the American ideal, enshrined forever in the proposition that all men are created equal. And it's right. Slavery and racism are wrong precisely because equality is right.

Acknowledging past sins of slavery and racism in America in no way requires abandoning the principles of America. Just the opposite. The more we hate the ugliness of slavery and racism, the more we should cherish the true principles upon which America was founded.

There is no greater student and therefore no greater teacher of American politics than Lincoln. If Obama wants to borrow from Lincoln's legacy, he should first learn from Lincoln.

The lesson Lincoln offers is a lesson of American exceptionalism. It is a lesson about how rare it is for a nation to be founded on the principles of justice, how beautiful it is that a nation can strive to live up to its own principles because they are good, and how the Americans were the first to figure that out.