

## “FEAR OF A BROWN PLANET”

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The enemy preaches “race hatred”, according to *FrontPageMagazine*’s David Horowitz. It aims to undermine the very foundations of Anglo-American civilization – and perhaps, through sheer numbers and singleness of purpose, it will succeed. Horowitz was the featured speaker at a March rally held on the UCLA campus, where attendees denounced the “brainwashing”, “evil propaganda” and “institutional racism” of their adversaries in a looming cultural war.

These white Republicans are at the forefront of a new wave of minority politics: white minority politics. Though rooted in California, this new politics of fear is cropping up across the country as its promoters redefine who is racial victim and who is racial oppressor, neatly inverting – and co-opting – the arguments and terms of the civil rights movement. The occasion for the UCLA rally was the campaign against what a recent article called “one of the most prominent and powerful organizations in the United States”: the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, known as Mecha, a national Chicano student group founded during the identity and power movements of the early 1970s.

Former California Democratic gubernatorial candidate Cruz Bustamante was the most high-profile Latino politician to come under attack for association with Mecha last year, though City Councilman and former LA mayoral hopeful Antonio Villaraigosa and dozens of other Latino politicians have also been targeted. At issue are references in Mecha’s founding documents to “La Raza,” a concept popularized by the early twentieth century Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos, which translates literally as “the race” but refers figuratively to Latinos born of the Spanish conquest of Indians. Casting this vocabulary of racial solidarity as a pernicious ideology of racial supremacy, UCLA’s Republicans have already done: cut off Mecha’s funding. Meanwhile, university Mechas in other states, including Colorado, Texas (offices of UT El Paso Mecha were vandalized late last year) and New Mexico are facing similar challenges.

Alamo-like fears of a Latino takeover are emerging in jittery white enclaves across this national-security-driven country, in which one of every four Americans will be of Latino descent by 2050, according to a census report released this past March. Tom Tancredo, a Colorado Representative and chairman of the Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus, has since 9/11 regularly conflated Latino immigrants with “terrorist criminals” at meetings like one recently held in the predominantly white Los Angeles suburb of La Canada. At that event, organizers displayed an unmanned aerial vehicle that they hope will track Latino immigrants at the border the way it tracks enemy combatants in Iraq. Tancredo also rails against Latinos who threaten “our civilization” with textbooks that describe “defenders of the Alamo as slave owners, land speculators and Indian killers.”

The Sierra Club recently fended off a hostile takeover by a new breed of well-heeled, anti-immigrant, anti-Latino activists who believe they’re defending American civilization against the balkanizing and breeding barbarians from the South. Mediagenic scholars like commentator and bestselling author *Mexifornia* author Victor Davis Hanson provide intellectual cover for this hate-based movement with frequent appearances on television, radio and lecture circuits and on the Internet. (Hanson’s work is supported by the Claremont and Hoover institutes, both of which receive significant funding from the Olin Foundation, which has also supported the notorious *Bell Curve* author Charles Murray and the war think tank Project for the New American Century, or PNAC.) Cable TV ranters Bill O’Reilly, Lou Dobbs and Sean Hannity have added their voices to the chorus warning against the Latino menace. Most

recently, national security guru Samuel Huntington called US Latinos “the single most immediate and most serious challenge to America’s traditional identity” in his book, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity*. What Huntington calls “The Hispanic Challenge” is portrayed as the cause of a “clash of civilizations” in the homeland.

Orange County is the epicenter of one of the most dramatic demographic and political shifts of the developed world. These changes are spinning identities and political processes with the speed and relentlessness of Disneyland’s whirling Mad Hatter teacup ride, which made me dizzy in the late 1960s, when I was a minority (80 percent of the population identified itself as “white”) among the mostly white workers and white Mouseketeers near the Davy Crockett canoes in Frontierland and the boats cruising the exotic tropical jungles in Adventureland.

Since then, as many as 2 million mostly white Californians have fled to what may have appeared to be less exotic places, like Florida, Alaska and Texas. During the 1990s California gained more than 4 million residents, mostly newborns and immigrant Latinos. As a result, whites who are still more than 70 percent of California’s electorate, are just 47 percent of the population and will be outnumbered by Latinos within twenty years. Rich and poor white voters holding down the racial ramparts in the state are being ideologically re-equipped as foot soldiers in the next phase of the conservative suburban political revolution that gave California – and eventually the country – its first actor-politico, the late Ronald Reagan, who stoked the embers of white voter fear while pounding the drum of national security. Unlike the more naked racial signposts and rituals of the Reagan era (signs in parks that say No Dogs, No Negroes, No Mexicans; snarling dogs that kept nonwhite students at bay), today’s signs are more coded (No Futbol, No Street Vending, etc.). But the more subtle messages are more widely and effectively distributed by think tanks, academics, radio pundits and right-wing politicians, who have created an industry that interprets whiteness in an unprecedented context – in which many whites feel uncomfortably surrounded by “minorities”. In this spirit, for example, Arnold Schwarzenegger made hay out of driver’s license-wielding immigrants and Indian gaming authorities in the recall election last year.

Radio listeners in Ventura County wake up to ads with messages like “Congratulations Ventura County. You’re known for some of California’s most contaminated beaches.” The narrator then explains, “Ventura isn’t coping with the waste products from its ongoing population explosion and associated development.” Such ads as well as press events and “reports” linking Latino immigrants to practically every problem in the Golden State – from disease and crime to national security and terrorism – are sponsored and distributed statewide by Californians for Population Stabilization, an organization whose board of directors is made up not of old-school white supremacists but of people like UCLA physicists and astronomy professor and insurgent Sierra Club board member Dr. Ben Zuckerman, and Stuart Hurlbert, a 2003 National Academy of Sciences award recipient and fellow of the prestigious American Association for the Advancement of Science. Links between grassroots and elite white fear networks include board memberships, financing, joint publications and, frequently, backing from Michigan ophthalmologist and millionaire John Tanton. Tanton, according to a report by the Southern Poverty Law Center, has “formed, led or in other ways made possible” most major anti-Latino, anti-immigrant groups in the United States.

Among the organizations founded by Tanton are the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and US English, on whose advisory board Schwarzenegger has served as an active member since 1988. Despite calls from national Latino leaders that he resign – as even David Horowitz did following revelations that US English staff members were affiliated with the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens – that the self-proclaimed “poster child for immigrants” has yet to do so.

California’s Republicans have kept generation after generation of Democrats and progressives on the defensive with initiatives that exploit growing anxieties among the aging, angry white voting majority.

Since the deindustrialization of the 1970s, the ability to manipulate information and technology has increasingly defined rich and poor in the biotech labs of Irvine, the silicon farms of Santa Clara, the global agribusiness centers of the San Joaquin Valley and elsewhere. Racial identity and education thus came to occupy the center of Information Age policies, spawning a series of ballot initiatives. Proposition 187 denied public education to the children of the undocumented, Proposition 209 denied public education through affirmative action and Proposition 227 did away with bilingual education programs. The forces of white fear were even bold enough to use the local initiative process to attempt to split Los Angeles into two separate cities in 2002. And, had it won, last year's Proposition 54 would have created a society blind to the color of suffering by eviscerating race from government statistics (many believe it lost only because of shortage of funds). Unlike the blurred vision of the Democratic Party, the Republican vision of California – and America, as several of these initiatives have been exported to other states – is clear: separate cities of poor, uneducated, brown barbarians and shining, walled white cities like those in the Academy Award-winning, all-white fantasy *Lord of the Rings*.

The Schwarzenegger message played especially well with older white voters. An especially angry member of that aging vanguard is Lou Calabro, head of the European American Issues Forum (EAIF), which he co-founded following a Proposition 209 rally in 1996. After telling me that the magazines I write for, including *The Nation*, are “egg-sucking, left-wing liberal extremists with an agenda of their own,” the energetic, stalker, blue-eyed, 70-year-old former police lieutenant arranged to meet me at his favorite grill around the corner from the San Francisco police station where EAIF, which he says has around 300 members, holds its meetings. Chinese residents are becoming the majority population in the neighborhood where we chatted over steak and potatoes. Calabro tells me that EAIF's primary mission is to “minimize discrimination and defamation against whites.” To pursue this mission, EAIF works to raise awareness of hate crimes against whites (“Did you know that 90 percent of interracial hate crimes between blacks and whites are perpetrated by blacks – against whites?”) and to address discrimination against whites before city councils, health bureaucracies and, especially, schools.

Calabro and EAIF are hard to situate politically; they have not been labeled “hate groups” by organizations like the Southern Poverty Law Center. They *have* met with mayors, state legislators, city council members and other establishment figures in Northern California, and they draw on the reports and messages generated by think tank fellows like Hanson. Calabro is quick to distance his organization from white fringe groups, which, he says, promote hatred as much as black, Latino and Jewish groups do.

The EAIF was involved in the controversial case of 15-year-old Lisa McClelland, who petitioned authorities at Freedom High School to form a Caucasian Club in predominantly (64 percent) white Oakley in Contra Costa County, just an hour's drive from liberal San Francisco. School authorities expressed grave concerns about her petition, but never denied the request to form the club. Still, McClelland and Calabro, her “informal adviser,” have filed a complaint with the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights for denying Lisa liberty at Freedom High. Since then, several other California schools have started white student organizations, including the Caucasian Student Union at Piedmont High School and “European Ancestry” club at San Jose's Independence High.

Calabro shared with me an EAIF kit, which contained instructions on “Forming Campus Chapters” at high schools and colleges (“Example: In a speech class, speak about EAIF recognition and note any positive reaction”); a copy of California Assembly Resolution 91, designating October “European American Heritage Month” in California; and a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed by classics and history professor – and PNAC supporter – Donald Kagan. With a background picture of a breastplated Augustus Caesar pointing to the future of Pax Romana and, implicitly, its modern imitators, Kagan's article, “Why History Matters,” contrasts the virtues of freedom and classics against the vices of civilizational decline.

The recruiting environment for groups like the EAlF and others struggling to establish a new Pax California is getting a huge boost from the media blitz surrounding anti-immigrant, anti-Latino books by heavyweights like Huntington and Hanson. Hanson, who attended the 2002 Christmas parties of both George W. Bush and Dick Cheney and has briefed their staffs on military history, links ethnic groups who (he says) refuse to assimilate with threats to national security: "Today we are at war with those who want to kill us all, whatever the group we claim to belong to. The scab of carelessness and inattention has been torn away, showing that the wound of separatism and ethnic conflict needs immediate care, lest it fester into disunity and thus weaken us when the stakes are so high."

After an academic career almost entirely focused on war and empire (his books include *Carnage and Culture* and *The Soul of Battle*) Hanson is now called upon as the de facto expert on all matters Latino by C-SPAN, CNN and many other outlets. Directing his imperial gaze at California's ascendant Latino majority in *Mexifornia*, Hanson exploits post-9/11 hysteria: "After September 11, 2001, the question of secure borders and a unified citizenry no longer stands afar in the future or remains a parlor game of academics and intellectuals, but is a matter of everyone's concern right now, both in and out of California."

Chock-full of Spenglerian talk of "decline", "balkanized enclaves", "the fiction of cultural equality" and other "pathologies" brought by Mexicans and other Latinos to the "West," *Mexifornia* proposes an "assimilationist program," echoing calls by Progressive Era California Governor Hiram Johnson for a program promoting "Americanization" of immigrants via education, language training and other remedies.

Hanson and other conservatives neglect to mention that area surrounding Hanson's San Joaquin Valley home boasts a startling disparity between rich and poor, and that the stretch of farmland between Bakersfield and Stockton was the site of more reported hate crimes in 2002 than Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana combined, according to FBI statistics.

Instead of participating in serious dialogue about the roots of racial tension, the forces of white fear work relentlessly to portray now vulnerable postindustrial whites as victims of a shadowy Latino, and especially Mexican, empire. Not far from the shimmering beaches of Orange County, white residents attending an Anaheim City Council meeting recently protested the opening of a Mexico City-based Gigante supermarket chain outlet. They screamed "cultural imperialism." Echoing the war cries of Hanson and Huntington, another speaker at the council meeting warned that California was becoming "ground zero for America's second civil war."

Whether or not there's a war, there is radical change afoot in the land of the identity spinning Mad Hatter ride that now makes whites dizzy. Many in Orange County were shocked to see Republican immigration-war veteran and now Anaheim Mayor Curt Pringle standing next to an aproned "Mrs. Anaheim" and Justo Frias, head of Gigante's US operations, at the recent grand opening of the supermarket. The website of the anti-Latino hate group American Patrol declared, "New Anaheim Mayor Chummy With Reconquistas (Reconquerers)." They were incensed that Pringle, who fourteen years ago paid security guards to hold placards saying Non-Citizens Can't Vote in front of polling places in heavily Latino districts in Orange County, was now shopping with the enemy.

Pringle's conversion represents part of another, counterbalancing trend in California that is also taking root alongside the politics of white fear. Sometimes, as in the case of the Gigante store, there is a crass capitalist logic driving the acceptance of Latinos and their culture. At the same time, more-rational whites, and nonwhites, are waging a political struggle to control and attack frontally the crazed but highly organized elements of white fear in schools, neighborhoods and voting booths.

The politics of white minority status, however, have been the blind spot in liberal Democratic California, where mostly white political consultants have yet to figure out how to reconcile Latino ascendancy with white (and, increasingly, elderly black) fear to create the grand coalition that will eventually replace the black-white coalitions that elected liberal Governors Pat and Jerry Brown as well as Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles. If mainstream Democrats want to build the electoral coalitions that will deter the Republican onslaught, they will have to bring Latinos out of the clerk's office and into more substantive positions at multimillion-dollar liberal political consulting firms.

And yet even if they rise to this electoral challenge, the rest of us will still be swimming against a strong cultural tide. That blockbuster civilizational war epics like *Troy* and Oliver Stone's *Alexander the Great* are hitting the box office in a time of political, military and cultural war is not mere coincidence. Movies and political narratives about civilizational clashes sell (except in the case of the recent – and already forgotten – *Alamo*), and they will continue to find financing and audiences in the absence of an effective response to the promoters of white fear in California and beyond. Perhaps it is time to consider renting a copy of one of the more than thirteen *Alamo* movies and “Remember”: How fear of the nonwhite other gets deployed domestically in times of global war and conquest.

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