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**Academic Repression in the First Person: Lies, Damn Lies,
and David Horowitz**

Grover Furr

The specific context of this essay is my inclusion in David Horowitz's book *The Professors* as one of the "101 most dangerous academics in America." The section on me is hugely dishonest. Researched and written by one Rocco DiPippo, it was first published in Horowitz's blog in March 2005--a big favor for DiPippo, who fawned with gratitude to Horowitz while publishing a yet longer version in his own blog.

The article is full of deliberate lies--statements that Horowitz either knew were false or that he made in flagrant disregard for the truth, without any attempt to verify them. They appear in the book as well. I've explained the main ones in a short essay, "[Horowitz's Lies about Grover Furr](#)".

Dishonesty

As is the case with conservative writers generally, Horowitz has no regard for the truth. Not only does he publish false statements, but when they are pointed out he acts as though they do not matter.

And they don't matter, in fact, because Horowitz, like other conservatives, is basically writing PR for exploitation. He is funded by corporate foundations, and everything he writes promotes capitalists' interests--favors employers vs. employees--in a very class-conscious but ideologically rigid way. (For articles on Horowitz's funding sources see Alan Jones, "Connecting the Dots", (<http://insidehighered.com/views/2006/06/16/jones>) and Jennifer Jacobson, "What Makes David Run?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* May 6, 2005. Ellen Messer-Davidow, "Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education," *Social Text* 36 (1993), 40-80, summarizes similar attacks of the Reagan-Bush Sr. era).

Horowitz's contempt for the truth has historical roots. Ivy Lee and Jacob Bernays, founders of the modern PR industry, knew that a concern for the truth is not irrelevant--it is a negative, a disadvantage--for the advertiser, the propagandist, the PR flack (in later life Lee felt some guilt about this). Josef Goebbels, Hitler's propagandist, learned from them. All served up falsehoods to defend brutal exploitation and corporate profits.

Many neocons are former Trotskyites or, like Horowitz, former Communist Party members who move from a dogmatic pro-working class form of class consciousness to an even more monochromatic form of pro-employer, pro-imperialist dogmatism.

But thanks to his Marxist training Horowitz knows something most of our colleagues do not know. There is a class struggle. It is waged in the realm of ideas as well, including, importantly, in colleges. This struggle is biased hugely in favor of capitalism, with only occasional dissenting voices, usually very weak ones.

Horowitz wants to weaken those dissenting voices even further, and is well paid for his efforts. Horowitz makes his money--a million or so a year--by carrying water for the class of exploiters. The money comes from corporate foundations and spin-offs like speeches to business and pro-business groups, all linked to the Republican Party. Recently Horowitz has turned to defending Zionism and Israel, knowing there's big bucks there too.

In public relations concern with the truth is a positive handicap. The flack's job is to compose lies that serve his boss's interest and spread them abroad thanks to the "mighty Wurlitzer" of the mass media. The media are themselves Big Business and large-scale employers of labor, a.k.a. exploiters, and also depend on capitalists for advertising.

This connection to the mass media through the corporate foundations and Republican Party is crucial. If Horowitz had only his blog, nobody would ever notice him. Case in point: DiPippo's attack on me appeared in that blog in March 2005 urging readers to bombard me with email ("Send this to your E-brigade!"). I got a total of seven messages!

More Dishonesty

Horowitz's concern for student rights, indoctrination in the classroom, and diversity of viewpoint is another lie. How about indoctrination in exploiters' dogma in Economics and Business departments? Religious dogma in Religion departments? Zionism in Judaic Studies? Horowitz is happy with the indoctrination and lack of diversity of viewpoints when it promotes the two faces of capitalist exploitation: the interests of corporations at home and imperialism abroad.

Indoctrination is the norm in higher education, as it is in primary and secondary school.



Grover Furr

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Horowitz is all for indoctrination--until capitalist exploitation comes under scrutiny. Then he cries foul!

The reality is this. There is so little diversity in US schooling that anyone who thinks diversity is at all desirable should put Marxists, communists, and other opponents of capitalism at the head of their Affirmative Action lists.

But--need I say it?--Horowitz is not at all for "diversity" unless it means even more bias in favor of business interests--which he calls "patriotism"

Anticommunism

What stimulated the DiPippo-Horowitz attack on me personally was my research into the new Russian historiography of Stalin and his role in the USSR. Documents from the former Soviet archives, and studies of them by Russian historians, have proven that the Khrushchev--Trotsky--Gorbachev--Cold War view of the "evil Stalin" is, simply put, a complete fabrication.

This exciting new work is anathema to champions of capitalism of all stripes, social-democratic and liberal as well as conservative. It's especially upsetting for the neocons, many of whom are quondam Marxists who believed Khrushchev and/or Trotsky, and who have been spouting the compatible Cold War line ever since. I've published some articles on this work, with more to come. (I summarize my work, with bibliography, in "(Un)critical Reading and the Discourse of Anti-communism" in *Red Critique* 11 (2006), at <http://tinyurl.com/v5deh>.) I've also opposed anticommunist falsifications on H-HOAC (Historians of American Communism), an academic mailing list which both Horowitz and DiPippo haunt.

The pages on me in his book reveal what Horowitz is really about--suppressing opinions that are not compatible with pro-capitalist PR. He argues that I made erroneous statements, but he is wrong in every instance. For the most part, though, he does not complain that the materials I assign in class are wrong--only that he does not agree with them.

He charges that I am "indoctrinating" students--but by this he means that I assign materials he considers to be, not wrong, but from the Left--that is, incompatible with his view of what is in the interest of his corporate masters. Despite his charge that I "indoctrinate" students, neither he nor his researcher DiPippo have any idea of how I teach. Neither interviewed a single student of mine or visited any of my classes.

By itself Horowitz's blog would be insignificant. After all, I don't mind if rotten neocons attack me. Or rotten Liberals, for that matter, like Michael Bérubé, also one of Horowitz's "101 Most Dangerous", who has insulted me on his blog without bothering to give any reason ("The ravings of people like Grover Furr and the fringes of the Monty Python Left...", August 30 2005). If they point out my errors, I'm grateful! If, as here, they lie and slander, they tell us something useful about their own lack of principles.

But through his big-business masters Horowitz is not only wired into the web of conservative pro-corporate hacks. These people constitute a segment of the Republican Party, and thereby an entry into the mainstream mass media too. A couple of examples from my own case: The *Star-Ledger* of Newark, New Jersey's largest daily paper, carries a "conservative" Op-Ed columnist named Paul Mulshine. I suppose this is to keep New Jersey business interests happy so that they keep buying ads--but no doubt too because the paper is owned by the billionaire Newhouse family.

Mulshine, it turns out, reads Horowitz's blog, and devoted 1 1/2 of his columns in Spring 2005 to attacking me for--you guessed it, not keeping Marxism out of my classes! In a second column Mulshine compared me unfavorably to an admitted Nazi professor at a nearby university, dismissed despite the fact that his students denied he had ever raised Nazi politics in his classes.

Mulshine's conclusion: if the Nazi could keep his Nazism out of his classes, I should certainly keep Marxism out of mine. This from a guy who had no idea what my classes were like--who just read Horowitz, who had no idea either. Mulshine too never spoke to a single student! Nor did he obtain any record of a single student complaint--my employers, Montclair State University, informed me that there were none.

I learned months later that Mulshine had written several articles for Horowitz's blog. Journalists are supposed to acknowledge this kind of thing--you know, "in the interest of full disclosure I'd like to inform my readers that I have written for David Horowitz's blog myself"--so we know where they are coming from. But from "journalist" Mulshine, not a peep.

A year later, hard upon the publication of his book, Horowitz was given a very friendly interview by the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. Editor Bill Steigerwald pitched soft questions to Horowitz and the latter ranted away about all the horrid professors, including me.

I emailed, and then phoned Steigerwald. He told me the *Trib-Review* had been bought by Richard Mellon Scaife. The same Scaife who has been bankrolling conservatives for 30 years (See Messer-Davidow 1993) and who has been bankrolling Horowitz too! Hmmm!

Steigerwald agreed to publish a Letter to the Editor in which I replied to Horowitz's slanders against me. This elicited a letter from an indignant reactionary, to which I was allowed to reply, and so on.

Finally Steigerwald called a halt to the exchanges, refusing to let me respond to a last letter

that called for me to be imprisoned for my views! I wondered about this. In fairness, shouldn't it be the person who has been assaulted--in this case, me--who gets final say?

A few months later I discovered that, like Mulshine, editor Steigerwald too had published in Horowitz's blog. Once again, his sweetheart interview of Horowitz contained no mention of this important fact. Nor did he inform his readers that the owner of the *Trib-Review* also funds Horowitz.

Both these facts would be relevant to a reader's ability to assess the paper's objectivity. Objectivity is--supposedly--what newspapers have to sell. Without it they are just advertisements swathed in PR material, which anybody can get for free.

In this case, the linkage runs this way: Scaife funds both Horowitz and the *Trib-Review*. Editor Steigerwald writes for Horowitz's blog; interviews Horowitz, and works for Scaife's paper, which prints favorable opinion piece on Horowitz. No "full disclosure" from Scaife; the *Trib-Review*; the editor--nada.

It gets better. Steigerwald's softball interview of Horowitz was syndicated to at least four other newspapers around the US. Each one of them has a policy of publishing Letters to the Editor only from persons in their circulation area. So they can publish interviews slandering me--or you--while refusing even to consider publishing a reply!

More "objectivity" from US journalism! Thus is the public kept from being informed of what is really going on! These two examples of how neocons are linked into the mainstream media are revealing. Let me give one more that is possibly more troubling still.

A couple of days after the attack on me in Horowitz's blog (March 2005) I received a phone call from Kelly Heyboer, a *Star-Ledger* reporter. She had been assigned by her editor to do a story on me because I had appeared in Horowitz's blog!

Ms. Heyboer was very pleasant and professional, and I gave her the interview. When it was over I told her that one thing concerned me. "The *Star-Ledger* is one of the largest newspapers in the country," I said, "and it seems wrong to me that it should consult a shrill right-wing blog to find material to fill its news hole." By doing so, I pointed out, the *Star-Ledger* was giving Horowitz a great deal of power--power that he would otherwise not have.

Ms. Heyboer told me that she had thought of this too, and agreed to speak with her editor about it. She later phoned back to tell me that her editor had agreed, at least to this extent: the story on me would not run "unless something more happened." It did not hurt that she was needed to rush to cover a serious fire that had just broken out in (I think) Passaic.

So here's what this means. At least one editor at this major mainstream newspaper reads Horowitz's blog and uses it as a source for stories. Either that, or the publisher likes Horowitz, and the editor can take a hint. (The *Star-Ledger* is the flagship of the Newhouse chain of over 30 papers, including three of the most important papers in New Jersey).

In any case, had I not been a bit savvy about journalism and raised the "news hole" issue, Horowitz's meretricious slander against me would have been in 375,000 copies all over the state, and well over a half-million if syndicated to other papers in the Newhouse chain. Now there's power!

More than that--it shows how the lying conservatives are not just hooked into the fascist-neocon-Republican media. They have their *entrée* into "mainstream" media too.

Academic Freedom, Academic Intimidation

Horowitz aims to intimidate. It won't work with me or, perhaps, other tenured professors. But the vast majority of faculty--the untenured and part-timers who teach most of the students in American universities--are the most underpaid, and have few legal protections.

Attacks against professors who protest the brutality and murder that conservatives equate with "balance" and "patriotism" have already had a big effect. Last winter John Peter Daly, an adjunct at Warren County Community College in New Jersey, lost his job for a private email to the head of the local student YAF chapter--an email in which no one alleged there was a single false statement and in which he insulted no one. Then there's the Ward Churchill witch-hunt.

At last year's convention of the Modern Language Association of America in Washington, D.C., I proposed a resolution, sponsored by the Radical Caucus of the MLA, against Horowitz's proposed Academic and Student Bills of Rights (A/SBOR). It passed and is even now being voted on in a mail ballot to the 15,000 or so MLA members (text at <http://tinyurl.com/dd36w>).

There was lively debate over what action to take, but little disagreement about the A/SBOR themselves, since the threat is a clear one. Horowitz would like to redefine "academic freedom" in a very narrow way. Here's what Horowitz means by "indoctrination": "...a disturbing absence in university courses of assigned texts that did not validate or amplify with the professor's ideological point of view. The net effect was to deny students access to alternative--and particularly--conservative ideas that would challenge the course assumptions. The curriculum was thus transformed into a program of indoctrination." (<http://www.discoverthenetwork.org/Articles/generalintro.html>) So for Horowitz, if a professor does not choose to assign "conservative" texts, s/he is guilty of "indoctrination"

Horowitz's group "[Students for Academic Freedom](#)" puts it this way: If you are not taking a course whose subject is the war in Iraq, your professor should not be making statements

about the war in class. Or about George Bush, if the class is not on contemporary American presidents, presidential administrations or some similar subject. Says who? Says Horowitz! He cites the 1940 AAUP statement that "Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject"

And who determines what material has "no relation to the subject?" The faculty?
No--Horowitz!

But here's the larger question: It is easy to make a relation between the Iraq War, Bush's policies, and any subject matter under the sun.

Would even Horowitz claim that, say, a German professor of Greek or Latin of the 1930s would have been "violating academic freedom" when criticizing Nazi anti-Semitism in their classes? I'm sure he would not--but even if he did, he'd be wrong. For example, it would be easy to relate 20th century anti-Semitism to the Roman suppression of Jewish revolts in 66-73 and 132-135 A.D.

Furthermore, I'd argue that as faculty we have an obligation to do precisely what Horowitz criticizes. We should urge our colleagues to discuss the Iraq War, Bush, US foreign and domestic policy, in creative ways in all our classes.

Conservatism = Lies Horowitz can cite AAUP statements from now till US troops quit the Middle East. He's never going to find that phony definition of "indoctrination" there. Students come to university to learn what's true. If you give them, not what's true, but what is expedient--what makes the exploiters, the imperialists, the capitalists, what makes David Horowitz, happy--then you are abandoning your responsibility as an academic.

Right after MLA 2005 I wrote to *Inside Higher Ed.*: ABOR is certainly intended to intimidate college administrators into promoting "affirmative action" for "conservative"--read: false and reactionary--ideas that, because they are false, should not be taught (except for purposes of refutation), but that are promoted by powerful institutions that promote exploitation. ("ABOR Information, Red-Baiting Dishonesty," <http://tinyurl.com/y9wpjg>) We need to recognize this fact: Conservative ideas are false ideas. They do not deserve "equal time", or any time, except for purposes of examination, dissection, criticism, and refutation.

Not Just the Conservatives--Liberal Elitists Too

I'd like to close by emphasizing this final point. The attack on Academic Freedom comes not from the Right and conservatives alone. Their attack is in the ascendant now, and of course must be resisted. But it is similar in all essential respects to the arguments made by many liberal elitists.

The star of the conservatives will no doubt go some day into at least temporary eclipse. Most faculty and students will sigh with relief. I have to admit--I will too. But we should not sigh too much.

As the American elite get us deeper into their push for domination over the Middle East, they come ever closer to war with some combination of other powers. Predictions of a global war with China in the next couple of decades can be found in many quarters. In the meantime there'll be no shortage of "limited" wars like Iraq. Surely too there will be more terrorist attacks on US soil--attacks that will give future US leaders the kind of "carte blanche" to continue the work so ably begun by the Bushites of destroying our remaining freedoms, Academic Freedom among them.

Now that the Bushites have lost some of their power, let us take advantage of what may be an all-too-brief breathing spell, and buckle down for the real fight that has only just begun--a fight for the Academic Freedom to speak the truth.

We can thank David Horowitz for one thing. He has reminded us that Academic Freedom must be fought for, or we will lose it. And if we, the faculty, do not lead this fight, it won't happen.

No fight can be won through defense alone. We faculty, together with our students, whom it is our honor and privilege to serve, must begin to expand the traditional boundaries of academic freedom. The old AAUP language is far too narrow. We should insist that it is we the faculty who have the right to decide what "has relation to their subject"

We need to insist on our right to find creative ways to raise in all our classes the vital issues of contemporary public affairs--issues like the Iraq War, assaults on civil liberty, the bipartisan attack on the social welfare benefits and standards of living of working people, citizen or not.

Not to fight for these things is to abandon our responsibility to our students. And it is our dedication to serving the interests of our students as we see them that makes Academic Freedom a vital right in our profession.

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