

## Trendsetters of the Left

*They bear the weight of past scandals and win few readers, yet they powerfully influence popular media and academe*

By Barbara Joanna Lucas

**Summary:** The “little magazines” of the Left lose money and enjoy small readerships, but they help shape nearly everything an American sees on TV, at the movies, or in the popular press. They also influence what your children will be taught in college and grade school. And yet these journals have checkered pasts that include underpaying their own workers (even as they decry “greedy capitalists”), fabricating stories from whole cloth, apologizing for Stalin, and sometimes even spying for the Soviets.

The mainstream media is part and parcel of the Left in America. But big media takes some of its cues from a more intensely ideological subsector of the media universe. Left-wing “think” magazines produce cutting-edge analyses of current events and trends that eventually trickle down to large national media outlets and smaller regional media.

In this sense, their role is similar to that played by the fake media watchdog group Media Matters for America. The George Soros-funded left-wing slander shop not only attacks figures on the political right for daring to be conservative, but also goes after mainstream media reporters in an effort to pressure them into toeing the leftist line. Media Matters has attacked MSNBC’s Chris Matthews and the *New York Times*’ Bill Keller



**Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor and publisher of *The Nation*, appears on MSNBC’s “Ed Show.”** (undated screen grab)

for deviating from the Left’s playbook. (For more on Media Matters, see *Organization Trends*, December 2014.)

Explicitly left-wing magazines, such as *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Mother Jones*, *The Progressive*, and *The American Prospect*, are agenda-setting media just like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. And like Media Matters, they help to push journalists to the left, providing them with ideas for stories and

investing in investigative reports, something that mainstream outlets have little interest in nowadays.

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## *The Nation*

Late last year, *The Nation* magazine, the oldest progressive and most far left periodical in America with a significant circulation, warned its readers not to settle for Hillary Clinton, the presumed Democratic presidential frontrunner in 2016. “We need a Democratic presidential candidate with a smart, populist program untethered to Wall Street and committed to dismantling a rigged system that enriches the very few at the expense of everyone else,” said the November 25 editorial.

The editorial went on to say that Vermont’s socialist Sen. “[Bernie] Sanders is one prospect. Former Virginia Senator Jim Webb is another; he has launched an exploratory committee to determine whether there’s room for a ‘nobody owns me’ populist run. Outgoing Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley would also like to be considered, despite suffering a setback when his designated successor unexpectedly lost on November 4. And the group Ready for Warren just launched a three-month drive to

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get Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren to rethink her steady refusal to run.”

Perhaps hedging their bets that the machine candidate will prevail, the editors asserted, “this is not an anti-Hillary message; it’s a pro-democracy one.” Of course, even though Ms. Rodham was a disciple of Saul Alinsky in her youth, it’s no surprise *The Nation’s* editors would abhor anyone with the last name Clinton, a name linked to centrists in a party that has turned sharply left in recent decades.

The editorial that denied the magazine is anti-Hillary was one part of *The Nation’s* new mission titled, “Project 45,” which hopes to change the way presidents are elected. The magazine’s editor and publisher, Katrina vanden Heuvel, called it “an initiative that refuses to accept the assumption that presidential elections are a spectator sport or that the 2016 campaign has to be dictated by insiders.” She added, “We’ll highlight reforms big and small, and we’ll lift up bold new ideas that deserve to be debated and discussed in election campaigns which, even in this era of big money and big spin, can be teachable moments” (ABC News, March 14, 2014).

“That’s why *The Nation* is making this commitment to encourage those who will fight to prevent the hijacking of the 2016 campaign by high-powered strategists, well-heeled donors and big media outlets that are more interested in cash, and a vapid politics of personality, than in a genuine clash of ideas,” said the Feb. 5, 2014 editorial announcing the mission. “Our Project 45, featured in print and online over the next three years, will reject predictable approaches to the selection of the forty-fifth president—and predictable coverage of that selection.”

The magazine plans to focus Project 45 on limiting money in politics with a constitutional amendment to overturn the *Citizens United* ruling by the Supreme

Court, which expanded free speech by allowing unions and corporations to make independent expenditures in political races. It also seeks to block voter integrity laws and wants to allow third party candidates in the presidential debates.

Nearing its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015, *The Nation* seeks to maintain relevancy by pushing the Democratic field to the left, and thus avoid the fact that it fits squarely in the category of dinosaur media. Magazines in general are finding it tougher to thrive in the digital age. But a malcontent, humorless ideology is a particularly tough sell to readers. Nevertheless, a crowded field of competitors is challenging the granddaddy of them all.

Like *The Nation*, other magazines are closely aligned or partially bankrolled by liberal nonprofits, including *Mother Jones*, the *The American Prospect*, and *The Progressive*. One magazine that has nearly the same pedigree as *The Nation* is *The New Republic*, founded in 1914, in the midst of the rise of progressivism in the United States. *TNR* is not affiliated with a nonprofit and today seems on its last legs after mass staff defections in protest of the magazine’s new my-way-or-the-highway owner, Chris Hughes. That could leave *The Nation* standing alone in terms of prestige, certainly in far-left circles.

### **The Nation Institute**

While *The Nation* magazine began before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Nation Institute has only been around since 1966. The institute’s board includes vanden Heuvel and former editor Victor Navasky. It also includes former *Nation* owner Hamilton Fish V; another former owner, Arthur Carter; liberal actor Tim Robbins; and other progressives.

The institute sponsors conferences and internship programs, and runs Radio Nation, a weekly syndicated radio program hosted by Laura Flanders and affiliated with National Public Radio which regularly promotes

the content in the for-profit magazine and website.

In cooperation with the Puffin Foundation, the Nation Institute last month gave the \$100,000 Puffin/Nation Prize for Creative Citizenship to Marxist academic/activist Frances Fox Piven who has devoted her life to overthrowing capitalism and undermining the American system of government. Taya Kitman, executive director and CEO of the Nation Institute said, “Frances, with her incredible energy, is an inspiration who has led by example throughout her career and to this day. Her passion in speaking out and speaking up for the working class, her seemingly endless dedication to fighting for the poor, and her courage in the face of vicious criticism make her the perfect choice for the prize. With Republicans sweeping into control after the midterm elections, her work and voice remain as vital as ever.”

Previous winners of the award include former NAACP President Ben Jealous; playwright Tony Kushner; Planned Parenthood Federation president Cecile Richards; and former green jobs czar Van Jones.

In total, the Nation Institute doles out about \$130,000 per year in awards to left-wing activists. Among its journalism fellows are some of the harshest anti-American mudslingers working in the press today, such as Naomi Klein and Jeremy Scahill.

In 1978, the institute began funding an internship program. Some of the interns sponsored through the Nation Institute graduate into the mainstream media, such as ABC News, Associated Press, *Christian Science Monitor*, *New Yorker*, and *Vanity Fair*.

In a grand display of liberal hypocrisy from a magazine that never believes the minimum wage is high enough, the Nation Institute did not even pay its interns the minimum wage until 2013, and even then it was only

because the interns had practiced what their elders preached and publicly protested their low pay. A dozen interns wrote a letter to the editor of *The Nation* complaining that the \$150 per week stipend was not enough to survive on. Nation Institute director Taya Kitman announced in the same issue that the letter was published that the institute “has determined to increase their stipend beginning with the fall 2013 class” and “continue to provide financial aid in the form of travel and housing grants to interns” (ProPublica, Aug. 2, 2013).

Major funders of the institute include Jon S. Corzine Foundation (\$1,126,670 since 2004); Schumann Center for Media and Democracy Inc. (\$365,000 since 2001); Ford Foundation (\$309,250 since 2012); George Soros’s Open Society Institute (\$189,500 since 1999); Arca Foundation (\$125,000 since 2004); John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (\$118,000 since 2000); and Tides Foundation (\$46,733 since 2009). Overall, donors (aka, “Nation Builders”) provide 30 percent of the magazine’s revenues; 60 percent of the revenue comes from subscribers, and just 10 percent comes from advertisers (Discover the Networks).

The magazine also has an imprint, Nation Books, which is a joint publishing venture between the nonprofit institute and the for-profit, far-left Thunder Mouth Press. Several of the authors of the imprint’s books are staff writers or contributors to *The Nation* magazine. “The mission of Nation Books is to help fill the void in commercial publishing with arresting new titles on the social and cultural forces that shape our lives by the best writers at work today,” the website says. (Note the amusing implication that there aren’t enough liberal books on the market.) “The imprint publishes new works on politics, human rights, feminism, race, gay and lesbian issues, history, art and culture, popular science and the environment—books that will ruffle feathers and unsettle perceived wisdom.”

Former *Nation* owner Fish is the president and co-publisher of the imprint. Carl Bromley is the editor. Some of the titles include, *Taking Back America: And Taking Down the Radical Right* by Vanden Heuvel and Robert Borosage; *The Bush-Hater’s Handbook: A Guide to the Most Appalling Presidency of the Past 100 Years* edited by Jack Huberman; *Warrior-King: The Case for Impeaching George W. Bush* by John C. Bonifaz; *Imperial America: Reflections on the United States of Amnesia* by wild-eyed *éminence grise* Gore Vidal; and *Right Wing Justice: The Conservative Campaign to Take Over the Courts* by Herman Schwartz.

### Storied and Shameful History

Rush Limbaugh correctly referred to *The Nation* magazine as the “fringe Bible of the Democratic Party base.” But that was not always the case.

The magazine was started in 1865 by a Republican abolitionist, E.L. Godkin, who was editor until 1899. The magazine backed the Republican Reconstruction in the South in its pages. Under Godkin, it pushed a libertarian point of view (*American Journalists: Getting the Story* by Donald A. Ritchie, Oxford University Press). Then Godkin pushed the magazine to endorse Grover Cleveland and the “bourbon Democrats” who supported the gold standard (*Reason*, December 2007). In short, the journal was generally a pro-free market publication.

But during Godkin’s tenure, the magazine had setbacks, shrinking to an insert in the *New York Evening Post* newspaper, then owned by Henry Villard, in 1881. His son Oscar Garrison Villard took over the magazine, producing it again as a stand-alone publication and moving it to the far left. It hasn’t returned to sanity since (Discover the Networks).

Under its new leaders, *The Nation* enthusiastically backed the Russian Revolution in 1917 and was the first American

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magazine to print the Soviet Constitution. Vladimir Lenin wasn't the only tyrant to make its editors' hearts skip a beat. Over the decades, *The Nation* would apologize and make excuses for Josef Stalin, Pol Pot, and Ho Chi Minh. All this time, it issued various hysterical warnings that portrayed the United States as one step away from fascism, theocracy, or corporate oligarchy.

Stalin supporter Freda Kirchwey replaced Villard as editor in 1932, a time when the United States was believed to be at the doorstep of its progressive utopia as Franklin Delano Roosevelt was running for president. Kirchwey was an early secular progressive culture warrior who used the magazine to advocate for such fashionable causes as sexual freedom and birth control (*Freda Kirchwey: A Woman of 'The Nation'*, Harvard University Press). *The Nation* managed to end up on the side of the United States in World War II—at least once Stalin had broken with his treaty partner Adolph Hitler and needed America's help. *The Nation* and Kirchwey did tick off progressives in 1948 by refusing to break rank with Democrats and support Progressive Party presidential candidate Henry Wallace.

Carey McWilliams, a lawyer, left-wing journalist, and labor organizer, took the helm of the magazine in 1955, as the magazine persistently sympathized with the Soviets on Cold War policies. Among the writers to start at the magazine during McWilliams' time were radical activist/presidential candidate Ralph Nader, Marxist historian Howard Zinn, and gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson.

In 1977, rich liberal investors bought the magazine. The group was assembled by Hamilton Fish V, heir to a prominent New York political family that goes back all the way to Dutch New York mayor Peter Stuyvesant. Fish has also supported documentaries and launched an organic farm. After he was graduated from Harvard, he raised money for the Senate campaign of

the notorious anti-American radical Ramsey Clark. In the Fish era, *The Nation* would reliably blast the Reagan administration. Victor Navasky became editor the year after Fish and his allies purchased the journal. To his credit, Navasky eventually admitted some of *The Nation's* sins, even as he remained a committed leftist: "Internationally the *Nation* was indeed slower than the [*Reader's Digest*] to comprehend the internal corruption and repression of Stalin's Russia," Navasky wrote.

Ironically, in 1989 the magazine founded by an abolitionist published a slapstick, twinkle-in-your-eye piece about child sex slaves from Haiti by Herbert Gold, who wrote, "For a writer going through personal distractions, an escape into the indulgence of melodrama can provide what the maker of an analgesic calls temporary fast relief. Slave Trade was intended to offer a lively passing of time" (Dec. 18, 1989).

In 1995, Arthur Carter, a Wall Street investment banker, bought the money-losing publication, but upon realizing it was not going to produce a profit, he considered closing it down and selling the mailing list for about \$2 million. That's when the current team of Victor Navasky and Katrina vanden Heuvel and other investors formed a group to take over the magazine.

In 2004, the Anti-Defamation League asked why *The Nation* would allow advertising from a group of Holocaust deniers called the Institute for Historical Review. The ad was titled, "Unmasking Israel's Most Dangerous Myths" and called the Holocaust a "historical myth cited to justify Zionist aggression and repression."

"Doesn't *The Nation* have advertising acceptability standards that identify and reject offensive content?" asked ADL national director Abraham H. Foxman in an April 21, 2004 letter to the editor. "If it does, it somehow missed the obvious here.

Unfortunately, giving space to a group that sponsors Holocaust denial only lends them credibility and perpetuates a lie."

Navasky was long viewed as the magazine's savior for pulling together the investment group that also included novelist E.L. Doctorow, actor Paul Newman, computer software mogul Peter Norton, and former Corporation for Public Broadcasting Chairman Alan Sagner. Navasky built a reputation as an anti-anti-communist and is among the last men standing who insist on the innocence of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs. He has also dismissed the importance of the Venona Project, the post-Cold War operation that yielded communications between Soviet intelligence officials and spies inside the United States. Navasky is an academic, currently serving as head of the magazine department for the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and having had a stint as a fellow at the Institute of Politics at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Before going to *The Nation*, he wrote for the *New York Times Magazine*.

He has slammed the "Murdochization" of the news media, a reference to Rupert Murdoch, and blasted the conservative *National Review* magazine for having "jingoistic, super-nationalistic values" (Discover the Networks). Under his tenure, *The Nation* expanded to have a presence on about 160 college campuses, distributing copies of the magazines and pushing subscriptions, while also getting "Radio Nation" on about 40 college radio stations.

Katrina vanden Heuvel, who took over from Navasky as editor, is the granddaughter of Hollywood studio chief Jules Stein. Her father was William J. vanden Heuvel, who was executive assistant to William Donovan, the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, in the 1950s. He became a Democratic player in the 1960s, working for New York Gov. Averill Harriman, then for U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy. In 1976 he was New York

chairman for Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign and became the Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations under Carter. Needless to say, she has an impressive pedigree. That's one reason it was comical when on "Hardball" with Chris Matthews in 2002, she said she lived in Harlem, and thus understood the plight of the nation's poor. Interestingly, Matthews didn't get a thrill from this. He pointed out that she lived in the highly affluent Morningside Heights area of New York (Front Page, June 3, 2002).

She once said as a student at Princeton, she "felt like a Russian." So it was a good fit when the magazine sent her to what was left of the Soviet Union in 1989 after five years at the magazine. She founded "You and We," a feminist magazine linking U.S. and Russian women. By 1995, she was working alongside Navasky, aggressively seeking to promote the magazine.

Vanden Heuvel's love for Russia is so deep that she credits the end of the Cold War entirely to Soviet dictator Mikhail Gorbachev, writing in the Oct. 8, 2009 issue: "Historic events quickly generate historical myths. In the United States it is said that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of a divided Europe was caused by a democratic revolution in Eastern Europe or by American power, or both. ...With the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall approaching, we believed that the leader most responsible for that historic event should be heard, on his own terms, in the United States."

Though never profitable, *The Nation* is heavily subsidized enough to avoid the fate of another iconic publication of the progressive movement.

### **The Fall of *The New Republic***

*Washington Post* columnist Dana Milbank, known for his snarkiness, wrote mournfully in his Dec. 8, 2014 column about his former employer: "The *New Republic* is dead; Chris Hughes killed it." In 2012

Hughes, the wealthy tech liberal, bought the magazine founded by Walter Lippmann, Herbert Crowley, and Willard Straight. "But Hughes is no Lippmann; he's a callow man who accidentally became rich—to the tune of some \$700 million—because he had the luck of being Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg's roommate at Harvard," Milbank wrote.

Just last year it celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Hughes decided it was going to be a technology company and fired Franklin Foer as editor, replacing him with an editor who had been fired from the low-rent gossip website Gawker. This move prompted staffers to flee and most contributing editors to demand that their names be removed from the masthead. The bloodbath caused at least 58 of 87 names on the masthead to disappear.

The magazine's apparent death comes after years of being to the right of most other lefty publications. The magazine supported the Global War on Terror and tried to invoke the party of FDR and JFK over the party of MoveOn.org and Daily Kos. It supported Joe Lieberman's hopeless bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004.

It had some dark years, including a period of editorship under Henry Wallace, FDR's former vice president and an apologist for Stalin (years later, Wallace recanted). After Wallace left as editor to run for president on the Progressive ticket, the editor in the late 1940s into the 1950s was Michael Whitney Straight, later revealed to be a Soviet spy in Anthony Blunt's ring at Cambridge University (the two were briefly lovers).

After Harvard professor Martin Peretz bought the magazine in the 1970s, *The New Republic* regained influence when well-known writers such as Michael Kinsley and Hendrik Hertzberg edited the magazine. It was also under Peretz the magazine suffered the Stephen Glass fabrication scandal.

Glass's made-up stories for the magazine, which many outsiders had assumed were supposed to be spoofs, were so outrageous that Hollywood made a movie out of the magazine's embarrassment, *Shattered Glass* (2003). Then Hughes took over. The magazine still exists, but its viability is questionable. Hughes suspended print publication until February. *The New Republic* is not affiliated with a nonprofit or a foundation.

### ***Mother Jones***

There is some irony in the fact that *Mother Jones*, founded in February 1976, was rooted in liberals' enthusiasm for the kind of investigative reporting that brought down the presidency of Richard Nixon. In 2013, the group Progress Kentucky secretly recorded Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and his staff talking about potential strategy to use against movie star Ashley Judd, who had hinted at challenging McConnell for the Senate in 2014. *Mother Jones* worked with Progress

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Kentucky, reported the story, and released secret recordings of McConnell and his staff. McConnell's re-election campaign understandably accused the magazine of using "Nixonian tactics."

*Mother Jones* made a much more significant splash in 2012, when it posted Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's torturous gaffe about the "47 percent" that allowed President Barack Obama's campaign to paint him as an out-of-touch plutocrat.

The magazine also was the first to report the heavily mischaracterized comment by 2008 Republican presidential candidate John McCain that the U.S. could spend "100 years in Iraq." McCain was referring to the similar presence of U.S. troops still stationed in South Korea and other allied countries long after the cessation of hostilities in the Korean and World War II. Yet *Mother Jones* reported it as if McCain desired a century of continuous Middle East combat.

Apparently all is fair if it helps Barack Obama get elected and re-elected.

The magazine is named after union organizer Mary Harris "Mother" Jones (died 1930), and claims to continue her crusade for so-called social justice. Jones was a fiery, pistol-packing labor leader who was immortalized in the U.S. Department of Labor's "Labor Hall of Fame."

In 1986, the magazine hired the most famous person it could find to be its editor, Michael Moore, known today mostly as a left-wing filmmaker. Moore lasted just five months in the job before being fired because he refused to publish a piece that was critical of the Sandinista dictatorship in Nicaragua. Moore sued for wrongful dismissal and demanded \$2 million. He managed to extract a \$58,000 settlement.

Apart from the Moore incident, *Mother Jones* has a reputation for not treating its employees

well. It advised its unpaid interns to apply for taxpayer-funded food stamps so they could survive their internships in expensive San Francisco, which has the highest rents in the nation thanks to the city's left-wing policies. Wrote one reporter:

"One former *MJ* intern who spoke to me on the condition of anonymity told me they 'slept on an air mattress for six months while I worked there because I couldn't afford a real one.' Another former intern said, 'During our first meeting with HR at *Mother Jones*, we were advised to sign up for food stamps'" (Vice.com, Dec. 2, 2013).

Last year *Mother Jones* published several love letters to the food stamp program. One, "The Hidden Benefits of Food Stamps," claims that food stamps improve the health of Americans and the U.S. economy. The article mentioned the dubious Keynesian "multiplier" effect, which claims that every \$5 in food stamps creates \$9 in additional economic activity. If this upside-down logic were true, America could spend itself into prosperity if the government ups spending on welfare programs by trillions of dollars.

As of last year, editors Monika Bauerlein and Clara Jeffery each pulled in more than \$167,000 annually. Many workers at the magazine belong to a union.

The magazine itself is owned by the nonprofit Foundation for National Progress. The foundation receives funding from the usual leftist philanthropies. Among them are Lannan Foundation (\$1,820,000 since 2004); Surdna Foundation (\$825,000 since 2005); Schumann Center for Media and Democracy (\$435,000 since 2003); Arca Foundation (\$372,500 since 2004); and two George Soros philanthropies, Foundation to Promote Open Society (\$360,000 since 2010) and Open Society Institute (\$225,000 since 2008).

The magazine also publishes the *Mother Jones* 400, which lists the top individual donors to federal political campaigns.

## *The Progressive*

The magazine with the most straightforward name is definitely *The Progressive*, which was founded in 1909 by Sen. Robert La Follette of Wisconsin who began his political life as a Republican but changed his party affiliation to Progressive. The journal was originally called *La Follette's Weekly*. A senator running a publication today might well run afoul of some onerous campaign finance laws that later progressives have championed.

La Follette was part of the Republican Party's progressive wing, notably to the left of Theodore Roosevelt. The magazine itself is today a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

During the progressive era, the magazine called for a predictable platform of higher taxes and regulations on businesses. It also called for direct party primaries to take the nominating process out of smoke-filled rooms controlled by party bosses. The magazine was very popular in 1911 and 1912. That was the lead up and the year when Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson faced each other in a presidential election, with incumbent William Howard Taft seen almost as an afterthought in the contest. La Follette refused to back TR and used the magazine to attack the former president, prompting many progressives to turn against the senator and his publication (Discover the Networks).

La Follette himself also took a dip in support when he opposed America's entry into World War I. He ran for president under the Progressive Party banner in 1924, carrying Wisconsin. He died in 1925, and in 1929 the magazine was renamed *The Progressive*. It published writers such as Upton Sinclair, Lincoln Steffens, and Carl Sandburg.

In 1940, two recent University of Wisconsin graduates, Mary and Morris Rubin, bought the magazine. Under their leadership, the journal opposed America's dropping the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and

demanding the country dismantle its nuclear arsenal. The magazine did endorse Henry Wallace for president in 1948, unlike *The Nation*. It also claims credit to this day for leading media opposition to Sen. Joe McCarthy during the 1950s.

Though it had a niche audience, the magazine made big news when editor Erwin Knoll decided to publish, “The H-Bomb Secret: How We Got It and Why We’re Telling It.” The article gave details for building a destructive bomb. A Wisconsin federal judge gave the government an injunction to halt the publication on grounds it presented an imminent danger to the public.

In the 1990s, the magazine published left-wing writers such as Noam Chomsky, Molly Ivins, and Howard Zinn. In 1993, editor Matthew Rothschild established the Progressive Media Project, a separate 501(c)(3) to provide op-ed clinics for liberal activists and think tanks.

Among the major donors to *The Progressive* and the Progressive Media Project are the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (\$60,000 since 2000) and the Tides Foundation (\$30,328 since 2004).

### ***The American Prospect***

*The American Prospect* magazine functions as a nonprofit organization. In addition to publishing a magazine, it routinely organizes progressive conferences. The website asserts, “Our articles set agendas, propose policies, and further debates.... We publish investigative pieces that expose and debunk the right. We challenge the premise that progressives need to shift to the center to become politically competitive.”

Still, the magazine rarely seems to set the agenda on much of anything, though it does generally have seven special projects per year.

In a controversy noted mostly for its  
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irony, *The American Prospect* published a special issue promoting campaign finance reform in September 2000, with the cover of “Checkbook Democracy.” The entire project, however, was funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which paid \$132,200 for the investigation. This checkbook journalism came to light in 2005, leading Slate’s Mickey Kaus to ask, “If the *New York Times* took more than \$100,000 from General Motors to produce a special issue on Regulation in the Auto Industry, wouldn’t there be a stink?” (*American Thinker*, Sept. 17, 2005).

Institutional donors to *The American Prospect* Inc. include Schumann Center for Media and Democracy (\$2,165,000 since 2001); New York Community Trust (\$2,000,250 since 2003); Ford Foundation (\$1,775,000 since 2002); Popplestone Foundation (\$1,725,000 since 2003); Open Society Institute (\$1,115,000 since 1999); John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (\$674,000 since 1999); Annie E. Casey Foundation (\$539,000 since 2007); Rockefeller Foundation (\$330,000 since 2000); Foundation to Promote Open Society (\$300,000 since 2009); Carnegie Corp. of New York (\$207,000 since 2007); Surdna Foundation (\$200,000 since 2004); and W.K. Kellogg Foundation (\$197,500 since 2012).

Sadly, because America’s pop culture and universities tilt so heavily to the left, *The American Prospect* and its compadres can expect to continue to exercise their oversized influence on the nation’s life. After all, what’s a little spying for the Soviets or fabricating articles between friends?

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**OT**

# BrieflyNoted

More proof emerged last month that President **Obama** is using the **IRS** as a weapon against his perceived enemies when the administration abruptly canceled the planned release of 2,500 damning documents reportedly showing the IRS illegally shared taxpayer files with the White House. The inspector general's office for the U.S. Department of the Treasury is making the novel claim that privacy laws prevent releasing documents. **Dan Epstein**, executive director of watchdog group **Cause of Action**, was skeptical. Treasury is using "sophisticated" lawyering to worm out of producing the documents, he said.

**National Action Network** president **Al Sharpton** has visited the White House an astounding 61 times since Obama became president. This fact tends to support Sharpton's boasts about the influence he wields over the Obama administration, including his claim that he was instrumental in selecting U.S. Attorney **Loretta Lynch** as nominee for the U.S. attorney general post.

A recent march in New York City organized by Sharpton's group, whose motto is "No justice, no peace," got ugly. Marchers demanded that new federal laws be enacted to limit the use of physical force by local and state police agencies. Protesters had their own ideas. According to reports, many chanted "What do we want? Dead cops!"

**MoveOn** has launched a campaign to draft Sen. **Elizabeth Warren** (D-Mass.) to run for president in 2016. The group said 81.3 percent of its members voted in favor of encouraging the left-wing populist to seek the Oval Office. Warren is "America's top champion of working families and the middle class" who is "leading the fight for students and graduates who are struggling under the weight of crippling student loan debt and is transforming the Social Security debate from whether to cut the program to how to grow it."

Warren has thrown her lot in with radical left-wing community organizers. In a message to attendees of last month's RootsCamp put on by **New Organizing Institute** in Washington, D.C., Warren said, "in every fight for equality, accountability, and a level playing field, it's the smart, tough, and determined organizers who attend RootsCamp that are the ones working together on the frontlines. Simply put, we couldn't do it without you."

After Dr. **Vivek Murthy** was barely confirmed in a 51-43 vote by the U.S. Senate as surgeon general, **George Soros's Media Matters for America** wondered what all the fuss was about. MMfA claims Murthy overcame "a longstanding right-wing media and **National Rifle Association** smear campaign." Conservative media "worked to cast Murthy as a radical for his uncontroversial stance that gun violence is a public health issue and criticized his supposed lack of qualifications." Actually, the notion that gun-related violence is a public health issue is thoroughly controversial. Public health is supposed to be about transmissible diseases and the like, not about self-defense and lifestyle choices.