

## George Soros' Social Agenda for America

*Drug Legalization, Euthanasia, Immigrant Entitlements and Feminism*

Neil Hrab

*Summary: The February issue of Foundation Watch examined the philanthropy of the billionaire financier George Soros. It found that Soros-funded groups supported increased government spending and tax increases, and opposed the death penalty and President Bush's judicial nominees. In this article author Neil Hrab looks at Soros grants in four other policy areas: drug legalization, euthanasia, immigrant entitlements, and feminist organizing.*

In 1956 George Soros (born 1930) moved from Great Britain, where he was educated, to the United States, where he made his fortune in the business of managing money, his own and other people's. The Hungarian-born Soros became a billionaire. Then about two decades ago he began to give away some of that fortune while continuing to work at making even more money.

Soros is the author of a number of books, which attempt to explain his peculiar and rather contradictory vision of how global society should evolve. But there is little confusion in his philanthropic giving, which is coordinated by the Open Society Institute (OSI), his grant-making foundation based in New York City. It's hard to understand Soros' ideas by reading his books. It's much easier to understand them by examining his grantmaking.

What follows is a review of recent Soros grants in four policy areas: drug legalization, euthanasia, immigrant entitlements, and feminist pro-abortion organizing.



George Soros: Promoter of radical social change.

### DRUG LEGALIZATION

George Soros has waged a long personal war against America's "war on drugs." Until 2000, he relied primarily on two nonprofit groups to carry on the battle. One was the Lindesmith Center, a pro-marijuana legalization think-tank set up in 1994 with a pledge of \$4 million (over 5 years) from Soros. The Center frequently held pro-legalization conferences, issued publications and in general provided a platform for legalization's proponents. The Center is named after Alfred Lindesmith, a deceased Indiana University sociologist who favored more relaxed drug laws. The other nonprofit was the Drug Policy Foundation, a membership organization established in 1987, which also provided funding for groups opposing the drug war. However, three years ago, the two merged to

become the Drug Policy Alliance (DPA), which continues their work. New York City-based DPA maintains seven offices across the country, including branches in Washington, D.C. and in the states of New Jersey, California and New Mexico.

**April 2003**

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DPA executive director Ethan Nadelmann argues, "People shouldn't be punished for what they put in their bodies, absent harm to others." To achieve that end, DPA works to loosen narcotics laws. In early 2002, for example, the New Mexico Drug Policy Project, a DPA branch, continually aired pro-legalization ads on state TV stations for five weeks at a cost of \$90,000. Broadcast as often as ten times a day, the ads alleged that the "war on drugs" cost New Mexicans more than \$40 million each year.

Other policies advocated by DPA include:

- Making marijuana legally available for medical purposes;
- Repealing mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenses.
- Ending imprisonment for simple drug possession, except where the distribution of drugs to children is involved;
- Redirecting most government drug control money from criminal justice to public health and education.

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**Editor:** John Carlisle

**Publisher:** Terrence Scanlon

## **Foundation Watch**

is published by Capital Research Center, a non-partisan education and research organization, classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity.

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**Foundation Watch** welcomes letters to the editor.

**Reprints** are available for \$2.50 prepaid to Capital Research Center.

It's no exaggeration to say that without Soros there would be no serious lobby against the drug war. He makes possible OSI's grantmaking and DPF's policy leadership.

It's not easy to determine how much Soros currently gives to DPA through the Open Society Institute because of the time lag in IRS disclosure of nonprofit tax forms. However, in 2000 the OSI gave about \$3.5 million to DPA - about the same total amount given to its predecessors in 1998. In 2000, DPF made more than 100 grants (\$1.7 million) to groups demanding that Washington relax its anti-narcotics laws. For example, about \$120,000 went to organizations agitating for reduced penalties against marijuana users such as the Washington, D.C.-based National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, the Drug Policy Forum of Hawaii and DrugSense of Irvine, California. And researchers at Yale University received \$25,000 to persuade Connecticut health authorities that needle exchange programs were good public policy.

In 2000, the DPF also donated \$60,000 in total to three left-wing groups opposed to U.S. government efforts to work with South American governments on common anti-narcotic policies: the Washington Office on Latin America, the Andean Information Network and Witness for Peace.

Many pro-legalization groups enthusiastically endorse using drugs and are ignored by policymakers and the press or treated as fringe organizations. But that's hardly true for DPA, whose researchers have placed articles in prestige journals such as *Foreign Affairs* and *Science*. The conservative *National Review* published an article by Ethann Nadelmann in 1995 about Switzerland's liberal attitude towards heroin addicts. And important scientific periodicals like the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and *British Medical Journal* review books published by DPA.

And DPA gets good media coverage, in part because executive director Nadelmann always has great soundbites for reporters. At a 1999 conference

Nadelmann told his audience: "When Nancy Reagan said, 'Just say no,' she wasn't altogether wrong. But it's the George Washington-chopping-down-the cherry tree version of drug education. It's cute, it's simple, but it doesn't work for teenagers."

While OSI opposes drug policies that "rely too heavily on police and prisons," it favors what it terms "harm reduction" services to drug users. These are programs that claim to show concern for drug users' health and human rights. OSI's International Harm Reduction Development (IHRD) program provides extensive funding to foreign government agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), especially in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Working closely with DPA, it gives grants for advocacy training, legal assistance and coalition-building.

The IHRD website says it is not currently accepting unsolicited grants for "service delivery projects" such as needle exchanges or methadone. However, IHRD's list of current grants programs abroad includes a sub-category for "sex workers," the term favored by nonprofits that differentiate forced from consensual prostitution (See "Vital Voices Global Partnership," *Foundation Watch*, March 2003).

DPA is only one U.S. drug legalization group receiving Soros' support. Last year, according to a November 2002 article in *USA Today*, Soros personally gave \$400,000 to Nevadans for Responsible Law Enforcement, a pro-marijuana-legalization group, to advocate for the liberalization of Arizona's drug laws. It gave \$65,000 in 2000 to the Marijuana Policy Project Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based group, and \$50,000 to the Drug Policy Forum of Texas. In 1998, it provided \$125,000 to the Common Sense for Drug Policy Foundation, a backer of the so-called "right" to "medical marijuana." In 1996, Soros was reported to have donated about \$500,000 to marijuana legalization initiatives in Arizona and California, which both failed. That year OSI also approved \$2.25 million for Drug Strategies, a D.C.-based group questioning the city's drug control regime.

The ACLU has been a particular beneficiary of OSI grants. In 2000, it received \$150,000 for its drug policy litigation project and \$23,000 to support a speaker's series in Massachusetts to promote "alternatives to incarceration for drug offenders." The ACLU of Washington (state) Foundation got \$75,000. In 1997-1998, OSI gave the national ACLU Foundation \$1.2 million, partially to fund anti-drug war litigation.

### EUTHANASIA

Many of Soros' policy interests appear quixotic. Euthanasia, like drug use, has little public support, and Americans look at public policy proposals to make it lawful with reactions ranging from skepticism to revulsion. Soros, however, approaches the popular reaction as an opportunity for public education. His grantmaking in this area is a form of national tutoring that he no doubt expects will eventually have a long-term impact—reaching even to rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In a November 1994 lecture at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City Soros revealed one motive for his interest: "Voters in Oregon just approved a law that makes it the first state to lift the prohibition against physician-assisted suicide. As the son of a mother who was a member of the Hemlock Society ... I cannot but approve." Founded in 1980, the Hemlock Society is a nonprofit group that advocates the right of the terminally-ill to commit suicide and calls for passage of laws permitting physician-assisted suicide.

That year Soros began giving money to start the Project on Death in America (PDIA), whose purpose is "to understand and transform the culture and experience of dying and bereavement through funding initiatives in research, scholarship, the humanities, and the arts, and to foster innovations in the provision of care, public education, professional education, and public policy." OSI remains a strong supporter of PDIA; in 2000 the foundation contributed a three-year \$15 million grant to sustain its mission.

Soros' goal is to transform American

attitudes toward death by changing public attitudes about physician-assisted suicide. His financial backing has helped drug legalization proponents gain a new respectability, and he aims to do the same for supporters of euthanasia. PDIA's large annual budget—\$5 million—has helped it achieve prominence. PDIA director Kathleen M. Foley has testified before Congress on physician-assisted suicide, and PDIA-linked physician Susan Block, MD, a psychiatrist with the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, last year argued in the pages of the *New England Journal of Medicine* that "physician-assisted death may be an acceptable option of last resort."

PDIA funds individual scholars in the U.S., Britain and Canada. Last year, for example, a PDIA-funded University of New Mexico scholar, Dr. Judith Kitzes, organized a conference in Albuquerque on palliative care. A past recipient of PDIA funds, Dr. Robert Twyncross of Oxford University, attended Kitzes' conference where he lectured participants about America's medical system. Twyncross lamented that U.S. medicine was "hell-bent on defying death"—as if that were wrong—and referred favorably to Britain's socialist health system.

In 2000, OSI also made grants to the Death with Dignity National Center (\$100,000) and the Oregon Death with Dignity Legal Defense and Education Center (\$75,000). National Death with Dignity describes itself as "the premier educational organization dedicated to discussing physician aid in dying openly, seriously, and with intellectual rigor." The Oregon group works to make the state the first to allow "terminally ill individuals meeting stringent safeguards to hasten their own deaths." Founded in 1993, it would make it legal for ailing people to obtain lethal drug prescriptions. Another Oregon-based group, the Compassion in Dying Federation of America (CDFA), has received OSI funding—\$150,000 in 1998 and \$125,000 in 1999. CDFA supports "aid-in-dying for terminally ill, mentally competent adults" and claims "assurance of a humane death enhances the celebration of life."

In 2001, PDIA made grants totaling \$5,105,000 to groups concerned with what's called "end of life" assistance for ailing people, such as palliative care for the terminally ill elderly. Other programs such as the PDIA "Social Work Leadership Development Awards" aim to increase the prestige of social workers committed to "end of life care" and help make them "mentors" and "role models" for a new generation of social workers.

### IMMIGRANT ENTITLEMENTS

The Emma Lazarus Fund of the Open Society Institute was established with a \$50 million endowment in 1996. Named after the author of the poem whose verses adorn the Statue of Liberty, it committed \$43 million the following year to organizations committed to fighting "the unfair treatment of and discrimination against immigrants who are lawfully present in the United States." The Fund was a direct response to the 1996 welfare reform law, approved by President Clinton, which limited immigrants' access to welfare entitlements. Its mission was to counter the "intensifying anti-immigrant rhetoric" that welfare reform purportedly encouraged and to help integrate newcomers into the American mainstream.

During its three years of existence, the Lazarus fund contributed generously to so-called "public interest" legal associations like the Alliance For Justice (\$80,000 over two years), a liberal coalition of largely Washington, D.C. groups that, along with People for the American Way, has spearheaded campaigns to appoint liberal activist judges to the federal courts and stop the confirmation of conservative ones. The Fund also gave \$600,000 to support the ACLU's Immigrant's Rights Project, which worked to challenge the constitutionality of national, state and local efforts to curb immigrants' entitlement to welfare benefits.

In 1998, the Fund announced it would give \$75,000 to the leftist National Lawyers Guild, whose core membership is a network of some 4,000 radical legal practitioners. It also promised \$140,000 to the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CRLAF), which was promoting the

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new cause of “environmental justice.” Environmental justice is the name for a strategy of political organizing that claims communities are targeted for toxic waste dumps and polluting industries because they are minority and poor.

The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area is another California legal group receiving Fund support (\$150,000). Founded in 1968 to advance “the rights of color, poor people, and immigrants and refugees,” it has helped defend race-based programs and most recently organized opposition to Ward Connerly’s 2002 campaign to stop the state of California from collecting data on its citizens’ racial and ethnic identity. A related group, the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of Texas, was awarded \$175,000 for 1997-1998, and the National Consumer Law Center, another liberal legal advocate received \$50,000 in 1997.

In 1997, OSI approved an eye-popping \$1,000,000 grant to the National Council of La Raza to study the negative effect of welfare reform on Latino immigrants. La Raza encourages the creation of a Chicano political consciousness even though Hispanic-Americans hail from many different countries and cultures; its programs and studies encourage federal and state governments to deal with Hispanics as a distinct cultural bloc. OSI also gave La Raza \$300,000 in 2000. Another advocacy group, the Mexican American Legal Defence and Education Fund (MALDEF), received \$75,000 from OSI in 1999. Recently, MALDEF opposed President Bush’s nomination of Miguel Estrada to serve on a federal appeals court, while La Raza took no position. Other Hispanic groups, such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), endorsed Estrada. They tend to be member-supported rather than dependent on foundation grants.

In 1999, the Fund gave \$200,000 to the San Francisco-based Tides Foundation to set up an Immigration Funders’ Collaborative. Perhaps this was a fitting end for the Emma Lazarus Fund. The idea behind a “funders’ collaborative” is to promote networking by foundation grantmakers,

encouraging them to undertake common projects. This lifts the burden from individual grantmakers, who fear big solo grant commitments to nonprofit projects, and from nonprofits, who fear undertaking multiple foundation-sponsored projects in order to maintain a constant level of funding. Soros continues to support Tides, a controversial foundation that often acts as both grantmaker and grantee (See “Tides Foundation’s Activist Network Exerts ‘Undue Influence’,” *Foundation Watch*, April 2000). In 2000, OSI made grants of close to \$2 million to support Tides’ work on immigration and drug policy as well as to curb gun ownership.

## PRO-ABORTION AGENDA

George Soros is an important funder of feminist groups supporting the right to abortion. A review of OSI’s website shows that from 1998 through 2003, it made over 150 grants to pro-abortion programs, pouring \$31 million into scores of nonprofit organizations. (For a survey of feminist organizations, see Kimberly Schuld, *CRC Guide to Feminist Organizations*, 2002.)

Joan Dunlop, an OSI board member, heads a group called A Women’s Lens on Global Issues, which mobilizes American women activists to work on international development issues. Previously she was president of the International Women’s Health Coalition, which she started in 1984. IWHC prospered under her leadership, obtaining funds from the MacArthur and Ford foundations and a four-year grant of \$1,975,000 from the OSI President’s Office.

OSI’s Program on Reproductive Health and Rights pledged \$600,000 to the D.C.-based National Abortion Federation (NAF), the self-described “professional association of abortion providers in the United States and Canada.” 1998-2002 grants to NAF were used to “alleviate the shortage of abortion providers,” support bilingual public education campaigns on abortion, and more fully integrate abortion services into medical education. OSI also gave \$700,000 to the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (now called NARAL Pro-Choice America) for its five-year “Choice for America” television ad campaign. The National Partner-

ship for Women and Families received \$1.1 million (1998-2003). It currently is fighting President Bush’s effort to prevent United Nations health workers from using U.S. aid money for overseas abortions. The National Women’s Law Center, a public interest law group that files lawsuits on a variety of feminist issues, took in \$850,000 in 1998 for a five-year program on “reproductive health and choice.”

The Ms Foundation for Women was awarded \$600,000 in 1998 for its Reproductive Rights Coalition Fund. The Feminist Majority Foundation got \$675,000, the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy - \$1.5 million, and the Institute for Women’s Policy Research - \$350,000. Planned Parenthood was awarded \$1 million towards its Emergency Contraception Project, \$1 million for a Mifepristone Affiliate-Readiness Project, and \$200,000 to coordinate coalition planning with other feminist groups.

OSI also supports international NGO programs. It has given five-figure grants to NGOs that monitor the implementation of the population recommendations set forth at the U.N.’s Beijing and Cairo conferences. Other grants go to help NGOs participate in future international conferences. One \$25,000 grant went to Action Canada for Population and Development so that members of its Youth Coalition could attend a U.N. General Assembly meeting on implementing the recommendations of the Beijing conference.

In his book *Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism* (2000), George Soros writes that he is “rather leery of self-appointed, self-righteous” international NGOs. He even warns that giving them more authority may endanger the world’s political stability. How odd then that Soros uses his grantmaking to strengthen NGOs that do not hesitate or equivocate in defining their vision for society. They want dramatic global change and George Soros’ philanthropy is helping them achieve it.

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## Open Society Institute Board of Trustees

George Soros is board chair of the Open Society Institute. Here are the other members of the OSI board of trustees.

**Morton I. Abramowitz** -- The former president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace also was on the editorial board of the journal *Foreign Policy*, served as U.S. ambassador to Thailand and Turkey, and was assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research during the Reagan Administration. The future of the former Yugoslavia is a long-standing concern for Soros, so it is interesting that Abramowitz supports a continuing U.S. engagement in Bosnia under U.N. auspices.

**Leon Botstein** -- The president of Bard College in New York is known for making provocative public statements. He has criticized Republican attempts to eliminate inheritance taxes—an incentive for college bequests. Like fellow trustee Lani Guinier, he supports affirmative action for minorities.

**Geoffrey Canada** -- A Harlem children's rights activist, he heads the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families, a New York education group that received a \$1.25 million grant from OSI in 1997. Canada became an OSI trustee in late 2002.

**Joan Dunlop** -- An abortion rights activist, she is heading a group called A Women's Lens on Global Issues. It mobilizes American women activists to work on international development issues. Previously she was president of the International Women's Health Coalition, which she started in 1984. IWHC prospered under her leadership, obtaining funds from the MacArthur and Ford foundations.

**Lani Guinier** -- She was nominated by President Bill Clinton to be assistant attorney general for civil rights until word spread that Guinier believed, in the words of Chester Finn, "only blacks can represent other blacks 'authentically.'" A Harvard professor of law, Guinier would dramatically increase racial and gender preference programs.

**Bill Moyers** -- Liberalism's Mr. Big, Moyers' 2000 PBS documentary "On Our Own Terms: Dying in the United States" presented a sanitized version of the issue of physician-assisted suicide. It has become a public relations bonanza for groups funded through OSI's Project on Dying in America. One group called Aging With Dignity reported a 300 percent increase in downloads from its website when it was mentioned on the program.

**Aryeh Neier** -- The President and CEO of the Open Society Institute has had a four-decade-long association with liberal causes. Neier has worked for such groups as Human Rights Watch and the ACLU. In the 1980s, he was a vocal critic of President Ronald Reagan's Latin American policy and U.N. ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick. As OSI chief, Neier uses his legal expertise to assist groups critical of the U.S. criminal justice system.

**David J. Rothman** -- A professor of history at Columbia University, Rothman writes on medical ethics issues. In a 1996 *Nation* article, he minimized physician-assisted suicide as "not likely to affect a sizable proportion of the population, not even of dying patients."

**Thomas M. Scanlon, Jr.** -- The Alford Professor of Natural Religion, Moral Philosophy and Civil Polity at Harvard writes widely on law, personal responsibility and human rights.

**John G. Simon** -- A Yale law school professor and founding director of the Yale Program on Non-Profit Organizations, Simon is a respected authority on the nonprofit sector. He is also a board member with the National Center on Philanthropy and the Law at New York University, which has ties to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

**Herbert Sturz** -- A New York City urban issues activist, Sturz was a member of the *New York Times*' editorial board and chairman of the city's planning commission during the Koch administration. He administers an OSI program directed towards urban youth.

# PhilanthropyNotes

In a February 27 speech at Carnegie Mellon University, **George Soros** accused the White House of shirking its responsibility as the world's only superpower. Soros said the Administration has a "visceral aversion to international cooperation" as demonstrated by its willingness to ignore world opinion on Iraq. "President Bush is pushing the wrong buttons when he says, 'Those who are not with us, are against us,'" said Soros. "This is an imperialist vision in which the U.S. leads and the rest of the world follows." Soros criticized Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Attorney General John Ashcroft as having "an exaggerated view of their own righteousness."

On February 5, the Senate Finance Committee tacked on to the Administration-backed Faith-Based Initiative a **major tax benefit for environmental organizations**. The measure provides a 25 percent tax cut on capital gains for the sale of land – but only if land is sold to an environmental group or government agency. The **American Land Rights Network** warns that this provision offers immense benefits to the **Nature Conservancy** and other land trusts which already make large sums buying up private lands and selling them to the government.

"**The 2002 Slate 60**," the annual list of charitable gifts and pledges from the nation's top philanthropists, reports that giving last year totaled \$4.6 billion, less than half of 2001's \$12.7 billion. The collapse of the technology sector hit charitable giving hard as technology entrepreneurs cut back on their giving. The top two donors in 2002 are the recently-deceased Walter Annenberg, who donated \$1 billion in art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Ruth Lilly, late heiress to the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical fortune, who left \$520 million to arts organizations, including \$100 million to tiny *Poetry* magazine. Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen was the tech sector's top donor (number fourteen), giving \$74 million to his foundations.

On February 18, **Andrew "Tiny" Rader**, founding chairman of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, passed away in San Diego at the age of 88. Rader led the Milwaukee-based institution for 15 years from its inception in 1985 to 2000. Bradley president Michael Grebe said, "The one man to whom the Bradley Foundation is most indebted...for its formation, for its clear thinking, for its strength of purpose, and for its boldness...is a giant called 'Tiny.'" Rader, who served as president of Allen-Bradley Company in Milwaukee from 1970 to 1985, sold the company to Rockwell International. The sale funded the Bradley Foundation, yielding hundreds of millions of dollars for local charities and national nonprofits focused on conservative approaches to public policy.

The watchdog group **Judicial Watch** is urging the Bush Administration to take tougher action against nonprofit groups that support and fund radical Islamic terrorist organizations, including Hamas. At a March 5 press conference, President Larry Klayman reports that after September 11 Judicial Watch had asked the Administration to take action against the **Holy Land Foundation**, the **Islamic Association for Palestine** and other nonprofits. Both groups had connections to the Dallas/Forth Worth metropolitan area. Two months later, the Administration took action against some, but not all, of the groups targeted by Judicial Watch. The press conference, held in a Dallas hotel, discussed the continued terrorist activity in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.





