

Occupy Wall Street's Elegant Message

The mainstream news media still seems baffled by the Occupy protests, wanting them to spell out specific demands mostly likely, so experts and pundits can then tear the ideas down. So far, the protesters are getting their message across through their simple presence, Danny Schechter reports.

By Danny Schechter

One of the most frequently repeated, recycled and dismissive questions about Occupy Wall Street is its supposed lack of an "agenda." The "what do you people want" question has featured in media interviews almost to the exclusion of all others.

It's as if the movement won't be taken seriously by some, unless and until, it enunciates a list of "demands" and defines itself in a way that can allow others, especially a cynical media, to label and pigeonhole it. (So, it won't be taken seriously then either.)

Many are just frothing at the mouth for some political positions they can expose as shallow or absurd. Teams of pundits are being primed to go on the attack once they have some bullet points to refute.

Many police departments don't need bullet points to go on the attack. They have been having a field day arresting occupiers in many cities, while collecting overtime and readying their own bullets (rubber and otherwise) as needed.

Some on Wall Street already denounce these adversaries as "unsophisticated" for their formulation of the 99 percent versus the 1 percent. You'd expect the 1 percent to reject this way of seeing the world.

On the Right, there is no factual inaccuracy or bizarre incident they won't invoke to dismiss a movement they lack the mental tools to understand.

The Drudge Report was delighted to expose an incident involving public masturbation in one city.

Some gun nut wrote: "Don't be mistaken. The Wall Street protestors aren't peaceful hippies congregating about greed or social inequality. They are uniting to destroy America and everything we stand for. Their model is the 'Arab Spring' which discharged their Governments in favor of anti-Israel agitators and Muslim fundamentalists. They are NOT about freedom, but about World domination and total control. And Obama is supporting them fully."

Hmm.

Others like Reverend Jesse Jackson want more engagement with legislative issues and even the backing of candidates.

Democratic candidates, even progressive ones like Elizabeth Warren who's running for the U.S. Senate in Massachusetts, seem ambivalent about backing the occupations. Most are taking their cue from President Obama who only says he understands their "frustrations."

Some on the Left, including friends of mine, seem to suffer from undisguised vanguardism and want the Movement to raise the red flag right away, despite all the anarchists, libertarians and Democrats among them.

Here's Bill Bowles writing from London "Although many on the established Left are claiming OWS as their own, latching on to the anti-capitalist theme that figures prominently, at least in some locations, it's clear that the focus of the OWS 'movement' varies greatly from place to place.

"Thus where it all started, in downtown Manhattan, the focus is very much on *capitalist criminals* rather than *criminal capitalism*. But little or no mention of the dreaded word – socialism, ironically for fear of alienating even those who occupy, never mind what the rabid corporate/state media does with that which shall remain nameless."

These are old and, in many instances, predictable debates but what they miss is what's new and so vital about this decentralized, mostly leaderless movement that has captured the world's imagination.

Judging by the media attention it has received and polls that show large numbers of supportive Americans, it is touching a global nerve and changing the national, even international conversation. It seems to be doing a lot that's right!

Not only have they survived mass arrests and continuing harassment, they showed they could brave what Mother Nature threw their way. They are in the best tradition of the post office which still projects this creed despite the specter of cutbacks: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds"

Occupy's "couriers" have self-appointed rounds in self-managed occupations run by work groups and guided by participation in a daily General Assembly where activists listen to each other and disagree without being disagreeable.

They have raised a war chest of several hundred thousand dollars. They keep their sites clean with their own sanitation department. In New York, they feed their own with their own kitchen that also serves homeless people in the

neighborhood. They even have their own “people’s library.”

In many ways, they are creating ways of cooperative living that they want society to be like. The key to it all is commitment and engagement on the individual level. This way of fusing pragmatism and idealism is what makes it so impressive.

Movements that function from the top-down are more controlled but not necessarily more effective.

At this point, the Occupy movements is still growing, and still spreading its aura more than its message. When you think of how many unemployed people there are and how many others are coping with foreclosures or student debt you can see its potential for organizing and outreach.

Already activists in Oakland, where attacks by police from 19 different jurisdictions have galvanized a mass reaction, are calling for a Nov. 2 “general strike.” Are they well organized enough to pull this off and to shut down a whole city?

This may be a case of overreaching in reaction to a brutal police action. But, bear in mind that since the attack occurred, no one is cheering. The city’s mayor says she now supports Occupy. The police are now supposedly investigating their own conduct, and the occupiers are back in the plaza they were forced to abandon.

Police attacks often boomerang with the public siding with citizens, not cops. There is a lot to be optimistic about.

Slavoj Žižek writes in *In These Times*, “The Western Left has come full circle: After abandoning the so-called ‘class struggle essentialism’ for the plurality of anti-racist, feminist, gay rights etc., struggles, ‘capitalism’ is now re-emerging as the name of THE problem.”

Let’s put the emphasis on words like “emerging” and “awakening,” Politics is always a process. Give people time to distinguish their friends from their enemies. Let’s trust the wisdom of the people. They seem to “get it” much more than the media or the pols.

It is significant that there has been talk of a national convention in Philadelphia on July Fourth next year. Right now, as for a definitive agenda, action always speaks louder than words.

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'In Time,' a Film for the 99%

Many Americans are accustomed to the top one percent on the economic pyramid getting the bulk of the benefits from society's work and investments, as if that's the natural order of things. But a new movie "In Time" presents a similar dilemma in a parallel reality, writes Lisa Pease.

By Lisa Pease

New Regency Pictures must be thrilled at the fortuitous timing of the launch of their new film "In Time." The science fiction thriller revolves around a world in which time is the ultimate currency and most people can't get enough of it.

The world is divided into time zones, most of them poor, except for the zone of New Greenwich, where the richest 1 percent live.



The premise of the world of the film is this: All people stop aging genetically once they hit 25. They have to earn every minute over 25. If they run out of time, they die. And to earn time is difficult for the 99 percent. Caught in low-level jobs or, in some cases, resorting to crime, the scrappy ghetto inhabitants who populate the world of the film make difficult choices about what to do with the time they collect.

The story is propelled by Will Salas, played with appropriate action hero intensity by Justin Timberlake. Will is given a gift of time at the start of the film with an admonishment not to waste it by a man who has already lived more

than 100 years. He shares information with Will that sends Will on a quest to see how the 1 percent live.

When Will's donor dies, the "timekeepers" – the police in this society – believe Will killed him to steal his time, a common occurrence among the 99 percent. As Will crosses into New Greenwich, he is pursued by one Timekeeper in particular who refuses to quit, playing Javert to Timberlake's Valjean.

In New Greenwich, Will meets one of the wealthiest men in the world, Philippe Weis, played (in a brilliant piece of casting) by Vincent Kartheiser, the rich young prick of *Mad Men*. Weis possesses untold millions of years of time, but he is poor in other areas that really matter.

Will befriends Philippe's caged bird of a daughter Sylvia (Amanda Seyfried), who longs for adventure and to be free of the bodyguards who protect her from others who would steal her time.

Together they set off on an adventure that may cost them all the time they have left, a risk both are eventually willing to take, because society is broken, and they think they have a chance to fix it. They don't know if their plan will work. But they know they have to try.

This isn't a character study. This isn't an emotional drama. But it is a fascinating, fast-paced ride through a parallel reality that is fun, interesting, and strangely heartening.

As winter storms threaten to put a chill on the Occupy Wall Street group and its compatriots in other cities, this film has the potential to send flurries of new protesters into their camps. The film presents a compelling – if obvious – parable about what happens when some keep all the bounty for themselves and force the rest to support the excessive lifestyle choices of the few.

It's unfair. It's not right. And it must be changed. But change is never easy and requires the sacrifices of many.

As I left the theater, I felt like I was still in the movie. I was at The Grove, a fancy village-like mall in Los Angeles where the 1 percent shop.

Outside the theater, a Christmas tree was being rebuilt. Branches from a stately forest veteran that had been sheared off a couple of days ago were now being groomed and reattached, propped up by blocks of additional wood, because nature's own creation evidently isn't good enough for the 1 percent.

Near the tree sat diners eating \$50 steaks and drinking \$100 bottles of wine. I passed \$990 Prada pumps en route to my humble abode in a much lower rent

district nearby. I put my worn-out shoes in the closet, opened the refrigerator and pulled out a bag of fading carrots.

But I'm not complaining. I'm grateful. I have time. And I have the keen realization that it is – by far – my most precious possession.

Lisa Pease is a writer who has examined issues ranging from the Kennedy assassination to voting irregularities in recent U.S. elections.

Unmasking October Surprise 'Debunker'

Special Report: The fake “debunking” of the 1980 October Surprise case in the early 1990s was driven by a few “journalists,” including Steven Emerson, who has been identified in a recent report as a “misinformation expert” spreading anti-Muslim propaganda, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In another blow to the crumbling cover-up surrounding Ronald Reagan's secret dealings with Iran during the 1980 presidential campaign, a key “journalist” who “debunked” the October Surprise allegations in the early 1990s has now been identified by a recent study as a member of a right-wing “misinformation” network.

Entitled “Fear, Inc.,” the 129-page report by the Center for American Progress lists Steven Emerson as one of five “scholars” who act as “misinformation experts” to “generate the false facts and materials” that are then exploited by politicians and pundits to frighten Americans about the supposed threat posed by Muslims.

The report offers a rare glimpse into the right-wing propaganda network that has exploited America's post-9/11 hysteria and transformed those fears into a powerful political movement to get millions of Christians and Jews to support legislation and policies that target Muslims and their communities.

But the historical significance of noting Emerson's role in this “Islamophobia network” is that he is revealed to be a propagandist willing to distort information for ideological ends, not the serious journalist that he successfully posed as during the 1980s and 1990s.

In more recent years, followers of Emerson's work have come to understand that he has very close ties to Israeli right-wingers in the Likud Party and that his

“journalism” often has reflected their political needs and interests.

But Emerson also had those ties in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Iran-Contra scandal and a precursor scandal known as the October Surprise threatened to expose Likud’s secretive actions in helping Republicans unseat President Jimmy Carter in the 1980 election and to entangle the Reagan administration in a clandestine foreign policy outside the view of the American people.

The Iran-Contra investigation exposed Israel’s hand in facilitating illicit arms shipments from the Reagan administration to Iran in 1985-86. But the inquiry also unearthed evidence that those Israeli-brokered arms sales dated back years earlier and may have emanated from treacherous contacts between Republicans and Iranians in 1980.

In 1980, as President Carter was trying desperately to free 52 Americans who were being held hostage in Iran, Israel’s Likud leaders were eager to see him defeated for reelection out of concern that he was too friendly to the Palestinians and might demand that Israel accept a Palestinian state. At the time, Likud was envisioning an expansion of Jewish settlements into that land.

Ronald Reagan’s campaign, too, had an obvious interest in seeing Carter fail to gain a last-minute release of the hostages, what vice presidential candidate George H.W. Bush termed Carter’s possible “October Surprise” to help his chances right before the election.

The Evidence

Over the years, about two dozen sources including officials from Iran, Europe, Israel, the United States and the Palestinian movement have asserted that Reagan’s representatives went behind Carter’s back to strike their own deal with Iran, ensuring that the hostages were not released until after the election.

After a full year of humiliation over the hostage crisis, American voters repudiated Carter on Nov.4, 1980, giving Reagan a landslide victory. The hostages were kept in Iran until Reagan was sworn in as president on Jan. 20, 1981.

Then, after the secret Iran-Contra arms deals were exposed in 1986, it was discovered that the flow of U.S. weapons to Iran, via Israel, began not in 1985 as was then acknowledged but right after Reagan took office. However, the full story about those earlier shipments remained hidden.

It was not until the early 1990s that Iran-Contra investigators, including special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, turned their attention to these initial shipments and whether they were approved by Reagan’s team before the 1980

election, as some witnesses were alleging.

In April 1991, interest in the so-called October Surprise mystery also was spurred by a New York Times op-ed written by former National Security Council aide Gary Sick and a PBS "Frontline" documentary that I helped produce. A reluctant Congress grudgingly agreed to consider authorizing special House and Senate inquiries.

There was sudden alarm among Republicans who feared the investigation would expose then-President George H.W. Bush's role in illicit dealings with Iran and thus jeopardize his reelection prospects in 1992. The inquiry also threatened to implicate Israel's Likud leaders in a plot to unseat one U.S. president (Carter) and replace him with another (Reagan).

Other powerful figures faced potential danger, too, including icons of the U.S. foreign policy establishment, such as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and David Rockefeller, who mixed his banking interests at Chase Manhattan and his interest in international affairs through his Council on Foreign Relations.

Rockefeller had been the banker of the Shah of Iran and had brought his extraordinary influence to bear in 1979 by assigning Kissinger and other Rockefeller protégés to pressure Carter to allow the deposed Shah into the United States for cancer treatment, the event that triggered the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the capture of the American hostages.

In 1980, Kissinger viewed restoration of a Republican White House as a possible ticket for his own return trip to the center of world power, as he developed working relationships with vice presidential nominee George H.W. Bush and Reagan's campaign chief William Casey.

Plus, Chase Manhattan had huge financial exposure if the new Iranian regime succeeded in withdrawing \$6 billion that it claimed rightly belonged to Iran. Rockefeller put the total at \$1 billion. But a sudden loss of capital could have put the bank's future in jeopardy.

The October Surprise story also implicated several CIA officers, whose anger at Carter's downsizing of the spy agency had led them allegedly to join with former CIA director George H.W. Bush in a plot to unseat the then-president.

So, an array of important people not only had strong interests in blocking Carter's efforts to resolve the hostage impasse in 1980, but also had much to fear from a thorough October Surprise investigation in 1991-92. [For details on the mystery, see Robert Parry's [Secrecy & Privilege](#).]

The 'Debunking'

At that key juncture as Congress pondered how strong an inquiry to authorize two media outlets, the neoconservative New Republic and the Establishment-oriented Newsweek, stepped in with a fierce determination to stop the investigation in its tracks.

The New Republic, owned by Martin Peretz, a staunch defender of hard-line Israeli policies, assigned the October Surprise “debunking” project to Steven Emerson, who was known for his negative reporting about Israel’s Muslim enemies and for his ties to the Israeli Right.

At Newsweek, executive editor Maynard Parker, a close associate of both David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger, personally oversaw a similar “debunking” project.

Inside Newsweek, where I had worked for three years (from 1987 to 1990), Kissinger had remarkable influence. He was paid handsomely for his ponderous opinion columns and was close enough to top management that he could steer coverage of foreign-policy stories.

Parker was also a proud member of Rockefeller’s CFR, viewing his role as Newsweek’s executive editor more as protecting the image of the foreign policy establishment than exposing serious wrongdoing. During my time at Newsweek, Parker had been hostile to my efforts to push the Iran-Contra investigation into the darker corners of the scandal.

At one point, I was told by a long-time Newsweek researcher that I should watch my back with Parker because he was considered “CIA,” having supposedly collaborated with the spy agency in his earlier journalism career.

So, the two magazines for somewhat different motives set out to bury the October Surprise investigation once and for all. Simultaneously, they both seized on some attendance records from a London historical conference in late July 1980 to insist that William Casey could not have attended two days of alleged meetings with Iranians in Madrid because he had been in London.

These records became the centerpiece for matching debunking stories that the two magazines were putting together. However, inside Newsweek, Craig Unger, an investigative reporter assigned to the project, realized that the attendance records didn’t prove what Parker wanted them to prove.

Unger told me that he spotted how the attendance records were being misread and alerted Parker and others. “They told me, essentially, to fuck off,” Unger said.

So, Newsweek and The New Republic rushed out their matching “debunking” stories in mid-November 1991, splashed across their covers declaring the October

Surprise story to be a “myth.” The impact of the two stories cannot be overstated. For the Republicans, the articles became the supposedly independent proof that no further investigation was needed.

Because of the stories, the Senate backed away from a full-scale investigation. The House agreed to conduct a probe, but it quickly became clear that it would be more a bipartisan effort to ratify the Newsweek/New Republic “debunking” than to pursue the truth.

An Enduring Cover-up

It, therefore, passed almost unnoticed when the cornerstone of the two magazines’ articles crumbled. At “Frontline,” we did what the two magazines didn’t. We interviewed Americans who were at the London historical conference with Casey, and they didn’t recall seeing him at the key morning session that would have supposedly disproved the Madrid meetings.

But the conclusive proof that debunked the debunking was our interview with historian Robert Dallek who gave that morning’s presentation to a small gathering of attendees sitting in a conference room at the British Imperial War Museum in London.

Dallek said he had been excited to learn that Casey, who was running Reagan’s presidential campaign, would be there. So, Dallek looked for Casey, only to be disappointed that Casey was a no-show.

A closer examination of the attendance sheets also revealed that Unger was right, that the records didn’t show Casey was there that morning. The records actually indicate that Casey arrived that afternoon, meaning that the “window” for the alleged Madrid meetings remained open.

Though I passed on our discovery to the House investigators and they quietly confirmed our findings the predetermined course of the inquiry, i.e. clearing the Republicans and their accomplices, didn’t change.

Without saying anything that might embarrass Newsweek or The New Republic, the investigators simply slipped in a substitute alibi for Casey, claiming that he attended the Bohemian Grove retreat for rich men in northern California that last weekend of July 1980 and then flew directly to London, arriving in the afternoon.

If anything the Bohemian Grove alibi was even more absurd than the one from the magazines. The documentary record and interviews clearly showed that Casey attended the Grove on the first weekend of August, not the last weekend of July. [See [Secrecy & Privilege](#).]

Still, this determination to create an alibi for Casey regarding the Madrid meetings enabled Bush's White House to keep under wraps its own evidence that Casey did travel to Spain.

Recently released documents from Bush's presidential library in College Station, Texas, reveal that in November 1991 as Newsweek and the New Republic were claiming that Casey could not have traveled to Madrid Bush's State Department had confirmed such a trip and had informed Bush's White House.

State Department legal adviser Edwin D. Williamson told associate White House counsel Chester Paul Beach Jr. that among the State Department "material potentially relevant to the October Surprise allegations [was] a cable from the Madrid embassy indicating that Bill Casey was in town, for purposes unknown," Beach noted in a "memorandum for record" dated Nov. 4, 1991. [See Consortiumnews.com's "October Surprise Evidence Revealed."]

Emerson's Jihad

Yet, when I tried to protest the various falsehoods and irrationalities being used to kill the October Surprise investigation, I was battered with insults.

At The New Republic, for instance, Emerson indicated that I had lied when I reported for "Frontline" that the Secret Service had only released redacted copies of Bush's travel records for another key date in the October Surprise mystery. Emerson said he had received copies of the Secret Service records under a Freedom of Information Act request without any redactions.

After talking to the Secret Service and being told that Emerson's records had redactions like everyone else's even Congress received redacted versions I challenged Emerson's account in letters to his editors, including one to CNN where he had been hired as an investigative reporter.

Emerson was subsequently dumped by CNN and I was promptly threatened by one of his law firms with a libel suit for having criticized him in letters to his editors. Apparently, I was supposed to apologize for saying that Emerson was lying when he claimed to have Bush's unredacted Secret Service records.

Faced with this legal threat, I had to dig into my children's college fund to hire a lawyer, who frankly seemed to doubt that the well-regarded Emerson could be in the wrong. My response was that if Emerson actually had the unredacted records, he could simply present them, but his lawyer said that would only be done in the midst of a costly trial.

As the abusive and threatening letters from Emerson's lawyers mounted, I decided to submit a FOIA to the Secret Service for Emerson's FOIA, i.e. I demanded

exactly the same documents that the Secret Service had released to him.

When those records arrived, they showed that Emerson indeed had been lying. His copies of the Secret Service records were redacted, just like those released to me and other investigators.

Finally, the threatened lawsuit went away, and Emerson was forced to admit in an interview with the media watchdog group FAIR that he never had the records he claimed. He blamed a research assistant, but never apologized for the bullying legal strategy designed to financially bleed a journalist (myself) into confirming a lie as the truth. [For more details, see [a report](#) in FAIR's "Extra!," November-December 1993.]

Despite having blundered regarding Casey's Madrid alibi and having been caught in a fabrication over the Secret Service records, Emerson came out of the October Surprise case with a rising reputation as a star reporter.

Emerson had benefited from having a close friend inside the House task force, Michael Zeldin, the deputy chief counsel. And though the task force had to jettison Emerson's bogus Casey alibi, House investigators told me Emerson frequently visited the task force's offices and advised Zeldin and others how to read the October Surprise evidence.

Although more evidence of Republican guilt poured in to the House October Surprise task force in late 1992 so much so that chief counsel Lawrence Barcella later told me that he urged task force chairman Lee Hamilton to extend the probe for several months the task force instead simply decided to wrap up its business with a finding of Republican innocence.

To paper over all the holes in the findings, the task force deployed an array of absurd alibis such as one claiming that because Reagan's foreign policy adviser Richard Allen wrote down Casey's home phone number on one date, that meant Casey was at home even though Allen had no recollection of reaching Casey at his home. [See Consortiumnews.com's ["The Crazy October Surprise Debunking."](#)]

Rising Reputation

It was a sign of the times in Washington and inside U.S. journalism that Emerson's reputation got a boost from his October Surprise "debunking" work.

After the House task force report was issued in 1993, the American Journalism Review invited Emerson to ridicule me and other journalists for getting the October Surprise story "wrong," under the odd assumption that a government report must always be right.

Emerson's critique left out the fact that he and Newsweek's Parker had botched a crucial Casey alibi, arguably the biggest single journalistic error in the entire case. Nor did Emerson mention how he falsely claimed to have unredacted copies of Bush's Secret Service records.

(When I later asked top AJR editors how they could ignore the Secret Service fabrication issue, they simply responded that Emerson had made his false claim in a different publication, i.e. The New Republic, not AJR.)

Before long, Emerson was amassing journalism awards for his work targeting American Muslims as a particularly dangerous lot and he was raising large sums of money to support his work from sources, such as right-wing mogul Richard Mellon Scaife. Emerson's documentary, "Jihad in America," was broadcast by PBS.

Only gradually did a few brave reporters begin criticizing Emerson and his cozy ties to right-wing Israeli officials, including Israeli intelligence officers. Typically, Emerson would hit back by issuing legal threats from his vast stable of high-priced lawyers.

Emerson's use of lawyers to bully other journalists, which I had witnessed firsthand, became part of his modus operandi, as Nation reporter Robert I. Friedman discovered in 1995 after criticizing Emerson's "Jihad in America."

"Intellectual terrorism seems to be part of Emerson's standard repertoire," Friedman wrote. "So is his penchant for papering his critics with threatening lawyers' letters."

Friedman also reported that Emerson hosted right-wing Israeli intelligence officials when they were in Washington.

"[Yigal] Carmon, who was Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's adviser on terrorism, and [Yoram] Ettinger, who was Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu's man in the Israeli Embassy, stay in Emerson's apartment on their frequent visits to Washington," Friedman wrote.

In 1999, a study of Emerson's history by John F. Sugg for FAIR's magazine "Extra!" quoted an Associated Press reporter who had worked with Emerson on a project as saying of Emerson and Carmon: "I have no doubt these guys are working together."

The Jerusalem Post reported that Emerson has "close ties to Israeli intelligence," and "Victor Ostrovsky, who defected from Israel's Mossad intelligence agency and has written books disclosing its secrets, calls Emerson 'the horn', because he trumpets Mossad claims," Sugg reported.

Bigotry Toward Muslims

Emerson's biases are better known today than they were when he was "debunking" the October Surprise allegations. He is now notorious for his Islamophobia and his "investigative journalism" that hammers away at purported dangers from "radicalized" American Muslims.

Last year, Emerson went on a national radio program and claimed that Islamic cleric Feisal Abdul Rauf would likely not "survive" Emerson's disclosure of supposedly radical comments that Rauf made a half decade ago.

Although acknowledging that his "investigation" was incomplete, Emerson offered the listeners to Bill Bennett's right-wing radio show "a little preview" of the allegedly offensive comments by Rauf, the cleric behind a planned Islamic center in Lower Manhattan near the site of 9/11's "ground zero."

"We have found audiotapes of Imam Rauf defending Wahhabism, the puritanical version of Islam that governs Saudi Arabia; we have found him calling for the elimination of the state of Israel by claiming he wants a one-nation state meaning no more Jewish state; we found him defending bin Laden violence."

However, when Emerson's Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT) released its evidence several days later, it fell far short of Emerson's lurid descriptions. Rauf actually made points that are shared by many mainstream analysts and none of the excerpted comments involved "defending Wahhabism."

As for Rauf "defending bin Laden violence," Emerson apparently was referring to remarks that Rauf made to an audience in Australia in 2005 about the history of U.S. and Western mistreatment of people in the Middle East.

"We tend to forget, in the West, that the United States has more Muslim blood on its hands than al-Qaeda has on its hands of innocent non-Muslims," Rauf said.

"You may remember that the U.S.-led sanctions against Iraq led to the death of over half a million Iraqi children. This has been documented by the United Nations. And when Madeleine Albright, who has become a friend of mine over the last couple of years, when she was Secretary of State and was asked whether this was worth it, [she] said it was worth it."

Emerson purported to "fact check" Rauf's statement on the death toll from the Iraq sanctions by claiming "a report by the British government said at most only 50,000 deaths could be attributed to the sanctions, which were brought on by the actions by former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein."

What Emerson's "fact check" ignored, however, was that Rauf was accurately

recounting Leslie Stahl's questioning of Secretary of State Albright on CBS "60 Minutes" in 1996. Emerson also left out the fact that United Nations studies did conclude that those U.S.-led sanctions caused the deaths of more than 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of five.

In the 1996 interview, Stahl told Albright regarding the sanctions, "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Albright responded, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price we think the price is worth it."

Emerson doesn't identify the specific British report that contains the lower figure, although even that number "only 50,000" represents a stunning death toll and doesn't contradict Rauf's chief point, that U.S.-British actions have killed many innocent Muslims over the years.

Also, by 2005, when Rauf made his remarks in Australia, the United States and Great Britain had invaded and occupied Iraq, with a death toll spiraling from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands with some estimates of war-related deaths in Iraq exceeding one million.

Far from "defending bin Laden violence," Rauf's comments simply reflected the truth about the indiscriminate killing inflicted on the Muslim world by U.S.-British military might over the years. Indeed, British imperialism in the region dates back several centuries, a point that Emerson also ignores.

Emerson next takes Rauf to task for asserting that the United States has supported authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes that have driven Muslims toward extremism.

"Collateral damage is a nice thing to put on a paper but when the collateral damage is your own uncle or cousin, what passions do these arouse?" Rauf is quoted as saying. "How do you negotiate? How do you tell people whose homes have been destroyed, whose lives have been destroyed, that this does not justify your actions of terrorism. It's hard.

"Yes, it is true that it does not justify the acts of bombing innocent civilians, that does not solve the problem, but after 50 years of, in many cases, oppression, of U.S. support of authoritarian regimes that have violated human rights in the most heinous of ways, how else do people get attention?"

Emerson "fact-checked" this comment by declaring, "This is justifying acts of terrorism by blaming the United States for the oppression of Islamic regimes of their own citizens. This also ignores U.S. aid of Muslim citizens in nations

such as Kosovo and Kuwait.”

However, any fair-minded observer would agree with Rauf that the United States has supported many brutal and undemocratic leaders of Muslim countries, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran under the Shah, and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq during the 1980s.

Even President George W. Bush might agree with Rauf. A key Bush argument for “regime change” in the Middle East was the need for the United States to finally stop coddling dictators because their repressive practices were a central ingredient in the toxic brew that contributed to terrorism.

Other of Emerson’s criticisms of Rauf are equally tendentious. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Islam Basher Claims to Unmask Cleric.”](#)]

Organizing Rep. King’s Hearings

Early this year, Emerson took credit for helping to organize the controversial hearings by Rep. Peter King, R-New York, on the alleged radicalization of domestic Muslims.

Emerson boasted about his role but also lashed out at King for not including him on the witness list. In a particularly bizarre letter written last January, Emerson vowed to withhold further assistance as retaliation for the snub.

“I was even going to bring in a special guest today and a VERY informed and connected source, who could have been very useful, possibly even critical to your hearing, but he too will not attend unless I do,” Emerson wrote. “You have caved in to the demands of radical Islamists in removing me as a witness.”

In another weird twist, Emerson somehow envisioned himself as the victim of McCarthyism because he wasn’t being allowed to go before the House Homeland Security Committee and accuse large segments of the American-Muslim community of being un-American. [[Politico, Jan. 19, 2011](#)]

Then, last summer, the Center for American Progress sponsored a report on Emerson and other Muslim-bashers. The context was the aftermath of a murderous rampage in Norway by Christian terrorist Anders Breivik. He cited their writings in a manifesto justifying his killing of 76 people on July 22 as the beginning of a war against “multiculturalists” who preach tolerance of Muslims.

CAP’s report, “Fear, Inc.,” noted a number of Emerson’s falsehoods and exaggerations about American Muslims and examined the convoluted financing of Emerson’s Investigative Project on Terrorism, which has drawn substantial support from right-wing foundations and funders whose political interests have

benefited from a surging right-wing campaign against Muslims.

“Emerson’s nonprofit organization IPT received a total of \$400,000 from Donors Capital Fund in 2007 and 2008, as well as \$100,000 from the Becker Foundation, and \$250,000 from Daniel Pipes’ Middle East Forum, according to our research,” the report said.

“Emerson’s nonprofit organization, in turn, helps fund his for-profit company, SAE Productions. IPT paid SAE Productions \$3.33 million to enable the company to ‘study alleged ties between American Muslims and overseas terrorism.’ Emerson is SAE’s sole employee.

“Even more intriguingly, a review of grants in November 2010 showed large sums of money contributed to the ‘Investigative Project,’ or ‘IPT,’ care of the Counterterrorism & Security Education and Research Foundation. An examination of CTSERF’s 990 forms [reports that non-profits file with the Internal Revenue Service] showed that, much like the Investigative Project, all grant revenue was transferred to a private, for-profit entity, the International Association of Counterterrorism and Security Professionals.

“Emerson did not respond to requests for comment by time of publication. The Russell Berrie Foundation has contributed \$2,736,000 to CTSERF, and Richard Scaife foundations contributed \$1,575,000. While neither the IPT, CTSERF, or IACSP websites make any mention of a link between CTSERF and the IPT, Ray Locker, the Investigative Project’s managing director, told the LobeLog blog that a relationship ‘exists’ and ‘it’s all above board and passes muster with the IRS.’

“But in 2008, when Emerson was asked why the IACSP’s Web address was listed at the bottom of an IPT press release on LexisNexis, he told LobeLog, ‘[I have] no idea how the IACSP website address got listed on the LexisNexis version of our press release. We are not a project of IACSP although we have frequently published material in their magazine.’

“He went on to say that ‘as for funding questions, other than what we have stated on our website, that we take no funds from outside the U.S. or from governmental agencies or from religious and political groups, we have a long standing policy since we were founded not to discuss matters of funding (for security reasons).’”

“Fear, Inc.” continued: “Steven Fustero, chief executive of CTSERF, told LobeLog, ‘The research and education designated funds are [] transferred to IACSP, which in turn makes the research grants,’ but would not discuss the relationship between CTSERF and IPT. An examination of CTSERF tax documents from

1999 to 2008 shows the group receiving \$11,108,332 in grant revenue and transferring \$12,206,900 to IACSP.

“This kind of action enrages Ken Berger, president of Charity Navigator, a nonprofit watchdog group. He argued that ‘basically, you have a nonprofit acting as a front organization, and all that money going to a for-profit.’

“The increasing influence of Islamophobia donors to Emerson’s nonprofit and for-profit work has focused more recently on anti-Islam, anti-Muslim expertise. Indeed, according to an investigation by *The Tennessean* newspaper, the Investigative Project now solicits money by telling donors they’re in imminent danger from Muslims.”

Who’s Dangerous?

In the two decades since *The New Republic*’s October Surprise “debunking” article, the magazine also has revealed more about its commitment to quality “journalism,” through such debacles as the serial fraud of its correspondent Stephen Glass.

And, publisher Martin Peretz has exposed more about his personal agenda. He now lives part time in Israel and – like Emerson – has taken to smearing Muslims, such as in [this TNR blog post](#) regarding the proposed Islamic community center in Lower Manhattan. He declared:

“Frankly, Muslim life is cheap, most notably to Muslims. And among those Muslims led by the Imam Rauf [the promoter of the Islamic center] there is hardly one who has raised a fuss about the routine and random bloodshed that defines their brotherhood.

“So, yes, I wonder whether I need honor these people and pretend that they are worthy of the privileges of the First Amendment which I have in my gut the sense that they will abuse.” (Facing accusations of racism, Peretz later issued a half-hearted apology which reiterated that his reference to Muslim life being cheap was “a statement of fact, not opinion.”)

A *New York Times* magazine [profile](#) of Peretz noted that Peretz’s hostility toward Muslims was nothing new. “As early as 1988, Peretz was courting danger in *The New Republic* with disturbing Arab stereotypes not terribly different from his 2010 remarks,” wrote Stephen Rodrick.

A common argument from the Islamophobe network is that Islam is a uniquely violent religion that seeks dominance over all others and therefore must be combated aggressively by Christians and Jews, explaining the American Right’s bizarre legislative obsession with banning Islamic Shariah law.

Though many Muslims dispute the depiction of their religion as violent and oppressive, there is another element to this Islamophobe argument that underscores its bigotry the history of Christianity, which ranks by far as the most violent religion ever, one that has engaged in genocide against “heathens” and unbelievers on multiple continents, including Muslim lands.

Christians also hold themselves out as believers in the one true faith, and many maintain as a fundamental tenet of the religion that non-Christians will be condemned to horrible deaths by fire once Judgment Day arrives. Simply read Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, if you’re not sure.

Similarly, the Old Testament boasts of genocidal conquests by the great Israelite kings in the so-called Golden Age. No one can read the Old Testament and come away thinking that the Jewish religion is entirely devoid of violent and supremacist thinking, either.

And, Christians far more than Muslims have persecuted and slaughtered Jews in modern times. The Holocaust was the work of Aryan/Christian supremacists, not that dissimilar in their beliefs from the Nordic/Christian terrorist Breivik.

Historically, Christians also have tortured and murdered many fellow Christians over doctrinal disputes, such as the Reformation. Despite Jesus’s teachings in favor of peace and social justice and against violence and greed the religion that he inspired has managed to adapt quite well to violence and greed.

In America, over the past three decades, there has been an alliance of convenience between right-wing Christians and right-wing Jews, though the two groups may still look at the other with some level of suspicion. Their mutual enemy is the Muslim as well as the multiculturalist, whether Christian, Jewish or non-believer, who wants different religions to live peacefully side by side.

When Breivik went on his murderous rampage in July, he targeted young “multiculturalists” at a camp for aspiring political activists. His goal was to kill anyone who would show tolerance toward Muslims and to spark a religious/ethnic war against Muslims and their friends.

Though Emerson and the other “misinformation experts” cannot fully be blamed for the atrocity in Norway, it wasn’t a mistake that Breivik cited their work as his inspiration.

[For more on related topics, see Robert Parry’s *Lost History, Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a three-book set for the discount price of only \$29. For details, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the

Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.
