

## The Dissidents from Political Correctness

*It is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself.*

*Tom Paine, 'The Age of Reason'*

*My message to the media is: Wake up! The silencing of authentic debate among feminists just helps the rise of the far Right. When the media get locked in their Northeastern ghetto and become slaves of the feminist establishment and fanatical special interests, the American audience ends up looking to conservative voices for common sense. As a libertarian Democrat, I protest against this self-defeating tyranny of political correctness.*

*Camille Paglia, 'Vamps and Tramps'*

**A**n apparent paradox of political correctness is that, like advertising, virtually everyone denies being affected by it, but in fact virtually everyone is.

Political correctness is a way of thinking—or rather emoting—that often so engulfs someone's mind that they are unaware of it. If you wear rose-tinted glasses long enough, it seems normal that the whole world is rose.

Some people, notably most of humanity outside the Western world, have not been inflicted with political correctness. Others remain unable to see beyond it for their entire lives.

Some in the West are little afflicted by political correctness, often becoming thorns in the side of the left-wing establishment, and personally targeted because of their dissent. Notable figures include the philosopher Roger Scruton (who long warned against multiculturalism and the erosion of the nation state), the US scholar Charles Murray (who writes on the impact of group differences on

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policy, and retributive justice), the authors Frederick Forsyth and V.S. Naipaul (both opposed to multiculturalism), and the former chief inspector of schools Chris Woodhead (who has thundered against PC educational nostrums).

Those most zealously opposed to PC tend to be those who were once infected by it and then broke free. Like Winston Smith in George Orwell's *1984*, the doubts often start slowly at first, with people realising the little lies and distortions. First they justify them as white lies, excusing them as being for the greater good. But as they start thinking about the lies, they start realising how prolific they are, and start wondering about the truth they conceal. Eventually, they become convinced that you cannot reach the truth through telling lies, and that, as the Bible said—in a rather different context—'the truth shall make you free'.

The pieces fall into place, and a new picture of the world-view emerges. The PC way of thinking is replaced with a new way of thinking—or rather an old one—that puts the emphasis on factual correctness rather than political correctness, and on reason rather than emotion. They are, in the classic definition of neo-conservatives, 'liberals mugged by reality', but often still liberal in the classical sense.

Those who journey from political correctness to truth often risk public disapprobation, but it is notable that most never lose their tolerance or humanity, and retain their fundamental values. They may question the politics of race, but not that racism is bad; they may question campaigns about women's pay, but not that women and men deserve equality of treatment; they may realise that western civilisation—with its extraordinary ability to create wealth and culture while promoting freedom, equality, and democracy—is, by almost all measures, the best civilisation that humanity has yet created, but that doesn't make them Islamophobes.

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In the US, becoming a dissident of left-wing political correctness has almost turned into a literary genre in itself. Countless books denounce the effects of PC in universities, the media and politics.

One of the most high profile defectors from political to factual correctness is David Horowitz, who for many years was a leading (far) left commentator, who had ‘second thoughts’ after a friend was murdered by the Black Panthers. He has now become a scourge of the dishonesty of the left and political correctness. One of his books, *Left Illusions: An Intellectual Odyssey*, contains the essay ‘The Era of Progressive Witch-Hunts’ in which he argues that the rise of politically correct witch-hunts in recent years and other forms of behavioural policing have ‘been far worse in... consequences to individuals and freedom of expression’<sup>1</sup> than the McCarthy witch-hunts’. He also explained the appeal of the politically correct mentality: ‘We were partisans of a cause that confirmed our humanity, even as it denied humanity to those who opposed us’,<sup>2</sup> and explained that ‘hatred of self, and by extension one’s country, is the root of the radical cause’.<sup>3</sup>

Another top journalist who tired of the distortions of political correctness was Emmy award-winner Bernard Goldberg, who spent 28 years at CBS television news, only to denounce it—and its famously left-wing presenter Dan Rather—when he retired in the book *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*. He details not just the liberal bias that pervades CBS, but how journalists were in hock to victim pressure groups, put ‘sensitivity’ ahead of ‘facts’, refused to tell the truth, and indulged in liberal hate-speech—denouncing as ‘right-wing’ anyone to the right of Lenin.

It is notable in the environmental field how many of those closely involved in it have lost faith in the main tenets of modern environmentalism—which in many ways has become a secular religion.

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Patrick Moore, a Canadian who was one of the co-founders of Greenpeace, has been demonised as ‘Judas’ by the environmental movement because he eventually turned into an environmental optimist, loudly critical of the anti-scientific, anti-human scare tactics of the organisation he helped create. Gregg Easterbrook, the former environment correspondent of the *Washington Post*, got so frustrated with the deception of writing almost nothing but gloomy environment stories, that in 1995 he published the book *A Moment on the Earth: the Coming Age of Environmental Optimism* about how the world’s environment was actually getting better.

Some years later, the Danish statistician Bjorn Lomborg, a former member of Greenpeace, got a class of his to collect the statistics to confirm what everyone knew, that the environment was getting worse. When, confounding their earlier politically correct certainty, they found that the large majority of statistics pointed the other way, he wrote *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, about how the world’s environment is getting better. He was rewarded for his dissidence from the politically correct dogma by a well orchestrated campaign of vilification, denunciation and academic persecution by the environmental movement, including a failed attempt to get him convicted of academic fraud and a pie-throwing attack in a bookshop by the environmental campaigner Mark Lynas, showing his intolerance of intellectual dissent.

Political activists have also turned on political correctness. In the US, the lesbian Tammy Bruce, one-time president of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organisation of Woman, was once described by Andrea Dworkin as ‘a brilliant feminist, activist, and iconoclast’. But she performed a spectacular U-turn, launching powerful attacks on political correctness and the destructive agenda of left-wing elites in two books: *The New Thought Police: Inside the Left’s Assault on Free Speech and Free Minds* and *The Death of Right and Wrong: Exposing the*

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*Left's Assault on Our Culture and Values.* In them, she details the rise of 'left-wing McCarthyism' where 'left-wing elites' desperately try to silence their critics rather than engage in debate. She lambastes feminists' hatred of men and marriage, the Black elite's championing of violent rap music, and academia's anti-Americanism, and argues that multiculturalism, identity politics and 'relativism' turned American society into a 'moral vacuum' incapable of distinguishing right from wrong. But, despite all this, she insists she is not a conservative—she is still a lesbian feminist liberal.