Here comes The David Horowitz Freedom Center

by Bill_Berkowitz

Leading Bush non-profit political ally changes name, plans expansion and new hires.

In early July, in a move akin to the establishment of a George W. Bush Center for Intellectual Curiosity & Open Government, a Barry Bonds Center for Organic Medicine, a Rosanne Barr Center for the Study of the Singing of the National Anthem, an OJ Simpson Center for Criminal Justice, or an Ann Coulter Center for Combating Plagiarism and Encouraging Civil Discourse, the Board of Directors of Horowitz's Center for the Study of Popular Culture announced that it was changing the organization's name to The David Horowitz Freedom Center (DHFC).

While it must have taken a linguistic contortionist to create the new name -- one doesn't think of Horowitz, the sixties radical lefty turned right wing provocateur/entrepreneur, when thinking about freedom -- the Center's Board Chair decided the time was right for the move.

"We decided on a name change for two reasons," said Board Chairman Jess Morgan. "First, when the Center began, [founded in 1988 by Horowitz] just as the Cold War was ending, we thought that the significant issue of our time would be the political radicalization of popular culture. The culture is still a battleground, but after 9/11, it is clear that freedom itself is under assault from the new totalitarianism: Islamic fascism. Secondly, David Horowitz, the Center's founder, has become increasingly identified with issues of freedom at home and abroad. We wanted to honor him and also support the efforts he has undertaken. The name change does this and rededicates us to the mission at hand."

According to an announcement posted at FrontPage Magazine on Friday, July 7, The David Horowitz Freedom Center hired Peter Collier, a longtime Horowitz colleague and the former publisher of Encounter Books, and Buzz Patterson, a former presidential aide and author of "Reckless Disregard," as vice president and chief operating officer.

In addition, "as part of its expansion...[the DHFC will] host the Liberty Film Festival, Hollywood's only conservative annual awards event."

The FrontPage piece pointed to a number of the Center's ongoing programs:

Â§ The Wednesday Morning Club, a lunch forum that provides a platform in the entertainment and media industry for conservative speakers and ideas;

Â§ Restoration Weekend, an annual event which has featured national leaders of the conservative movement;

Â§ The Individual Rights Foundation, an organization that litigates high-profile conservative and libertarian public interest cases;

Â§ Students for Academic Freedom, a national coalition of student organizations with chapters on 160 campuses, whose goal is to end the political abuse of the university and restore its academic integrity.

Â§ FrontPage Magazine, the Center's online journal, features "news of the war at home and abroad." FPM receives 1.5 million visitors and 620,000 unique visitors a month (with 65 million hits) and is linked to more than 2,000 other websites.

Â§ DiscoverTheNetworks.com, launched in 2005, is the largest publicly accessible database, defining the chief groups and individuals of the Left and their organizational interlocks. DTN has had more than 8 million visitors in its first 18 months of operation.

"As The David Horowitz Freedom Center, we will continue to expand these programs," said Board Chair Jess Morgan. "We are changing the name, but not what we do. We will continue to defend the cultural foundations of free institutions and defend freedom at home and abroad, a task that has become a matter of survival now that America is at war with an enemy determined to destroy us."

Just prior to being canonized by the Center for the Study of Popular Culture's Board, Horowitz was involved in a bevy of decidedly anti-freedom activities. He has been outspoken in defense of the rhetorical atrocities in Ann Coulter's best selling new book, "Godless: The Church of Liberalism" -- in which she viciously insults several widows of 9/11 victims -- while at the same time he has launched several brutal strikes against the New York Times.

His appearance on CNN's Larry King program became especially bizarre when Horowitz insisted that Coulter was "much funnier" than Bill Maher and Al Franken combined, and declared "Godless" "absolutely" satirical.

"She's a very funny woman," Horowitz told a reporter. He pointed out that he believes that she has been the victim of "a double standard. The kind of rhetorical exaggeration that she uses as a weapon is in widespread use, but only she gets skewered for it. I don't think she's a mean person. I don't think that label is deserved, although I think she plays to it and it's worked very well for her."

Horowitz has also been front and center in the right's current jihad against the New York Times, which began when the newspaper published an article on the Bush administration's investigation of terrorist money laundering using SWIFT, an international banking correspondence system.

Horowitz is a "professional propagandist... who has been shrieking for years about the liberal 'fifth column,'" columnist Joe Conason wrote in July 8 piece for Salon. He has "declared 'war' on the Times as well as all liberals, Democrats and leftists. Just to prove that he is still crazy after all these years, Horowitz endorsed the publication of the home addresses and telephone numbers of the newspaper's personnel."

According to Conason, Travel SectionGate began with a Horowitz blog entry that "cited a June 30 [New York Times] Escapes feature that included 'huge color photos of the vacation residences of Vice President Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, identifying the small Maryland town where they live, showing the front driveway and in Rumsfeld's case actually pointing out the hidden security camera in case any hostile intruders should get careless' as further evidence of the paper's perfidy. He identified the article's purpose as 'apparent retaliation for criticism of [the Times'] disclosure of classified intelligence to America's enemies.'"

Horowitz continued: "Make no mistake about it, there is a war going on in this country. The aggressors in this war are Democrats, liberals and leftists who began a scorched earth campaign against President Bush before the initiation of hostilities in Iraq." According to Conason, Horowitz "continued in this vein, citing various examples of dissent against the Bush administration and the war in Iraq as proof of liberal Democratic disloyalty."

Never mind, as Glenn Greenwald pointed out, that Rumsfeld had granted an official request from the Times to photograph his summer house. Never mind that Newsmax, the right-wing Web site that is financed, like Horowitz's operation, by the Scaife foundations, had published an article on the Rumsfeld and Cheney residences in that Maryland resort community. (And never mind that Horowitz knows nothing about how daily newspapers work, let alone terrorists or banks; such feature spreads are assigned and illustrated weeks in advance.) Never mind that Horowitz's link to a Frontpage contributor who published the address of Sulzberger's home could result in actual violence.

In a calmer political environment, an obviously deranged individual like Horowitz could be dismissed as comic relief. But with substantial resources and friends in the White House, including Karl Rove and the president, he is more than a mere crank. He is long overdue for exposure and repudiation by the mainstream media, whose attention he so plainly craves.

If the Times or any other newspaper were to examine Horowitz's "treason" campaign, perhaps the first place to look would be at this remarkable confession of his own central role in publishing American national security secrets in a magazine he edited three decades ago. As blogger Scoobie Davis once observed, the former radical leftist did exactly what he now accuses others of doing -- and admitted that he hoped to damage American security. Is there a statute of limitations on his offense?

"I suppose the change [in name] is a little closer to truth in advertising, since the 'center' is about him and never had much to do with culture, popular or otherwise," Joe Conason told me in an email. "Wrapping this publicity scam in 'freedom' and the flag is pretty vulgar but routine for him.

"Offhand, the closest example that comes to mind is the 'Trent Lott Leadership Institute' at Ole Miss, financed by lobbyists who know how to cultivate a Senator's vanity. Poor insecure David must stroke his own ego, albeit with plenty of Scaife money."

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