

# Social Justice Warriors' War Against the Enlightenment

by Lorna Salzman (March 2016)

The Enlightenment of the 18th century, whose principles enabled the rise of secular democracy, egalitarianism and human rights, was made flesh in the French Revolution and inscribed in our Constitution as the foundation of our country's statutes and political identity. It also made possible the scientific revolution that began in the previous century even as it provoked persecution of scientific free-thinkers by the Catholic church, whose doctrines and power structures were directly threatened.

Dissent and free inquiry were arguably the greatest gifts of the Enlightenment, and their absence today in the world of Islam has empowered Muslim theocracies based on irrationality and fanaticism as well as a resurgence of socially regressive "political" Hinduism in India, where the western legacy of evidence-based science and critical reason is being replaced by a Hinduism that claims to be the originator of modern physics and evolutionary biology and boasts of the power of "traditional" and alternative ways of seeing the world.

Meera Nanda recounts this in her important book "Prophets Looking Backwards," and those who read it will get clues to the new American culture wars being led mainly by feminists; it is no accident that their wrath has descended on the leading proponent of reason and science, evolutionary biologist and atheist Richard Dawkins. Islam and Hinduism and some strains of Buddhism embrace models of superstition and irrationality as a means of controlling the populace. In India it is a cynical ploy to gain the trust of the lower castes who often practice their own form of vigilantism by slandering and murdering innocent people accused of heretical acts. In the US, the Social Justice Warrior feminists have their own vigilantism via twitter and the internet, lynching nonconformist thinkers like Richard Dawkins.

This intellectual and moral void has relegated these theocracy-infused societies to little more than Neanderthal status in science, philosophy and culture. Foreign texts, art, philosophy, and science are essentially banned in

educational institutions while government and media conspire to prevent contamination by foreign influences. Some American liberals and most of the left still purvey theories about incipient "democratic" resistance starting with the Arab Spring, and with the rebellion against ISIS in the region, as signs of burgeoning democratic urges and now they and the liberal media promote the pretense that the influx of refugees from northern Africa and the middle east consists of persecuted innocent people fleeing tyrannical government repression.

This is of course the usual myth, echoing the leftist rant that indicts the Iraq war and the US for everything that is wrong in the world. But it is a myth without evidence, like all the others associated with religion, with no historic substantiation. Putting aside the centuries-long tribal, ethnic and religious conflicts, the simple fact is that overpopulation, religious doctrine and underdevelopment due to rejection of western secular values and science have led to a super-abundance of young, uneducated, unskilled and socially maladapted men who, seeing the flight of the truly persecuted Syrians, tagged on to their exodus to Western Europe...that same continent which their societies long regarded as morally and culturally degenerate but which now are imagined to be some kind of cornucopian refuge. Many refugees interviewed in recent weeks were stunned to discover that their expectation of a free house and job in the western welfare states was not being met. And many of the Iraqi refugees are now returning to their home country, having seen their hopes dashed.

Let us look at the new social resistance movements in the US, collectively called the Social Justice Warriors (SJW), exemplified by radical feminist attacks on white men and atheists, campus Identity Politics demanding "safe spaces," rejection of textbooks written by white men (Ovid being a special target), demands for protection from what they interpret as racist speech, Political Correctness, inculcation of white university teachers with a better attitude and more awareness of "racism," demands for "trigger warnings" of writings or speech that might make them uncomfortable, a reversion to the ugly notion of group as opposed to individual equality, calls for physical segregation (private rooms for meetings, separate dormitory facilities for blacks, etc.): these have become commonplace, in a situation where legitimate grievances are overwhelmed by absurdities like the renaming of schools, *ad hominem* attacks on peripheral individuals, and a laundry list of imaginary or fabricated grievances such as second-hand reports of hate speech or overheard

conversations where the listener detects a whiff of racism and which is about as reliable as the party game of telephone, where the last listener announces what she heard and it is light-years away from the original message.

This is secular doctrinal coercion intended to remove "white privilege" and replace it with "black privilege"...or women's privilege or gay privilege. To enhance this doctrine, those filing their complaints against an entire society are willing, even eager, to revive the segregation of the early 20th century, to submit whites to loyalty oaths, to coerce educational institutions into marginalizing or abandoning the intellectual creations of western civilization on grounds that our ancestors owned slaves or held some repugnant positions on race. Only their being dead deprives these critics of the ability to punish them personally; instead, all of American society must now pay penance by knuckling under to the new Stalinism.

But what does this have to do with radical Islamism? And what does it have to do with the vicious attacks by feminists on Richard Dawkins? Everything. Because Dawkins is talking about THEM: the feminists and the SJW, who represent the secular version of radical fundamentalist religion and in which their personal doctrinal dedication precludes dissent and dialogue, in the end discarding egalitarianism in favor of phenotypic preference, in a modern version of Social Darwinism. They recognize themselves as the subject of Dawkins' critiques, even when they are not named. And that's why they exploded at the famous cartoon re-posted by Dawkins, with the Islamist and the feminist comparing their agendas: they are identical. Of all people today, Dawkins most effectively represents the opposite of irrational fanatic ideology. Dawkins, a white western man, an "elitist" with impeccable intellectual credentials and status – with more media prominence than an Indian rapist, an Afghani husband to a nine-year old girl, a polygamist Arab or a Minnesota Somali recruit to Al Shabab – is the enemy rather than patriarchal misogynist Islam. And it is not accidental that this parallels the American left's claim that American "imperialism" is responsible for Islamist terrorism.

At its core, SJW, feminism and Identity Politics are all resistance movements against Enlightenment principles of reason, dissent, free thought and scientific inquiry. And no one articulates these values more credibly than Richard Dawkins...and his associate "New Atheists" such as Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, Michael Shermer and Jerry Coyne. Worse, these white men are powerful advocates

of evolution! This is that touchy subject inflicted on everyone in school, taught by professors in thrall to capitalism and corporate power, who do not sufficiently preach or abjectly accede to the goals of the SJW and the feminists, who do not preach cultural relativism, who do not indict our distant ancestors for today's plague of sexism, who do not adequately incorporate the feminist/left's own social justice principles into their daily lessons, and who do not play the game called "Phenotype Rules!" in which skin color or ethnicity displaces equal rights for individuals.

Evolution's enabler, natural selection, is condemned as the progenitor of inequality and "genetic determinism." Behavior or practices with an evolutionary basis are scorned as repressive, replaced by the Marxist doctrine (now rampant among cultural determinists and post-modernists) that society alone is to blame for human misbehavior – a modern version of Original Sin – and that therefore society must be engineered (by the left of course) to attain a just and equitable society. Social justice and feminist warriors seem to have missed the totalitarian implications of this doctrine, not to mention that others than themselves might end up doing the social engineering in the name of a different doctrine.

Like the old Stalin who spit in the face of science, persecuted the botanist Vavilov and discarded evolutionary biology in favor of political Lysenkoism (which squashed Russian science for decades), we are witnessing the dismissal not only of reason but of the notion of universal values and the replacement of the individual as the inheritor of rights with the concept of Group Rights. This is an old trick, and more than just diversionary. It is subversive of all the Enlightenment principles embodied in our Constitution and in our entire civil society. It is socially divisive, as we can see every day from the tussles on campuses and on the internet. And if Group Rights ever became the norm, then it's a coin toss as to who decides which Group gets the rights and which ones don't, or which group gets pilloried for its offenses.

In a word, the new social justice/feminism attack dogs are dancing to the same ideological tune as the Islamists and the fundamentalist Muslims. But instead of regarding women as the fount of everything repugnant, they are indicting white atheist men. Not the old boys' club of the U.S Congress, not the male board rooms of corporations, not the pederast priest, not the unpunished rapists in the U.S. military, not the Wall St. financiers and brokers who created the

expanding economic inequality that has thrown millions out of jobs, not the corporations who outsource or move their business abroad to avoid taxes and thus indirectly impoverish social, technological and infrastructure funding. To address these would be too much like work: intellectual work, physical work, time, money, organization. Far easier it is to limit yourself to what is nearby and easy to torment: the campus. And famous white men. It is far easier to curse atheists on twitter or the internet or confront an individual without worrying about evidence, without having to leave your computer and go out into the streets and do some actual political work. Far easier it is to insinuate and intimidate instead of debate. Far easier it is to manipulate, even create, stimulants of human guilt.

The SJW and feminists are, of course, not attacking religion or its many atrocities. To do so would be to align with Dawkins and the "new atheists", all white men who are stand-ins for a white male-dominated society. Nor are they, it should be noted emphatically, even discussing atheism. Why? Because Identity Politics does not allow it. IP by definition is an elevation of personal beliefs and feelings above societal concerns. The Personal becomes the Political, in the most egregious and egotistical sense. A SFW will not allow herself or her grievances to be deflected by acknowledging the oppression of Muslim women. Instead, she will align with some "moderate" Muslim man against white and western society, thus sparing him the trouble of confronting the atrocities of his religion. Thus has almost the entire American left recused itself from the major human rights battles of our time, leaving the field wide open to the right. Europe is now finding this out to its sorrow.

The irony of all this, amid the spectacle of a degraded and despised public space and discourse, is that today's overtly atheist movement was stimulated by a profound concern over a growing global human rights crisis caused mostly by religion: the persecution and murder of women, gays and apostates by a theocratic pseudo-nation-state calling itself Islam, a state founded on the rejection of reason and the embrace of irrationality and doctrinal fanaticism. The SJW movement appropriated the lesson brilliantly and adapted it to the secular context, ending up precisely alongside those such as climate change deniers, who promise to destroy every remnant of the Enlightenment. This is what is commonly known as giving aid and comfort to the enemy but in this case the enemy is a friend.

Today, following hundreds of Islam-motivated crimes and acts of terrorism, many liberals and most leftists still refuse to acknowledge that this religion is the largest agent opposing human rights in the world today. One might expect the SJW to place the inequality and abuse of women as a major (if not THE major) human rights problem in the world. In fact it has no clue about the scary resemblance of their movement to religious fanaticism and its corresponding curbs on human rights. And when a small cartoon notes this resemblance publicly, their fury cannot be contained. It is almost as if the pope announced evidence proving there were no God.

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Lorna Salzman's career as an environmental activist and writer began when the late David Brower hired her to be the regional representative of Friends of the Earth in NYC. Later she worked as an editor on *National Audubon's American Birds* magazine and as director of Food & Water, an early opponent of food irradiation, and then spent three years as a natural resource specialist in the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection. She co-founded the New York Green Party in 1984 and in 2004 she sought the U.S. Green Party's presidential nomination. She is the author of "[here](#)."

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