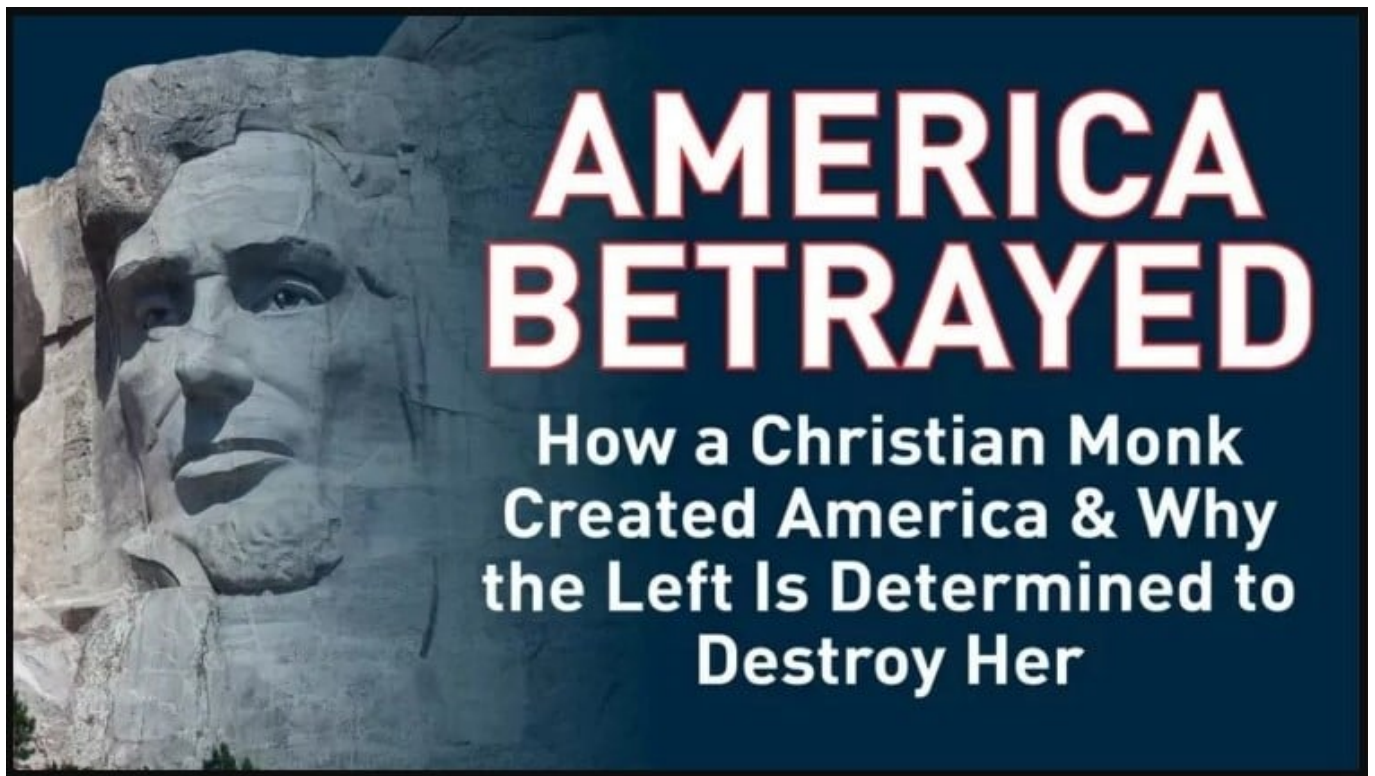


# David Horowitz Delivers 'America Betrayed'

By Bruce Bawer

During the last few years, while the American left and its media minions have been presenting clueless consumers with a narrative that's well-nigh unprecedented in the degree to which it deviates from the truth, David Horowitz, in a series of model books, has been busy setting the record straight.



Was Donald Trump's presidency an exercise in authoritarianism and a threat to our democracy? No, it was an attempt – foiled by his enemies in the deep state – to return the country to its constitutional roots. Was George Floyd a martyr in a nation founded on white supremacy? No, he was a thug who's been deified by race hustlers out to divide Americans along racial lines. Are corporate DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs a necessary measure to redress longtime prejudices and inequities? No, they're part of a cynical

Maoist attempt to compel universal acceptance of an ideology that's utterly at odds with core American values.

I've compared these short volumes – which form a distinctive sequence in Horowitz's large, storied, and wide-ranging *oeuvre* – to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and other pamphlets which, in the lead-up to the Declaration of Independence, played a crucial role in setting before the American public the argument for breaking from Britain. Now, in *America Betrayed*, Horowitz steps back from the present historical moment and from the left's current menu of mischievous machinations in order to elucidate the origins and essence of the American project – and the long history of malevolent efforts to derail it. Those efforts, as it happens, have repeatedly centered on race, hence Horowitz's declaration, in his preface, that he “wrote this book to provide a concise, easily digested and accurate history of race in America to serve as an antidote to the hateful lies progressives have promoted about their own country.”

To achieve this end, Horowitz first takes us back to the Protestant Reformation. His subtitle is *How a Christian Monk Created America & Why the Left Is Determined to Destroy Her*; the monk in question is none other than Martin Luther, whom, despite the fierce antisemitism of Luther's later years, he has come to admire as a key figure in the back story of America's founding. I should mention that fans of Horowitz who are also devout Catholics may find this part of the book problematic; but he's quite simply correct when he describes the Roman Catholic Church of Luther's time as a deeply corrupt authoritarian institution that, with no biblical warrant, and in defiance of the plain fact that all human beings (even priests, pontiffs, and prophets) are capable of evil, had “elevated the priesthood and the Church to superhuman heights.”

Among other things, the Catholic clergy, in their arrogance, claimed to possess the power to sell salvation itself in the

form of “indulgences” – a practice that Horowitz rightly condemns as an “unholy scam.” Taking on this nasty business, Luther “brought the Church to its knees” – an accomplishment that Horowitz compares to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s role in bringing down the Soviet Union – and, translating the Bible into German so that his followers could read the Word of God for themselves, accustomed them to the notions of freedom of conscience, the sanctity of the individual soul, and “the priesthood of all believers.” As Horowitz explains, the United States of America could never have been established – at least in the form that we know it – without a basis in these principles of Luther’s, which by the mid-18th century had come to be embraced by most Christians in northern Europe. To quote from *America Betrayed*: “The sanctity of the human soul: this is the foundation of all democracy and the nemesis of human tyranny.”

Of course, a generation of young Americans are now being taught – thanks in large part to more recent unholy scams like the *New York Times*’ mendacious 1619 Project – that their country was, uniquely, built not on the sanctity of the individual but on the evil of slavery, and that the enslavement of Africans was, from the outset, justified by its defenders entirely on the basis of racial superiority. Horowitz shoots down these falsehoods with bullets of truth. For example:

- The institution of slavery, far from being distinctively American, has existed in every time and nation since the dawn of history.
- America inherited slavery from the British, and, in recognition of its inherent evil, banned the slave trade in 1808 – only 21 years after the signing of the Constitution.
- The people who came to America as slaves were captured not by Americans but by their fellow Africans, who then

sold them to Europeans.

- Only a tiny percentage of the slaves transported to the Western hemisphere – to say nothing of the even more massive number of slaves who were shipped eastward from Africa – ended up in what is now the United States.
- Slavery in America was “relatively benign,” as demonstrated by the rapid growth (even after the slave trade ended) in America’s slave population.
- At the time of the Civil War there were 500,000 free blacks in the U.S., 3,000 of whom owned slaves – which belies the notion that it was “all about race.”
- Of 2.7 million Union soldiers, 360,000 died in the Civil War. In all history, there is no other example of one race making such sacrifices to free another.
- Slavery still exists today – not in any majority-white country, but in black Africa and the Muslim world.

No, far from being rooted in America’s founding principles, black slavery was, from the beginning, an affront to them. Most of America’s founders recognized this, and knew that one day the slavery question would have to be decided once and for all, probably on the field of battle. Given the number of soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice to end slavery, the 1619 Project’s lies are, as Horowitz puts it, “as malicious as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.”

To be sure, as in any society where multiple ethnic groups have lived side by side, there have always been ethnic frictions in the U.S. And yes, there *has* been terrible racism. But it wasn’t as prevalent in the colonial era as it was in the antebellum Republic – especially in the Southern states – in the decades leading up to the Civil War, where defenders of the “peculiar institution,” living in a country founded on freedom and equality, had no argument for their position other than that those principles didn’t apply to black slaves. And

why? Because, they maintained, those slaves, by virtue of their race, were *by definition* unequal, and thus unentitled to freedom. Needless to say, they had a weak case – and an un-American one. What was “distinctly American,” in other words, in the prewar arguments over slavery “was the declaration of equality embraced by the American majority, not the racist defense of slavery by the soon-to-be-defeated slaveholding majority.” Alas, the notion that blacks were naturally subordinate to whites persevered in the South for a century following the Civil War, providing a justification for Jim Crow and, during the presidency of the Virginia-born Woodrow Wilson, for the introduction of Dixie-style racial segregation into the federal government – a policy that was not reversed until World War II.

If the civil-rights movement of the mid-20th century won so much support – and accomplished so much reform so quickly – it was, affirms Horowitz, because the message of freedom and equality preached by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., was consistent with, and indeed firmly rooted in, America’s founding values – and, in turn, in the teachings of Martin Luther. One wonderful detail that Horowitz mentions here came as news to me: King’s father, who, like him, was a Baptist minister, was actually born Michael King, but, after he learned at a conference in Germany about the life and teachings of Martin Luther, he changed his name to Martin Luther King.

Thanks to Dr. King’s approach, the transformation of race relations in America during the second half of the 20th century was nothing short of miraculous. Dr. King had called for America to “live out the full meaning of its creed” – and it did. Yet in the 1960s and afterwards, even as racial prejudice was steadily diminishing on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line, race hustlers were stepping up their efforts to sow division. Jews had played an outsized role in the civil-rights movement, but hatemongers like Stokely Carmichael (aka

Kwame Ture) and Louis Farrakhan depicted Jews as devils. And in the 21st century, the Democratic Party, which had been the home of the KKK, reaffirmed its role as the “party of racial divisions” (Horowitz’s apt phrase) by embracing the tribalist – and explicitly Marxist – movement known as Black Lives Matter.

It goes without saying that Barack Obama would never have been elected (and re-elected) president if America had not overcome the blight of racism. But once ensconced in the Oval Office, he spoke of racism as America’s founding sin and of black slavery as if it had been a uniquely American evil. No surprise there: Obama was a devout disciple of the pernicious political theorist Saul Alinsky, who in books like *Rules for Radicals* preached that mankind is divided into oppressors and oppressed, and that the radical’s job is to drag down the former and empower the latter. During Obama’s presidency, the toxic notion of America as a “white supremacist” nation in which the oppressors had always been white and the oppressed always black became nothing less than establishment orthodoxy. So it is that those of us who reject this premise are now faced with the daunting task of somehow returning America to its senses, to its values – to *itself*.

By turns infuriating and inspiring, *America Betrayed* is a masterpiece of concision, tracing the American idea – the *real* American idea – from its Protestant roots to the present day with remarkable precision and clarity. Horowitz’s preface alone is full of sentences that should be carved in stone somewhere:

- “Given the prejudices and bigotries that are endemic to human beings of all races, Americans can be proud of their racial past and its contribution to human freedom, and especially the freedom of African Americans.”
- “Three hundred and sixty thousand mainly white Union soldiers sacrificed their lives to free black Africans

enslaved by their brothers.”

- “From America’s inception there was always a white movement of dedicated abolitionists, many of whom were willing to give their lives to win freedom for all blacks. There never was a successful revolt by the slaves themselves. If white Americans had been universally racist as leftists maintain, blacks in America would still be slaves. Instead, thanks to the sacrifices of white Americans, they are the most prosperous, most privileged, and free-est blacks in the world today, including all of black Africa and the West Indies.”

It’s fascinating, moreover, to learn about what the author refers to as his own youthful “flirtations” with Christianity. A lifelong secular Jew, Horowitz was nonetheless, for a time, a “Christian romantic.” During his second year of college, he was permitted to deliver a sermon at a Lutheran church in which he discussed Oscar Wilde’s short story “The Happy Prince,” which, in Horowitz’s view, “captured the Christian message.” Horowitz calls Wilde’s story “poignant,” and I found this anecdote itself quite poignant, because it captures something of what makes Horowitz stand out from all other conservative intellectuals of his generation. Which of them, after all, can you imagine as a 1950s college kid, preaching from a Lutheran pulpit about a story by Oscar Wilde, of all people? This passage, along with a handful of other autobiographical references, imbue *America Betrayed* with an affecting personal touch that makes it seem at times less similar to one of his potent political jeremiads of recent vintage and more reminiscent of his pithy meditative volumes with titles like *A Point in Time*. It is, in any event, a gem of a book, and should be read by everyone who’s been swayed by the left’s loathsome lies about race in America.

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