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# The Teflon Nativists: FAIR Marked By Ties To White Supremacy

by Heidi Beirich

The forces seeking to sharply reduce the number of immigrants coming to America won a stunning victory last June, when nativist anger at an "amnesty" for the undocumented scuttled a major bipartisan immigration reform package backed by President Bush. Many members of Congress were completely unprepared for the flood of angry E-mails, phone calls and faxes they received — an inundation so massive that the phone system collapsed under the weight of more than 400,000 faxes.

They should not have been surprised. The furious nativist tide was largely driven by an array of immigration restriction organizations that has been built up over the course of more than 20 years into fixtures in the nation's capital.

The vast majority of these groups were founded or funded by John Tanton, a major architect of the contemporary nativist movement who, 20 years ago, was already warning of a destructive "Latin onslaught" heading to the United States. Most of these organizations used their vast resources in the days leading up to a vote on the bill to stir up a nativist backlash that ultimately resulted in its death.

At the center of the Tanton web is the nonprofit Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the most important organization fueling the backlash against immigration. Founded by Tanton in 1979, FAIR has long been marked by anti-Latino and anti-Catholic attitudes. It has mixed this bigotry with a fondness for eugenics, the idea of breeding better humans discredited by its Nazi associations. It has accepted \$1.2 million from an infamous, racist eugenics foundation. It has employed officials in key positions who are also members of white supremacist groups. Recently, it has promoted racist conspiracy theories about Mexico's secret designs on the American Southwest and an alternative theory alleging secret plans to merge the United States, Mexico and Canada. Just last February, a senior FAIR official sought "advice" from the leaders of a racist Belgian political party.



John Tanton

FAIR officials declined repeated requests for comment.

None of this — or any other material evidencing the bigotry and racism that courses through the group — seems to have affected FAIR's media standing. In just the first 10 months of 2007, the group was quoted in mainstream media outlets nearly 500 times with virtually no mention of its more unsavory aspects. FAIR President Dan Stein was featured on CNN's "Lou Dobbs Tonight" at least 12 times in the same period, along with countless appearances on other television news shows. And, perhaps most remarkably of

all, FAIR has been taken seriously by Congress, which has called upon its officials to testify on immigration more than 30 times since 2000.

"The sad fact is that attempts to reform our immigration system are being sabotaged by organizations fueled by hate," said Henry Fernandez, a senior fellow and expert on immigration at the Center for American Progress, a "progressive" think tank. "Many anti-immigrant leaders have backgrounds that should disqualify them from even participating in mainstream debate, yet the American press quotes them without ever noting their bizarre and often racist beliefs."



FAIR official Dan Stein, second from left, testified before a House Judiciary subcommittee in 2003, one of 30 FAIR appearances before Congress since 2000. FAIR's opinion is sought despite its well-documented links to extremism.

### **The Founder: Early Hints**

For decades, John Tanton has operated a nativist empire out of his U.S. Inc. foundation's headquarters in Petoskey, Mich. Even as he simultaneously runs his own hate group — The Social Contract Press, listed for many years by the Southern Poverty Law Center because of its anti-Latino and white supremacist writings — Tanton has remained the house intellectual for FAIR. In fact, U.S. Inc. bankrolls much of FAIR's lobbying activity and, at least until 2005, Tanton ran its Research and Publications Committee, the group that fashions and then disseminates FAIR's position papers. In its 2004 annual report, FAIR highlighted its own main ideologue, singing Tanton's praises for "visionary qualities that have not waned one bit."

But what, exactly, is Tanton's vision?

As long ago as 1988, when a series of internal 1986 documents known as the WITAN memos were leaked to the press, Tanton's bigoted attitudes have been known. In the memos, written to colleagues on the staff of FAIR, Tanton warned of a coming "Latin onslaught" and worried that high Latino birth rates would lead "the present majority to hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile." Tanton repeatedly demeaned Latinos in the memos, asking whether they would "bring with them the tradition of the mordida [bribe], the lack of involvement in public affairs" and also questioning Latinos' "educability."

Echoing his 19th-century nativist forebears who feared Catholic immigrants from Italy and Ireland, Tanton has often attacked Catholics in terms not so different from those used by the Klan and the Know-Nothing Party of the 1840s. In the WITAN memos, for instance, he worried that Latino immigrants would endanger the separation of church and state and undermine support for public schooling. Never one to miss a threatening and fertile Catholic, Tanton even reminded his colleagues, "Keep in mind that many of the Vietnamese coming in are also Catholic."

The leaked memos caused an uproar. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Walter Cronkite quit the board of a group Tanton headed, U.S. English, after the memos became public in 1988. U.S. English Executive Director Linda Chavez — a former Reagan Administration official and, later, a conservative commentator — also left, calling Tanton's views "anti-Hispanic, anti-Catholic and not excusable."

In 1994, Tanton's Social Contract Press republished an openly racist French book, *The Camp of the Saints*, with Tanton writing that he was "honored" to republish the race war novel. What Tanton called a "prescient" book describes the takeover of France by "swarthy hordes" of Indians, "grotesque little beggars from the streets of Calcutta," who arrive in a desperate refugee flotilla. It attacks white liberals who, rather than turn the Indians away, "empty out all our hospital beds so that cholera-ridden and leprous wretches could sprawl between white sheets ... and cram our nurseries full of monster children." It explains how, after the Indians take over France, white women are sent to a "whorehouse for Hindus." In an afterword special to Tanton's edition of the novel, author Jean Raspail wrote about his fears that "the proliferation of other races dooms our race, my race, to extinction."

Tanton's view of the book he published? "We are indebted to Jean Raspail for his insights into the human condition, and for being 20 years ahead of this time. History will judge him more kindly than have some of his contemporaries."

Tanton has repeatedly suggested that racial conflict will be the outcome of immigration, saying in the WITAN memos that "an explosion" could be the result of whites' declining "power and control over their lives." More than a decade later, in 1998, he made a similar point in an interview with a reporter, suggesting that whites would inevitably develop a racial consciousness because "most people don't want to disappear into the dustbin of history." Tanton added that once whites did become racially conscious, the result would be "the war of each against all."

In 1997, Tanton spelled out his views on the inevitability of immigration overwhelming American whites. "In the bacteriology lab, we have culture plates," he explained. "You put a bug in there and it starts growing and gets bigger and bigger. And it grows until it finally fills the whole plate. And it crashes and dies."

### **The Founder's Friends**

It's no surprise that Tanton employs people with similar views. His long-time deputy, for

example, is Wayne Lutton, who works out of Tanton's Petoskey offices and edits the journal, *The Social Contract*, published by Tanton's press. Lutton is not just linked to white supremacist ideas, many of which he publishes in his journal — he has actually held leadership positions in four white nationalist hate groups: the Council of Conservative Citizens, the National Policy Institute, and *The Occidental Quarterly* and *American Renaissance*, both racist publications. Lutton has written for the *Journal of Historical Review*, which specializes in Holocaust denial. Early on, Lutton and Tanton collaborated on *The Immigration Invasion*, a nativist screed that has been seized by Canadian border officials as hateful contraband.



Joe Turner started the group SaveOurState.org, which tolerates neo-Nazis' presence at anti-immigration rallies.

Under Lutton's editorial leadership, Tanton's journal has published dozens of articles from prominent white supremacists. One special issue was even devoted to the theme of "Europhobia: The Hostility Toward European-Descended Americans" and featured a lead article from John Vinson, head of the Tanton-backed hate group, the American Immigration Control Foundation. Vinson argued that multiculturalism was replacing "successful Euro-American culture" with "dysfunctional Third World cultures." Tanton elaborated in his own remarks, decrying the "unwarranted hatred and fear" of whites that he blamed on "multiculturalists" and immigrants.

Presumably, these articles and more are well known to Stein, the president of FAIR — until 2003, he was an editorial adviser to *The Social Contract*. And Stein had lots of company. FAIR board members Sharon Barnes and Diana Hull also have been on the journal's board of editorial advisers. FAIR's current media director, Ira Mehlman, was an adviser in 2001 and 2002, and his essay, "Grand Delusions: Open Borders Will Destroy Society," was published in the journal's pages. Today, FAIR still advertises *The Social Contract* on its website, saying the journal "offers in-depth studies on immigration, population, language, assimilation, environment, national unity and balance of individual rights and civil responsibilities."

So where does FAIR stand on the matter of Tanton's views? The group has never criticized or sought distance from its founder. In 2004, in fact, Stein insisted that Tanton "never asserted the inferiority or superiority of any racial, ethnic or religious group.

Never." The same year, FAIR hosted a gala event honoring Tanton for his 25 years of service. To this day, Tanton remains on FAIR's board.

### **The Eugenics Connection**

Probably the best-known evidence of FAIR's extremism is its acceptance of funds from a notorious, New York City-based hate group, the Pioneer Fund. In the mid-1980s, when FAIR's budgets were still in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, the group reached out to Pioneer Fund, which was established in 1937 to promote the racial stock of the original colonists, finance studies of race and intelligence, and foster policies of "racial betterment." (Pioneer has concentrated on studies meant to show that blacks are less intelligent than whites, but it has also backed nativist groups like ProjectUSA, run by former FAIR board member Craig Nelsen.)

The Pioneer Fund liked what it saw and, between 1985 and 1994, disbursed about \$1.2 million to FAIR. In 1997, when the *Phoenix New Times* confronted Tanton about the matter, he "claimed ignorance about the Pioneer Fund's connection to numerous researchers seemingly intent on proving the inferiority of blacks, as well as its unsavory ties to Nazism." But he sounded a different tune in 2001, when he insisted that he was "comfortable being in the company of other Pioneer Fund grantees." Today, Tanton's defense is that he is no different than the "open borders



Richard Lamm

crowd" that accepts money from the liberal Ford Foundation, which was founded by Henry Ford, the anti-Semitic auto manufacturer. What he ignores is that the Ford Foundation, unlike the Pioneer Fund, is not promoting racist ideas.

Some have called for FAIR to return the Pioneer money, but that has not happened. In fact, when asked about it in 1993, Stein told a reporter, "My job is to get every dime of Pioneer's money." One reason for Stein's lack of hesitation may be that FAIR has long been interested in the pseudo-science of eugenics.

One of FAIR's long-time leaders, and a personal hero to Tanton, is the late Garrett Hardin, a committed eugenicist and for years a professor of human ecology at the University of California. Hardin, who died in 2003, was himself a Pioneer Fund grantee, using the fund's money to expand his 1968 essay, "The Tragedy of the Commons." In it, Hardin wrote, "Freedom to breed will bring ruin to all."

### **Race War and the Duty to Die**

That was the least of it. In a 1992 interview with *Omni* magazine, Hardin said he supported infanticide — "A fetus is of so little value, there's no point worrying about it" — as "effective population control." He argued the Third World is filled with "the next

generation of breeders" who need to be stopped. He discouraged aid to starving Africans because that would only "encourage population growth."

Hardin wasn't alone. A current FAIR board member, three-time Democratic governor of Colorado Richard Lamm, sounded a similar theme in 1984, while still governor, saying "terminally ill people have a duty to die and get out of the way."

Like Tanton, Lamm seems to fear a coming race war. In his futuristic 1985 novel, *Megatraumas: America at the Year 2000*, Lamm sketches it out like this: "[O]ur lack of control of our borders allowed 2 million legal and illegal immigrants to settle in the United States every year. That caused unemployment to rise to 15.2 percent by 1990 and 19.1 percent this year. ... [T]he rash of firebombings throughout the Southwest, and the three-month siege of downtown San Diego in 1998 were all led by second-generation Hispanics, the children of immigrants."

As late as 2004, Lamm was sounding similar racial fears, telling a reporter that "new cultures" in the U.S. "are diluting what we are and who we are."

For his part, Stein was asked about Hardin's belief that only "intelligent people" should breed for an editorial by Tucker Carlson in the 1997 *Wall Street Journal*. "Yeah, so what?" Stein replied. "What is your problem with that?"

After Hardin's death, John Tanton created in honor of his mentor a group called The Garrett Hardin Society, devoted to "the preservation of [Hardin's] writings and ideas." On the society's board are Tanton, Wayne Lutton and U.S. Inc.'s recently appointed chief executive, John Rohe, the author of an adoring 2002 biography of Tanton and his wife that reads like the life of a saint.

## **Hiring Haters**

In late 2006, FAIR hired as its western field representative, a key organizing position, a man named Joseph Turner. Turner was likely attractive to FAIR because he wrote what turned out to be a sort of model anti-illegal immigrant ordinance for the city of San Bernardino, Calif. Based on Turner's work, FAIR wrote a version of the law that is now promoted to many other cities. (The law almost certainly violates the Constitution, but that has not stopped many municipalities' interest.)

But there was more to Turner than FAIR let on. In 2005, Turner had created, and then led, a nativist group called Save Our State. The group was remarkable for its failure to disassociate itself from the neo-Nazi skinheads who often joined its rallies — something that virtually all other nativist groups, worried about bad publicity, worked hard to do. Save Our State's electronic bulletin board, too, was remarkable for the racist vitriol that frequently appeared there.

It was in that forum that Turner made one of his more controversial remarks, amounting to a defense of white separatism. "I can make the argument that just because one believes in white separatism that that does not make them a racist," Turner wrote in 2005. "I can make the argument that someone who proclaims to be a white nationalist isn't necessarily a white supremacist. I don't think that standing up for your 'kind' or 'your race' makes you a bad person." The Southern Poverty Law Center has listed Save Our State as a hate group since it appeared in 2005.



Joe Turner

Turner's predecessor in the FAIR organizing post, Rick Oltman, was cut from the same cloth. Oltman has been described as a member of the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC) in the publications of that hate group, which is directly descended from the segregationist White Citizens Councils and has described blacks as "a retrograde species of humanity." He has spoken at at least one of the CCC's conferences and has taken part in one of its rallies. And he wasn't alone.

According to the CCC newsletter, FAIR's longtime associate director, Dave Ray, was scheduled to speak at another CCC event. And, in September 2002, FAIR Eastern Regional Coordinator Jim Stadenraus participated in an anti-immigration conference on Long Island, N.Y., with Jared Taylor. Taylor is both a CCC member and the founder of the racist eugenicist publication, *American Renaissance*.

FAIR has also produced programming featuring hate group leaders linked to the CCC. According to the anti-racist Center for New Community, FAIR's now defunct television production, "Borderline," featured interviews with Taylor and Sam Francis, who edited the CCC's newsletter until his death in 2005.

Donald Collins, a member of both FAIR's board of directors and its board of advisers, has his own ties to white supremacy. Collins posts frequently to a hate website called Vdare.com, which is named after Virginia Dare (said to be the first white child born in the New World) and publishes the work of white supremacists and anti-Semites. Collins also has been published in *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, a periodical run by longtime academic racist Roger Pearson. (Pearson founded the Eugenics Society in 1963 and worked with at least one former SS officer in England. He is also the recipient of several Pioneer Fund grants.)

Several of Collins' articles have attacked Catholics and their church for their pro-immigrant stances. In one, he accused Los Angeles Archbishop Roger Mahony of selling out his country "in exchange for more temporal power and glory." Collins has also accused Catholic bishops of "infiltrating and manipulating the American political process" in order to undermine the separation of church and state.

Collins is not FAIR's only link to the Vdare.com hate site. Joe Guzzardi, a member of FAIR's board of advisers, is the editor of Vdare.com. He writes there frequently about how Latin American immigrants come to the United States in order to "reconquer" it — a conspiracy theory pushed by numerous hate groups.



Joe Guzzardi

### **Bad Press**

By and large, FAIR has escaped negative publicity, generally being depicted as a mainstream critic of American immigration policy. But there are exceptions.

In 2000, FAIR ran ads opposing the reelection of Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.), a Lebanese American who defeated Tanton in the primaries, because he had supported issuing more visas for immigrants with high-tech skills. The ads featured side-by-side photos of Abraham and Osama bin Laden and this question: "Why is Senator Abraham trying to make it easier for terrorists like Osama bin Laden to export their war of terror to any city street in America?" The ads also accused the senator of pushing a bill that would "take American jobs. Our jobs."

The ads produced an immediate controversy, and a staunch conservative, Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), quit FAIR in protest. Under attack, Stein insisted the ads weren't racist and later claimed that he'd thought Abraham was Jewish.

That same year, FAIR helped fund ads in Iowa that were rejected as "borderline racist" by the general manager of WHO-TV in Des Moines. When the same ads appeared in Nebraska, Sen. Chuck Hagel, a Republican, lost his temper. "The trash that this crowd puts out is just beyond terrible," Hagel said.



Rick Oltman

Four years later in Texas, the Coalition for the Future of the American Worker — a FAIR front group designed to look like it represents labor interests — ran ads heavy on images of dark-skinned men loitering on corners and running from police cars. One of the ad's prime targets, Rep. Martin Frost (D-Texas), condemned the ads as racist. His Republican challenger, Pete Sessions, found them so repugnant that he joined Frost in calling for them to be yanked off the air in their district.

In 2004, FAIR made an extremely unusual criticism of a fellow nativist, a woman named Virginia Abernethy who had just joined the national advisory board of Protect Arizona Now (PAN). PAN, aided by some \$600,000 from FAIR, had worked to collect signatures for a referendum (which ultimately passed) to require proof of citizenship when registering to vote or signing up for public benefits. But as Election Day neared, newspapers trumpeted the revelation that PAN's new adviser was a self-declared "white separatist" who had long been active in the CCC.



FAIR reacted instantly with a pious press release denouncing "Abernethy's repulsive views." The release left many scratching their heads — FAIR, after all, had CCC members on its payroll, and any number of other ties to the group. Its own officials had in several cases endorsed similar separatist views. And Tanton, FAIR's founder and chief ideologue, was intimately familiar with Abernethy's work. After all, he had published her writings frequently in *The Social Contract* and his editor, Wayne Lutton, had shared the podium with Abernethy at forums of the CCC.

### **Whither FAIR?**

Following the defeat of the bipartisan immigration package this summer, FAIR flew into action one more time. This time, it went after the DREAM Act, a widely supported, bipartisan bill that would have provided a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrant students accepted to college. FAIR was the key advocate for its defeat and, sure enough, the DREAM Act finally died this October.

Is this the future for FAIR? Will journalists, politicians and the general public continue to take the organization and its nativist propaganda seriously?

Dan Stein thinks so.

As he put it at FAIR's 25th anniversary celebration in 2004, just when the American nativist movement had begun to sense its own strength: "[T]oday," he said, "as the country moves finally into a serious and realistic debate, the founders have created a mature and knowledgeable organization prepared to lead."

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