



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 25, 2011

Glenn Beck vs. Frances Fox Piven

In the wake of the Tucson shootings, conservative pundit and Fox News television host Glenn Beck called upon all Americans to reject violence. Beck also reached out to members of Congress to sign a pledge repudiating all violence. The pledge listed examples of the type of violence that should be denounced, ranging from far right-wing militias to leftist Frances Fox Piven's calls for violent revolution. Sadly, a mere 14 lawmakers signed on to the pledge. What's worse than such a pitiful display of anti-violent solidarity, however, is that the mainstream media has latched onto Beck's targeting of Frances Fox Piven and is now perpetrating a battle between Beck and Piven.



Since his start on the Fox News channel two years ago, Beck has exposed Francis Fox Piven's strategy to overwhelm the government welfare rolls and collapse the system. He has also indicated that Piven's strategy of overloading the system involves necessary violence. [Stanley Kurtz](#) of the *National Review* explains Piven's violent stance:

Calls for the escalation and manipulation of violent rioting have long been central to Piven's strategy. Her 1977 book with Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, detailed the rationale behind the infamous crisis strategy of a decade before. The core argument is that the poor and unemployed are so isolated from the levers of power in America that their greatest potential impact is to withhold "quiescence in civil life: they can riot."

At the heart of the book, Cloward and Piven luxuriously describe instances of "mob looting," "rent riots," and similar disruptions, egged on especially by Communist-party organizers in the 1930s. Many of those violent protests resulted in injuries. A few led to deaths. The central argument of *Poor People's Movements* is that it was not formal democratic activity but violent disruptions inspired by leftist organizers that forced the first great expansion of the welfare state.

Toward the end of the book, when Cloward and Piven describe their own work with the National Welfare Rights Organization, they treat the violent urban rioting of the Sixties as a positive force behind the era's expansion of the welfare state."

Her calls for violence did not simply end with her book, however. Appearing at the [University of Wisconsin](#) years later, Piven addressed the use of violence in protest. She argued that protestors should try to avoid violence during protests as a means of self-defense, since violent outbursts could lead to injuries against the protestors. She also asserted that when the left uses violence, the media and conservatives could pounce on it and hold it against the protestors. As such, she declared, "Unless you have a good reason for breaking a window, you probably shouldn't do that...unless it's part of a bigger strategy." What could the bigger strategy be?



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In December, Piven wrote a piece for [The Nation](#) wherein she encourages the unemployed to get angry and says that an effective jobless movement in the United States should mirror those found in Greece and England:

“So where are the angry crowds, the demonstrations, sit-ins and unruly mobs? After all, the injustice is apparent. Working people are losing their homes and their pensions while robber -baron CEOs report renewed profits and windfall bonuses. Shouldn’t the unemployed be on the march? Why aren’t they demanding enhanced safety net protections and big initiatives to generate jobs?

An effective movement of the unemployed will have to look something like the strikes and riots that have spread across Greece in response to the austerity measures forced on the Greek government by the European Union, or like the student protests that recently spread with lightning speed across England in response to the prospect of greatly increased school fees.”

In February 2009, Piven indicated that there needs to be “tumult disorder pressure” that would ultimately force President Obama to “make choices.” She also went on to cite what she dubbed great moments of American change, which she stated began with elections and were coupled with “powerful, disruptive, unruly movements from the bottom of society.” Examples of how to bring about much-needed change, according to Piven include, “striking for example or by blockading the streets or by shutting down the schools.”

On December 5, 2010, Piven spoke of the housing crisis. “There’s much more I think labor could do. A lot of working people are losing their homes through foreclosure. Now all the pieces are in place for a massive defiant movement.”

In a [November 17, 2010](#) Office Hours Podcast with the University of Minnesota, Piven celebrated “labor power” as a means for progressives, socialists, and social democrats to make things happen. She also heavily endorsed the use of “strike power” that would ultimately “cause a lot of trouble.”

It’s fair to say that Piven has at the very least a healthy affection for violence.

However, all of this has been ultimately ignored by the mainstream media outlets like the [New York Times](#), who has openly criticized Beck for “elevating a 78-year old liberal academic to celebrity of a different sort, in a way that some say is endangering her life.”

According to Piven and the *Times*, threats against Piven appeared both on Beck’s website *The Blaze* — though the threats have since been removed from the website — as well as via direct email, and she blames Beck’s portrayal of her for it.

The *Times* cited a letter written by liberal nonprofit group, the Center for Constitutional Rights, that called upon Fox News to put a stop to Beck’s “false accusations” about Piven.

“Mr. Beck is putting Professor Piven in actual physical danger of a violent response,” the letter reads.

In response, Fox News senior vice president, Joel Cheatwood, refused, asserting that Beck has accurately portrayed Piven and that he never once threatened her.

“The Glenn Beck Program, probably above and beyond any on television, has denounced violence repeatedly, “ said Mr. Cheatwood.

The *Times* also attempts to vindicate Piven’s calls for violence as “rhetorical tricks.” The article also goes out of its way to prove that Beck has inflated Cloward and Piven’s 1966 article, “The Weight of the Poor: A Strategy to End Poverty,” to appear far more harmful than it was intended to be.



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Since the publication of the *Times* article, Beck has responded to the accusations that he has helped to stir up violence against Piven. According to Beck, the *Times* article is merely a “hatchet job.” Beck also points out that the organization that came out in defense of Piven, the Center for Constitutional Rights has the backing of George Soros, the same man who declared war on Glenn Beck and has invested millions in organizations for the purpose of trying to get Beck off the air.

The Blaze reports of the liberal group:

In 2007, the website NGO Monitor, a watchdog for NGOs or Non-Government Organizations, wrote a summary of CCR’s activities and funding. The website said the group’s ‘activities have become more radicalized.’ At the same time the article was published, NGO Monitor wrote that the group received ‘large donations from the Ford Foundation and George Soros’ Open Society Institute.’ Another site, [DiscoverTheNetworks.org](#), points out that Soros was funneling money to CCR as far back as 2004.

Also responding to the *Times* article, *Wall Street Journal* reporter James Taranto [wrote](#):

The idea that Beck is to blame for these alleged threats is baseless. That is why the *Times* makes this accusation only indirectly, through insinuation and innuendo, consistent with its recent journalist modus operandi. Indeed, what exactly is Beck supposed to have done wrong here? There is no allegation that anything he has said about Piven or her ideas is untrue, save for her denial in the *Times* that she has advocated violence, which is contradicted by her own quote in the previous paragraph.

Taranto adds that there is no evidence that Beck has advocated any violence against Piven.

So why would the *New York Times* involve themselves in this battle? According to Taranto:

Why is a newspaper that has been posturing as the scourge of violent rhetoric now siding with a purveyor of such rhetoric, and blatantly slanting the news as it does so? Because her opponent is a prominent media figure from outside the old media establishment. Because Glenn Beck is a threat to the authority of the *New York Times*.

What does Saul Alinsky’s [Rules for Radicals](#) propose as a means to deal with threats like Beck? Rule number 11 reads, “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it.”

Seems the Left already has that one covered.



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