



NAACP Releases Report on Tea Party Racism

Earlier this week, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights announced their intent to release a report entitled, *Tea Party Nationalism: A Critical Examination of the Tea Party Movement and the Size, Scope, and Focus of its National Factions*.

Released on Wednesday, October 20, the report focuses specifically on six major Tea Party groups: FreedomWorks, 1776 Tea Party, Tea Party Nation, Tea Party Patriots, ResistNet, and the Tea Party Express. Co-authored by Leonard Ziskind and Devin Burghart. It ultimately concludes that the Tea Party movement is permeated with concerns about race and that the individual Tea Party groups have given platform to anti-Semites, racists, and bigots.



According to the introduction, This report documents the corporate structures and leaderships, their finances, and membership concentrations of each faction. It looks at the actual relationship of these factions to each other, including some of the very explicit differences they have with each other. And we begin an analysis of the larger politics that motivate each faction and the Tea Party movement generally.

The report meticulously outlines alleged racist and ethnocentric tendencies in Tea Party organizations as it proceeds through a variety of chapters: "Introduction"; "Local Tea Party Chapters"; "Origins of the Tea Parties"; "Tea Party Nation At A Glance"; "Tea Parties Racism, Anti-Semitism and the Militia Impulse"; "Tea Party Patriots At A Glance"; "Who is an American? Tea Parties, Nativism, and the Birthers"; "Tea Party Express At A Glance"; "Correlation Between Unemployment Levels and Tea Party Membership?"; and "FreedomWorks At A Glance."

The chapter entitled *Tea Parties-Racism, Anti-Semitism, and the Militia Impulse* is perhaps the most troubling. It begins:

This section of the Special Report compiles opinion polling data, documents significant examples of racist vitriol on the part of the Tea Party leaders, shows incidents where well-known anti-Semites and white supremacists have been given a platform by Tea Partiers, and analyzes the attempt by white nationalist organizations to find new recruits in Tea Party ranks.

However, much of the cited material includes the presence of Confederate battle flags, signs that read *America is a Christian nation*, and racist caricatures of President Obama," all of which are presented as indicators of racism. Another instance of racism addressed in this section are venom (and spittle) directed at African-American Congressmen during the health care debate, an [incident](#) which has long



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since been proven to be wholly exaggerated.

What is most notable about this section in the report, however, are the areas with which the writers take issue, such as assertions by Tea Party leaders that owning a firearm is a constitutional right, Tea Partiers defense of militias, strict Christian ideologies, and pride in the Confederacy .

Additionally, much of this chapter, as well as the report as a whole, seems to rest on unproved assertions, such as The Council of Conservative Citizens is the largest white nationalist organization in the country and the group most active in the Tea Parties, a claim seemingly unfounded and devoid of any citations to support the statement.

Similarly, the chapter Who is an American? Tea Parties, Nativism, and the Birthers, rests on highly subjective examples to prove Tea Party racism. While describing the nationalism of the Tea Party movement, the chapter clarifies:

It is a form of American nationalism, however, that does not include all Americans, and separates itself from those it regards as insufficiently “real Americans.” Consider in this regard, a recent Tea Party Nation newsletter article entitled, “Real Americans Did Not Sue Arizona. Or the hand-drawn sign at a Tea Party rally that was obviously earnestly felt: “I am a arrogant American, unlike our President. I am proud of my country, our freedom, our generosity, no apology from me”

The chapter goes on to align the birther movement to the Tea Party movement, simply because a handful of birthers have been found at Tea Party events. The chapter goes on to criticize birthers for convincing an increased number of Americans to believe that the President is not a Christian, even though social scientists have not yet said that this jump in the numbers was caused by Tea Partiers propaganda.

Overall, the report appears to be the random and unproven musings of a disgruntled group of people. It provided the NAACP with yet another opportunity to publicly reprimand the Tea Party movement for failing to repudiate racism, a point of contention addressed in a resolution passed by the NAACP at a July convention. The resolution came on the heels of accusations that black Congressmen had [racial slurs](#) shouted to them and were spit upon prior to the health care law vote, though all claims have since been refuted.

While the report does admit that Tea Party leaders have expelled racist leaders like Mark Williams of the Tea Party Express, calling such maneuvers a welcome first step, and that most members of the Tea Party movement are sincere, principle people of good will, it unfairly generalizes an entire group based on the actions of a minute portion. Many of the actions and behaviors on which that minute portion are judged in the report are often subjective, and in some cases, unproved.

In a statement issued by NAACP President Ben Jealous prior to the release of the report, he indicated, These groups and individuals are out there, and we ignore them at our own peril. They are speaking at Tea Party events, recruiting at rallies and in some cases remain in the Tea Party leadership itself. The danger is not that the majority of Tea Party members share their views, but that left unchecked, these extremists might indirectly influence the direction of the Tea Party and therefore the direction of our country: moving it backward and not forward.

In response to the report, Sal Russo, political consultant of the Tea Party Express, says, To attack a grassroots movement of this magnitude with sundry isolated incidents only goes to show the NAACP has abandoned the cause of civil rights for the advancement of liberal Democratic policies.



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CEO Arthur R. Thompson of the John Birch Society articulates similar sentiments: The NAACP has a habit of calling anything racist or bigoted that disagrees with their socialist agenda. They have a long history of that.

He adds, They have destroyed black leaders who stood up for the Constitution or self-reliance. This has been their pattern since they ostracized Booker T. Washington.

Ultimately, the danger of crying racism, notes Thompson, is that once something is branded racist, many people [then] don't look at the argument. They look at the emotion.

Tea Party organizations have thus far dismissed the report as another tactic in the smear campaign launched by the NAACP against the Tea Party movement.

Read also: [NAACP Set to Release Report on Tea Party Racism](#)

Photo: The Rev. Jesse Jackson, left, listens to NAACP president Ben Jealous at the 101st annual NAACP convention July 14, 2010, in Kansas City, Mo.: AP Images



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