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## **The right has its own version of political correctness. It's just as stifling.**

*Conservatives use “patriotic correctness” to regulate speech, behavior and acceptable opinions.*

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President-elect Donald Trump has not been shy about the “big problem in this country”: political correctness. Trump has blamed PC for the attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando (“They have put political correctness above common sense, above your safety and above all else,” he tweeted) and the rise of the militant group Islamic State. His voters agreed (indeed, it might even have been the reason for his victory).

It's not just him. Political correctness has become a major bugaboo of the right in the past decade, a rallying cry against all that has gone wrong with liberalism and America. Conservative writers fill volumes complaining how political correctness stifles free expression and promotes bunk social theories about “power structures” based on patriarchy, race and mass victimhood. Forbes charged that it “stifles freedom of speech.” The Daily Caller has gone so far as to claim that political correctness “kills Americans.”

But conservatives have their own, nationalist version of PC, their own set of rules regulating speech, behavior and acceptable opinions. I call it “patriotic correctness.” It's a full-throated, un-nuanced, uncompromising defense of American nationalism, history and cherry-picked ideals. Central to its thesis is the belief that nothing in America can't be fixed by more patriotism enforced by public shaming, boycotts and policies to cut out foreign and non-American influences.

Insufficient displays of patriotism among the patriotically correct can result in exclusion from public life and ruined careers. It also restricts honest criticism of failed public policies, diverting blame for things like the war in Iraq to those Americans who didn't support the war effort enough.

For example, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the run-up to the Iraq War, David Frum labeled dissenters as anti-American. Jonah Goldberg wrote that opponents of the war “can only get

passionate about the perfidy of our own president.” Conservative gadfly Robert “Buzz” Patterson went further, calling much of the Democratic Party, Hollywood, big media, college campuses and many other organizations “traitors.” The French government’s opposition to the invasion of Iraq prompted Congress to rename French fries as “freedom fries” in congressional cafeterias, a 21st-century liberty cabbage. When the Dixie Chicks opposed the Iraq War, many stations pulled the group’s music from the air so as not to “trigger” listeners. Fans destroyed Dixie Chicks albums in grotesque public demonstrations. The radio became a safe space.

More recently, 49er quarterback Colin Kaepernick sat and then knelt for the national anthem to protest police brutality. Tomi Lahren, host of “Final Thoughts,” gave an incoherent rant about soldiers dying for Kaepernick’s right to speak so, therefore, he should shut up and stand for the national anthem. Some fans even burned their Kaepernick jerseys in protest. Others said Kaepernick should “get the hell out” if he doesn’t love America. Myths of an NFL rule mandating standing for the anthem, even though no such rule actually exists, were spread to justify the outrage and point to a double standard of enforcement whereby the NFL condones protests against America but players get fined if they wear different-color shoelaces. In such a narrative, patriots are the victims of an elite liberal power structure.

Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.) tweeted that “Kaepernick should think about the service members risking their lives to protect his freedom to be both rich and unpatriotic.” Kaepernick’s microaggression even offended liberal Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who said the protest was “dumb and disrespectful,” words she later retracted.

Believing in American exceptionalism means that anything less than chest-thumping jingoism is capitulation. Unionized public employees who can’t be fired are bad at their jobs and are more interested in increasing their own power than fulfilling their public duties — except if they are police or Border Patrol officers, who are unselfishly devoted to their jobs. The crime rate is high and rising, so when facts show that criminality has declined substantially over the decades, the patriotically correct respond with appeals to the bubbled feelings of the common man.

One of the biggest critics of patriotic correctness is National Review writer Jim Geraghty. He responded to outrage over Jeb Bush and his wife, Columba, speaking Spanish at home by writing, “What business is it of yours?” and said there is “something bafflingly insecure about our culture if we genuinely feel threatened by foreign languages spoken in the private sphere of the family home.”

Complaining about political correctness is patriotically correct. The patriotically correct must use the non-word “illegals,” or “illegal immigrant” or “illegal alien” to describe foreigners who broke our immigration laws. Dissenters support “open borders” or “shamnesty” for 30 million illegal alien invaders. The punishment is deportation because “we’re a nation of laws” and they didn’t “get in line,” even though no such line actually exists. Just remember that they are never anti-immigration, only anti-illegal immigration, even when they want to cut legal immigration.

Black Lives Matter is racist because it implies that black lives are more important than other lives, but Blue Lives Matter doesn’t imply that cops’ lives are more important than the rest of ours. Banning Islam or Muslim immigration is a necessary security measure, but homosexuals should not be allowed to get married because it infringes on religious liberty. Transgender people

could access women's restrooms for perverted purposes, but Donald Trump walking in on nude underage girls in dressing rooms before a beauty pageant is just "media bias."

Terrorism is an "existential threat," even though the chance of being killed in a terrorist attack is about 1 in 3.2 million a year. Saying the words "radical Islam" when describing terrorism is an important incantation necessary to defeat that threat. When Chobani yogurt founder Hamdi Ulukaya decides to employ refugees in his factories, it's because of his ties to "globalist corporate figures." Waving a Mexican flag on U.S. soil means you hate America, but waving a Confederate flag just means you're proud of your heritage. The phrase "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas" needs a trigger warning.

Blaming the liberal or mainstream media and "media bias" is the patriotically correct version of blaming the corporations or capitalism. The patriotically correct notion that they "would rather be governed by the first 2,000 people in the Boston telephone directory than by the 2,000 people on the faculty of Harvard University" because the former have "common sense" and the "intellectual elites" don't know anything, despite all the evidence to the contrary, can be sustained only in a total bubble. Poor white Americans are the victims of economic dislocation and globalization beyond their control, while poor blacks and Hispanics are poor because of their failed cultures. The patriotically correct are triggered when they hear strangers speaking in a language other than English. Does that remind you of the PC duty to publicly shame those who use unacceptable language to describe race, gender or whatever other identity is the victim du jour?

The patriotically correct rightly ridicule PC "safe spaces" but promptly retreat to Breitbart or talk radio, where they can have mutually reinforcing homogeneous temper tantrums while complaining about the lack of intellectual diversity on the left. There is no such thing as too much national security, but it's liberals who want to coddle Americans with a "nanny state." Those who disagree with the patriotically correct are animated by anti-Americanism, are post-American, or deserve any other of a long list of clunky and vague labels that signal virtue to other members of the patriotic in-group.

Every group has implicit rules against certain opinions, actions and language as well as enforcement mechanisms — and the patriotically correct are no exception. But they are different because they are near-uniformly unaware of how they are hewing to a code of speech and conduct similar to the PC lefties they claim to oppose. The modern form of political correctness on college campuses and the media is social tyranny with manners, while patriotic correctness is tyranny without the manners, and its adherents do not hesitate to use the law to advance their goals. If we have a term to describe this new phenomenon — I nominate patriotic correctness.

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