

NATIONAL REVIEW

Re: Ruy Teixeira

Kevin D. Williamson

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You know whom I'm thinking about this morning, Charlie?

Nat Hentoff.

With the progressive writer and scholar Ruy Teixeira finding a new home at AEI — because the co-author of *The Emerging Democratic Majority* is not quite woke enough for the contemporary Left (no one ever is) — it is worth remembering that Nat Hentoff, one of the most interesting and humane left-wing writers of his time, finished up his career at the Cato Institute for similar reasons: Hentoff was a man of the Left in most things save his belief that unborn children and the state of Israel have a right not to be exterminated — and, for that dissent, became unemployable in the ever-more-exacting conformist world of progressive institutions.

Institutions such as AEI and Cato were created as safe havens for heterodox right-leaning and libertarian thinkers at odds with progressive academic orthodoxy, but they are proving to be just as valuable to traditional liberals and even to progressives such as Teixeira who are not willing to knuckle under and toe the party line.

Conformism is a disease, a kind of mental illness.

Every now and then — regularly, in fact — NATIONAL REVIEW will publish some piece at odds with conservative orthodoxy or conservative sensibilities — a dissenting piece on animal welfare or gay marriage or something like that. Invariably, some of the Twitter-dwelling figures on the pissant Right will exclaim: “Look, here’s NATIONAL REVIEW endorsing *x*!” whatever *x* may be. They are, of course, indicting themselves and their organizations: NATIONAL REVIEW publishes a lot of different authors with a lot of different points of view and enforces no mandatory party line — but that is not true of every organization on the Right, some of which are very interested in enforcing their own version of political correctness. Tribalistic politics on the right ends up looking a lot like tribalistic politics on the left — narrow, stultified, boring, more an exercise in group therapy than an exercise in thought or inquiry.

With that in mind, I am glad that organizations such as AEI and Cato and NATIONAL REVIEW make room for thinkers and scholars who are not men of the party, partisan Republicans, orthodox conservatives and libertarians, etc. It is a sign of good political health and intellectual confidence. I'm sure Ruy Teixeira will do interesting and valuable work at AEI, that I'll disagree with him politically about 92 percent of the time, and that the world will be better off for that arrangement.