



## No Enemies to the Right?

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Conservatives have long criticized liberals for what they see as a policy of “no enemies to the left.” That is, they said, liberals might not *be* socialists, communists, or revolutionaries, but they forbore criticizing such people.

And they have a point. The *Washington Post* has mentioned Angela Davis in several articles this year, always describing her as an “activist” and not as a former longtime leader of the Communist Party. Davis has received many awards for her supposed activism for human rights and the environment – as well as the Soviet Union’s Lenin Peace Prize, called the Stalin Prize until 1957.

Senator Bernie Sanders says he advocates “democratic socialism” as found in Denmark and Sweden, but he honeymooned in the Soviet Union, defended the communist government of Nicaragua, and signed a letter of support for Venezuela’s disastrous strongman Hugo Chavez. And none of his opponents for the Democratic presidential nomination have called him out for that.

But now conservatives have a problem of their own. Call it “no enemies to the right.”

William F. Buckley Jr. the founder and editor of *National Review*, was known for kicking the fringe organs like the John Birch Society out of the conservative movement.

As one of his biographers wrote, Buckley “stood guard over the movement he founded and—in what he called his greatest achievement—kept it free where he could of extremists, bigots, kooks, anti-Semites and racists.”

Buckley made some missteps of his own early on. But he did show evidence of changing with the times. As his *National Review* colleagues put it in announcing his death, “He created modern conservatism as an intellectual and then a political movement. He kept it from drifting into the fever swamps.”

But things have changed since Buckley’s death in 2008, as many conservatives seem to have lost interest in drawing bright lines between themselves and the fever swamps. Just consider a few recent cases.

The venerable CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference, run by the American Conservative Union, a venue at which Ronald Reagan gave influential speeches, in 2017 invited Milo Yiannopoulos, a guy who sent racist tweets to other writers before being permanently kicked of Twitter for harassing Leslie Jones, who makes anti-Semitic remarks about others, and falsely accuses transgender people of disproportionate crime rates, to be a keynote speaker.

CPAC then disinvited him after revelations that he defended sex between adult men and teenagers on a radio show. But they were proud to have him when he was merely a bigot.

The next year CPAC doubled down, inviting Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, granddaughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen and niece of National Front leader Marine Le Pen, to speak. Marion told the *Washington Post*, “I am the political heir of Jean-Marie Le Pen. He was a visionary. He was right about a lot of things.” One of the things Le Pen was best known for was declaring the Holocaust “a mere detail in the history of the Second World War.”

The Claremont Institute, whose mission is to “restore the principles of the American Founding,” awarded a Lincoln Fellowship to Jack Posobiec, a blogger who has promoted the Pizzagate and Seth Rich conspiracy theories, tweeted about “white genocide,” and dropped racist and Nazi code words into numerous tweets. Think of him as a straight and less hip Milo.

Fox News host Laura Ingraham criticized social media companies for trying to “silence conservative voices.” She posted a graphic listing such maligned intellectuals as conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, Milo himself, professional victim Laura Loomer, and noted anti-Semite Paul Nehlen—just the sort of fever swamps Buckley tried to steer clear of.

Conservatives have heavily touted a study of political bias on social media, claiming that of 22 prominent, politically active individuals known to have been suspended by Twitter since 2005 and who expressed a preference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, 21 supported Donald Trump. But as Zach Graves of the Lincoln Network noted, along with a couple of legitimate conservatives, the 21 are largely “a who’s who of outspoken or accused white nationalists, neo-Confederates, holocaust deniers, conspiracy peddlers, professional trolls, and other alt-right or fringe personalities” – including the American Nazi Party and former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke.

It would be helpful if those on the left would stop suggesting that everyone on the right is a racist. But it would also be good if those on the right would admit that there *are* racists—and banish them for the good of their cause.

From the perspective of a libertarian outsider looking in, it’s time for conservatives to decide: do you believe in liberty, limited government, equality under the law, the rule of law, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution? If so, you don’t belong anywhere near the fever swamps. You have enemies to the left, but also enemies to the right. Redraw those red lines. Put those guardrails back up.

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