

INVESTIGATION

Prominent Climate Denier Authored Controversial Articles as Publisher of Conservative Student Newspaper

Alex Epstein, a close ally of the fossil fuel industry, raised questions about Martin Luther King, Jr and the inferiority of non-Western cultures in articles he authored as the publisher of the Duke Review

Alex Epstein speaking with attendees at the 2018 Student Action Summit hosted by Turning Point USA at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach, Florida.
Photo: Gage Skidmore

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Alex Epstein is a self-styled “philosopher and energy expert” closely affiliated with the fossil fuel industry. The author of “The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels” and the upcoming “Fossil Future” (to be released May 24th), Epstein uses his platform to attack climate science and those concerned with impacts of climate change. He advocates using “energy poverty” as a talking point in favor of fossil fuels, and accuses environmentalists of racism. Coal and oil corporations have increasingly taken up Epstein's messaging in recent years.

However, a series of articles Epstein authored in college as publisher of the *Duke Review* reveal that Epstein considered non-Western cultures,

of Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Last week, after being asked for comment on his writings by the Washington Post, Epstein defended his past work, saying "I do think western culture is overall superior."

The writings, obtained by Documented and featured in a recent Washington Post article, raise new questions about the authenticity of Epstein's concern for "energy poverty," which he often bolsters with references to African nations. These new revelations also raise questions about the degree to which Epstein's views on western culture's supremacy undergird the fossil fuel industry's instrumentalization of poverty as a talking point.



Locke, Aristotle, and Newton have had no equivalents in Africa or Asia, and the advancements in those areas have been almost exclusively due to Western influence. To see the results, just compare New York to Chad. No benefit can be gained by focusing an education on anti-reason cultures, their only academic merit lies in contrasting them to Western civilization as models of inferiority.

ALEX EPSTEIN, "CURRICULUM 2000," DUKE REVIEW, MARCH 1999



The African and African American studies department has 23 classes. In many of these classes, African culture is presented, not as inferior to Western culture, but on equal footing with it. The same is done with Latin American, Indian, and American Indian culture.

ALEX EPSTEIN, "THE REAL CAUSE OF BINGE DRINKING," DUKE REVIEW, APRIL 2000



While blacks in the pre-Civil War period were shackled by slavery, blacks today are not. Nor are they forcibly held back by legal segregation or Jim Crow laws. They are free to work hard, earn money, and succeed, as many do.

ALEX EPSTEIN, "THE RACISM OF REPARATIONS," DUKE REVIEW, MARCH 2001

During that same period, Epstein published a 2000 article titled, "Martin Luther King: Is he Worthy of a Day Off Over Jefferson, Columbus, and Lincoln?" where he stated:



Black crime has increased steadily since King's time, and seven out of ten black children born today have parents that are not married. Could it be that there is a reason behind all these problems, a reason having to do with ideas? Since a culture is just the dominant ideas accepted by a certain group of people, a culture yielding bad results is based on bad ideas. I submit that because of the bad ideas he promoted, Dr. King is responsible for a great part of the destruction that has occurred in America today, especially among black Americans, the group he supposedly saved.

ALEX EPSTEIN, "MARTIN LUTHER KING: IS HE WORTHY OF A DAY OFF OVER JEFFERSON, COLUMBUS, AND LINCOLN?" DUKE REVIEW, FEBRUARY 2000

that useless to businesses.



Not all "others" benefit a business. Certain others - the homeless, those on welfare, Medicare recipients - are worse than useless to businesses. A business benefits only by dealing with an individual or company that creates value.

ALEX EPSTEIN, "GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY," DUKE REVIEW, NOVEMBER 2000

Documented is publishing a selection of articles authored by Alex Epstein in the *Duke Review*, which you can find below. The full collection of *Duke Review* issues from 1999-2001 are available upon request.



could be expected from their age. What "uplifting" did we

Duke Association of Scholars

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Professor Alan C. Kors

of the

University of Pennsylvania

The Betrayal of Liberty on America's Campuses

When: Friday, October 16, 1998

Time: 2:15 P.M.

Where: Room 204 Breedlove
Perkins Library

TABLE 1

www.mca.com

DukeWatch

Fish corrects rumors of his pro-life stance in national magazine

In a letter in the October 12, 1999 edition of the *Weekly Standard*, Professor Stanley Fish claimed that he was misquoted in a recent issue. (The quote was reprinted in *First Forum's* article "University of Illinois Chicago Catches Fish—Hook, Line and Sinkers" in a recent issue of the *Choke Review*.) Apparently Fish did not accept the pre-choice treatment of ignoring "the facts of life before birth" and that science and technology make clear that the being killed by abortion is a human being. Fish really asserted that it was the "two life prospects"

whereas a useful evidence while pro-choicers look elsewhere for arguments in support of their position."

In a typically post-modernist bent, Fish stressed that he believes that "[t]he game [is the abortion debate], is always a rhetorical one in which no position can ever be conclusively (that is, to the satisfaction of all parties) refuted." In the whole abortion battle is just a rhetorical game. Maybe Fish should try talking that to the widows of slain abortion doctor Barnett A. Schario.

In a surprising close to his letter Fish mentioned that the non-conservative publication the *Weekly Standard*, to which he is a loyal subscriber, happens to be his favorite magazine.

Review featured
on Internet show

The Duke Review, along with the College Republicans and Students For Life, was featured on the internet radio program "Duke Report." The program, created and produced by Timothy Weiner (left) here, was one of a series focusing on Duke issues and events as part of an independent study for the Sanford Institute of Public Policy. That particular involvement was called "Conservative on Campus" and can be heard at <http://www.duke.edu/study/conservative>.

We welcome the presence of GSA new programs. The quality and professionalism of the program is remarkable for a company whose radio licensing is virtually non-existent.

Staff of Review
salutes psychology
professor Staddon

We at the *Duke Review* welcome James H. Duke, professor of psychology, John Staddon for his comment, well measured letter to the editor about Martin Luther King day speaker Julian Bond. Staddon pointed out that Bond and his cronies are active interested in creating racial divisions, that is to say, America in which nobody is discriminated against.

Stoddard correctly commented that Clarence Thomas, who was invited to Bond's speech, "is devoted to smiling Americans of all races, not dividing us" and would have made a much better choice of speaker.

In the past, Sweden has been and appears strongly to be pursuing such an alternative route and Dabir's book is a welcome addition. Of affirmative nature it writes "The issue is not at all a 'complex'." It is very simple. Should the state require that any firm be profitable over its values in employment of social administration? Modified comments about food, housing, fuel and unfair trading laws that are not necessary the fact that the government should "justify" itself in any manner when both oppressed and oppressors are present.

Rational thought and moral
courage are as lacking among
Oder faculty that it is rather a
joke of fools as when we as-
sume both well as the other.

MLK: unworthy of day off over other great leaders

Alex Epstein
Staff Writer

On January 18, for the first time in school history, Duke students got the day off to celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday. This was the result of an administrative cave-in due to pressure from the Black Student Alliance and other student organizations. Most people had no

of helpless Indians. And Thomas Jefferson had slaves and impregnated a slave-girl. While the prevailing generalizations are either half-true or not true at all, they are all based on the same premise: a man's strength and virtues in one area of his life do not excuse his lack of virtue in another area. This is certainly a valid claim, but I believe that the

spending the day in the Supreme Court, watching lawyers argue the case of *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, an important segregation case, King went to the Willard hotel. That night, FBI bugs recorded King drinking heavily and having sexual intercourse with women, some of whom were his wife. Research's book quotes King from that night:

the moral principles contained in his religion. There is certainly no doubt about Christianity's position on infidelity, and King devotes two full pages to that position almost as much as is humanly possible.

King's plagiarisms and infidelities were not the worst of his vices. Throughout his political career, he had close ties to many Communist leaders. Page 134 of 134

birthday was signed on to be a national holiday's celebration with Communism. These included giving speeches written for him by Communists and working closely for years with a man who was once in charge of moving Rightists given by the Soviet Union to the CPUSA. While King never himself a member of

off for Columbus Day, Vietnam's Day, or Presidents' Day. Can anyone really claim that Martin Luther King did more for America or black Americans than Abraham Lincoln? Columbus is possibly the most significant figure in the history of Western culture, and the impetus for the events that led to the formation of America, the greatest republic in world history. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, the document which brilliantly articulates man's fundamental rights, and was one of the first to publicly advocate the abolition of slavery. But none of these men, we are often told, is worthy of a holiday.

Lincoln might have freed the slaves, but he took too long to do so. Columbus killed a bunch

surpassed virtue, and great moral character. This is hardly the case. The lack of a Dr preceding Mr King's name in this article is intentional. He plagiarized his dissertation, which earned him a doctorate at Boston University. In his book, *The Martin Luther King Jr. Plagiarism Story*, Theodore Pappas identifies eight instances of plagiarism in King's doctoral dissertation, five prior to that document, and one in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

In addition to plagiarizing his way to a doctorate, King also cheated on his wife with regularity. One such instance is documented in Taylor Branch's book *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-65*. On January 6, 1964, after

some and adulterous escapades, some of which indicated that King could be brutal in his sexual abuse of women.

King's full record will not be released until 2027, but it is expected to be incredibly incriminating and explicit. Thomas Jefferson is regularly criticized and ridiculed for his infidelities (and rightly so), but King is held to an entirely different standard. When was the last time you heard Jesse Jackson say, "Well, Martin made some great speeches, but he really should have spent more time with the wife and kids and less cooing with promiscuous women." Furthermore, while Jefferson was a Deist and did not accept Christianity, King was a Reverend who told his followers to uphold



Joseph Stalin, fellow Marxist

After all, he considers this, "the supreme mission of a Marxist politician."

Don't get us wrong. We don't object to having a culture of Marxism here at Duke - it's rather quaint. But why do we have to pay them so much money to promote egalitarianism?

That would indeed be an informative way to utilize this 20 column inches we have reserved for Dr. Jameson. Yes, preach to the evils of the nexus of "callous cash payment."

Tell you what. We'll make it 30 inches. Maybe throw in a photo of Karl Marx or Joseph Stalin - your choice.

Dr. Jameson?

Marx Watch... 3,385 days and counting.

vious prize, if you will - of 20 column inches to explain his view of Marxist's proper place in the academy. Also, the precious space goes unclaimed... as has for the last 3,385 days.

THE DUKE REVIEW

MARCH 1999

PAGE 12

Analysis

Curriculum 2000: Faculty passes a disastrous academic policy for the millenium to come

Robert Epstein
Associate Publisher

The introduction to the Curriculum 2000 (C2K) proposal states, "The curriculum of a university serves as its hallmark; it reflects the values and the capabilities of its students, and the aspirations of its institution." After reviewing the recently approved curriculum, it must be concluded that Duke's faculty values relativism and mental impotence, its students are incapable of rational thought, and Duke as an institution agrees to destroy the minds of those it is supposed to teach.

Curriculum 2000 requires students to take three courses in each of four Areas of Knowledge: Arts and Literature, Civilities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences and Mathematics. These requirements by themselves could form the basis of a valid curriculum. However, Dr. William Chambliss and his friends in the Curriculum 2000 committee did not stop there.

Like C2K, students must take courses in each of eight categories, including Interpretive and Aesthetic Approaches, Cross-Cultural Inquiry, Ethical Inquiry, and Science, Technology, and Society. In addition, students must take at least one foreign language course.

The Interpretive and Aesthetic Approaches category is

globalization, and power so that students may evaluate complex and difficult issues from multiple perspectives," the proposal explains. Implicit in this claim is the notion that analyzing issues from different cultural perspectives will somehow lead one to a valid conclusion. But reality is not subjective, so all cultural perspectives cannot be right at the same time. A student is served best not by developing multiple perspectives, but by developing one valid perspective which precludes reality.

Imagine trying to evaluate a "complex and difficult issue" from multiple cultural perspectives. Say you need to make an important life decision, like deciding on a career. This is perhaps the most important decision you will make in your adult life. As a graduate of Duke under Curriculum 2000, you have learned about many different cultures, but not much about reason.

More importantly, administrators tell you, you have learned to appreciate the equally valid world views that comprise each culture. Using your Zen Buddhist perspective, you conclude that careers are not important, and that happiness may only be obtained by not thinking and waiting for some form of mystical enlightenment. But wait, the equally valid Zulu perspective tells you that your mission in life

is to pick one out at random and living his life by its teachings?

The above example illustrates what the assumption that all cultures and ways of thinking are equal implies. All ways of thinking are not valid. If a person believes he can fly and jumps off a building to validate his belief, reality will not change to accommodate his thinking. The less one's thinking relates to reality, the worse it serves him. The purpose of a college should be to develop the minds of its students. This cannot be done by offering them a collection of arbitrary views on the world and telling them that each is as good as the others. A curriculum must offer courses that encourage the acquisition of knowledge and its integration using reason. Such courses cannot be based on tribal African culture or the mystical doctrines of the Far East, because these cultures do not hold reason in high esteem, and reason is the only valid way of dealing with reality.

The Greatness of Western Culture

The only culture that promotes the rational thought needed to thrive in the world is Western culture. Western civilization was the first to value reason as a means of knowledge. All other cultures sought knowledge from the heavens. John Locke, a Western philosopher, was the first to recognize the

importance of reason, and it is their works that must be studied in order to develop a strong capacity for rational thought.

Contrast the accomplishments of Western civilization with those of any other civilization, and by any reasonable standard no civilization comes close. The thinkers in Western history who have inspired reason and individual rights have made all the difference in the world. Locke, Aristotle, and Newton have had no equivalents in Africa or Asia, and the advancements in those areas have been almost exclusively due to Western influence. To see the results, just compare New York to Chad. No benefit can be gained by focusing an education on anti-reason cultures, their only academic merit lies in contrasting them to Western civilization as models of inferiority. In order to live as rational, productive beings in pursuit of their own happiness, students must learn from the cultural heritage that made the highly advanced world we live in possible, not cultures based on ideas which would have made our world unthinkable.

The Foreign Language Requirement

Curriculum 2000's foreign language requirement is a response to the 20% of Trinity students who currently choose not to take a foreign language. The C2K proposal justifies this re-

sponse, as they are not necessary for every student's success in life. A subject like philosophy, in contrast, should be taught to every student because every human uses philosophy (often very poorly thought out philosophy) to make decisions.

C2K: A Relativist's Dream

Curriculum 2000 claims to require only 13 classes, but those 13 have to fit into categories like Interpretive and Aesthetic Approaches, Cross-Cultural Inquiry, Science, Technology, and Society, and Ethical Inquiry. This forces students to take many courses that they would not normally take, courses that can serve no constructive intellectual purpose, but can potentially serve a very destructive one. Interpretive and Aesthetic Approaches classes focus on not using one's mind, which can only hurt a person in life. Cross-Cultural Inquiry classes teach that all cultures are equal and that every way of thinking is equally valid, a destructive promise that can ruin one's ability to reason. Science, Technology, and Society classes will not teach students anything useful about either science or technology, only about how they relate to "society." Expect countless mindless indoctrinations of cloning, genetic engineering, and the pursuit of profit in those classes. After all, why should Bill Gates be allowed to

type of approach helps a student deal with the reality of the world a little more consciously, unadorned.

The Cross Cultural Inquiry category represents the essence of the philosophy behind Curriculum 2000. A class in this inquiry would require a student to be exposed to at least two different cultures so that he can "experience" cultural differences and look at issues from different perspectives. "CCI encourages critical and responsible attention to issues of identity, diversity,

another equally valid world view, you learned via Marxism, which tells you that you should spend your life sacrificing yourself for society. Three valid perspectives, but you only get to make one choice. How can one choose when he has been taught that every culture offers a valid and equally good way of living one's life? He has no means of choosing between alternatives. Should a Duke graduate just take all the cultures he has learned about, write down their names and put them in a hat,

cially and technologically, increasing the quality of life for individuals everywhere. That does not imply that all of Western civilization has been continuously filled with thinkers who respected reason and individual rights, because that is certainly not the case. Slavery, collectivism, and mysticism have all wrought huge amounts of destruction on Western civilization. However, these do not negate the tremendous achievements of the great minds of Western civi-

There are other, legitimate reasons why one would want to take a foreign language. Sometimes learning another language can help one's understanding of language in general, or aid one in a career in which he is dealing with many individuals from a specific foreign country. However, knowing a foreign language is not a primary intellectual requirement for becoming a reasoning, productive individual. It is important that Duke offer foreign languages, but they should be

Curriculum 2000 is simply the agenda of multiculturalism, relativism, history of the mind, and failure of technological progress rolled into one. It takes the clichés that are currently destroying the minds of relatively few Duke students, and makes every student take them. Duke students do not need an abandonment of reason in making the need for education which values reason. Duke needs a Western civilization-based core curriculum.

Martin Luther King: Is He Worthy of a Day off over Jeff

Last year, the January issue of *The Economist* would have preferred to remain unimpressed about King's indecision.

[illegible]

Last year, for the first time in school history, Drake students got the day off to celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday. That was the result of an administrative plan to shut its governing body, the Black Student Alliance and other student organizations. Most people had no problem with the day off, considering they had been brought up to believe that Martin Luther King was one of the great leaders in American history.

[illegible]

Schickelshahn also taught that Martin Luther King was a man of unimpeachable ethics, unimpeachable spirit, and preeminent character. This is hardly the case. The lack of a Dr. presiding Mr. King's name in this article is significant. He played the drummer, the singer, the preacher at Southern University. In his hands, The African Luther King, Dr. Phyllis Kiley, Theodore Tappan identified eight instances of plagiarism in King's editorial documents. One prior to this document, and one in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

In addition to preparing the way to a floodgate, King also shared his wealth with the poor. One such instance is documented in Taylor Branch's book *Fire from Heaven: The King Years, 1963-1968*. On January 8, 1968, after spending the day in the Supreme Court, watching lawsuits argue the case of *Wick v. Turner* Co., King went to the Lincoln Center to see the play *Seven Days in May* by Robert Kennedy. That night, FBI files recorded King drinking heavily and having sexual intercourse with women, some of whom were his lovers. Branch's book quotes King from that night as saying, "I'm preoccupied for God" and "I'm not a Negro anymore." Charles Brannan, a former Assistant Director of the FBI who had much knowledge of King's personal life, described his sexual affairs as full of "vigorous and adolescent exuberance, some of which indicated that King could be brutal in his sexual use of women." King's FBI record will not be released until 2027, but it is expected to be scintillatingly entertaining and explicit. Thomas Jefferson is regularly criticized for his infidelities and being a slaveholder (and rightly so), but King is held to an entirely different standard. When was the last time you saw a man with a beard and a turban?

was actually followed in his own political

The above charge was dismissed because if they did not improve in 1987, you found a strong potential likelihood for what was right (the building). Senator Jesse Helms stood up for what was right and fought against King's birthday being made a holiday, and was designated as such because of his actions. King's Commission has always advanced his vision as many would like. His mission during the Vietnam War showed nothing but sympathy for the Communist North Vietnamese. Instead of arguing that participating in the war was to

... we are about to have our first ...

[illegible]

When I listening to his "I Have a Dream" speech, it is difficult to imagine that Martin Luther King was anything but a moral man trying to save America, support the free ideals of racial equality under the law. One must conclude that King did not see this ideal as an end in itself, only the means to reach more societal ends. While liberals would have no problem with King's support of massive amounts of government funds via taxation and social redistribution, they should not worship a man who flagrantly plagiarized his illustrations and the end of too many famous speeches, and claimed the heart and terms of the religion he preached as his own. Just an adherent of Jefferson and Washington must acknowledge and condemn the immoral actions of these American icons. King's advisors must not ignore his blunders of immorality. Washington and Jefferson were men of the most significant figures in shaping America into the freest nation the world has ever known (and FDR came along). King, while capturing the hearts of many Americans with his eloquent and persuasive speeches, did not incorporate truly much in terms of economic advancement among black Americans. In fact, the earnings of black Americans were up to a higher rate prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 than they did following it. The leaders who led black America following King legacy destroyed urban neighborhoods, encouraged dependence on government funds, and helped cement the joke that we are more of a ghetto. If we are to pick our most wisest birthday we celebrate one year, let it be the Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson, or Jefferson. The American should realize more than this civil rights leader.

my presence was to give... light. This time around, I hope to be better positioned to see things by the blood, understand the... on Thoreau's influence and Christian... (I'm going back) to... naturally seeing. "We attacked my... initially, when I was... understanding his personal stories, I... about Martin's other kind, it's not getting... brilliant off, but the... about a blood line.

Thompson, James H. Thompson, would like to agree with Jeff. Eugene McCarthy, who is a member of the House, said that he would like to see the House and the Senate work together to get the country out of the mess that we are in. I am not sure that is the best way to get out of the mess that we are in. I am not sure that is the best way to get out of the mess that we are in. I am not sure that is the best way to get out of the mess that we are in.



and, according to the report, those whom Mr. Torgler had been told to watch.

This week on 4 other problems with Mr. Epstein's testimony, 12. Kings greatest contribution to the world's Presidency

THE DUKE REVIEW

November 2000

PAGE 3

Feature

"Giving back to the community"

By Alex Epstein
Publisher

There is no more popular ethical tenet in business today than the idea that businesses should "give back to the community." For its annual Community Service Week, Duke invited Jerry Greenfield, cofounder of Ben and Jerry's, to speak to students about this view. According to Greenfield, "You have to redefine the bottom line and look not at just how much money you make, but how have you helped the community in which you operate?"

The wording of the expression "give back to the community" is important to note. That businesses should "give back" implies that there is something they have taken from the "community" in the first place. (Such an expression would make total sense if businesses obtained money by seizing it forcibly from others—but such is the province of government, not business.) The justification most often given by those who say businesses should "give back" is something like the following: "Businesses benefit from

other people: their customers, their employees, the people who helped them get started. The businesses didn't do it on their own; they got help from the 'community.' Therefore, they owe something in return." Companies are supposed to give away money, employee time, and stock to the "community." These measures engender profitability, but are considered moral imperatives nonetheless.

The "others benefit the business" justification for "giving back to the community" evades a crucial fact: Not all "others" benefit a business. Certain others—the homeless, those on welfare, Medicaid recipients—are worse than useless to businesses. A business benefits only by dealing with an individual or company that creates value. For instance, a productive employee, a frequent customer, a reliable supplier, or a smart venture capitalist.

In each of these cases, the business deals with the individual or company by trade. A programmer for Microsoft does not give his services free of charge to Bill Gates, he works for a salary. A customer

buying a new color TV does not buy it to benefit him; he buys it because the money he pays is worth less to him than the TV. Intel's suppliers do not give them silicon wafers for free; they are paid handsomely for their services. A venture capitalist finances an Internet startup, not to give his money away, but to receive huge returns if the company achieves its potential. In all such relationships, the business and the other party trade value for value to serve their mutual interests; no gifts or sacrifices are involved.

When a business makes a lot of money, it is due to the rational decisions of its management and the hard work of its employees. These allow a company to create something of great value for which customers are willing to pay—not out of the customers' beneficence, but out of their self-interest. The success of a business is earned; it is not an act of community generosity.

Because businesses earn their success through voluntary trade, not received gifts, the expression "give back to the community" is completely unjustified. When the Jerry Greenfields of the world call

for "giving back to the community," they are really calling for sacrifice to the community. The "community" didn't earn the money or the employee's time or a share of the company's profits, but the business is supposed to give it to them anyway—if it doesn't it will be blamed as greedy and immoral.

A business that succeeds is expected to sacrifice the interests of its employees and stockholders to those whose only claim on the business's wealth is geographic proximity. By this moral code, the fact that businessmen earned their success does not entitle them to enjoy the fruits of their labor—but the location of the "community" members gives them full license to enjoy the wealth they did nothing to create.

This, I submit, is a moral travesty. Creating wealth and earning money takes an enormous amount of thought and effort, and the men who do it successfully deserve everything they get. They should be praised for their achievements, not told they owe something to the "community" that gives nothing of value in return.

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Alex Epstein article "Giving Back to the Community." Published in the Duke Review's November 2000 issue.

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March 2001

THE DUKE REVIEW

From the Publisher...

The Racism of Reparations

The Duke Review

For Justice From Lynx Scripta Mater

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Imagine the following scenario. A man holds up a bank. There are several eyewitnesses, who only get a brief glance at the criminal—all they can report is that he is black. The police, upon learning this information, go out on the street and arrest the first black man they find. The man is brought into court, tried on the evidence that his skin color is the same as the perpetrator's, and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

The public reaction in such a scenario would be justified outrage. How, people would ask, can you punish a man for a crime he didn't commit, just because of his skin color? The same question should be asked of a new organization advocating reparations for slavery, under which whites today would be punished for a crime committed by other whites—150 years ago.

The organization in question is the Reparations Assessment Group (RAG), which is preparing a major lawsuit, from which, according to a story by the Associated Press, taxpayers and corporations could face "possible multi-billion dollar settlements." The group includes Harvard Professor Charles Ogletree, who says: "We want full recognition and a remedy of how slavery stigmatized, raped, murdered, and exploited millions of Africans through no fault of their own." White people are expected to provide the "recognition" and the "remedy." Why? Simply because they are white.

In any reparation, someone is punished and someone is rewarded. A legitimate reparation is one in which the victim of an injustice is given restitution at the expense of the perpetrator.

In the case of slavery, however, both victim and perpetrator are long dead; there have been no slaves or slaveholders in America since 1865. Still, RAG's lawsuit, if successful, will force corporations and white taxpayers to pay, with both huge sums of money and public apologies granted to blacks who are descendants of slaves.


Reparations advocates attempt to justify these measures by saying that whites today benefit from slavery, while blacks suffer from it. It is often said that America was "built on the backs of slaves." This is simply false. America became the richest country in the world not because of slave labor, but because of the Industrial Revolution begun in the slave-free North. Inventions like the sewing machine, the power loom, and the McCormick reaper were the product of thinking, free men, not slave muscle-power. And in North's victory in the Civil War enabled the U.S. to grow into the nation of wealth it is today.

In today's economy, much of the wealth is created by companies in the fields of computers, communications, and biotech. If the reparations lawsuit is successful, it will be these companies that pay—they have the most money. There is no connection between these companies and slave labor. What slave could claim even partial credit in the success of Intel, Cisco, or Pfizer? What slave played a part in inventing the microprocessor, the Internet router, or Viagra?

While blacks in the pre-Civil War period were shackled by slavery, blacks today are not. Nor are they any longer forcibly held back by legal segregation or Jim Crow laws. They are free to work hard, earn money, and succeed, as many do.

No individual today is a victim or perpetrator of slavery, but reparations advocates are not concerned with individual justice. They subscribe to the collectivist belief that individuals are merely interchangeable members of a group. Thus, the group of whites as a whole is responsible for slavery, and blacks as a whole deserve reparations for it. Using this premise they attempt to make whites feel collectively guilty and capitulate to their demands. Alexander Pires, a member of RAG, said: "Most people don't like having dirt on their hands," as if the moral dirt from a white person 150 years ago automatically sullies any white person today.

The RAG's reparations lawsuit is not a quest for justice; it is an act of injustice. RAG's members seek to punish one man for the sins of another, because both men have the same skin color. This is pure racism. The targets of their attacks should assert their identities as individuals—individuals who deserve no unearned guilt for their skin color.



Alex Epstein, Publisher

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STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

We believe that Man's mind is his greatest asset, his life is his own by right, not privilege, the good is to live it, and freedom—the absence of coercion—is essential to the achievement of human happiness.

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Alex Epstein's "From the Publisher" letter, titled 'The Racism of Reparations.' The letter was published in the Duke Review's March 2001 issue.

Spreading Pro Fossil Fuel Disinformation

Epstein, founder of the for-profit company Center for Industrial Progress, is an aggressive supporter of the fossil fuel industry. He sometimes sports an “I love fossil fuels” t-shirt, denies climate science, and attacks critics of the fossil fuel industry as racist. This has made him popular with Republican politicians, and he has appeared in three Congressional hearings as an expert witness. He also influences oil policy directly as a member of the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC), a powerful quasi-regulatory body that lobbies for oil and gas interests. Through his Energy Talking Points project, he provides message guidance to oil industry leaders and elected officials, often at high levels. Email correspondence obtained by Documented revealed that Texas Gov. Greg Abbott’s office circulated talking points authored by Epstein during the deadly 2021 winter storm Uri. The messaging document sought to falsely lay the blame for the mass power outages on wind and solar energy projects. Similar messaging documents advocate blaming “energy poverty” on renewable energy use.

Funding

While Epstein’s for-profit hides its funding sources, he’s admitted receiving funding from coal companies and utilities like SoCalGas. The Prometheus Foundation (headed by for-profit school magnate Carl Barney) has also contributed.

A sizable portion of Epstein’s income seems to be derived from paid speeches to corporations, trade associations, and political groups. For instance, Epstein has been known to solicit large fees to debate prominent climate advocates, and he has used his past debates with Bill McKibben, Robert F.

hosted by the [Steamboat Institute](#) and sponsored by [Liberty Counsel Services](#).

Many of his clients are the predictable oil corporations and oil lobbying groups, but he has also spoken at [Google](#) and the [Harvard Business School](#).



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