

# Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)

Center for New Community  
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*The mission of the Center for New Community is to build community, justice, and equality. The Center's Building Democracy Initiative works to counter emerging threats to civil and human rights.*

## Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)

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The Federation for American Immigration Reform, better known by its acronym FAIR, was founded in 1979 by retired Michigan ophthalmologist John Tanton. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which acts as an umbrella for the anti-immigrant movement, providing research, publications, funding and organizational acumen to local grassroots groups, and serving as the public face of the movement in the media and in testimony to Congress.

### IDEOLOGY

FAIR attempts to portray itself as the “mainstream” of the American anti-immigrant movement, carefully crafting its message to appeal to economic and environmental concerns associated with increasing population. FAIR nativism, at least on the surface, is of the soft variety, preferring for the most part to reference the needs of future generations and the importance of population control to decrying how “Third World” immigrants are “different.” Thus the bulk of FAIR’s public pronouncements are innocuous, even reasonable, but in this context it is important to understand FAIR not in isolation, but in its role within a larger social movement. This is made explicit in the recently released biography *Mary Lou & John Tanton: A Journey into American Conservation* (2002), in which it is acknowledged “FAIR’s moderate position allowed new immigration organizations to employ a more emotional appeal. For example, Palmer Stacey, a staffer for Senator East, a conservative southerner interested in immigration, founded the American Immigration Control Foundation (AICF) by using appeals far more strident than FAIR’s.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite this division of labor, FAIR demonstrates a full awareness of the range of arguments that can be deployed in opposing immigration, including outright xenophobia. Thus its 1997 training manual *How to ~~Survive~~ Win the Immigration Debate* acknowledges four types of anti-immigration arguments—traditional, economic, social, and population/environment.<sup>2</sup> It is, of course, the third type of argument, euphemistically termed “social,” that can prove troublesome for FAIR. Glossed in the aforementioned manual by the sentence “Too much immigration causes unhealthy social strain,”<sup>3</sup> this area of argument is open to claims that pathologize immigrants for endemic social problems and play on people’s fears and prejudices.

FAIR is not above working closely with more radical groups and individuals. For example, FAIR has participated with the American Immigration Control Foundation in sponsoring advertising campaigns, and has given grants directly to Glenn Spencer’s Voices of Citizens Together—a group that preaches a crude anti-Mexican conspiracy theory—and to U.S. Inc., which is headed by FAIR founder John Tanton.

Tanton himself, though usually identified as a conservationist, counts Wayne Lutton, a man who has shown little discomfort in the company of outright racists, as collaborator and employee.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, Tanton was forced out of the leadership of U.S. English because of a paper he wrote for a private study group involved with the campaign for an English-only law in Arizona. In that paper, he employs explicit racist references when he writes, “Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile? As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion? ... Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down?”<sup>5</sup>

## **FAIR AND THE PIONEER FUND**

FAIR has received significant financial support from white supremacist sources. Since its founding, FAIR has received more than \$1 million from the notorious racist foundation, the Pioneer Fund.<sup>6</sup>

Founded in 1937 to further the cause of purifying the American gene pool by encouraging the descendants of white colonialists to procreate, the Pioneer Fund has become a centerpiece in keeping scientific racism alive through allocating grants for

pseudo-academic studies. The Pioneer Fund is infamous not only for its funding of classic racist eugenics research in the pre-World War II era, but also for continued financial support for racial segregation and racist science.

The current Pioneer director is University of Western Ontario psychologist J. Philippe Rushton, who is best known for his advocacy of a theory correlating genital size inversely with intelligence and morality and parsing this by race.<sup>7</sup>

FAIR has been asked to repudiate the Pioneer Fund on numerous occasions, but has instead chosen to defend their receipt of the money. As of this writing, there is no indication that FAIR has chosen to return the Pioneer Fund grants.

## **FAIR ACTIVITIES**

As the most visible face of the anti-immigrant movement, FAIR maintains a variety of programs, including the training of citizen activists, informing its membership and the general public on immigration related issues, and encouraging direct lobbying.

One of those lobbying efforts is the Immigration Legislative Network. FAIR notes, "To counter the forces of the special interests that promote mass immigration, FAIR coordinates a vast network of immigration reform activists through the Immigration Legislative Network (ILN).

The ILN is FAIR's main tool for organizing and vocalizing in local, state, and national arenas the need for immigration reform. FAIR arms the ILN with timely congressional updates by phone, fax, e-mail, and regular mail. The ILN receives *Action Alerts* containing specific recommendations for furthering the cause of immigration reform including calling or writing Congress, opinion-editorial suggestions for their local newspapers, and talking points for the media. In 2000, ILN *Action Alerts* included calls to action to block illegal alien amnesties and to stop the H-1B bill from increasing the number of imported foreign workers, and information on the positions of all presidential candidates' on immigration."<sup>8</sup>

FAIR also participates in anti-immigrant advertising campaigns. For instance, FAIR lead the way in forming a new coalition after September 11 called "United to Secure America," which launched a series of TV and print ads in Iowa and several other Midwestern venues. The ads feature photos of some of the terrorists in the hijacking of planes that crashed into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11. The ad states that the federal government's immigration system "is too overwhelmed to protect us" and existing

laws aren't enforced. The newspaper ad reads: "Call Congress now and demand a reduction in immigration to a number we can safely manage." The group is nothing more than a new façade for FAIR, NumbersUSA, American Immigration Control, and other groups.

The organization also provides direct support to grassroots anti-immigrant groups. Between 1993 and 1999 FAIR has provided grants and direct allocations to 12 organizations totaling over \$230,000. In many cases these funds have helped launch a new grassroots organization that would not otherwise exist. (See: FAIR Grants). Through this distribution of funds, information and technical support FAIR is able to support a range of anti-immigrant strategies, including those of groups like U.S., Inc. and American Patrol, both of which are more closely tied to white nationalist and conspiratorial motivations and strategies.

When Glenn Spencer of American Patrol planned to bring his unguarded hate to Iowa in 2002, he revealed that his trip was going to be partially coordinated by FAIR. American Patrol's racist vigilantism hasn't driven away FAIR. FAIR has given Spencer at least \$11,000 in financial support. (See: *CNC Background Brief: American Patrol* for complete details).

### **FAIR Grants**

Border Solutions Task Force:	2,100	<i>Nat. Grassroots Alliance:</i>	5,146
Citizens of Dade County United:	1,000	San Diego Crime Commission:	3,000
Citizen Protection Fund:	3,000	Texans for FAIR Immigration:	2,250
FLLA187 Committee, Inc.:	30,000	The 21st Century Fund:	9,000
Ins. for Development Training:	5,000	<i>U.S., Inc.:</i>	155,000
<i>Midwest Coal. to Reform Immig.:</i>	6,950	<i>Voices of Citizens Together:</i>	11,000
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>233,446<sup>9</sup></b>

### **FAIR AND THE COALITION FOR THE FUTURE AMERICAN WORKER**

Earlier this year, FAIR flooded the airwaves with radio and TV commercials under the guise of the "Coalition for the Future American Worker." From their first airing, the ads have been roundly denounced as dishonest and racist.

In January, WHO-TV in Des Moines, Iowa, refused to air the anti-immigrant ads paid for by FAIR and other anti-immigrant organizations. Station general manager Jim Boyer stated that his staff found the ads inflammatory and "borderline racist."<sup>10</sup> He said, "It was a piece of business we did not want."<sup>11</sup>

Iowa labor leaders were quick to add, "They don't represent anybody in the labor movement in Iowa," said Iowa Federation of Labor President Mark Smith. "It's just racist stuff with no factual basis," said Smith, who represents some 135,000 workers in Iowa.<sup>12</sup>

When the ads showed up in Nebraska, U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel proclaimed, "This trash that this crowd puts on is just beyond terrible."<sup>13</sup> Terry Moore, president of the Omaha Federation of Labor echoed the sentiment, "The ads, which make unfounded connections between minorities and crime, are racist, deceitful and unpatriotic."<sup>14</sup>

In Texas, the Dallas Morning News editorialized that the FAIR-funded ads were, "as racially tinged as those Willie Horton ads the late Mr. Atwater put together for the first President Bush during his 1988 White House bid. It contains many shots of blacks and Hispanics, some of whom look as if they are making a run for the border."<sup>15</sup> U.S. Senator Martin Frost called the sponsors of the ad a "hate-mongering group."<sup>16</sup>

Utah Congressman Chris Cannon described the ads running in his state as "misleading" and "inflammatory."<sup>17</sup>

## **FAIR AND PAN**

FAIR was also instrumental in passing the controversial Protect Arizona Now ballot initiative, Proposition 200. FAIR contributed \$255,500.00 to pay for last-minute signature gatherers to qualify the initiative for the ballot. Without the FAIR petition drive, it is unlikely that the measure would have qualified. FAIR also ran ads supporting the initiative during the campaign.

Passed by voters on November 2, Proposition 200 denies access to all public services not mandated by the federal government to anyone unable to produce proof of citizenship, and requires Arizonans to prove their citizenship when registering to vote and show identification when casting a ballot in person. Additionally, state or local government workers who don't report undocumented immigrants who apply for government services can be charged with a misdemeanor and face up to four months in jail.

The difficulties facing Arizonans relating to health care, education, crime and numerous other problems are very real issues. Unfortunately, criminalizing civil servants and blaming undocumented immigrants for all of these problems will not solve them. Instead, an atmosphere of intolerance has been injected into the political dialogue.

## **FAIR AND THE COUNCIL OF CONSERVATIVE CITIZENS**

While publicly claiming to oppose racism, behind the scenes FAIR staffers continue to work with unabashedly white supremacist groups like the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC).

The CCC finds its roots in the Citizens Councils of America (CCA), more commonly known as the White Citizens Councils. The CCA formed in the wake of the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling that outlawed segregation in the nation's public schools. The White Citizens Councils did all they could to fight the Brown decision – by supporting segregationist politicians, inundating the South with segregationist propaganda and forming whites-only private schools.

Today, all the CCC core issues remain racially charged: official recognition of Confederate battle flags, preserving monuments to the Confederacy, and attacks against affirmative action and non-white immigration.

Immigration by people of color is thus regarded as a demographic threat to these prerogatives, as white people change from being the unquestioned majority of the population to becoming one minority among several. In recent years, CCC chapters have sharply increased their attention to the anti-immigrant cause. Between January 1997 and October 2003, local chapters organized almost thirty different rallies, meetings and protests aimed at brown-skinned immigrants. Protests have included picket signs with slogans such as, "Immigrants are a Cancer," "Now Swim Back," and "2 Million Illegals Voted Nov. 2000."

The high level of activity has attracted a large dues-paying membership base, which CCC figures put at 15,000. The bulk of that membership hails from the South, but growth is also occurring along the east coast, in the Midwest, and in California

FAIR staffers have spoken at CCC events and shared the stage with CCC leaders. At least one FAIR staffer is even reported to be a CCC member. Among the examples of FAIR working with the white supremacist CCC :

- FAIR Western Regional Coordinator Rick Oltman is described as member of the Council of Conservative Citizens in the Winter 1997/1998 edition of the *Citizens Informer*.<sup>18</sup>
- In 1997, FAIR Western Regional Coordinator Rick Oltman actually shared the podium with Virginia Abernethy at the Council of Conservative Citizens conference. Oltman and Abernethy sat on a panel entitled, “Immigration – Are We Being Overrun?”<sup>19</sup>
- At a January 17, 1998 anti-immigration rally in Cullman, Alabama, Rick Oltman shared the podium with Council of Conservative Citizens leaders and William Burchfield, a onetime Alabama state leader of Thom Robb’s Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>20</sup>
- According to the *Citizens Informer*, FAIR Field Coordinator Dave Ray was a scheduled guest speaker at a March 11, 1997 Central Alabama CCC meeting.<sup>21</sup>
- FAIR’s weekly television show, “Borderline,” has featured white nationalist leaders, including Sam Francis, a leader in the Council of Conservative Citizens and Associate Editor of *The Occidental Quarterly*<sup>22</sup>, and Jared Taylor of the CCC and head of the New Century Foundation, the publisher of the racist journal, *American Renaissance*;<sup>23</sup>
- FAIR Eastern Regional Director, Jim Staudenraus, shared the stage with Jared Taylor of the CCC and *American Renaissance* at a September 7, 2002 anti-immigration conference.<sup>24</sup>
- CCC members have participated in several of FAIR’s Immigration Reform Awareness Week lobbying events.

Though FAIR has attempted to separate themselves from charges of racism, they have made no effort to separate themselves from racist groups like the Council of Conservative Citizens. Nor has FAIR taken any public action against staffers who chose

to work with the CCC -- Rick Oltman, Dave Ray and Jim Staudenraus have not been disciplined or fired.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John F. Rohe, *Mary Lou & John Tanton: A Journey into American Conservation*, (Washington, D.C.: FAIR Horizon Press, 2002), p.83.

<sup>2</sup> Federation for American Immigration Reform, *How to ~~Survive~~ Win the Immigration Debate*, (Washington, D.C: FAIR, 1997), p.3.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> Lutton sits on the board of the New Century Foundation, which publishes the racist magazine *American Renaissance*, and on the editorial advisory board of the *Citizens Informer*. Lutton also has the distinction of having published over a dozen articles in the Holocaust denial publication the *Journal for Historical Review*.

<sup>5</sup> John Tanton, paper for the WITAN study group, 1986, as referenced in Jean Stefanic & Richard Deldago, *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda*, (Temple University Press, 1998), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Institute for the Study of Academic Racism - <http://www.ferris.edu/ISAR/Institut/pioneer/pfspread/pfp6.htm>

<sup>7</sup> J. P. Rushton, *Race, Evolution and Behavior* [New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Press, 1995], chapter 10. For a closer look at the Pioneer Fund see W. H. Tucker, *The Funding of Scientific Racism: Wickliffe Draper and the Pioneer Fund*, Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> FAIR 2000 Annual Report, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> IRS 990s for years 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, & 1999

<sup>10</sup> Jeanne Abbott, "WHO-TV pulls 'borderline racist' ads," *Des Moines Register*, January 2, 2004, pg. 4B.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Brianna Blake and Jonathan Roos, "Labor leaders blast TV ads by anti-immigration group ," *Des Moines Register*, January 1, 2004, Pg. 4A.

<sup>13</sup> Margery Beck, "Hagel fights anti-immigration ads with his own," Associated Press, April 29, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Cindy Gonzalez, "Hagel counterattacks on immigration," *Omaha World Herald*, April 29, 2004, pg. 7a.

<sup>15</sup> Editorial, "Willie Horton Redux Immigration ad pours gas on the fire," *The Dallas Morning News*, April 9, 2004, Pg. 22A.

<sup>16</sup> "REP. FROST CALLS ON REP. SESSIONS TO STOP INACCURATE SHADOW ADS, SPEAK FOR HIMSELF ON JOB CREATION," States News Service, April 6, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Kristen Stewart, "Cannon blasts 'misleading' ads ; Immigration issue: Congressman says the spots criticizing his amnesty stand are using 'Fear'" *Salt Lake Tribune* (Utah), April 9, 2004, Pg. D2.

<sup>18</sup> *Citizens Informer*, Winter 1997/1998, pg. 5

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<sup>19</sup> *Citizens Informer*, Winter 1997/1998, pg. 3

<sup>20</sup> *Citizens Informer*, Spring 1998, pg. 6

<sup>21</sup> "Central Alabama CofCC," *Citizens Informer*, No. 1, 1997, pg.

<sup>22</sup> *FAIR Immigration Report*, March 1997.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Field Report. See also, [http://www.sqlife.org/2ndNCIR\\_report\\_photos.htm](http://www.sqlife.org/2ndNCIR_report_photos.htm)