

**America's Cultural Revolution –  
Christopher Rufo**

<https://www.takimag.com/article/americas-untouchables/>

Steve Sailer opened the recent article with the words **“In this decade, America’s most effective conservative activist has likely been Chris Rufo...”** That prompted me to read Rufo’s book.

The problem with any book is getting it published. My conclusion is that Rufo simplified the story in order not to ruffle feathers – so he could get the book published. However, you can’t solve a puzzle if you leave key pieces on the floor. This book provides a lot of good history, but it is overly simplistic.

Rufo discusses four personalities that have had an outsized affect on American culture – the American cultural revolution he calls it. He writes about the life and work of Herbert Marcuse, the philosopher; Angela Davis, the campus radical; Paolo Friere, the pedagogue and Derrick Bell, the legal thinker as if they were primarily responsible for what has happened.

In my opinion he gives them too much credit for good motives. They wanted recognition, career advancement, money and power, and were smart enough to see that radicalism will get them where they wanted to go. Rufo concludes that their movements were ultimately nihilistic, going nowhere. I would contend that the four actors were themselves nihilists. Perhaps psychopaths, manipulating others for personal gain. They were creatures of their times, taking advantage of what they could.

What about the rest of us? Were we asleep? Hardly! The Berkeley campus had a lively leftist scene in the 1950s. They were vehemently against Joe McCarthy. There were Fair Play for Cuba speakers. Berkeley, and much of society loved the mordant, leftist comedy of Lenny Bruce and Mort Saul. Allen Ginsberg’s North American Man Boy Love Association was well known and tolerated. Finocchio’s transvestite nightclub in North Beach, San Francisco was crowded every night. It was a decade before drugs invaded the campus, but we all read about them in Kerouac’s “On the Road” and heard about their use among San Francisco and New York beatniks. Rufo’s contention that we were a straight, conservative, God-fearing people had not applied to Berkeley or San Francisco for decades.

The four main characters of this book had no monopoly on nihilism. A significant portion of American society had already strayed far from its Puritan roots. They were preaching to kids who had given up an old religion and were ripe for a new one. Rufo, in his conclusion, calls for the nation to return to what it was. Sorry, but most of us weren’t what he would like to think we were.

The key observation that Rufo is reluctant to put into words, the missing piece of the puzzle, is that people differ in ability. Peoples are different in average ability. Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois wrote freely about the “talented tenth” that could master college education, who could serve as leaders for black society.

Rufo does repeat Eldridge Cleaver’s use of the German **Lumpenproletariat, which translates as “ragged working class” - unskilled, unemployed, dispossessed and alienated.** He writes that “Despite all of Eldridge Cleaver’s ideological posturing, Marx might have been right after all. The lumpenproletariat—the “thieves and criminals of all kinds living on the crumbs of society”—might have been too undisciplined, violent, hedonistic, and easily manipulated, and, thus, incapable of becoming the true subject of the revolution. As the BLA soldier Sundiata Acoli lamented, the media was able to highlight the movement’s “lumpen tendencies,” including “lack of discipline, liberal use of alcohol, marijuana,

One of Rufo's themes is that the rhetorical trick has been to substitute "equity," meaning comparable outcomes – for "equality," comparable opportunities. It only works if you assume equality of ability. Since that can never be proven – it simply isn't true – it must be presented as an unchallengeable a priori. All who question it are irredeemable racists. Scientific evidence is not sought, and freedom of inquiry is not allowed.

Following Rufo's Table of Contents -

## Part I: Revolution

### Chapter 1: Herbert Marcuse: Father of the Revolution

Herbert Marcuse immigrated from Germany to the United States in 1934. He had been associated with Jewish radical groups like the Communists in Germany and didn't want to take his chances with Hitler. He fit in with the well-established communists on United States campuses – see Robert Oppenheimer among others. Marcuse was more prolific, but he was part of a well-established stream of thought.

### Chapter 2: The New Left: "We Will Burn and Loot and Destroy"

Yes, that's what they had been doing for decades. The Jacobins in the French revolution. Toussaint L'Overture and Dessalines in the Haitian revolution. The anarchists that preceded the communists in Russia. Rosa Luxemburg in Germany. It is far easier to tear down than to build up. As always, when the leaders of the tear-it-down program came to power, they exploited it for personal gain, not for the benefit of their supporters.

### Chapter 3: The Long March Through the Institutions

The campus left was strong in the 1930s. See the movie Oppenheimer – many people were attracted to communism even then. Roosevelt's administration, as Rufo mentions, employed many leftists including quite a few actual communists like Harry Dexter White.

Rufo needs to be braver in mentioning American Jewry in the context of the march through the institutions. Jews have always been liberal, going back to their radicalism in the eastern European homelands from which most of them came. They entered academia in large numbers in the 1930s as the "gentlemen's agreement" keeping their numbers down was abandoned.

Reed College was a hotbed of leftism long before Angela Davis appeared on the scene. [Ron Unz](#) tells the story as it was, about the chaos that followed in the wake of her brilliant but nihilistic attacks on the establishment. The hometown [Portland Oregonian](#) had a more positive take on her life and work. Either way, the attack on the institutions was well underway in the '50s, and Marcuse was not the first or only Europe intellectual involved.

### Chapter 4: The New Ideological Regime

The campuses supported Adlai Stevenson over Eisenhower in 1952 in 1956. Campus liberals despised Joe McCarthy. As a student in Berkeley and at Reed College at the time of the Cuban revolution I saw a vast amount of "Fair play for Cuba" activism. The folksinger music of the late 1950s and 1960s, people like Peter Paul and Mary, Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger were all people of the left.

University administrators were conflicted. Clark Kerr attempted to be open-minded and fair. It was no contest. He folded easily and lost his job. Ironically, San Francisco State's Sam Hayakawa was the only prominent academic to refuse to be intimidated. This tiny man pulled the plug on the demonstrators' loudspeaker. To no avail – after his tenure – he became a GOP Senator - SF State

became a stronghold of the academic left.

Popular comedians of the 1950s included Mort Sahl, Lenny Bruce, and Singer Tom Lehrer. These were all very liberal people. Reed College, which I attended, was called the “Little red schoolhouse.” Virtually nobody on campus supported Richard Nixon in 1960. The 1964 free speech movement in Berkeley predates Herbert Marcuse and Angela Davis’ prominence. It was profoundly leftist. The antiwar movement was likewise a leftist effort, undoubtedly supported by the Communists to the extent that they could.

## Part II: Race

### Chapter 5: Angela Davis: The Spirit of Racial Revolt

Race is obviously heritable. Even liberals believe that intelligence is heritable, at least when it comes to them and their own children. This implies making the logical correlation between A and B, which is vehemently discouraged.

Another logical conclusion, one that statistics strongly support, is that the average intelligence of mixed-race individuals falls between that of the two parental races. Angela Davis’ physiognomy is clearly that of a hybrid, like W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington and many other black leaders. She knew from childhood that she was smart, wherever it came from.

Clarence Thomas writes about the dilemma facing every intelligent black. He can choose to apply his intelligence to earn success in white culture via hard work, or exploit the gift of intelligence to easily earn the esteem of blacks. As MLK, Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and Obama have shown, the latter course offers many advantages: lots of sex, fawning admiration and indulgence of indiscretions. Mainstreamers such as Clarence Thomas, Thomas Sowell and Larry Elder have to hold themselves to a higher standard and tolerate relentless catcalls for being “Uncle Toms.” Angela Davis chose the path that would bring her glory and adulation – defending black behavior, however bad, on the pretext that it was a justifiable reaction to insufferable white behavior.

Bad behavior is fun, and being black gives a person the excuse that the white man made them do it. Angela Davis liked flirting with danger. She defended Eldridge Cleaver, who used it as an excuse for raping white women (!?).

### Chapter 6: "Kill the Pigs": The Black Revolution Explodes

The first BLM – Black Liberation Movement – of the 60s and 70s racked up a significant body count. In the process it put the establishment in gear. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies identified, incarcerated and sometimes killed the militants in shootouts. The establishment enjoyed public support. Nobody, not even the black community, wanted wanton violence.

### Chapter 7: From Black Liberation to Black Studies

The universities, the established white liberal academics, were not threatened in the same way as the public. They welcomed Angela Davis. Rufo writes:

“The triumph of the long march through the institutions, however, does not represent the ascension of rational, scientific government, nor the arrival of Marcuse’s “direct democracy.” It represents the extension of bureaucratic power and the creation of a new one - dimensional society. As the activists

moved from a position of negation to a position of authority, they slowly undermined their own legitimacy as a movement of subversion and their own rationale as a method for liberation. ”

“The outcome is a revolt of the state against the people. The bureaucracy fortifies its own power and privilege while waging a taxpayer-financed revolution against the middle and lower classes. Liberation becomes the pretext for domination. The counterculture becomes the Establishment. The revolution solidifies into bureaucracy “

## Chapter 8: BLM: The Revolution Reborn

Black Lives Matter was a revival of the Black Liberation Movement. The difference was that the zeitgeist allowed them to get away with murder. By 2020, the triumph of emotions over reason, the triumph of student activism over any reasonable restraints on campus, was complete. Progressives served as mayors, counselors, judges, and district attorneys in mostly white northern cities. The colleges where those white folk had studied had been teaching white guilt for two generations.

Rufo writes: “The Black Lives Matter activists have built their argument to orchestrate a precise cascade of human emotions, shocking the conscience with examples of “police brutality,” abstracting those rare but salient events as “systemic racism,” and leading the public to the morally unopposable cause of “abolition.””

Chapter 9: Mob Rule in Seattle describes what happened in that city. Similarly hard-hit were Minneapolis, Portland, San Francisco and other mostly with progressive cities. The fifty years of long march had eroded their will to resist.

## Part III: Education

### Chapter 10: Paulo Freire: Master of Subversion

Paulo Friere is beloved of the academy, one of the most celebrated educators of our time. Except – he didn’t really educate. He talked about the need for education. What he actually did was to indoctrinate. Rufo writes:

“As a book, [Friere’s] Pedagogy of the Oppressed is a Rorschach test. At one level, it presents a simple, even uncontroversial lesson: children must be invested in their own education and engage in creative problem-solving, rather than be subjected to rote learning and top-down control. This insight is packaged in American schools today as “critical pedagogy” and “culturally responsive teaching,” with Freire playing the role of the kindly, bearded teacher who wants to cultivate the spirit of social justice.

“But underneath the surface, there is a deeper, troubling current that runs all the way through Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Freire bases his pedagogy on the political belief that capitalism has enslaved the population and “anesthetized” the world’s oppressed with a series of myths: “the myth that the oppressive order is a ‘free society’”; “the myth that all persons are free to work where they wish”; “the myth that this order respects human rights”; “the myth of private property as fundamental to personal human development”; “the myth of the charity and generosity of the elites.”

Friere taught that the poverty of the people of color – starting in Brazil – was due to white oppression. Poor they are. Here is my photo of a Landless Rural Workers squatter camp in northern Brazil. Uneducated they are as well. Unfortunately, Freire was not able to put together a program to

effectively educate them. All he could manage was to stir up their grievances. Though Brazil pretends to be colorblind, it escapes nobody's notice that most members of the Movimento sem terra are descended of African slaves.



Chapter 11: "We Must Punish Them": Marxism Conquers the American Classroom.

Teachers

Chapter 12: Engineers of the Human Soul

Chapter 13: The Child Soldiers of Portland

Part IV: Power

Chapter 14: Derrick Bell: Prophet of Racial Pessimism...

Chapter 15: "I Live to Harass White Folks": The Po...

Chapter 16: The Rise of Critical Race Theory

Chapter 17: DEI and the End of the Constitutional...

Conclusion: The Counter-Revolution to Come

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Original Amazon review

Making more sense out of nonsense than is there to be found.

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The four main characters of this book had no monopoly on nihilism. A significant portion of American society had already strayed far from its Puritan roots. These radicals were preaching to kids who had given up an old religion and were ripe for a new one. Rufo, in his conclusion, calls for the nation to return to what it was. Sorry, but most of us weren't what he would like to think we were.

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One of Rufo's themes is that the rhetorical trick has been to substitute "equity," meaning comparable outcomes – for "equality," comparable opportunities. It only works if you assume equality of ability. Since that can never be proven – it simply isn't true – it must be presented as an unchallengeable a priori. All who question it are irredeemable racists. Scientific evidence is not sought, and freedom of inquiry is not allowed.

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Rufo's explanation of the texts is quite good. However, the texts themselves are irrational. Post-modern. Deconstructing them does not lead to enlightenment. It is question of whether the times sought the texts they needed rather than that the texts found an opportune time. Like Foucault and Derrida, these texts are hollow. Their authors simply had the luck to tap into a pre-existing anomie, nihilism and religious vacuum.

Four stars, for a wonderful trip through the texts, even though the texts make no sense unto themselves and don't shed much light on the people who embraced them.