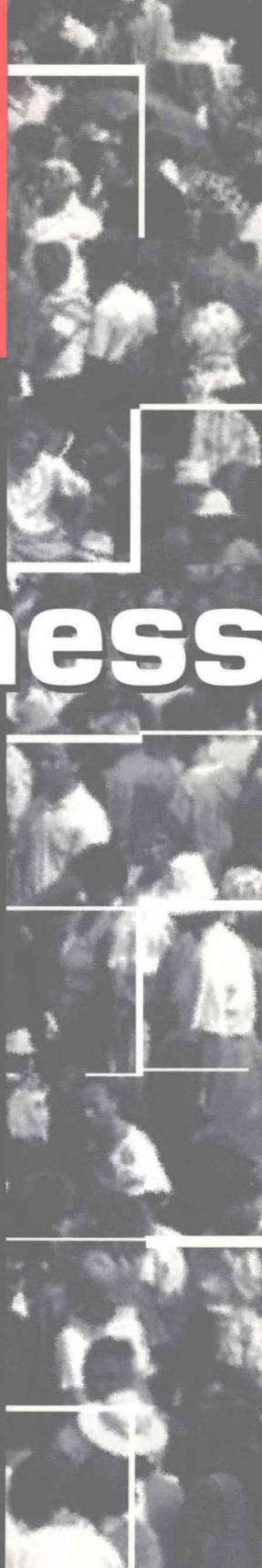


**Beyond**

**Political  
Correctness**

**Social  
Transformation  
in the United States**

**MICHAEL S. CUMMINGS**



# BEYOND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

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Social Transformation  
in the United States

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Michael S. Cummings



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BEYOND  
POLITICAL  
CORRECTNESS

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*For Petra, Anthony, and Eliza  
and in memory of Libbus and Jocko*

# Preface

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This book is about political correctness, or PC. It is also about social transformation. It is especially about how political correctness impedes the kind of social change that could greatly improve our country. It is written for students and scholars of politics, for social activists, and for concerned citizens. In the glossary at the end of the book, you will find definitions of key terms such as “political correctness,” “progressive,” “liberal,” and “conservative.” These definitions are neither right nor wrong, but are simply the ones I have found most useful in my own thinking. You will notice that particular people you know may fit the generic definitions imperfectly, because few people fit into a single definitional box.

A particular term, for instance “adultism,” may push your buttons, perhaps because it feels too PC or anti-PC. Please don’t throw the book across the room, as a student of mine did recently with a book I had assigned, but intellectually gird your loins to engage my argument. As I make my “progressive” case against PC, I will take positions that may surprise you. My purpose is not to create a new set of politically correct proposals, but to bring out of the closet and into the light of day some provocative ideas that have been shortchanged by PC. I’d be happy to engage you further at <mcumming@carbon.cudenver.edu>. I enjoy passionate, conscientious disagreement more than casual or unconsidered agreement.

\* \* \*

The ideas in this book have been inspired by many thinkers, from Plato and Marx to W.E.B. Du Bois, and Betty Friedan to Christopher Lasch and Jeanne Bethke Elshtain. They have been enriched by the work of many public servants, including my distant relative Blue Jacket, Cesar Chavez, Ina May Gaskin, Clarence Jordan, Ralph Nader, Nellie Story, Norman Thomas, Harriet Tubman, and George Wiley. They also have benefited from my engagement with a generation of students, colleagues, and political activists.

The following people read all or parts of the manuscript: Leanne Anderson, Steve Barr, Ted Becker, Molly Boone, Zach Boone, Karen Breslin, Susan Cummings, Ken Dolbeare, Dan Eades, Larry Hanks, Patrizia Longo, Bill Patrick, Mike Robinson, Ed Schwerin, Christa Slaton, Peter Stillman, Thad Tecza, Petra Ulrych, Scott Vickers, Mike Woontner, Regina Woontner, and Betty Zisk. Their reactions, critiques, and suggestions have been invaluable, and I am deeply beholden to them. I owe a special debt of thanks to Ted Becker for soliciting and encouraging me in this lengthy project, to Jerry Jacks for helping me with the research, and to Dan Eades of Lynne Rienner Publishers for supporting it at every stage.

Finally, a number of friends have made special contributions, both direct and indirect, to my work on the book, including Albert Bates, Harv Bishop, Bob Clifton, Joel Edelstein, Vasek Hlavaty, Cheng Liang Lee, Ken Gordon, Jan Lapetino, Scott Logan, Patty McMurray, Russell Means, Glenn Morris, Karla Haas Moskowitz, Ken Newman, Zdenka Pilna, Don Pitzer, John Rensenbrink, Tony Robinson, Giuseppa Saccaro del Buffa, Lyman Tower Sargent, Steve Thomas, Ray Tillman, and Stacey Winslow. Most of these contributors have provided transformative examples, or helped me think outside of my box, or both.

—M.S.C.

# Contents

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<i>Preface</i>	ix
Introduction: Political Correctness as Antitransformational	1
1 PC, Opportunism, and Transformative Deficit on the Left	23
2 Affirmative Action: Hanging Separately While the Gentry Feast	49
3 Transformative Values: Synergy, Entropy, and Social Change	83
4 Beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism: The Invisible Hand of Synergy	111
5 The Missing Child in Transformational Politics	141
6 Beyond Adultism: Political Empowerment for Young People	171
7 Family Empowerment in Social Transformation: The Politics of Birthing, Nursing, and Parenting	209
8 Missing Synergies in Ecology, Crime, and Political Economy	255
9 Conclusion: Ideology as Friend and Foe of Transformation	309
<i>Glossary</i>	313
<i>Bibliography</i>	317
<i>Index</i>	329
<i>About the Book</i>	339



# Introduction: Political Correctness as Antitransformational

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“This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off, to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism . . . Now is the time. . . . I have a dream. . . . Let freedom ring.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., August 28, 1963

“But the hushing of the criticism of honest opponents is a dangerous thing.”

—W.E.B. Du Bois<sup>1</sup>

This is a book about how left-wing political correctness, or PC, unintentionally undermines progressive causes such as social justice, children’s rights, ecology, economic democracy, and the building of strong communities. PC’s silencing of dissent and chilling of debate, I shall argue, does more damage to the cause of social transformation than to the cause of conservatism. Left-wing ideological closure obscures many promising ideas and insights; the chapters that follow take some of them out of the closet and put them on the table for frank discussion. These ideas promise to transform affirmative action, shift our shared values from win-lose to win-win, enfranchise youth, empower families, preserve the balance of nature, restore communities beset by crime, and democratize the economy.

No one smirks or protests when a mathematician claims that a math problem has a single correct solution and that all other answers are simply wrong. Politics, on the other hand, is a matter of opinion, and it makes less sense to speak of a “politically correct” solution to a social problem. “Just so,” say political conservatives. “Yet some people act as if they had the single correct political solution.” For more than a decade, conservatives have charged their leftist foes with claiming political correctness, for themselves and their liberal or radical beliefs. The term “political correctness” was created in the 1920s and 1930s by communist groups, and notably used without apology by Chinese leader Mao Zedong for over four decades, to depict their own political views as objectively, scientifically valid.<sup>2</sup> In the 1980s

the term was rediscovered and given a satirical twist by conservatives to debunk the narrow-mindedness of their left-wing opponents.

Today, criticisms of political correctness come mostly from conservatives fed up with liberalism, radicalism, socialism, feminism, multiculturalism, environmentalism, egalitarianism, and other left-wingisms.<sup>3</sup> These right-wing critics of PC charge their leftist opponents with acting unfairly, even oppressively, toward conservative principles, policies, and people. In 1999 an anti-PC Princeton professor quoted a colleague's complaint that academic freedom had come to mean "the moral right to be as far to the moral left as you please."<sup>4</sup> As a result, charge such anti-PC groups as the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), nonleftists don't get a fair shake on college campuses.<sup>5</sup> Both Lynne Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney, and 2000 Democratic VP nominee Joseph Lieberman play prominent roles in ACTA.

Many conservatives believe that were it not for the successful interventions of the politically correct left, the conservative vision for America would naturally prevail. In this book, I fault leftist PC for the opposite reason: that it unintentionally helps to perpetuate the status quo. It does so by keeping vital but troubling issues in the closet, by silencing dissent, by distorting reality, by miring progressives in sterile ideological conflicts of the partisan left and right, and thus, most importantly, by obscuring real transformational alternatives. Most notably, PC has weakened the progressive agenda in the areas mentioned above as well as in its slighting of the fundamental issue of personal and social values. In areas such as affirmative action, family values, and criminal justice, PC practitioners on the left have tried to quarantine truth in a futile attempt to keep it from infecting their ideologies and their followers.

As I argue in subsequent chapters, the conservative vision suffers not from the ravages of left-wing PC but from its own arbitrary elitism, entropic values, contradictory blend of Christianity and capitalism, pecuniary sacrifice of families and communities, and undemocratic, ecocidal political economy. Burdened by a vision that a majority will never knowingly accept and that the earth cannot long tolerate, conservatives can nevertheless offer insightful critiques of left-wing follies. When they do, progressives would do well to listen and learn rather than retreat myopically behind a veil of political correctness. This book explores vital alternatives for social transformation that have been short-circuited by the strictures of PC.

### **PC and Anti-PC Are Still the Rage**

After more than a decade of pro- and anti-PC furor, charges and defenses of political correctness show no signs of abating. Indeed, the rhetorical use of

the term “political correctness” has spread far beyond its original domain. For instance, sexual conversation and behavior is often screened for political correctness. “Reading about new sexual harassment suits,” writes Professor Mary Karr, “I used to be spring-loaded on ‘You go, girl,’ certain in the feminist marrow of my bones that some deep wrong was being righted. Then I found myself threatened with such a suit, and my worldview wheeled around.”<sup>6</sup> Karr reports the Byzantine events, including potential lawsuits, that she lived through, adding, “On the battleground of political correctness, it’s not the possibility of a lawsuit that’s scary. It’s the silence.”<sup>7</sup> PC makes people afraid to speak their minds. This book is intended to break some of the silences that Karr fears.

Artistic and literary awards are now subject to PC screens. Some previously unknown, white Australian writers and artists have recently won acclaim after adopting aboriginal personas, because, claims one writer, “politically correct publishers and awards judges discriminate against white men in favor of female, Aboriginal, and immigrant-descended writers.”<sup>8</sup> In 1998, the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) rescinded the award it had given Japanese-American writer Lois-Ann Yamanaka for her novel *Blu’s Hanging*, called “powerful,” “arresting,” and “brilliant” by critics. Yamanaka had won previous awards “for her searing depictions of poverty, violence and racism in her native Hawaii.” But because some Filipinos took offense at her depiction of a minor Filipino character in the novel, the AAAS reconsidered, determined that the book was “racist,” and canceled the award. Poet David Mura blasted the AAAS’s belated PC screening as equivalent to its “functioning like the thought police.” He added: “The purpose of writers is not to produce idealized portraits of the community.”<sup>9</sup>

The Motion Picture Academy moved in the opposite direction in March 1999, when it gave an honorary, lifetime-achievement Oscar to director Elia Kazan despite objections by many film-industry professionals that Kazan had cooperated with the House Un-American Activities Committee’s black-listing of suspected communists in the 1950s. *Boston Globe* commentator Martin Nolan wrote: “When the Motion Picture Academy approved an honorary Oscar for Elia Kazan, their historic decision hastened the demise of the ‘politically correct’ instinct in America.”<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, PC’s demise is far less imminent than Nolan implies. In mid-2000, former George Bush speechwriter Tony Snow complained that each day brings “fresh spasms” of PC: for instance, “The Director’s Guild of America abandons the D.W. Griffith award for reasons of political correctness.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1999, the Walt Disney Corporation came out with yet another version of “Tarzan,” to mostly favorable reviews. Some critics, however, noted that Disney’s animated “Tarzan” is set in Africa but has nary an African character. The many previous versions that did have African characters tended to portray them in a traditional European or American racial stereotype. Critic

Peter Rainer wrote that “perhaps Disney thought the best way to get around the ooga-booga stereotype was to eliminate blacks altogether. It’s the neutron bomb version of political correctness.”<sup>12</sup>

Even science has come in for its share of PC disputes. Herrnstein and Murray’s (1994) *The Bell Curve* continues to ignite political reaction to its contention that African Americans suffer from lower average innate intelligence than white Americans. The authors conclude that programs to compensate blacks for their social disadvantages are useless and ill-advised—a merciless inference even if their IQ findings were valid. William Julius Wilson has pointed out that Herrnstein and Murray’s methodology cannot account for the subtly cumulative effects of historical racism, which tarnish role models, reduce self-confidence, stunt ambition, and eliminate informal support networks. Faulting their scientific methods, biologist Stephen Jay Gould responds: “Like so many conservative ideologues who rail against the largely bogus ogre of suffocating political correctness, Herrnstein and Murray claim that they only want a hearing for unpopular views so that truth will out.”<sup>13</sup> Wilson and Gould believe that their criticisms of *The Bell Curve* are both politically and scientifically correct.

Archaeologist Gary Matlock and anthropologist Stephen LeBlanc tell of the PC pressure against studying violence among indigenous puebloans of the U.S. Southwest. “Mainstream anthropology has, until recently, been loathe [*sic*] to recognize warfare as a major force in social evolution,” says LeBlanc. “Searching for warfare has been widely considered politically incorrect, plain and simple.”<sup>14</sup> Zoologists Robert Pitman and Susan Chivers complain about popular and media negativity toward their discovery of two different types of killer whales, a “docile” type and a “wilder” type that ravages sperm whales by hunting in packs. “The forces of political correctness and media marketing seem bent on projecting an image of a more benign form (the *Free Willy* or Shamu model), and some people urge exclusive use of the name ‘orca’ for the species, instead of what is perceived as the more sinister label of ‘killer whale.’”<sup>15</sup> In 2000, a team of UCLA psychologists reported physiological and behavioral differences between men and women in responding to stress. Noting the finding’s political incorrectness, lead researcher Shelley Taylor said, “I hope women don’t find it offensive.”<sup>16</sup>

A medical finding by France’s leading obstetrician, Dr. Emile Papiernik, has led to political criticisms or media blackouts of his study by left-wing French periodicals like *Le Monde* and *Liberation*. His data show that, on average, the fetuses of black women reach full term a week sooner than those of white women. “Recognizing that difference,” he argues, “allows doctors to begin monitoring African mothers one week earlier. This can cut in half prenatal deaths, fetal distress during delivery and the neonatal damage associated with post-term births.” Having lost his father to a Nazi concentration camp in World War II, the Jewish Papiernik says he knows firsthand about the dangers of racial classification, but that acknowledging racial differences

is a necessary step toward achieving equal medical care. "As a doctor, I can tell you in numbers of lives lost about the stupidity of political correctness."<sup>17</sup> Psychiatrist Sally Satel labels as "indoctrinologists" ("their diagnosis is oppression and their prescription is social reform") those of her medical colleagues who criticize U.S. medical care for being racist and sexist: "The critics are beginning to fashion a world of politically correct medicine."<sup>18</sup>

I hope that Chapter 2's criticisms of affirmative action do not lead to mysterious disappearances of my book, as happened to Professor Jay Bergman's postings of anti-affirmative-action fliers around his Central Connecticut State University campus. When he finally spotted forty-year-old student Dawn Bliesener taking one from a bulletin board, "he began screaming so loudly that nearby professors came out to quiet him." After the university sided with the student, Bergman's case became a cause célèbre for conservative academics "as an example of how colleges will tolerate the suppression of unpopular views while cracking down on those who are not considered 'politically correct.'" Bergman was aided by the National Association of Scholars, which investigates PC improprieties on college campuses.<sup>19</sup>

In 1998, the tobacco industry began to shift its marketing tactics when R.J. Reynolds developed ads that satirized antismoking groups as puritanical prudes and killjoys. The ads portray smoking as a forbidden fruit that a courageous, rebellious person might want to explore rather than cravenly kowtow to nay-sayers such as parents or the surgeon general. New Camel ads feature mock warnings headlined "Viewer Discretion Advised" along with the legally required health warning. A Winston billboard declares, "At least you can still smoke in your own car." "Judge me all you want, just keep the verdict to yourself," says another. Ever true to the tobacco-industry approach, Reynolds spokeswoman Fran Creighton denied any satirical intent in the ads. "We would never make fun of the cigarette health warning," she said. "This is maybe more about the P.C. (politically correct) world we live in. The world has an authoritarian view on everything."<sup>20</sup> After the U.S. government filed a massive suit against the tobacco industry in 1999, Phillip Morris lawyer Greg Little promised, "We will not succumb to politically correct extortion."<sup>21</sup>

In early 2000, the gun industry and its supporters protested Citibank's policy of refusing to do business with customers involved in manufacturing or selling arms. Former U.S. attorney and gun-club spokesman James Winchester accused Citibank of unfair discrimination and "political correctness run amok."<sup>22</sup> Under threat of boycott, Citibank soon reversed itself. Complaining about the arbitrary racial classifications of the 2000 U.S. Census, news editor Vincent Carroll says, "Welcome to America: where even the Census form is politically correct."<sup>23</sup>

Even military critics of NATO's 1999 bombing campaign in Yugoslavia drew insight from the PC wars. One of the world's top defense institutes,

the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, charged that NATO's strategy had violated basic principles of warfare by failing to make sufficiently credible threats of force and by "desperately trying to avoid casualties." The institute's director, John Chapman, said that the alliance had been guilty of "strategic correctness," by which he meant an excessively humanitarian approach to warfare intended to soothe the sensibilities of the leaders' own political constituencies.<sup>24</sup>

In "Hobby Not Always Politically Correct," chess grand master Larry Evans reports that in some quarters chess is frowned upon for being too warlike and competitive. One of his readers wrote: "Last year my kid's intermediate school principal forbade holding chess tournaments on the school's premises on the grounds that it was 'too competitive and does not foster the appropriate spirit commensurate with the school's principles.'" The father noted with irony that the same school has two baseball stadiums. Evans replies, "Chess too competitive but not baseball? Give me a break."<sup>25</sup>

In 1997, a long-brewing conflict over political correctness in Denver led to the termination of the National Western Stock Show's black-white team of Leon Coffee, an African-American rodeo "clown," and his white sidekick, good friend and rodeo announcer Hadley Barrett. I put "clown" in quotes because Coffee's job—"bullfighter," in rodeo lingo—entails not only entertaining the crowd but saving the lives of thrown bull riders by distracting angry bulls. This case illustrates, not only in black and white but in suggestive detail, some legitimate pros and cons of PC. Over the years, Barrett and Coffee's raw humor has gotten many laughs but has also rankled some rodeo fans, including women and ethnic minorities.

Here is a typical exchange between the two: "Coffee joshes a rodeo spectator about his bald spot. Barrett's voice booms out through the arena in the spectator's defense, telling Coffee to take off his silly hat. 'See that?' Barrett says, pointing to the clown's tightly curled black hair. 'That's the original Velcro right there.'"<sup>26</sup> Coffee and Barrett defend their equal-opportunity jokes, which they say are aimed at everyone, including themselves. But the NAACP and other groups have taken offense at their political incorrectness. "Politically correct," fumes Coffee. "I hate those words. You can't be politically correct and be funny." Rather than avoid sensitive issues such as race, he prefers to tackle them head-on, as reflected in one of his favorite jokes. "He shouts up to Barrett in the announcer's booth that when white people are born, they're pink. When they get mad, they're red. When they get cold, they're blue. When they get sick, they're green. And they call me colored!"

Coffee maintains that the rodeo is run on merit, not race or privilege, as exemplified by recent African-American champion cowboys such as Chris Littlejohn. Coffee believes that he has earned his own "bullfighting" job on merit too: "There isn't a cowboy out there with a bull on his butt that says, 'Don't send the black guy to save me, send the white guy.'" Defending

his equal-opportunity insults, Coffee argues that “I don’t pick on anybody—I pick on everybody. I take no prisoners.” The problem with this argument, PC supporters might reply, is that being picked on equally does not mean being affected equally by being picked on. White people being told that they turn different colors are less likely to feel hurt than obese women hearing the clowns tell Barrett that “their girlfriends lost 45 pounds overnight, just by shaving their legs. Had to use a Weed-Eater” and that “one girlfriend was so fat, she enjoyed watching the rodeo from Section HH, Seats 5, 6, and 7.” Although Barrett and Coffee defend their right to poke fun in good humor, Barrett did apologize in 1997 for thoughtlessly joking about “jewling down” someone, saying that he had intended no offense to Jews.

### **Justifiable Ambivalence About PC**

Andrew Hudson, a spokesman for the black liberal mayor of Denver, Wellington Webb, reported that his office had gotten frequent complaints about Coffee and Barrett. Hudson said he regarded many of them as valid. “Our biggest concern,” he said, “is that you have a very diverse crowd, ethnicities and backgrounds, who were bringing their family and children to an event, and being exposed to these types of comments. People bringing kids to a rodeo shouldn’t have to expect this kind of thing.”<sup>27</sup> By contrast, conservative columnist Linda Chavez defended the television show *Seinfeld* for the very reason that Hudson, Webb, and stock show officials agreed on Coffee and Barrett’s termination in 1997: “Where most comedy shows eschew offending any liberal interest groups,” she wrote, “*Seinfeld* was an equal opportunity insulter, with homosexuals, handicapped persons and minorities fair game for parody.” She added that the show’s humor “was never cruel or malicious.” What Chavez liked best about *Seinfeld* was that it was funny “because it exaggerated the worst aspects of our narcissistic, materialistic, politically correct culture.”<sup>28</sup>

A civilization’s history of racism, sexism, and other forms of arbitrary discrimination makes it hard to draw a “correct” line in social interactions between, on the one hand, an apt sensitivity to past injuries and, on the other, a hypersensitivity that can make people humorless and even speechless. Despite the criticisms I launch at PC in this book, I can hardly join Joseph Stromberg in viewing concerns about personal dignity and indignities as “some egregiously goofy manifestation such as ‘political correctness.’”<sup>29</sup> For both good and bad, political correctness is far more than a goofy manifestation. A young American Indian woman writes, “For Native Americans, political correctness and multicultural programs are important steps toward self-determination, political power, and resistance to a history of federal policies of cultural genocide.”<sup>30</sup> Historian Patricia Limerick believes that “what we

call the politically correct more often than not turns out to be the factually correct.”<sup>31</sup> Richard Rorty (1998: p. 81) defends liberal political correctness: “The adoption of attitudes which the Right sneers at as ‘politically correct’ has made America a far more civilized society than it was thirty years ago.” And Paul Peterson (1995: p. 3) asserts that “the politically correct answer in a pluralist democracy is also likely to be ethically correct.”

In a 1999 PC episode in Washington, D.C., David Howard, a white staffer for black mayor Anthony Williams, used “niggardly” in a meeting, accidentally offending a black staffer who mistook this synonym for “miserly” as an ethnic slur. Under pressure to fire Howard by blacks who already regarded the Ivy League mayor as insufficiently black, Williams accepted his friend’s resignation, prompting a critical retort by Cynthia Tucker, African-American editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. In her article “The Blacker Than Thou Thing,” she opined that Mayor Williams “might have brought this dumb little drama to a close by handing out vocabulary books” rather than accepting Howard’s resignation.<sup>32</sup> She quotes Julian Bond, “the literate chairman of the board” of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as saying, “You hate to think you have to censor your language to meet other people’s lack of understanding.” *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd wrote that “even if the mayor is having a teensy-weensy identity crisis, he should never have sided with ignorance or succumbed to P.C. poisoning.”<sup>33</sup>

Jesse Jackson’s compromise position on this racially loaded episode reflects the hard-to-define correct-sensitivity line I referred to earlier. He proposed that Williams rehire Howard (which he did, but to a different position) while suggesting that Howard—and the rest of us—try to avoid such words as “niggardly” that can easily be misinterpreted. I am concerned that many of the parties who expend energy on such PC brouhahas share an underlying concern for bettering society that gets lost in the shuffle. The critique of PC developed in this book seeks above all to reverse PC’s dissipation of progressive energies and its stunting of transformational visions.

The proposals I make in Chapters 2 through 9 are frankly transformational, even utopian, intended to change U.S. society fundamentally. Indeed, my critique of political correctness is incidental to a greater purpose threatened by PC: the building of societies that better nurture their people and the planet on which we all depend. Transcending the limits and blinders of the partisan left and right does not mean seeking a “moderate” center touted—and courted—by U.S. politicians in general elections. Indeed, the arguments made in this book show just how immoderate the center of U.S. politics can be. By internationally shared criteria for the well-being of human beings and the earth, mainstream U.S. policy is in many areas quite “extreme.”<sup>34</sup>

As this book was nearing completion, a tragic incident brought home once again the ways in which political correctness can obscure the causes



of social problems and confound their solutions. Traveling with my family through the Czech and Slovak Republics in the spring of 1999, I learned of the massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, a suburb of Denver, where we live. Teenagers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold had killed twelve of their fellow students and teacher Dave Sanders, and wounded thirteen other students before killing themselves. Coming on the heels of a rash of other school shootings in Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Oregon, the Columbine slaughter has prompted much soul-searching by Americans about what is wrong with U.S. society. It has also spawned a great deal of pontificating by political and religious pundits as well as panderers of special interests. But as I shall argue in the book, neither the soul-searching nor the pontificating has gotten to the roots of the social pathologies besetting Americans young and old.

Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich blamed liberalism for the Columbine massacre, citing thirty-five years of cultural contamination by “the political and intellectual elites and political correctness” for undermining American values.<sup>35</sup> Vice President Al Gore countered that it is the lack of gun control that best explains such incidents, and President Clinton charged that the Republican leadership in the House “seems intent on ignoring the lessons of Littleton” by defeating the administration’s gun-control proposals.<sup>36</sup> When some left-leaning activists criticized the memorial service for Columbine victims as “too evangelical and too white,” columnist Kathleen Parker charged that “political correctness has no shame.”<sup>37</sup> Christians seized on victim Cassie Bernall’s alleged affirmation of her belief in God—when asked about it by one of the gunmen just before he killed her—to promote their recruitment efforts and their religious beliefs, one of which is presumably that God works in mysterious ways.

Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo came closer to basic causes when he cited intolerance, youth alienation and fear, division, and lack of community as breeding grounds for youth violence. Except for noting the privileged status of high school athletes, targeted by the Columbine killers, few if any leading voices cited the harshly competitive winner-loser values of U.S. culture as a fertile ground for revenge by socially marginalized people like Harris and Klebold. After Columbine we might have expected criticisms of this entropic culture from political progressives—until we consider that left-wing PC has cast “the values thing” as a red herring of the right, used by conservatives to distract us from the true, structural causes of our societal ills. The Marxian tradition of reducing values to an “epiphenomenon” of underlying economic causes has seduced many progressives into ceding a wide range of values issues, including family values, to the right. But a society that celebrates Coach Vince Lombardi’s dictum that “winning is the only thing” will continue to produce Dylan Klebolds who rage against their loserhood and refuse to go quietly “into that good night.”<sup>38</sup>