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**Author(s):** Andrews, Molly

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### **Fighting for 'the finest image we have of her': Patriotism and Oppositional Politics**

In the midst of the Second World War, Albert Camus was moved to write a series of letters to his German friend, Rene Leynaud, in which he explained what he perceived to be the fundamental difference between their worldviews. He begins the first of these letters by recalling a conversation between them.

You said to me "The greatness of my country is beyond price. Anything is good that contributes to its greatness..." "No", I told you, "I cannot believe that everything must be subordinated to a single end... I should like to be able to love my country and still love justice. I don't want any greatness for it, particularly a greatness born of blood and falsehood. I want to keep it alive by keeping justice alive." You retorted: "Well, you don't love your country." "...No, I didn't love my country, if pointing out what is unjust in what we love amounts to not loving, if insisting that what we love should measure up to the finest image we have of her amounts to not loving (Camus 1960: 3-4).

For Camus, the only greatness worth having is that which is built on a fundamental respect for the integrity of justice. A "greatness" which is blind or indifferent to the supremacy of this principle, a "greatness" which is "beyond price," can only be hollow. The context in which Camus makes his case, the Second World War, is perhaps the most pronounced moral tale of the twentieth century. Here are the forces of good and evil, the resistance fighters (of which Camus was a part) against the unconscionable nazis - can one really question whose "greatness" was greater? And yet, it is perhaps the particularity of this context which lends it its clarity. Despite the obvious merits of Camus' argument, the central point which he makes is controversial, especially when applied to other contexts.

My own work on the political psychology of social change activists (Andrews 1991, 1994a, 1994b) reveals that one characteristic which people of this description seem to share, even in different times and in different countries, is a professed deep love for their country. This contrasts with the way in which they have often been portrayed: as disloyal citizens, if not outright traitors. In Britain, Jack Dash, lifetime member of the Communist Party and well-known trade union organizer of the docks of East London, began his first interview with the proud claim that he was born "on our national day, St. George's Day, and the anniversary of the birth of Shakespeare," the 23rd of April, 1907. He saw his life's work as a dedication to the interests of the working people of his country, and as such it was only fitting that he, along with the bard, should be born "on our national day." Many times in our conversations together he described himself as "a patriot for my class." This profound sense of identity with the ordinary people of the country was shared by other respondents in the same study, in which I explored motivation for long-term political activism.

My work in East Germany, shortly after the revolutionary changes of Autumn 1989, reveals a similar story. I interviewed many women and men who had been pivotal actors in the dramatic changes which occurred in that country. Why had they done what they did? Had their intention been to bring down, not only the wall, but their country along with it? The comments I heard were virtually all resonant with the feelings of Werner Fischer, once prominent dissident and later the person in charge of disbanding the Stasi: "I did not want to see the GDR disappear. This is how many opposition members express it today: 'better to have a stormy relationship than none at all.'" The popular construction in the west of the fall of the Berlin Wall, depicting a people's victory of capitalism over socialism, contrasts with the viewpoint of many of those who participated in the making of those events. As Fischer explains, "We never questioned this system as such.... we did believe in the reformability of the system ... [We wanted] to adapt

socialism to a more human face, as it was known to us..." Many political activists who strongly criticized the state shared the beliefs of Robert Havemann, symbol of East German resistance, who described himself "not as one disappointed in the socialist idea but as its confirmed partisan" (Allen 1991: 62). They saw themselves as patriots, and wanted to defend their country against those who were running it. Those who chose to stay and fight for a better socialism in East Germany were not taking an option exercised by many of their compatriots, namely to leave. In 1989, 343,854 emigrants left for the West (Naimark 1992:86). Three days before the opening of the Berlin Wall, Barbel Bohley described those who had stayed behind: "The consensus is: we want to stay here, we want reforms here, we don't want to introduce capitalism" (East European Reporter Autumn 1989: 17). Wolfgang Templin, once described by Honnecker as the number one enemy of the state, personifies the spirit of many who offered resistance to the East German state. Templin, along with his family, was exiled to the west following his participation in the Rosa Luxemburg demonstrations of January 1988. He describes what happened immediately following the opening of the Berlin Wall, nearly two years after he had been forced to leave the country:

I immediately rang friends and said, if the wall comes down, then my route back into the GDR is free, and I was ecstatic... The fall of the wall for me meant that I could go back into the GDR rather than get out of it. And purely physically I experienced this - everybody pushing past me in the opposite direction and me pushing against the stream the other way. Well, I was overjoyed and it was in that mood that I re-entered the GDR. ... Two, three weeks later, we all, that is my children, my family moved back here.

These do not appear to be the words of someone who is an enemy of the state. Rather, the story which Templin tells reveals a deep love for his country, a love which is shared by many of his fellow activists, who, like him cared enough to fight.

The experience of Jack Dash on the docks of East London, or of Wolfgang Templin, forging his way through the crowds as he made his way back to his native East Germany, are unique only in

their particulars. It is not uncommon for those who are charged with being unpatriotic, because of a public and sustained criticism of their government, to attribute their motivations to a fierce sense of loyalty to what they perceive to be the larger good of the country.

In this paper, I will examine in detail one situation in which activists who were demonstrating against a policy of their government refused to acquiesce with the labels which others used to characterize their actions. Rather, through their actions they challenged prevalent constructions of patriotism, as they suggested an alternative expression of loving one's country.

Colorado Springs, Colorado - with five military establishments in the general vicinity - is one of the most densely militarized cities in the United States, with fifty-five percent of its total economy involved in the defense industry. It is not, thus, a very welcoming community for "peace politics." Nevertheless, during the Gulf War, a very small but committed group of people set up a 24-hour-a-day vigil to protest the war, which was kept from the beginning of Operation Desert Storm until the cease fire. When these anti-war protesters<sup>1</sup> describe the motivation behind their political activity, they reveal a profound sense of attachment for their country, and present the case for their actions on grounds similar to those argued by Camus. Arwen, one of the vigil organizers, exemplifies this attitude:

I do love my country ... People use this 'love it or leave it' ideal a lot. In some ways I would agree with that, but I define loving more broadly than they do. Most people who say that mean accept it or leave it and that's very different from what I think ... it means to love. To love is not to accept it as it is but to consider it worth

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In the autumn of 1992 I interviewed ten people, all of whom had been politically active during the Gulf War. Initially I interviewed persons who I knew had participated in protests against the war, regarding their views on the presence of the national flag at the anti-war vigil. These conversations led me to speak with others who had been involved with orchestrating different local activities pertaining to the Gulf War, most notably "One Hour for America."

while to work on.

The question "Would you say that you love your country?" produces a very elaborate response from Bruce, a cleric and activist from Colorado Springs:

Oh, I absolutely would... If I didn't care ... why would I even bother... I mean why wouldn't I go home at night and forget about this stuff... I don't do it because I like it. I don't do it because it's fun... Why would I bang my head against the wall in these causes that seem often to be losing causes if I didn't have some sense of what's the larger good there... Love for me is a different kind of an activity and ... action than most people think of it as, and for me, there's lots of commitment and endurance and tough hanging in there that goes with the notion of love, and doing things that don't feel comfortable that are important to do for some larger good.

Both Arwen and Bruce make a distinction between their own conceptions of "loving one's country" and what they believe "most people think." The critical tension revolves around competing interpretations of love. Is love unconditional acceptance, or is it of a more robust nature, enduring and benefitting from criticism? Jill says "you can love something without loving everything about it... a large part of love is seeing faults and seeing problems and being willing to face those and to change those." Bruce's concern with "the larger good" is reminiscent of Camus' refusal to subordinate everything to achieve a single end. An action or course of action must be evaluated, not on merits of convenience and self-interest, but according to higher principles of morality. Such principles must be upheld, even if this means that one must come into conflict with one's own group; moreover, this conflict can itself be read as an expression of love for the group.

A review of the language of patriotism reveals that into the second half of the nineteenth century in England "radicals instinctively used a vocabulary of patriotism... as a constantly reforged tool of opposition, and as means of possessing the past" (Cunningham 1989:57). Indeed, the longstanding assumption was that "government was corrupt and opposition patriotic" (p. 58), and it is only in more recent times that those who

uncritically support the actions of a government are considered to be the most patriotic. However, in the United States, it has become increasingly common to associate patriotism with an uncritical, enthusiastic regard for actions which are committed in the country's name. Engaging in public demonstration against a particular policy, far from being an expression of love, has become widely recast as evidence of the contrary.

This particular theme emerged with a sudden force during the 1992 U.S. presidential election. When the Republican Party's campaign was faltering in the early autumn of '92, it opted for a new tactic. George Bush argued that by participating in a demonstration in 1969 against the Vietnam war - a demonstration which had occurred "on foreign soil" as was repeatedly emphasized, at the U.S. embassy in London - Bill Clinton had exhibited fundamental disloyalty to the country he was now asking to lead. Clinton vociferously declared that his protest was an expression of, rather than a negation of, his deep concern for the actions of his country. In George Bush's acceptance speech for the Republican nomination, he characterized Clinton as someone who says "'America is a nation in decline'.... Well, don't let anyone tell you that America is second-rate, especially someone running for president" (New York Times, August 21, 1992). The strategy which Bush continuously employed was one which attempted to equate criticisms of governmental policy with antipathy towards the nation, with the effect of casting aspersions onto Clinton's credentials as a patriot.

#### Capture the flag : the struggle over national symbols

The rhetoric of patriotism and its symbols have not always been the exclusive province of the political right, even in the United States. Although now very few who engage in political dissent would be inclined to characterize their actions as patriotic, this is more a

function of a protracted and successful Conservative campaign to monopolize the language and symbols of patriotism than of the unpatriotic nature of this dissent. For instance, the Pledge of Allegiance, with which every citizen of the United States is familiar, is a relatively new addition to American<sup>2</sup> life. It was not written until the very end of the 19th century, and then only as a simple celebration verse commemorating Columbus Day. The wording was more ambiguous than the current version, with the promise of loyalty being to "my flag and the Republic for which it stands." There was no mention of God. A concerted campaign from the political right resulted in the present situation, in which children in public schools throughout the country are required by law to begin each school day standing to attention, with their hands on their hearts, pledging allegiance to their country. In response to the intensive anti-government activity of the Vietnam era, there was another campaign - this time unsuccessful - launched by the political right, to prohibit legally the burning of the American flag. Because of the history of the political right's attempt to appropriate national symbols as their own, presently, most people across the political spectrum associate the flag of the country as representing not the whole country, but rather particular interests within it. The right has successfully asserted its control of the "patriotism industry," as if such an affiliation were inherent in the symbols themselves - a claim which the left has not contested. The situation merits close analysis, but has generated little. Why?

Margi, a teacher and gay activist in Colorado Springs, says the American flag "carries too much baggage with it."

I cannot imagine ever, in a million years, hanging a flag, having a flag, owning a flag, I can't imagine going to a ball game and saluting, doing that

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Because there is no adjective form to describe persons or things from the United States, I shall use the term "American" to designate such. However, I do so reluctantly as this adjective should in fact refer to all of North, Central and South America, not to just one country belonging to this region.



kind of stuff. ...I'm not actually interested in expropriating symbols that other people have taken over... I just [say] "okay, you guys can have it. I don't care."

Margi questions how much effort it is worth to reclaim symbols, as well as the precise logistics of the process. She asks "What would it mean to reappropriate the flag? Does it mean that I have to go out and buy a \$60 flag and a \$120 flag pole? I've got better thing to do with \$180 than to reappropriate the flag." Has the situation simply gone too far? Is the amount of effort necessary to launch such a "reappropriation campaign" incommensurate with the benefits which would be gained by such an undertaking? This assessment pivots on what one perceives to be those benefits. Daily life is comprised of choice and compromise. People need to pick the battles they are going fight. Clearly Margi has decided that this particular contest just isn't worth it: "you guys can have it. I don't care."

But there are others who feel that the reappropriation of the language and symbols of patriotism is a worthwhile project, or at least it has potential to be. After much debate, participants at the anti-war vigil in Colorado Springs decided to put up an American flag, alongside an earth flag. (These were not always present, however, depending on who was actually at the vigil.) Arwen explains:

Some of the people wanted it there to prove that we were American, to ... not let other people take over that symbol, you know, this "good American" "bad American" thing. The good Americans can have the flag, the bad Americans can't... we weren't going to let them do that... [we were going to] simply take that back.

This attempt by the protesters to reappropriate the country's most emotive symbol was not without risks. Their effort to lay claim to their "American-ness" - as symbolized by the American flag - served to anger those Colorado Springs residents who felt that these protesters,

who from their point of view were supporting the enemy, had no right to exhibit the flag. Arwen elaborates:

We were clearly "un-American", right? And our attempts to prove that that wasn't the case, having an American flag there for instance, served to make them, if anything, more angry... How could we hold up the American flag? We were "bad Americans."

For whatever reason, it is clear that the presence of the protesters, and their use of the American flag, did indeed anger many people. Pat, who stayed at the vigil for most of its duration, describes the atmosphere as one of "continual anger from the Colorado Springs community. At one point a student having a bottle thrown at her head in the middle of the day, and constantly people driving around us honking horns, throwing things, screaming." Justin's description echoes this:

the people in Colorado Springs... pelted us with snow balls, bottles, beer cans, tennis balls, you name it... [they] just treated us in a really nasty way, [they] spat on us... tried to run us over, tried to drive up on the median strip where we were sitting... the whole concept of trying to cause us bodily harm to signal that they disagreed with what we were doing really bothered me.

The American flag featured in some of the violence directed against the protesters. Justin continues:

There were a couple of times in which people with huge American flags tried to hit us over the head with the actual flag poles and sort of drape the flags over our heads ... there was another time when this pickup truck with some red necks stopped next to the vigil and they harassed us for a while and then they ran around us with their flag in a circle a few times.

In such circumstances, the protesters were not always successful in retaining positive associations with the flag which, in theory at least, was meant to represent them and their constitutional right to protest.

Jill, who was raised in Colorado Springs, explains how her feelings about the flag changed as a result of her participation in the vigil.

I'd see it on the Fourth of July. It was a symbol of the country, and it was a symbol that I thought you could be relatively proud of... [but] during the vigil the flag was used as a weapon against me ... I'd have people waving the flag at me, insinuating or suggesting that I was not a proper American or that I was not an American... this flag became a symbol more of the war and militarism than it did of my country... when it was used as a weapon against me that was a very difficult thing.

The students at the vigil made a strong effort to discriminate between "the present leadership of the country... and the ideals upon which the country was based." Although there was never a clear and lasting consensus amongst the protesters which of these the flag actually represented, Pat says there was at least "a good argument for the fact that the flag did not stand for George Bush leading people into a war, but stood for justice and peace and freedom."

Although participants at the vigil felt that the flag had been used as a weapon against them, physically and symbolically, their insistence on laying claim to the flag also yielded more positive results. One story in particular attests to the possibility of building dialogue between people of different perspectives. As a response to the anti-war vigil, some people who supported the war decided that on Friday and Saturday evenings, they would hold their own "counter-vigil" to protest the protesters, as it were.

A lot of times they'd just give us really nasty looks, but ...every now and then we had people who would come and talk and one guy did come and talk ... he wanted to know what we were really all about and why we were there and how come we had an American flag... he didn't get it, the American flag on our side?... why did we both have American flags... he thought we were the un-American ones, and he just didn't understand what was going on... the more he talked the more interested he became... And he came back and stayed with us... He brought his friend over too.

The point is not that the young man had changed his mind about the war; he hadn't. (Arwen

explains that even though he stayed at the anti-war vigil "he would say things about '...well, I'm not really against this war"). His presence there must have been about something else; if nothing more, one can safely assume that he felt there was room at the vigil for dissenting opinions, and that all of these opinions were equally "American."

At the same time that anti-war protesters were living at the vigil, debating whether the flag should be there with them or not, and fending off various attacks from those who felt them to be traitors, another event with a very different purpose was being planned in Colorado Springs. Hal, one of the main organizers of "Hour for America" as it was called, describes its purpose as being "a show of patriotism and Americanism" and "a euphoria of those of us who have served in the military."

Let's celebrate what has happened... let's try to feel good about ourselves, let's don't be negative for what we've done, let's try to understand what has really happened and why we did it, and give one hour for our country and for the people that fought for us.

At this event, wherever one looked there were American flags, in all shapes sizes; some people even dressed up as Old Glory, others as Uncle Sam. When Hal speaks of the rally, it is with great pride and enthusiasm. Sublimely, he describes the "huge flags, 50' x 50', hanging off of buildings... what that means to you is freedom... There's no symbol as strong as that American flag." Hal himself "took three flags down, I had them in both hands and I was just one of the crowd." The Air Force Academy Choir sang, and there were many speakers; generally speaking, it was a very successful "feel good" event.

But not everyone who attended Hour for America left feeling very good. Knowing that the gathering would attract much media attention, anti-war protesters decided that this would be a good venue in which to stage a counter-demonstration. Mary, a long-time member of Colorado

Springs' Peace and Justice Community, describes her experience of the "Love America rally" as she terms it, which occurred on "bad Friday" (the event was on a Friday).

There was so much intense hostility it was incredible ... you could just cut it with a knife... after the rally itself was over [people] lined up and you could see that they wanted to attack us and the police were there and they were kind of forming this barricade between us and the people at the parade... It was one of the most depressing moments I've had in a long time... they just wanted to sing louder and wave their flags faster every time they would look at us and spit... but I think that's patriotism. Where is this diversity, this melting pot?... Everybody gets melted into one mold, there is nothing about tolerance for peers.

When Bill speaks of the rally, it is in very similar terms, emphasizing the frightening "power of blind patriotism to wipe out dissent and ... rational disagreement...immediately equating opposition with unpatriotism." He then adds: "And all those flags, I mean, why do people have to flaunt something that strongly? You know it's really shallow."

Despite how enormous the flags were at the Hour for America rally, they still were not big enough to encompass dissenting points of view. This is a relatively recent phenomenon. Not so long ago, it was common for people on the left, as well as on the right, to embrace the American flag as their own. In documentaries of the American left such as "Seeing Red", one can see footage of communists marching down Fifth Avenue in New York in the inter-war years, carrying both "hammers and sickles" and "stars and stripes." But clearly much had changed between this time and the late 1960s, early 1970s, when Old Glory was regularly burned at demonstrations protesting the Vietnam War. The transition is an interesting one. While the flag was always identified with the country - after all, that is the purpose of a flag - it was not always identified with particular interests within the country. In as much as it was regarded at all, it was everyone's flag, the flag of "we the People." Indeed, the emotive power of the flag - both positive and negative - is relatively recent.

No doubt the founders would be pleased to see that the flag is respected today.

But they would not understand it being worshipped. Worship of the flag is strictly

a modern development... The interesting thing is not that the rituals of flag worship go back only as far as the late nineteenth century but that Americans think they go back further (Shenkman 1991:4-5).

Imagine the difference between seeing someone holding an American passport and holding an American flag; though each is ostensibly a statement of nationality, the image of the flag connotes far more. But at what point was the flag transformed from being a representation of the whole nation to something far more particular? The 1950s was a critical period during which the political right in the United States seemed to "win" the flag, and thus symbolically the battle for arbitrator of what it means to be "American." The name of the infamous congressional committee, House on UnAmerican Activities Committee, epitomized this victory, if victory it can be called. The language here is very powerful, with the pregnant phrase "un-American activities" indicating that there are ways that Americans do and do not act. But by what criterion can this be measured, and who is qualified to sit in judgment? Surely on such issues, there can be no disinterested party. Why is it not the case that, following in the footsteps of the Boston Tea Party, nonviolent civil disobedience might be considered the highest form of "American activity" and anything which tries to stifle the constitutional right to protest is indeed "un-American"?

It is neither unimportant nor inconsequential that all citizens of a country do not have equal access to the symbols of that country. Those who support the theory of democracy must also support its practice. People do not lose degrees of their citizenship because they exercise their constitutional rights; if they did, those rights would have no meaning. "Old Glory" does not represent any citizen or group of citizens more than any other - or at least, it should not. The violence which was triggered by the presence of the American flag at an anti-war vigil reveals the degree to which one portion of the population feels that the flag is theirs. They are, of course, right. But it is not theirs alone.

### Good citizens, un-Americans, and the politics of language

If voicing criticism of the U.S. government indicates that one is behaving in a way which is "un-American", is the least critical person also the "most American"? During the 1960s and 1970s, persons who were engaged in political protest were often greeted with the message "America, love it or leave it." And again, anti-war protesters during the Gulf War in early 1991 were told "Go back to Baghdad." During the Gulf War, the local paper in Colorado Springs, the Gazette Telegraph, renowned for its strong conservative bent, was full with letters to the editor, commenting on the presence of the anti-war vigil. One letter, dated February 5, called the group "anti-American protesters" and closes with challenge "to put your body where your mouth is - any other country anywhere. If you don't like it here, you are free to leave." The next day's paper contained a response from one of the protesters:

I have been harassed, threatened, cursed at, pelted from passing vehicles and excoriated by the local media. How is it that people cheer for the demonstrators of Eastern Europe and then call us bums and traitors? How is it that people presume that one must love the government to love one's country? The truth is that I, too, am fighting to keep this country free... Those who would intimidate me into giving up those rights [to freedom of speech and assembly] are the ones who threaten democracy...

Another section of the same day's paper ran a piece by syndicated columnist and former Reagan White House aide Mona Charen, whose article personifies the inconsistency noted by the protester above. She begins, "This time, they carry American instead of enemy flags, and they carry them right side up instead of inverted."<sup>3</sup> It is immediately apparent that her attitude is one of condescension; in the article, she characterizes the demonstrations as fashion events, describing the protesters as they "sprang for the guitars and tie-dyed T-shirts the minute the shooting started - notwithstanding the fact that guns played virtually no role in the Gulf War. But

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Charen is correct in her observation that, across the country, American flags were present anti-war demonstrations. (The example of the vigil discussed in this paper is quite typical in that regard, though its reception by the community was perhaps more dramatic than elsewhere, due to the military make-up of Colorado Springs.)

Charen, like many of the residents of Colorado Springs, seems particularly piqued that these protesters are carrying the American flag. "We keep hearing that the freedom to dissent is what America is all about" she declares.

That's true as far as it goes, but let's not confuse the act of dissent with the dissenters. Of course they are free to say whatever they like, but it is quite obvious - and I'll say it if no one else will - that a large segment of the alienated protesters are less patriotic than other Americans... We Americans guarantee the rights to protest. But we don't guarantee the right to be called a patriot.

Charen's comment cannot withstand rational scrutiny. What she terms "confusing the act of dissent with the dissenters" is merely acknowledging a relationship between actor and action, for surely there can be no dissent without dissenters. Charen knows that she must at least appear to recognize the rights and liberties of individuals, including those pertaining to freedom of expression; but clearly she does not feel obligated to extend this tolerance from action to actor.

The central issue in her letter is that of who should be considered "patriotic" and who should not. She cites the American Heritage Dictionary's definition of a patriot as "someone who loves, supports and defends his [sic] country." But a country is larger than any particular policy which is enacted in its name. Loving (a country) and criticizing (a policy) are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as argued above. When Charen proclaims "We Americans ... don't guarantee the right to be called a patriot" her use of pronouns is both emphatic and ambiguous. Are the protesters included in her construction of "we" or do their activities somehow render them less American? Moreover, by what right can one citizen or group of citizens sit in judgement over the patriotism of another?

Hal feels that being an American means "you have a country and a system that will defend you against barbaric actions of other nations" as well as securing you certain inalienable rights. In exchange, "to be a good citizen it means that you defend your country as much as you possibly



can, and what it's doing; that you support your country, that you try very hard to understand the overall picture of what's taking place; [and] that you are not a taker but a giver..."

Spontaneously, Hal speaks of "defend[ing] your country ... and what it's doing", as activities intricately bound up with patriotism. Hal concludes his interview by saying "So that's what patriotism means, that you're patriotic about your support."

Noticeably, the possibility of a critical patriotism is excluded. "Loving your country" means supporting it, and supporting it means not being critical of any of its policies. More extreme forms of this same construction posit that those who are critical should leave. In any other context, this unsophisticated concept of 'love' would seem absurd. As Mary comments:  
Back in the days of people being worried about the Soviet Union, it was like "Why don't you go protest in Russia?" and it was like "Well, because I'm from this country, what do you think?!"... I mean, do you do that with your children? Love them or leave them?

The very suggestion that Mary should move to another country because she disagrees with some policies of her government, implies that love does not allow room for criticism. To illustrate her point, Mary introduces the example of affiliative ties with children. Society expects parents to "love" their children in a way which is more actively engaged than blind acceptance, which entails staying and working with them through trying times. Children who are the objects of uncritical positive regard are often thought to be over-indulged and spoiled. But why should love at an interpersonal level allow for and indeed sometimes even demand a willingness to be critical, whereas in the public arena any critical stance be in and of itself sufficient evidence of the absence of love? With Camus, one must ask, does "pointing out what is unjust in what we love amount to not loving"?

So far we have seen that language which people use to speak about what we might in a very

general sense call "patriotism" is itself very revealing. Fairclough (1989) writes:  
People sometimes explicitly argue about the meanings of words like democracy, nationalization, imperialism, socialism, liberation or terrorism. ... Such disputes are sometimes seen as merely preliminaries to or outgrowths from the real processes and practices of politics... they are not: they are politics (p. 23)

Notably, Fairclough does not list the word "patriotism" as one which attracts much discussion. Indeed, this word is not the subject of much rational debate; the appeal is more visceral, less analytic. The example of Charen is illustrative of this. The strength of her position is precisely that it does not attempt to articulate an argument of why or how one might dissociate actors from actions, but rather appeals to unconscious associations (tye-dyed tee-shirts, guitars, etc).

The power of such a strategy is that diminishes the probability of debate, and effectively marginalizes all points of view which are not consistent with its rather tight conceptual network of associations. Earlier Bill spoke of the frightening "power of blind patriotism to wipe out dissent and... rational disagreement." The terms of the debate are not rational because there is no debate. By and large this remains unchallenged, even by those whom it effectively marginalizes.

When Margi is asked what it means to be a "good American" or a "good citizen", she responds "I actually just have abandoned that language and way of thinking because it's too much work... I just don't think it's worth much effort to reclaim that language." <sup>4</sup> She then elaborates:

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Other similar projects, however, she does find more compelling. She explains "I don't do that with gay and lesbian language... I do try to expropriate that and change the meanings that the wider culture impose on them." Margi's efforts here are part of a larger campaign; for instance the name of a major gay and lesbian advocacy group is Queer Nation.

When this data was collected, in the autumn of 1992, the state of Colorado had just passed the notorious Amendment Two. This amendment, sponsored out of Colorado Springs, effectively legalized discrimination against gays and lesbians, and was ultimately declared unconstitutional. Interestingly the "No on [Amendment] Two" campaign used as one of its rallying phrases "Liberty and Justice for All" - an obvious allusion to founding principles of the United States, meant in this case to highlight the discrepancy between the words of the so-called patriots of Colorado Springs and their uncharitable actions. Here the reclaiming of the language of patriotism is skillfully used to promote the cause of gay and lesbian rights.

I think "good American" for me is ... a negative phrase because of the way it's been appropriated as somebody that George Bush would like, somebody that supports what George Bush stands for, somebody who is pro-military... pro U.S. being the big gun in the world.

Those, like Margi, who have been labeled "un-American" because of their political activities or even beliefs, come to reject that language and all that it represents. She has no interest in being a "good American" where good American means someone who upholds the very principles from which she explicitly wishes to distance herself. Others, like Bruce, acknowledge the political nature and transformative potential of language.

If citizenship language is going to work to enrich the society we are a part of and to help it be changed and transformed in certain ways that are more peaceful, more humane and more compassionate...I'm fine with that language... [But] it's not language I necessarily would have chosen.

Bruce then goes on to say that "a good citizen is somebody who tries to enrich the public life of the nation... and does it in a way that lets everybody into the process but still can be very passionate about your own sets of commitments and beliefs." Even though Margi sees the phrase "good American" as having been appropriated by the right, she also says it can refer to "a person who is involved... working to create some kind of social change or social action on a national level... and 'good' means they agree with me... so Jessie Helms is not a good American even though he's involved in doing that." Here Margi is being slightly tongue in cheek, turning the rhetoric on its head and excluding from her definition the very people who feel that it is their unique province. Justin has similar thoughts: "... it means working for change towards the things that I believe in." In the context of the Gulf War this translated itself into demonstrating during the war, showing the community and the country that we disagree and explaining why...talking about things that were not talked about by pro-war supporters and political leaders in the country at the time... that's what... most people at the vigil thought was their duty as good citizens of this country.

Bill believes that being a good citizen means getting behind policies that you think are good... oppos[ing] those that you think

are not, and constantly try[ing] to be better informed about those that you don't know for sure... and [to] re-examine positions when it's not really clear what's right or what's wrong.

All of the anti-war respondents seem to have a two-tier concept of what it means to be a "good citizen." Their first reaction to hearing the phrase is one of distancing themselves from it; as Bruce observes, the language evokes images of the status quo. But he does not think it should be discarded for this purpose, but rather used because of it: "often the way into the struggle for social change... starts at a pretty status quo level." Mary echoes this, saying "maybe that's a good word [patriotism] you can use to get in, like a wolf in lamb's clothing... Maybe we need to keep the word just for times like that." When anti-war respondents are asked to consider not what they think others might mean by the phrase "good citizen" or "good American" but rather their own thoughts on the subject, they come up with relatively similar ideas to each other: good citizens actively inform themselves about important issues, evaluate the information they receive, make judgements about the situation, and finally take action to promote what they see to be the positive good as regards that particular issue. To be a good citizen means that one must be fundamentally engaged with issues of public life, and to take responsibility as a proactive member of society.

It is interesting that those who would call themselves "good Americans" as well as those who, for the most part, have abandoned the use of such language but who are engaged, nevertheless, in an ongoing effort to shape the course of current events, share between them the belief that citizenship brings with it certain responsibilities. "Good Americans" feel that people have the duty to defend and support their country, to adopt a positive outlook, and to be nice citizens. They sometimes regard critics of the system as nay-sayers, always finding one issue or another to complain about. Hal exemplifies this attitude "let's celebrate what has happened... let's don't be negative." But "nice" and "good" are themselves political constructs. Being "good" might sometimes demand being decidedly not nice. There are situations which call for disruptive

behavior - literally, behavior aimed at disrupting, or stopping, something which one perceives to be wrong. Many people who engage in political protest are motivated in their actions by this sense of responsibility. For them, being "nice" - that is to say, concentrating exclusively on the positive aspects of a situation and closing their eyes to all that is negative, is antithetical to their understanding of what it means to be a good citizen.

### Patriotism and Internationalism

Consideration of the meaning of the phrase "good citizen" invariably invites questions of location; good citizen of what? The question of how near and how far to draw the line of "primary allegiance" is a very interesting one. Why it should be as limited - or as wide - as the boundaries of a country is not altogether clear. Steve comments on this issue, using the example of two different local districts:

I don't love the people who live in South El Paso more than I love people in North Royer. Just because there's a creek running through town doesn't mean ... the people on this side of the water I should love better...we talk about this all the time, that the life of an American is clearly more valuable than the life of any "third world" country person. Why is it? Where the hell did that come from? I have no idea.

Here, the creek itself is neutral; but the meaning with which it is imbued is very charged. It is perhaps a natural human tendency to make strong distinctions between "us" and "them." But often the categories do not naturally exist, and must therefore be constructed. Hence, people on this side of the creek will be us, and people on the other side will be them. John Mack writes that "Nationalism has proven historically to be a powerful idea or 'sentiment.'... But it is no more nor less than that, an idea" (Mack 1983:48). Does the construction of an us only work if there exists a not-us, a them? Surely the Gulf War would have been received very differently in the United States if we had perceived the 200,000 plus lives which were lost as being in some sense "ours."

What is this construction of "ours" and upon what is it based?

As soon as one begins to delve into the origins of national groupings it soon becomes apparent that the constellations that have formed are often accidental, the definition of what particular grouping constitutes a nation is quite arbitrary, and the reality of nationhood can be seen as a construct of the mind, a fantasy brought forth in a territorial context (Mack 1983:48).

In modern times, the concept of patriotism has often been linked to that of nationalism. But why should this be so? If one were to think of patriotism as loving one's country (though not necessarily always supporting or defending it) isn't it possible that it is in one's country's best interests to think globally? While a particular practice may have short-term benefits (like deriving the benefits from nuclear energy, but dumping its wastes in someone else's backyard), if ultimately it does not bode well for the overall context in which one's country exists - i.e. the rest of the world - neither is it favorable for one's country. The only way in which this would not be true were if, indeed, the world was not composed of interrelated and complex systems.

If national boundaries are merely "fantasies brought forth in a territorial context" - that is to say that they are not "natural" and thus are in some sense arbitrary - what can be said about patriotism which is linked to nationalism? Webster's Dictionary defines nationalism as "loyalty and devotion to a nation; a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups." But what does "devotion to a nation... exalting one nation above all others..." really mean? If one looks only to the part and not to the whole, when the whole is destroyed there will be no part to speak of. Exalting one's country above all others seems incompatible with the international consciousness required for preservation of the planet (and by implication, of course, all of the countries on the planet, including one's own). From this point of view, nationalism is only a very limited form of patriotism; genuine "love for one's

country" must concern itself with matters which extend beyond one's country.

Bill has thought a lot about the issue of world citizenship. His global consciousness is evident in his present activism, much of which focuses on the de-militarization of space, not even a supranational but a supraglobal issue. (The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) is located in Colorado Springs, which makes him well-positioned to coordinate such work). It is not that Bill does not have a particular feeling about being an American; indeed he does. "I'm really tied into being an American" he explains. "I have close ties with my family, I'm a nut about baseball." Although Bill enjoys certain aspects of life in the United States, "being really tied into being an American" does not mean limiting himself and his work to concerns within its borders.

I think that the concept of world citizenship... has to take center stage increasingly, because just the necessity of an interconnecting world, and that pluralism is going to be very important... it leads to an awful lot of diversity and that's a strength, but we as citizens, increasingly have to see ourselves as world citizens first, and then work the patriotism and love of a particular region or country or tradition second.

When Jill is asked what it means to her to be a citizen of the United States, she responds "I suppose if I had my choice, I'd rather see myself first as a citizen of the world, simply a human being who exists on this planet and secondly as somebody who happens to live in a country called the United States of America." Jill has not spent much time out the country, and as a result does not have a very clearly defined idea of what role her "American-ness" plays in her life, as opposed to other aspects. She comments: "my idea of being an American is more just my idea of being myself. I don't have anything to compare it to."

Although respondents may feel that their allegiance extends beyond their country, they do at the same time experience a heightened sense of responsibility for actions perpetrated by their

country. Bruce's consciousness of being an American has been heightened by taking groups of people to Latin America to do community service there. He explains "... in some ways that experience defines my role of who I feel I am as an American citizen... I feel I have a real sense of responsibility for what our nation does." Mary uses somewhat similar language, saying that for her, being a citizen of the United States means "I feel more responsibility toward what this country does than towards any other country..." Bill spent four years in the army in the early sixties, mostly in Europe but also briefly in east Africa. "I tell people that's where I really lost my sense of patriotism [in the limited sense], of just seeing the world through American eyes...a major step in world citizenship." For both Bruce and Bill, spending time outside of the United States accentuated their consciousness of being American. Margi says that when she's "with people who don't think of themselves as Americans, then my Americanism becomes more prominent." This includes people who aren't American as well as "people who are really trashing this country can make me very aware of being part of the country and being part of what's being trashed, even if I'm involved in doing that."

All of the respondents have a clear consciousness of being citizens of the United States, as well as being members of a larger group, the global community, of which the United States is but one part. One membership does not negate the other, although they might lend perspective to each other. Social identity theory is particularly useful as a means through which to discuss the complementarity and tensions between co-existing group memberships, as well as the relationship between the fact of group membership and feelings about that membership, as referred to by several respondents in the above passages.

### Social Identity Theory and Critical Loyalty

Tajfel has defined social identity as  
that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his



membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel 1978:63).

This definition raises several questions germane to the present discussion: Is membership to a group contingent upon one's feelings towards that group? For the purposes of our discussion here, this question translates into: does being critical of the policies of the United States make one any less of an American? What part of one's self-concept comes from knowledge that one is from a particular country? Does this knowledge conflict with or compliment other, equally true, information, such as that one is a member of a global community?

I have argued elsewhere (Andrews 1991) that social identity theory does not sufficiently differentiate between two kinds of group membership: voluntary and involuntary. Involuntary membership encompasses those parts of oneself about which one has had no say - gender, race, and the historical time of one's birth being the most obvious. Voluntary membership, however, is of a much more flexible nature.

Given that one is born a particular gender, race, at a particular time, and into an entire network of familial background, one invariably has feelings, conscious or unconscious, regarding such aspects of one's involuntary group membership (for instance, by becoming active in the women's movement or in the struggle against racial discrimination) (Andrews 1991:26-27).

While one would expect to find a high degree of positive regard for the groups of which one is voluntarily a member - after all, one has chosen to be part of them - the same does not necessarily follow for involuntary group memberships. As the example in the excerpt above shows, often voluntary group memberships are a reflection on or expression of an individual's feelings about her involuntary group memberships. So, for instance, the fact that someone is born white and in South Africa reveals only part of the story: whether that person, during the years of apartheid, went into political exile, or joined the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), or accepted and did not question the privileges accorded

her because of the color of her skin, was a significant indicator of the salience of this category as an organizing principle in an individual's self-concept.

Similarly, then, the fact that an individual is a citizen of the United States may wield much importance in determining the circumstances of an individual's life, but it is not useful as a direct indicator of significant belief structures. Under what circumstances is one's consciousness of being an American citizen heightened? In the section above, several respondents observe that it is in contexts often outside of the United States that they are most acutely aware of their American citizenship, an experience which is doubtless familiar to anyone who has spent any time outside of their own country. But precisely what evaluative content accompanies this "heightened consciousness" is a different question altogether; awareness of a particular group membership is no indicator of the value ascribed to this fact.

Tajfel states that social identity is the combination of consciousness of a particular group membership, plus the "value and emotional significance" attached to that membership. What part of respondents' social identity derives from the fact of their American citizenship? We learn not only the fact of our citizenship, but the value attached to that fact, from a very early age - with some of these 'learning situations' being more overt, and carefully orchestrated, than others. The reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance, mentioned above, is one of the most obvious examples. Here, the intention is to teach children not only that they are they American citizens, but that this means something very special. Citizens are not, however, formally socialized to evaluate critically the actions of their nation; if and when they come to do so, some of the previously unchallenged positive regard may have to be rethought. While in most cases this will not effect the involuntary

group memberships (persons are not likely to renounce their citizenship, though some do), there may well be a shift in voluntary memberships.

We have seen in earlier passages that many of the respondents engage in political advocacy because, as American citizens, they feel particularly responsible for policies which are conducted, at least theoretically, in their name. In other words, it is not in spite of their citizenship but - at least in part - because of it, that they demonstrate. Their actions are motivated by a sense of critical loyalty, described by Staub as:  
commitment to the group's ultimate welfare, and/or to universal human ideals and values, rather than to a policy or course of action adopted by the group at any particular time. It also means the willingness and capacity to deviate from --not support but resist and attempt to change--the current direction of one's group (Staub 1991:11).

Critical loyalty and critical consciousness do not jeopardize group membership but almost lend it an increased, more genuine legitimacy. This phrase encapsulates the complexity of the issues discussed in this chapter; one can simultaneously be critical and loyal. Indeed, the expression of the criticism may be motivated by the fact of the loyalty, for as Bruce commented earlier "If I didn't care, why would I even bother?" Thus, critical loyalty is the central defining characteristic of radical patriotism.

### Concluding Comments

The political right has been successful at putting across its view of what it means to be a good American; the left, rather than contesting the terms of the debate (or, more precisely, the lack of debate) has resigned from this discourse altogether. However, the price for this resignation has not been small. The right quite correctly appreciates the political leverage to be gained by holding the patriotic high ground. It is not that the left should try to "[re]capture the flag", for that would result in a replication rather than a correction of the current problem, whereby a

portion of a group dictates for the whole of the group what precisely that membership means. What is at stake here is more than a clarification of semantics, for ultimately the question is begged: whose country is it? Eventually, the phrase "good American" becomes synonymous with "American" and anyone who is not a good American, isn't worthy of being called American at all. By this strategy, there evolve two classifications of Americans: good Americans, and un-Americans. But by what criterion is it determined who shall fall into which group? By what right does one group of Americans determine what is and what is not "American"? Who is it that asks these questions, and why do they ask them? To paraphrase Fairclough, this is not an outgrowth of politics, this is politics.

The astute radicals, referred to earlier, who "used a vocabulary of patriotism ... as a means of possessing the past" well knew that the victor's spoils in the struggle over who is to name history are most substantial. By presenting themselves as the real patriots, radicals of former times could more effectively wield influence on the future direction of their country, whose spirit they claimed to embody. It was, after all, their country. It is this very sense of rightful input that has been sacrificed, an effective, self-imposed disenfranchisement. When those who engage in political protest simultaneously withdraw from any claim to being "American" they, perhaps unintentionally but nonetheless effectively, collude with their own marginalization. By acquiescing with the construction that "good Americans" are uncritical Americans, the potential power of critical (and thus "un-") Americans is significantly diminished.

This has very far-reaching effects, for ultimately this construction is one of the United States' most successful exports. Common knowledge has it that the United States is indeed united in its opinion about itself; like most "common knowledge" this is erroneous. In keeping with much of the literature on stereotyping and prejudice, the reaction of many non-Americans to hearing the

critical views expressed by an un-American is often one of surprise, quickly followed by a statement to the effect "you're not like other Americans." So pervasive is the belief that Americans are uncritical of their government, that even evidence demonstrating that this is not always so is relegated to the status of "the exception." Ultimately, if the only "Americans" are those citizens of the United States who fervently and uncritically embrace all things done in their country's name, then the un-Americans, the critically loyal Americans, cannot be heard. This, in turn, substantially reduces the possibility of building a genuine internationalism in which the "greatness of a country" is assessed by its contribution to the "greater whole."

In this paper I have concentrated on one particular story of demonstrators who, in expressing their disagreement with certain policies of their government, believed they were behaving as good citizens, citizens who love their country and care about it, not at the exclusion of the rest of the world, but as an integral part of it. This story is not a uniquely American one, though its details are particular to that country. Throughout the ages, citizens across the world have fought to realize the high principles for which their countries were meant to stand. Are they really any less patriotic because their love of country transcends the precise moment through which they happen to be living? Radical patriots have a great historical legacy, which is there to be claimed by those who believe that criticism is the stuff of which true democracy is made.

Nelson Mandela, in his defense of himself in his trial of 1962, makes a clear distinction between his country and the "proclaimed policies of the government."

... the whole life of any thinking African in this country drives him continuously to a conflict between his conscience on the one hand and the law on the other.

This is not a conflict peculiar to this country. The conflict arises for men of conscience, for men who think and who feel deeply in every country... Men are not capable of doing nothing, of saying nothing, of not reacting to injustice, of not protesting against oppression, of not striving for the good of society and the good life in the ways they see it. Nor will they do so in this country... (Mandela year?: 152-156).

Mandela concludes his heartfelt defense by stating "I have done my duty to my people and to South Africa" (p.160). It is precisely by voicing his fierce opposition to the existing government that Mandela believes he is doing his duty to his country. Mandela's entire life is a testimony to Camus's stated desire: "I should like to be able to love my county and still love justice."

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