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**Carolyn Gallaher**

## ON THE FAULT LINE: RACE, CLASS AND THE US PATRIOT MOVEMENT

### **Abstract**

This paper analyses the identity politics of the US Patriot Movement and how it addresses the anxieties its primary constituency – working-class whites – have with globalization. White workers find themselves straddling an identity fault under globalization. By virtue of their class, they suffer exploitation within a capitalist system. By virtue of their race, they find themselves the beneficiaries of racial privileges. To analyse how a patriot politic addresses this dual positionality, a poststructuralist identity theory is employed, focusing on a subset of this literature known as whiteness studies. It is argued that discourses of patriotism keep patriots from addressing the economic basis of many of their grievances while buttressing notions of cultural/racial superiority through 'safe' nationalistic coding. The Patriot Movement in Central Kentucky is examined as a case study – in particular, its deployment of a patriot politic around two issues: calls to legalize industrial hemp and efforts to stop the designation of a biosphere reserve in the state. This paper's conclusions are situated within a current debate in whiteness studies between those calling for the abolition of whiteness and those calling for its reconstruction. The paper contends that disidentification is not a viable option without alternative categories to replace it. The willingness of Kentucky patriots to galvanize around a patriot politics despite realizing goals through it indicates that working-class whites are anxious for political categories of action in the new global era. Given that working-class whites are mobilizing around categories that code their race-based anxieties, however, reconstruction paradigms must also consider the reconstruction of categories – such as 'patriot' – that currently work to divide workers along racial lines.

### **Keywords**

Patriot Movement; whiteness; class; Kentucky; hemp; biosphere

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**T**HE PATRIOT MOVEMENT is a broad, right wing social movement in the USA. The movement is comprised of citizens' militias, second amendment advocates, anti-environmentalist groups and members of the racist 'religion' of Christian Identity. People identifying themselves as patriots also include individuals who 'drop out' of the system by refusing to pay taxes or to carry a driving license (Abanes, 1996; Dees, 1996; Stern, 1996). This otherwise loose movement is given form by its opposition to globalization, what its constituents call 'the new world order'. Patriots believe this new world order has co-opted the US government and with the help of 'compromised' elected officials is working to destroy US sovereignty and to strip its citizens of their constitutional rights. Researchers estimate that the movement emerged in the early 1980s, and has grown rapidly since. By the early 1990s the movement had a national presence with every state having at least one patriot group, and several having as many as thirty (Dees, 1996).

After the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, the movement divided. Some patriots went 'underground', operating in cells or as lone wolfs (SPLC, 2000). Others attempted to mainstream their message by giving interviews to the media, addressing more conventional political issues and, in some cases, running for office. These 'above ground' patriots have also taken pains to distance themselves from those espousing white supremacy in the movement. The relationship between the movement's two sides remains, however, significant. The above ground portion of the movement tends to legitimize the entire movement, while buffeting its racist, extremist inner core (Diamond, 1995). By virtue of its relative moderation, the above ground portion of the movement also tends to create the discourses that define the overall movement's anti-global agenda. The discursive links are sound. Researchers note that many new converts, attracted initially to groups on the movement's periphery, are later 'funnelled' into its hard core centre (Toole, in Stern, 1996).

In this paper, I focus on the above ground portion of the movement, analysing the anti-global identity politic created by it. While globalization is a broad term, in this paper I define it as a body of practices that changed the 'rules' of capital accumulation. These new rules are designed to increase accumulation by globalizing production and/or market orientation (Greider, 1998; Harvey, 1989, 1996). The key question that this paper addresses is how this anti-global identity politic addresses the anxieties the movement's mostly white, male and working-class constituency has with the new global economy. Research indicates that many converts to the movement have economic resentments with globalization. Thousands joined the movement during the farm crisis (Abanes, 1996; Dyer, J., 1997). Thousands more joined after their well paying factory jobs were moved 'south of the border' (Moore, 1996). Converts also often have cultural resentments. As patriots watch corporations move well paying manufacturing jobs overseas and witness the rise of service sector jobs (dominated by women/minorities) in their place, they feel somehow more entitled to these jobs

than working-class people in other countries, and women and minorities in their own (Junas, 1995; Mozzochi, 1995).

As the above description illustrates, white working-class males find themselves on the dividing line between privilege and disadvantage, dominance and subordination. As white males, they enjoy privileges afforded by their race and gender. As workers, they suffer exploitation by virtue of their position within an economic system. Their mobilization, therefore, may take either progressive or regressive form, depending upon how they are mobilized. To analyse how a patriot politic addresses this dual positionality, I employ a body of literature known broadly as poststructuralist identity theory. I argue that discourses of patriotism, when deployed around specific issues, keep patriots from addressing the economic basis of many of their grievances, while buttressing notions of cultural/racial superiority through 'safe' nationalistic coding. As a case study, I examine the Patriot Movement in Central Kentucky. I illustrate my argument by analysing the movement's mobilization around two issues: its calls to legalize industrial hemp and its attempts to thwart the designation of a biosphere reserve in the state.<sup>1</sup>

The remainder of this paper is organized in the following manner. In the first section, I discuss identity theory, focusing on studies of whiteness, and situate my central research question within this literature. In the second section, I provide a brief history of the movement, describing its emergence during the 1980s farm crisis and its expansion in the 1990s. In the third section, I describe my research site and methodology. In the fourth section, I analyse how patriot identity is deployed around specific issues in the movement, and how its deployment addresses the dual positionality of its adherents. In the final section, I offer some concluding thoughts about regressively articulated categories and potential progressive interventions activists and scholars might consider in the future.

### On the fault lines of identity

As an intellectual inquiry, the study of identity politics is relatively new; studies only began to appear with frequency in the early- to mid-1980s. As with the emergence of many intellectual trends, context is important. The so-called 'new social movements' of the 1960s and 1970s provided especially fertile ground (Offe, 1987; Melucci, 1989; Touraine, 1995). While there are debates about whether such movements are really new (Plotke, 1990), there is no doubt that the reliance on new categories of action (black power, feminist, gay) and novel forms of organization (horizontal) provided scholars with questions for analysis. Moreover, the study of such movements through traditional categories of analysis, whether by Marxists examining class or humanists studying individual agency, proved difficult. Such movements were collectively organized, yet their collectivity was rarely articulated through traditional political categories.

Numerous literatures have evolved to study such movements. In this paper, I turn to one of these literatures, poststructuralist identity theory, in order to analyse the Patriot Movement. I use this literature because I am interested in how the term patriot, a ubiquitous, often meaningless word, has been (re)created as a category of identification and political action. People calling themselves patriots have taken the term patriot, invoking its historical, frontiersque connotations, and deployed it around issues as diverse as gun control and global climate treaties. I am also interested in what this identity politics signifies about the larger context in which it has arisen. That is, what does the resurgence of right-wing groups such as the Patriot Movement tell us about class and identity politics under globalization? In what follows, I briefly outline this broad, expansive literature, and highlight theoretical issues with which my study of the Patriot Movement resonates and to which it works to enhance.

The identity theory reviewed in this section is a subset of French poststructuralism (Derrida, 1976; LaClau and Mouffe, 1985). Poststructural thought questions the dualistic epistemology of western knowledge, arguing that its categories of knowledge are neither transcendent of time/space nor purely objective. This broad frame guides the approach that poststructural identity theorists take to questions of subjectivity and political identity (Pile and Thrift, 1995). At its root, poststructural identity theory is defined by two broad characteristics. First, identity theory takes an anti-essentialist approach to its analysis of social categories. Its scholars hold that no category of social meaning has an essence that may transcend time and place (LaClau and Mouffe, 1985). Rather, categories of social difference, even biological ones (Butler, 1990), only gain meaning as they are constructed in opposition to an 'other' within a discursive field. Second, while all identities are constructed in opposition to an 'other', identity theory has traditionally been concerned to understand the construction of oppressed identities. In the West, such identities include those defined as 'other' in some way to a white, heterosexual, male norm. Indeed, over the last twenty years identity theory has developed a wide body of literature on the creation of resistance identity politics such as feminism (Butler, 1990; Rose, 1993), black power (Hall, 1991; hooks, 1991), and lesbian rights (De Lauretis, 1993; Sedgwick 1993). Scholars have also concerned themselves with strategizing how to eradicate dominant identity configurations while resisting liberal attempts to erase difference. Strategies include calls for 'safe space' (hooks and West, 1991; Valentine, 1995), spatial separation (Shugar, 1995), in-your-space politics (Radcliffe, 1993; Rose, 1995) and the rearticulation of broad categories such as 'citizenship' (LaClau and Mouffe, 1985).

While the focus on resistance is laudable, it is not without its problems. In particular, identity scholars have begun to question the success of such strategies within a context in which normative identity, and those bearing its privileges, are left largely ignored (Dyer, R., 1997; Ignatiev, 1995; Jeffords, 1989; Roediger, 1994; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998). In response to such critiques, identity

scholars now examine normative identity construction as well. In defining the purpose of his book *White*, for example, Richard Dyer argues that studying whiteness

is not done merely to fill a gap in the analytic literature, but because there is something at stake in looking at, or continuing to ignore, white racial imagery. As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people.

(1997: 1)

It is here, in the relation between resistance and dominance that the key theoretical question of this paper lies. The Patriot Movement is comprised largely of white males (Junas, 1995; Dees, 1996). It also has well documented links to white supremacists (Aho, 1990; Dees, 1996). Patriots themselves, however, claim they are organized to fight a 'new world order' that will rob them of their livelihood and their rights. Comprised of white males claiming oppression, the Patriot Movement prompts us to ask what lines of difference exist within white male heteronormativity, and how they are addressed through the category of patriot. In the remainder of this section, I focus on the literature on whiteness specifically, examining its key tenants as they relate to the Patriot Movement and the empirical analysis that follows.<sup>2</sup>

As an emerging focus in identity theory, the literature on whiteness is still under construction. However, there are emerging themes that give shape to theoretical understandings of white identity. First, although whiteness is an identity category, whites rarely define themselves as white because whiteness tends to be the norm against which others gain a 'race' or 'colour' (McIntosh, 1988; Dyer, R., 1997). As such, while whites recognize themselves as white, they do not tend to define themselves in racial terms (Roediger, 1994; Lipsitz, 1998). This is not to say that whites do not have a vested interest in protecting the privileges associated with whiteness – they do (Barrett and Roediger, 1997). Because whiteness functions as the 'norm' in American society, however, not only do most whites consider their racial privilege the result of individual merit, they also rarely conceive of protecting their privilege in racial terms. Rather, as a category whiteness tends to be displaced onto or submerged within other categories of meaning.

Crucial among these categories in the US is the concept of nation. As Morrison (1992) argues, in the US context, American identity is a white construct. Examining early American literature, Morrison notes its heavy reliance on the gothic – a style well outdated in Europe and seemingly at odds with the newness and vitality of the young nation. For settlers coming from the slums, prisons and feudal manors of Europe, however, freedom was an unknown entity. The gothic served as a medium through which whites could meditate on the

meaning of freedom, and their simultaneous terror of and longing for it. The gothic figure upon which these fears were projected was the African other. It was only in relation to this confined, bound and thoroughly 'unfree' other that the concept of America as the 'land of the free' could be articulated.

The marriage of 'American' and 'white', and the eventual coding of 'white' through nationalist categories was further solidified after the Civil War as the nation found itself home to waves of new immigrants. The so-called 'new labor history' illustrates this point well – indeed, labour historians have been at the forefront of much of the scholarship on whiteness and national identity (Roediger, 1994; Ignatiev, 1995; Lipsitz, 1998). As these scholars note, when most new immigrants arrived in the USA, they were considered foreign *and* non-white (Ignatiev, 1995; Barrett and Roediger, 1997). With each successive wave of immigrants, domestic whites' cries about an assault on 'white men's wages' grew more forceful (Barrett and Roediger, 1997). The actions domestic whites took to protect their 'status', however, illustrate not only the constructed and fluid nature of the category, but how the construction of working-class America was itself racialized, defined as white, but coded through nationalized categories.

The sheer number of immigrants arriving on US shores in the decades after the Civil War compelled domestic whites to negotiate with their 'inferior' competition. Through a variety of measures the US labour movement worked to co-opt successive waves of European immigrants by invoking their help in the fight for an 'American standard of living' over and against the domestic black population. Immigrant groups were willing co-conspirators. As Ignatiev succinctly notes in relation to the Irish, 'to enter the white race was a strategy to secure an advantage in a competitive society' (1995: 2). By collapsing whites and non-whites under the banner of Americanism, immigrants not only became 'white', but American identity itself was further solidified as unspokenly 'white'.

Much of the literature on whiteness has tended to focus on how whiteness oppresses and how its constitution leads to oppression, but as the above work indicates, identity scholars have also illustrated an important line of difference that runs through white identity – that of class. In so doing they have also highlighted a moment of political intervention for those concerned to eradicate the hegemony of whiteness, and perhaps, in the process, of capitalist domination as well. As Ignatiev argues:

... my insistence on addressing problems of race as central to the formation (or non-formation) of an American working class stems from my view that there have been (and continue to be) moments when an anticapitalist course is a real possibility, and that the adherence of some workers to an alliance with capital on the basis of a shared 'whiteness' has been and is the greatest obstacle ...

(1995: 183–184)

While Ignatiev's analysis is historical, his concern bears noting today. Investment to whiteness (Lipsitz, 1998) continues to keep white workers from seeing their links with workers of other races. The changing political economic context of globalization, however, requires that we ponder how these changes effect the mobilization of white against 'other' through nationalistic rhetoric. In particular, I see three ways that globalization complicates our analysis, providing new grist for theorizing how race trumps class among white workers.

First, while white workers continue to find themselves straddling the fault lines of white identity, at once the beneficiaries of white privilege and the victims of capital exploitation, the political landscape through which they may mobilize has changed. Unions, the traditional political outlet for white workers, have suffered severe losses over the last two decades of globalizing production. While unions are not without problems (as Ignatiev well notes), they at least provided a structure through which black and white workers could attempt to unify over and against capital. During the same time period, the left became increasingly concerned with resistance movements such as feminism, black power and lesbian rights – all politics resisting in some way, white, male, heterosexual dominance. In short, left of centre outlets for white working-class males have steadily decreased.

The political right has been particularly adept at exploiting this political void (Lipsitz, 1998). As a variety of scholars note, after the Civil Rights Movement many whites felt uncomfortable expressing their biases in overtly racial terms (Daniels, 1997; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998). Savvy far right activist took these sentiments to heart, positioning their racist rhetoric through anti-global rhetoric – a discursive big tent that allowed organizers to address both the class- and race-based anxieties of white workers (Diamond, 1995, 1996). Given the varied meanings of the term 'global', however, we must examine how the global as other is constructed through patriot discourses. As the empirical portion of this paper illustrates, the anti-global agenda is given form through cold war rhetoric. The new world order is painted as trying to 'socialize' or 'communize' the globe. As such, we must examine how *this* particular framing addresses and funnels the class and race based anxieties of the white working class.

Second, while invocations to nation are nothing new, in an increasingly globalized world, 'patriot' is in many ways an empty signifier. This is so even though the movement symbolically wraps itself in the flag. The antecedents leading up to this are varied, but in short, globalization has altered the form of the state and thus its symbolic function. While the state has actively supported globalization, it has often been at its own expense: the state becomes an active participant in its own dismantling (Held, 1991; Castells, 1997; Greider, 1998). Through treaties, trade agreements and multilateral aid packages, nation-states lose control over traditional powers, such as protecting domestic markets, propping up agricultural commodity prices and ensuring jobs. These losses have eroded the legitimacy of the state to speak to, for, and on behalf of its citizens



(Castells, 1997). As such, invocations to nation now tend to be detached from support of or reliance on state structures, serving instead as a signifier for what Castells calls 'the fundamental categories of millennial existence' such as God, family, ethnicity and locality (1997: 2).

Unpacking the 'emptiness' of invocations to nation and patriotism is especially important because it sheds light on a key contradiction within the movement – a contradiction its commentators have long found infuriating. Some of the movement's most ardent supporters, most notably ranchers and farmers, have long been the beneficiaries of government largesse, including grazing rights on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands and crop subsidies, yet they actively call for an end to the very state structures that maintain their livelihood.

Finally, as the above example hints at, globalization has shifted the terrain of class-based grievances. As such, in understanding how race is used to divide the working class, we must look outside of its deployment in traditional urban factory settings. One such 'venue' is rural America. As Davidson (1996) notes, the rural heartland looks increasingly like an urban 'ghetto', with poverty and suicide rates as high as the country's worst inner cities. Harvey (1996) further observes that rural America is increasingly dominated by the logic of corporate agriculture. Many rural people now work in low paying jobs for agribusinesses, such as hog and chicken farming, which now dominate the rural landscape of the US southeast. Even independent producers are subject to corporate logic because agribusiness controls buying and distribution networks.

The Patriot Movement provides an important window through which to analyse such concerns. While there are patriot organizations across the country, the movement's base remains rural, and many of its key issues concern land and the ability to make a livelihood from it. In the intermountain west, the movement protested government restrictions on the use of BLM lands. In the Midwest, the movement has been an outlet for farmers and rural communities left dispossessed by the farm crisis (Davidson, 1996; Dyer, J., 1997). And, as the empirical portion of this paper illustrates, in Kentucky the movement has galvanized around issues such as the legalization of hemp and the implementation of biosphere reserves. Before examining the specific issues around which patriots define themselves and their 'cause', however, it is first necessary to put these considerations into a larger historical context.

### **A brief history of the Patriot Movement**

While rural extremism is a recurring theme in US history, its emergence in the early 1980s as the 'Patriot Movement' was made possible by global restructuring in the agriculture sector, and the subsequent farm crisis that ensued (Stock, 1996; Dyer, J., 1997). However, the farm crisis, in and of itself, does not explain the emergence of the movement. Rather, as explained below, right-wing

activists, most of them white supremacists, actively and systematically mobilized farmers angry over farm foreclosure. Their use of patriot rhetoric has not only worked to obscure the class based nature of many of their anxieties, but to foster notions of cultural superiority among the movement's mostly white, male, working-class constituency.

*The farm crisis*

During the 1980s, established groups on the far right began to intentionally mobilize those adversely affected by globalization (Diamond, 1995; Davidson, 1996; Dees, 1996). Initially these groups focused their efforts on farmers adversely effected by the farm crisis. These groups included white supremacist, anti-government and Christian Identity organizations (Diamond, 1995; Davidson, 1996; Dyer J., 1997). While these groups introduced racist theories to explain the crisis and proffered illegal solutions to address it, it is not difficult to see why they were successful in tapping into anti-government sentiments (Davidson, 1996; Dyer, J., 1997).

During the 1970s, the Nixon administration decided to expand US agricultural exports. The decision was a reaction to several trends. Politically, Nixon hoped to secure the farm vote by helping farmers increase their income. Declining exports for US manufactured goods also played a part, and when coupled with rising oil prices, rendered an unfavourable balance of trade for the US (Davidson, 1996). In an attempt to shore up American trade, Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz embarked on an ambitious plan to modernize US agriculture in order to increase its export earnings. Butz wanted nothing less than to change the face of agriculture, issuing as Davidson notes 'a clarion call to farmers to "get big or get out"' (1996: 15).

During the 1970s, the Farm Home Administration, a government lender, began offering farmers loans to expand their acreage and technology. The loans had floating interest rates, but at the time rates were low so many farmers borrowed. Farmers also found it easy to qualify for loans because the Department of Agriculture wanted as many farmers as possible to expand. As farmers rushed to buy land, land values rose dramatically. Between 1970 and 1980, the price of farmland in Iowa alone went from \$419 to \$2,066 an acre (Davidson, 1996). The promise of greater yields coupled with increased land values, however, was regarded by the government, bankers and farmers alike as safeguards against increasing debt loads (Dyer, J., 1997).

In 1979, the bubble burst when Paul Volcker, then chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, raised interest rates to combat rising inflation. Many farmers saw their interest increase by as much as 6% in four years (Davidson, 1996). Unfortunately for farmers, with the interest rate hikes, land values – which had become artificially inflated during the land grabs of the 1970s – plummeted. To top off an already bleak situation, grain production in Green Revolution countries was

on the rise, driving prices down worldwide. Millions of farmers found themselves facing imminent foreclosure. Loan payments became increasingly impossible to make at the same time that farmer income slowed down and equity dried up.

While farmers acted in good faith – accepting loans, expanding their acreage and increasing American grain production by 20% – when troubled times arrived, the government did little to intervene (Davidson, 1996). They paid verbal homage to the misery of small farmers in the heartland, but the government offered limited debt relief or refinancing options to help farmers avoid foreclosure. And, as Joel Dyer (1997) notes, those programs that were available were poorly advertised, meaning that most people eligible for aid never received it.

The government's indifference may seem cruel, but it was based in the logic of globalization. The Reagan administration knew that nearly half of US agricultural exports were traded on the international market and that the trend was set to increase (Dyer, 1997). Thus, the administration reasoned that the US could best compete with cheaper third world grain (often grown on plantations) by facilitating economies of scale in the agricultural sector. Moreover, because the primary buyers in the international grain market were US agribusinesses, Reagan's decision not to intervene was made all the easier – the pro-business administration could cater to businesses, and American ones at that. In such a context, small farmers were ultimately viewed as an unfortunate, but necessary sacrifice. As Dyer succinctly summarizes the issue:

Why does Washington remain silent in the face of this rural catastrophe? The answer is cold but practical. Our nation's politicians realize that the collapse of rural America is an inevitable result of a global economy, and as such, it would be a waste of time and money to bail it out.

(1997: 17)

The government's dominant role in encouraging farmers to take on fiscally irresponsible debt loads, in addition to its seeming nonchalance once the crisis began, left farming communities angry and distrustful of the government. The government, as an entity meant to work on behalf of its citizens, and to protect them when needed, had lost its legitimacy across the farm belt. In this void, groups on the far right stepped in to mobilize farmers, directly exploiting their anger at the government. The Posse Comitatus appears to have been the most influential of these groups (Diamond, 1995).<sup>3</sup>

The Posse Comitatus was successful at organizing farmers by tapping into the state's crisis of legitimacy on a variety of levels. At a symbolic level, Posse organizers validated farmer anger, assuring them they had a right to be angry. This may seem a trivial gesture, but it was more than the cadre of expansion experts, who had descended upon rural America during the 1970s, were willing

to do (Dyer, J., 1997). Posse organizers also provided an explanatory framework to help farmers make sense of the government's decision to abandon them (Davidson, 1996). They told farmers that the real US government had been hijacked by an elite cadre of Jewish bankers and sympathizers. They termed this government the Zionist Occupational Government (ZOG). Posse leaders told farmers that ZOG had created the farm crisis in order to gain control over the world's land and labour. Posse organizers also provided farmers with concrete actions to save their farms. They instructed farmers how to file illegal liens against judges and bankers (Dyer, J., 1997). They told farmers not to pay their taxes (Diamond, 1995). They also established 'common law courts' where farmers could 'convict' those they held responsible for the crisis (Dyer, J., 1997).

While these actions were illegal and mostly ineffective, they gave hope to farmers, and they did so in a way that resonated culturally with them. As Stock (1996) and others argue (Dyer J., 1997), rural culture prizes hard work and the self-sufficiency it is believed to bring. These twin ideals are especially embedded in farming communities, where the farmer who fails is seen to do so by his own hand. The concreteness of Posse plans was, therefore, especially attractive because they gave farmers specific and individual means to save their farms – something mass demonstrations could not provide. The backdrop to these ideals – long standing mistrust of government – is also relevant. Government representatives, from the extension agent to the Secretary of Agriculture, have long been viewed with suspicion in rural America, even during boom times. Thus, when the crisis hit, few farmers were inclined to demand a solution from the very entity they had long blamed for their problems. In this cultural context, common law courts carried special meaning. They represented an avenue for solving problems locally, and outside of the purview of government. Finally, as Davidson (1996) notes, the Posse's anti-Semitic rhetoric found fertile ground in rural America. Indeed, while I do not believe that rural people are more prone to anti-Semitism than their urban and suburban counterparts, he is correct that theories about Jewish bankers have a long history in rural communities, and thus, their rearticulation in the farm crisis context required little effort.

#### *Beyond crisis*

During the 1990s, the Patriot Movement expanded beyond the farm belt, obtaining a national presence (SPLC, 2000). While more research is needed, initial studies suggest that the Movement's expansion is due to a combination of factors. Patriot leaders, especially those with long standing far right 'credentials', made a conscious effort to tone down racist rhetoric, and to downplay past affiliations with racist groups (Junas, 1995; Dees, 1996). Instead, they applied their theories of a global conspiracy to domestic issues. They pointed to new environmental restrictions, for example, as evidence that the new world order is chipping away at private property rights (Burke, 1995). They pointed to government

strong-arming as proof that the new world order poses an imminent threat. The movement gained considerable momentum, for example, after civilians were killed by government agents in the Ruby Ridge and Waco incidents (Mozzochi, 1995; Abanes, 1996; Dees, 1996). The change in rhetoric does not imply, however, that these leaders stopped being racists. Rather, such decisions were tactical – racist rhetoric limited the pool of ‘easy’ converts. Secondly, the Internet appears to have played a role in aiding recruitment (Castells, 1997). Patriot groups began disseminating their message on the Web, allowing them to reach a wider audience than they were able to access in prior campaigns.

The limited vertical integration within the movement, coupled with its rhetorical focus on individual rights, has led to mutations in patriot ideology. These changes have had a moderating influence on the movement. There are now patriot groups who refuse racist rhetoric and who work through legal channels. These groups, however, may still funnel people into more extreme parts of the movement, while remaining ignorant of, or passive to, the actual workings of extremist elements. Indeed, racists and extremists still populate the movement, but as Diamond notes, they are now surrounded by a ‘kinder, gentler periphery’ (1996: 202). This periphery works to buffet the hard-core centre, while giving it broader political legitimacy. Moreover, after the Oklahoma City bombing, the periphery distanced itself from the extremist core, thereby gaining some measure of autonomy. Analysing the movement’s periphery is important because it tends to attract white males whose anxieties have not yet been fully politicized.

## Methodology

The information I use in this paper is drawn from research conducted on the Patriot Movement in Central Kentucky from February 1997 to August 1999. My research was qualitative in nature and was drawn from two key sources: meetings of a local patriot group and semi-structured interviews with patriot leaders (Schoenberger, 1992; Fontana and Frey, 1994). Two of the informants were interviewed twice. Below I discuss the process of data collection and briefly outline the analysis of this qualitative data ‘set’.

From February 1997 until June of 1998, I attended the bi-monthly meetings of a patriot group called Citizen’s for a Constitutional Kentucky (CCK). All CCK meetings were open to the public, and were organized as a forum for concerned citizens to address local concerns. Each meeting was organized around local speakers and was followed by a question and answer period. Some CCK meetings also featured guest speakers, who were well known patriots making the rounds of an informal patriot speaker circuit. Meetings usually lasted two hours and attendance ranged from 15 to 50 people.

At CCK meetings, I identified people who were leaders in the movement

and I requested interviews from them. From these sources, I was also able to identify activists in the state who were not attending CCK meetings. I considered people to be leaders if they met one of three criteria: they were leaders in other patriot groups (e.g. a militia), they spoke in an official capacity at meetings and/or they advocated patriot causes in public settings (e.g. in the media). My purpose was to secure a focus group of patriot leaders in order to understand how the movement was being framed in the local context of Kentucky. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight patriot leaders during my time in the field.<sup>4</sup> All eight patriots were white men between the ages of 25 and 65, matching national profiles (Junas, 1995; Dees, 1996). In this work, I do not identify the patriots I interviewed by name. All but one gave me permission to do so, but I choose not to because the space constraints of an article do not provide room for a meaningful introduction to the individuals interviewed, and might even confuse the discussion. My decision not to identify my sources should not be regarded as a form of protection for seditious acts. The patriots I interviewed gave no indication they were involved in illicit acts to overthrow the government.

The research process for this project was inductive. The issues I discuss in the empirical section of this paper were chosen after attending patriot meetings and conducting several interviews. I wanted patriots to tell me what they considered important rather than choosing issues beforehand that I wanted to analyse. I chose to interview patriot leaders instead of rank and file patriots because the movement in Kentucky is relatively new. Leaders are particularly important during these early stages.

The presentation of research results is also organized inductively. To present patriots' positions I use direct quotes whenever possible so that they may speak for themselves. In addition, I provide long snippets of my conversations with patriots. By presenting the give and take, back and forth nature of an interview setting, the reader may better see the process by which patriots make their arguments (Katz, 1994). After these presentations I analyze their meaning viz. a viz. the larger question of this paper – how discourses of patriotism address the dual positionality of the movement's primary adherents. While my analysis is largely centred around deconstructing and criticizing the movement's solutions, it is important to note that I do not believe patriots suffer from 'false consciousness'. Indeed, as I demonstrate shortly, many of the movement's concerns are rooted in long-standing grievances that have more to do with regionally and culturally specific ideals than with standard 'left' or 'right' ideology. It is my belief, however, that a progressive path should be a real option for patriots so that exclusionary solutions are not their only alternative to an unacceptable status quo. Finally, given the small number of interviews the presentation of results should not be taken as all encompassing. Rather it represents a snapshot of the movement under construction from the perspectives of its leaders (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

### Kentucky patriots

This section is organized into two parts. I begin by discussing Kentucky's tobacco problem and the initial patriot response to it. During early 1997, Central Kentucky patriots were calling for the legalization of industrial hemp as a potential supplement to/substitute for tobacco. By the spring of 1998, however, when the McCain Tobacco bill was being debated in the US Congress, Central Kentucky patriots were largely absent from public debate on the matter. They were silent, I contend, because of their reliance on discourses of patriotism. In particular, their idea that subsidies are 'socialist' or 'communist' precluded them from taking a cohesive stand on subsidies as they related to the potential introduction of hemp. In the second section, I detail the movement's opposition to the implementation of a biosphere reserve in Kentucky. I argue that the movement's invocations to national sovereignty in this case fosters racial anxieties about globalization while funnelling them through 'safe' and 'palatable' nationalistic coding.

#### *The tobacco problem and the hemp solution*

Hemp has a long history in the state of Kentucky. Historically, it was used for subsistence purposes, providing medicine, clothing and rope for the state's early frontier families.<sup>5</sup> As the frontier developed, hemp became an important cash crop. Industry and government alike purchased the plant because its strong fibres make excellent rope, bale bags and paper (Hopkins, 1948; Herer, 1995). Despite the crop's widespread use, in 1937 its growth was made unprofitable through the Marijuana Tax Act. The Act allocated a dual occupation/transfer tax on farmers growing marijuana or hemp. They were required to register with the Secretary of the Treasury and to pay an occupational tax for growing either crop. Any transfers of hemp or marijuana were also taxed. In 1937, one ounce of hemp sold for approximately one dollar (Herer, 1995). The government's new transfer tax was set at one dollar an ounce, effectively taxing hemp out of business. Subsequent legislation criminalized the use, growth and sale of both crops (Herer, 1995).

Kentucky patriots believe that hemp production should be legalized in the state. Their support for its legalization is multi-faceted, but at a fundamental level, it is rooted in a cultural context in which rural self-sufficiency is prized (Berry, 1992). Indeed, while hemp is often associated in the media with marijuana, in Kentucky hemp has come to symbolize for many a rural way of life that is fast disappearing. As I discovered, patriots had no problem spouting off statistics and facts about the hemp plant – they reminded me that its strong fibres can be used to make clothing, rope, paper, oil and wax, among other products, and that it has served as an important cash crop as well. And, these facts were almost always proffered in reference to the self-sufficiency hemp once provided. As one of my informants explained it:

One-hundred and fifty years ago the farmer raised all the fibre, all the fuel, all the medicine, and all the food. That's what farming is – you raise those four basic commodities from the land and when you use land as a means for producing wealth, the wealth flows back to the land, it goes back to where it was produced. We had nuclear families, you could be raised on a farm and grow up, and the mom and dad could leave it to you and you could leave it to your children. You could be born in a small town, grow up, raise a family, fall in love, and live and die in a small town because the economy would support you.

Patriots also have practical reasons for supporting hemp. Indeed, given hemp's history in the state they believe it is an ideal substitute or supplement crop for tobacco, the state's current 'top' cash crop.

Hemp used to be a major cash crop in Kentucky before the Second World War. Why not [grow it]? I mean, it's stupid, because some idiot in Washington passed a stupid regulation. It's the dumbest thing. If people are going to make some money, they should grow it.

As the above comment indicates, patriots in Kentucky are not only supportive of the legalization of hemp, but they are also suspicious of the process by which it was made illegal. Many have done substantial research on the matter. They argue that in order to understand why such a traditional, and at times profitable, crop could be outlawed one must give Roosevelt's New Deal a closer look. The New Deal is often touted as beneficial to the working classes, but patriots contend that it set in place a regulatory structure that benefited corporations over small producers. Corporations, because of their size and because of their contacts in government, were better able to lobby, protest, and frame regulation than were small producers spread across the country and growing different crops. As one patriot told me:

In the late 1930s, Roosevelt, in anticipation of World War II and in response to the Depression, introduced the New Deal Legislation. He drafted all of the industry executives into writing this legislation. It was, in fact, a New Deal between business and government!

It was this context, patriots argue, that led to hemp's outlaw. During the early 1930s, inventors had developed a machine to extract fibres from the plant's hardy stalk. Petro-chemical companies feared that these new technologies would undercut their plans to develop and market synthetic fibres. To protect their interests, petro-chemical companies began to lobby their contacts in congress to outlaw the crop. To give their project public legitimacy they waged a campaign to conflate hemp with marijuana, arguing that both were a danger to society.



According to Kentucky patriots, by the time the Marijuana Tax Act was introduced in congress its passage was already a 'done deal'.

While the Patriot Movement in Kentucky stands outside of the political mainstream, its account of how hemp came to be outlawed is the same as mainstream and liberal accounts (Herer, 1995), and patriots are certainly not alone in their calls to legalize the plant (Chevas, 1997; Charpentier, 1998; Thompson, 1998). Indeed, calls to repeal the hemp ban have been steadily increasing since the early 1990s when the tobacco industry came under assault from health lobbies, state attorney generals and individual plaintiffs. This is not to say that Kentucky patriots, residents and tobacco farmers fail to recognize the health problems associated with smoking or the ethical problems associated with those who sell the finished product (Berry, 1992). The importance of tobacco to the state's economy, however, means that few want to see the industry driven from business until the state's farmers can find alternative crops that are also economically sustainable. Patriots believe that hemp could be such a crop.

In November of 1997, hemp advocates in Kentucky faced a new and more imminent threat. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) introduced the Universal Tobacco Settlement Act.<sup>6</sup> Most of the bill targeted the manufacturing and advertising practices of tobacco companies, but a key section also proposed a gradual phase-out of tobacco price support programmes for farmers. The reduction and eventual elimination of these 'subsidies' would force tobacco farmers to compete with tobacco grown overseas.

The potential for the elimination of tobacco price supports posed two inter-related issues for those interested in seeing hemp replace or supplement tobacco, the state's key cash crop. First, while subsidies do create a form of dependence for tobacco farmers, they permit tobacco farming to be profitable on small acreage plots. The tobacco programme, first initiated in the 1930s, establishes minimum price levels and assigns quotas for each harvest based on farm size. The programme was designed to limit production so farmers would not overproduce, thereby driving prices down. This programme allows tobacco farming to be profitable on small farms because prices remain not only stable, but also relatively high (Berry, 1992). Eliminating subsidies would send prices down, benefiting economies of scale. Small farmers would likely go out of business. Not surprisingly, maintaining the price support system is widely popular, especially among small farmers, who make up the bulk of the state's farmers. Secondly, while the elimination of subsidies could ultimately bode favourably for hemp's reintroduction, its successful implementation could not occur immediately. Maintaining the conditions for livelihood would be crucial for keeping farmers in business until hemp could be legalized and implemented.

While the issue of tobacco supports is separate from debates over the legalization of hemp, the two issues are clearly related from a tactical point of view. I was surprised, therefore, to discover that patriots had no cohesive position on subsidies, whether pro or con. Indeed, the mixed opinions and general hesitance

on the issue of tobacco supports turned the issue into a 'dead' issue. By the late spring of 1998, when the McCain bill was being hotly debated in the Senate, patriots had turned their attention elsewhere. The failure of the bill in June went unnoticed at the bi-weekly CCK meeting.

This is not to say that patriots should have responded either favourably or negatively towards subsidies. Given their position on hemp, they could have reasonably taken either the pro position, arguing subsidies would protect farmers, or the con position, arguing that elimination would jump start the popularity of hemp. As I was to discover, however, regardless of the position patriots took on subsidies, the discourses of patriotism they used to articulate their position precluded them from engaging the economic base of their stated grievances.

Not surprisingly, patriots who support subsidies argued that they were necessary for keeping tobacco farmers in business until other profitable cash crops could be introduced. Patriots who support subsidies stressed, however, that their support was pragmatic rather than ideological. One patriot, who supported subsidies, for example, argued that subsidies are inherently bad for the USA. Using wheat as a prototypical example, he explained that subsidies are an incentive

to produce too much, so the government is stuck with a surplus. So what do they do? They sell it abroad at a loss. Now that's bad public relations and bad foreign relations because it means the wheat farmers in the rest of the world can't compete.

Moreover, although this patriot was sympathetic to the plight of tobacco farmers he was highly critical of the position in which farmers find themselves today:

The government itself has created this dependent class. It goes way back, sixty years or more. So the government has to assume responsibility for its actions. What is ideal, and what is actual, are two different things. And I think time will cure, but not necessarily in the next two years.

When I queried what he thought time would do to help farmers, he replied,

Well, 150 years ago, 85% or 90% of all Americans lived on a farm, were farmers. Today its 2%. What's happened, where have those other farmers gone? They have left the farm and gone to the city and gotten into professions, and businesses, and what not.

Despite his position outside of the 'mainstream', this patriot's position is quite common. Scholars, farmers and average citizens alike have criticized subsidies for putting farmers in a dependent relationship with the government (Berry, 1992; Stock, 1996), and many believe the problem will be solved with time. This particular patriot, as a begrudging advocate of subsidies, however, claims difference from these various constituencies. By claiming the patriot identity, he

situates himself outside of the two party system, arguing that the two parties are a part of the problem rather than the solution. He is, however, unable to do so, because he grounds his understanding of subsidies through discourses of patriotism. So framed, his primary concern becomes protecting the integrity of the American system (equated as it is here with the free market system) rather than small farming. Indeed, this is why he can posit time, rather than hemp as the real solution to the tobacco problem. Time may well prove to be a 'solution', but it does nothing to address the economic grievances of the here and now.

Interestingly, patriots who opposed subsidies employed the same discursive framing to stake out their opposition to subsidies as those who begrudgingly supported them. As a general rule, these patriots claimed that even though they sympathized with farmers, they were opposed to subsidies. As one patriot succinctly put it, 'Well, I don't think anything should be subsidized!' When I asked patriots who were opposed to subsidies why they took this position, especially given its popularity among farmers and its importance in maintaining small farming, they responded on the ideological grounds of the free market. As another patriot earnestly told me, 'Subsidy is another word for socialism, you know that right?'

As a researcher on the Patriot Movement I am accustomed to hearing the labels 'socialist' and 'communist' applied liberally to people, institutions, and ideas patriots oppose. I was, however, surprised to hear it tagged onto something that was not only supported by tobacco farmers but also regarded as crucial for keeping the tradition of small farming viable in the state. I had expected that subsidies might be opposed, but on the grounds that they were an impediment to the legalization of hemp. To ensure I had made myself clear to this particular patriot, I tried to clarify and contextualize my question. Below is a snippet of our conversation. I provide it to highlight how patriotism frames his position.

*Author:* Well, it depends on how you define socialism, but the reason I'm asking this question is because in Kentucky the big issue is tobacco, and you want to protect tobacco farmers there . . . If you get rid of subsidies in Kentucky, small farming is going to fall apart.

*Patriot:* Well, subsidies came into existence during the dustbowl days and stuff, which was a good thing at that time for people facing hardships. But it was never removed. And the reason? There was a design intent and that was moving us into socialism, Ok? What should have happened is once those hardships were over, people were put back on their own to raise their crops that they could raise and sell at a fair market value. But the markets became so controlled at that time that the markets actually became a way to control people.

*Author:* But if the markets are now controlled by agribusiness, then how can a Kentucky tobacco farmer compete with tobacco grown in Brazil without subsidies?

*Patriot:* He can't.

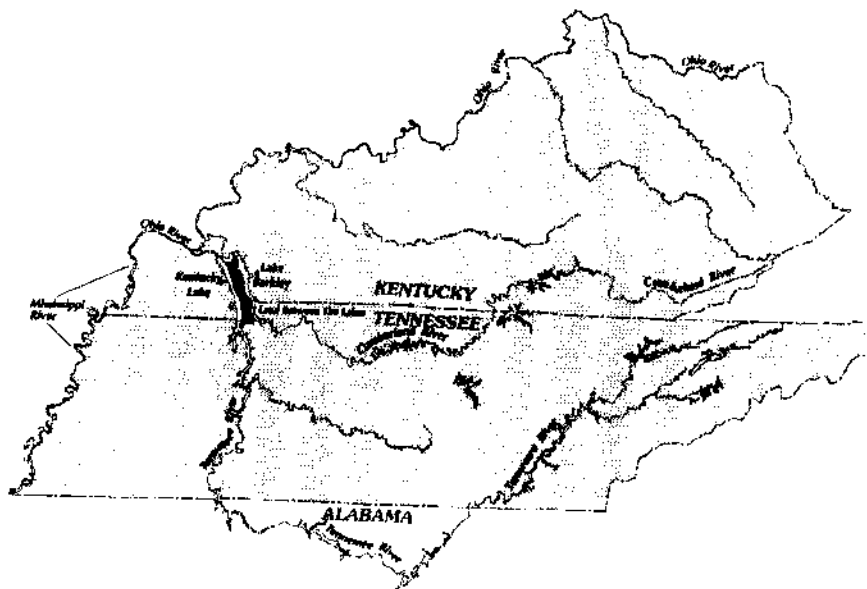
*Author:* But, if you get rid of the tobacco subsidies, there goes the tobacco; there goes the tobacco farmer.

*Patriot:* Because we put him in that hard spot. We put him there. Had we not opened up the world's borders, okay, to where essentially anything goes, or what's best for the rest of the world. America's had it so good for so long, let's take from them and give to the rest of the world, Okay? Which is what's happening. Be it coal, or tobacco, or just about anything you can name.

*Author:* So the answer is?

*Patriot:* The answer is to have not allowed the big conglomerates. See, at one time you couldn't do that . . . you couldn't have one corporation come in and regulate all of everything . . . the little guy can no longer compete with the big guy. It used to be if you worked hard, you could produce and grow and become that big guy. Now the big guy is suppressing and putting out of business 'mom and pop' and the little guy.

As I reviewed the transcription of my interview with this patriot I found it difficult to reconcile what I felt to be obvious contradictions in his logic. I could not understand how this patriot could bemoan the loss of mom and pop stores while opposing measures designed to protect them. I was tempted to pass off his comments as a lack of knowledge about globalization. As I reread the interview, however, I decided this approach was inaccurate and unfair. His comments about large conglomerates illustrate that he is not only aware of the competitive advantage large corporations have over smaller ones, but also unhappy with the results. But his comment about no longer being able to become the 'big guy' also illustrates a basic support for unfettered competition, the very thing that permits the creation of an unequal playing field. Moreover, his insistence that equalizing measures like subsidies are 'socialist' solidifies his acceptance of, and support for the free market. As such, instead of seeing the inability of small to compete against large as a problem endemic to global capitalism, he sees it as a national problem. So framed, instead of blaming the speed up of capitalism, he points to 'the rest of the world', depicting it as anxious to impose socialism in order to take from America.



**Figure 1** Land Between the Lakes.

As this patriot's comments indicate, discourses of patriotism tend to shift the terrain of the debate from considerations of how free market policies undermine rural self-sufficiency to ones of national dominance. So framed, the problems associated with globalized capital, and potential solutions to them, are diffused. It is for this reason that patriots can call for the legalization of hemp on the grounds that it may bolster the state's self sufficiency, but their solutions do little to actually provide it.

*Get the UN out of Kentucky!*

During the late summer and early autumn of 1997, I began to hear discussion at CCK meetings about a 'UN presence' in the state of Kentucky. I soon discovered that patriots were referring to the recent implementation of a biosphere reserve in Southern Kentucky in the state's Land Between the Lakes region (see figure 1). The Biosphere concept was initially developed by the UN's Scientific, Educational, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the 1970s (USMAB, 1995). Although the idea was developed by the UN, all Biospheres in the US must be applied for and administered by local government and/or private organizations, and approved by the US government's Man and the Biosphere Program. In the case of the Land Between the Lakes Biosphere the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) applied for and received designation in 1991.

The TVA began to acquire land in the region after 1933 when the Roosevelt

administration dammed the Tennessee River and its tributaries to harness hydroelectric power. Land acquisition was most pronounced in Land Between the Lakes, however, in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1963, President Kennedy designated the area a 'national recreation area', signalling the government's intention to encourage tourism-led development for the area. In 1999 (after this research was completed), the TVA transferred ownership and management of Land Between the Lakes to the US Forest Service. Given the timing of data collection for this project, discussion of ownership in this paper refers to the TVA and not the Forest Service.

Biospheres have three major regions. Core regions form the centre of a biosphere. To ensure their ecological integrity core areas are to have 'secure domestic legal protection and only activities that do not adversely affect natural processes and wildlife are allowed' (USMAB, 1990). Buffer areas surround core areas, and may have only limited economic activity, resource extraction, and settlement. The third area of a biosphere is the transition area and may contain any variety of activities. Transition areas are designed to be research areas for implementing a balance between the economic and ecological needs of an area (USMAB, 1990).

Given the patriot position on the UN (considered a part of the new world order), it is not surprising that Kentucky patriots oppose the designation of a biosphere reserve within the state. In particular, Kentucky patriots are opposed to the biosphere on three related grounds. First, they believe that the biosphere concept is 'anti-human'. At the inaugural CCK meeting, a designated speaker from the Land Between the Lakes region succinctly captured this sentiment when he vehemently declared from the podium, 'They're gonna take care of the bugs, but not you!' The comment proved a good sound bite. The following day it appeared in the local newspaper, the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, in an article about the meeting (Edelen, 1997). During an interview, another patriot made a similar claim. Waving his copy of a map showing the biosphere 'threat', he declared:

No human activity will be allowed. It will be closed off to the public . . . approximately 50% of land area of the United States will be closed to the citizens of the United States . . . I have no quarrel with people who want to set aside a certain area where wild animals can live . . . but not 50% of the United States!

Patriots also oppose biospheres because they believe they are designed to take away private property in the USA. While the TVA has no authority to seize additional property for the creation of a biosphere, citizens in the region have a living memory of losing their land (through eminent domain) when the TVA dammed the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers, creating Lake Barkley, Kentucky Lake, and the Land Between the Lakes (see figure 1). These memories, whether lived or transmitted from family and relatives, provides a powerful context for believing land could be taken again. When I queried one patriot as to why people

would view the TVA's new biosphere as a threat to them, he reminded me of the importance of the historical context: 'Well, originally a great many people who lived in that area [Land Between the Lakes] were removed by the TVA, in the Roosevelt Administration'.

Indeed, the current battle over the land has as much to do with the original damming project as it does with the issue of private property. In short, the damming was done with little input from the local community and it has left a long-lasting legacy of resentment against the TVA – one that is found locally across the political spectrum. John Egerton, who is a local environmentalist (and as such not likely to be on the 'same page' as most patriots), described Land Between the Lakes this way in his book *The Americanization of Dixie; the Southernization of America*:

The Land Between the Lakes is a 'national demonstration' of the destructive consequences of bureaucratic insensitivity and greed, an example of cold and impersonal manipulation to create a controlled environment in which the past is obliterated and all human activity is regulated. It is a concept of urban renewal writ large across a rural landscape.

(cited in Havard, 1983: 312–13)

The fact that much of the land is still standing, in that it is not submerged within the huge reservoirs created by TVA dams, is also difficult for former landowners to accept. As another patriot argued:

The problem is the TVA moved all of those people out of there. People that had lived there for generations, and they said they wanted to use the land for the TVA. Well, excuse me, twenty years later and its not used. Now they want to hand it off to UNESCO. People want their land back. I don't blame them. Why not?

As the above comment suggests, patriots are also opposed to the biospheres because they believe that the biosphere will become the property of the UN, thereby negating not only former landholder's claims to it, but US sovereignty over its own territory. As one patriot argued, 'The UN has no right having dominion over us, getting to take away our freedom of speech. The UN has no right. Our taxes paid for this. This is ours! This belongs to America. This belongs to we the people, the citizens'. Other patriots made virtually the same argument. As another put it:

We have certain public lands in the United States. Public land means that they are public – as much yours as mine or the person over there. These aren't meant to be regulated by foreigners. They have no right to tell us what to do with our property. We don't go to their countries and tell them what to do.

Despite patriots' claims about loss of property and sovereignty, biospheres represent a threat to neither. The designation of Land Between the Lakes as a biosphere reserve in 1991 resulted in no changes to land ownership in the region. No private property was seized or annexed to make the biosphere. The TVA has held the deed to the land since it first acquired it, and its transfer in 1999 went to another government agency, not the UN. The only difference is that the land now has biosphere designation. Moreover, while patriots claim the UN has control over land use, the USMAB guidelines require that important decisions about implementation be held to public scrutiny and with broad public approval. Patriots have taken this opportunity to disrupt Land Between the Lakes Commission meetings and to lodge formal complaints. As one biosphere manager, who requested anonymity, told me, 'It's been difficult to get anything done down here'.

Unlike the movement's position on hemp, its position on the biosphere is not based on a material economic grievance. This is not to dismiss the claims of former property owners in the area. Their reaction is understandable, and common to those who have lost land by eminent domain. The designation of TVA land as a biosphere, however, does not represent a threat to current property or land use. However, it does remind patriots of the region's prior loss at the same time that it bolsters their perceptions of an eroding status for white westerners. Indeed, patriots regard designation not only as indication the region will never get its land back, but also that 'foreigners' will get it instead. The racial nature of their anxiety as well as its facilitation through nationalistic rhetoric came into sharp relief as I attempted to confront patriots about the inaccuracies in their claims.

Many of the patriots with whom I spoke seemed to know little about the specifics of the biosphere implementation and regulation. They tended to hone in on the concept's connection with UNESCO without worrying about the specifics. Moreover, when I presented facts to the contrary, they generally ignored them, or adapted the facts to fit them into a larger conspiracy of a new world order. An exchange I had with one patriot illustrates this tendency well. He had just made the claim that the UN was operating the Land Between the Lakes biosphere. In an attempt to find factual common ground, I felt obliged to respond, saying, 'but, the biosphere in the Land Between the Lakes, this is administered by the TVA'. He replied, making virtually the same claim that had prompted me to attempt to correct the record, saying 'yes, but they were wanting to turn it over to the UN biosphere programme'. Rather than continuing to question his facts, I chose instead to accept his presumption in order to see how he was constructing and justifying this argument. I responded by asking 'Why?' His reply became a chance to present 'evidence' that the new world order was organizing police forces to begin its attempt at world domination:

The people pitched a fit, I mean they saw that there was gonna be big trouble over that one. And they backed down off of it and said well, the



TVA is gonna run this. Well, the TVA has another police agency; it's a federal police agency. It's just like the BATF or the FBI. So, we have another growing police agency against the citizens. So they're gonna be driving around the property telling you what you can and can't do . . . and gun grabs, gun laws, the police incidence are getting worse!

Other patriots were careful to acknowledge that the Land Between the Lakes biosphere is owned by the TVA rather than the UN. However, they also maintained that the forces of the new world order are behind the biosphere programme. In particular, they claimed that the institution responsible for designating biospheres, the US Man and the Biosphere Programme, is illegal because it was approved in the executive branch, thereby bypassing congressional approval. As one patriot argued, 'There's a 128 [biospheres] now, you know. But, the thing is that that programme was never legalized by congress. Never! As a matter of fact, the only time congress discussed it was to say that it's not legal'.

These same patriots also believe that the ideals of the new world order are openly manifested in the biosphere programme, even if the UN does not own individual biospheres within the USA. Indeed, they believe that the biospheres represent a stepping stone for the ultimate goal of the UN, which is, as one patriot told me, 'to primitivize the entire world. Now, in the third world that doesn't take too much. But in the advanced countries that means completely redistributing the population. And its not going to be voluntary'.

Despite the economic rhetoric, such fears are manifestations of racial/cultural anxiety. Patriots are angered by the biospheres not because they pose any real threat to land ownership or use in the area, but because they represent not only a 'foreign' presence' in their midst, but one they consider racially inferior as well. As such, patriots not only consider development a zero sum game (if the 'third world' develops, it will be at the expense of the 'first world'), they also consider the extant discrepancies to be the fault of people in the 'third world'. This was clarified to me in the following exchange I had with the patriot quoted directly above in response to his comment about 'primitivization'.

*Author:* Well, don't the third world countries have a right to want some of the wealth that was taken from them many eons ago?

*Patriot:* Wait a minute now. If you are talking about resources, like gold, diamonds, iron ore, timber, what not, the United States, in particular, and the western world didn't take it. They paid for it.

*Author:* During colonialism?

*Patriot:* Yeah, take South Africa for instance. The South African mines hire native labour. Its true, they paid low wages and in fact in South Africa the

white labour unions were the ones who used every trick in the trade to exclude black workers. So, in that sense there was very overt discrimination against blacks, but in any case, black or white, the gold was mined. The mine owners bought the property and employed the workers and sold the products around the world. So, I don't quite understand what their complaint is about exploitation. What they usually mean is that if it had been in this country they would have had to pay them more. That's true, but it just shows that they do not understand how wages are set.

At face level, such comments represent a selective understanding of history as well as an overt sense of cultural superiority. At a deeper level, such comments also represent discursive linking of the non-west, coded here as inferior, to ignorance of capitalism (in the best case scenario) and to anti-capitalism (in the worst case scenario). Ironically, in this case a sense of cultural superiority is framed as an economic issue played out in an updated cold war narrative of capitalism versus socialism, freedom versus primitivization. Most importantly, the valid resentments about the way the TVA initially acquired LBL land, and the concerns for 'a local say' that underlie them are squandered around inaccurate claims about a UN takeover. Indeed, there are valid concerns about who benefits economically from LBL land – the scientists, nature lovers and tourists who use/enjoy the natural landscape, or the local residents who work in the low end service sector jobs attached to it – but these concerns go unaddressed when the focus is on the UN and the 'greedy others' it supposedly represents.

### **Rethinking identity and the white worker**

The Patriot Movement represents a recurring moment in American history. Investment to their race allows white working-class people, mostly males, to deny or fail to see commonality with workers of other races and in other places. Its current configuration, however, is particularly troubling. When funnelled through discourses of patriotism white workers' anxieties with globalization, whether economic, cultural, or some combination of the two, are doubly 'thwarted'. Patriotism – defined over and against socialism, communism and left thought generally – prohibits the articulation of class as a category of action before it is even given form. This is particularly significant today when venues for class consciousness are already limited and where public discourse trumpets the booming economy as belonging to everyone. Likewise, for those with cultural anxieties, patriotism provides safe codes for expressing fears that white dominance is under assault. So conceived, white workers not only fail to see the power of their class as a category of action, they are also allowed to define themselves as victims to greedy, grasping, global 'others' through 'palatable' terms and their reactions to these 'others' as heroic – on behalf of the nation. Indeed, it is this

framing that allowed one Kentucky patriot to proclaim with complete sincerity, both publicly at a CCK meeting and later in an interview with me, 'You see, I'm not a racist, a sexist, or a xenophobe. I'm a nationalist'.

In trying to grapple with the contradictory position that white workers find themselves in, whiteness scholars have proposed a variety of interventions. Some scholars argue that whites must become 'race traitors' by disidentifying with whiteness (Roediger, 1994; Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996). By refusing to identify as white, it is argued, whites not only make explicit their refusal to associate with a dominating category, they also acknowledge what Roediger describes as 'the empty culture of whiteness' (1994: 13). Other scholars are critical of the abolition paradigm (Newitz, 1997; Newitz and Wray, 1997; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998). They argue that whites are unlikely to mobilize around disidentification if there is nothing 'to rally around or to affirm' in its place (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998: 21). Such scholars argue that whiteness as an identity must be reconstructed in ways that allow all whites, whether working class or wealthy, to join anti-racist struggles without giving up their identity in the process.

In subtle ways, I believe the empirical portion of this paper illustrates that disidentification is not likely to work because in the anxiety ridden atmosphere of globalization working-class whites are looking *for* categories through which to act. Indeed, in the case of the Kentucky Patriot Movement, the symbolic revenue of having a category of identity and action seems to outweigh the lack of material gain garnered by acting through it. As the movement's calls to legalize hemp and prohibit a biosphere illustrate, Kentucky Patriots have had little success in actually meeting their stated goals. Their inability to articulate a coherent position on subsidies eliminated their ability to contribute to the hemp debate at a crucial time for tobacco farming. Moreover, while they have certainly been successful in hampering the running of the Land Between the Lakes biosphere, their actions have resulted in no changes to land ownership and have at best delayed plans for the area.

While whiteness scholars are correct to consider reconstructing whiteness in progressive ways, they, and activists on the ground, must also consider the reconstitution of categories currently deployed by working-class whites in regressive ways. America, and patriotism to it, must also be considered as it may be reconstructed. This is not to say that such a task is easy. As Goodwyn's (1976) now seminal study of populism illustrates, 'America' and 'American' have long been defined *viz. a viz.* their discursive articulation with capitalism and in more subtle yet no less insidious ways with whiteness. However, globalization does provide a unique context in which to consider reconstructing 'America' and 'American' in progressive ways.

Globalization has weakened the traditional role of the state (Held, 1991; Castells, 1997). In this context, the state, as a body of regulating institutions, and the nation, as an identity and set of symbols, are becoming structurally disconnected. This disconnect provides an opportunity for the left to discursively

rearticulate the concept of nation and state in ways that equate neither with the 'free market'. This is important because in a context where the state increasingly supports free market reforms (e.g. eliminating subsidies) and where corporations address worker resistance by simply moving production, the ability of white workers to form alliances with state sponsored capital on the basis of shared whiteness becomes increasingly difficult. Indeed, the footloose nature of capital when coupled with the state's willingness to aid the process provide stark evidence that corporations no longer feel a need to facilitate alliances with some workers in order to divide all workers.

Unfortunately, as this paper illustrates, activists on the right are attempting to resurrect these old alliances. Given the current context, however, the right has largely created a symbolic alliance – one between the white working-class and an imagined state built on romantic notions of past glory. This past 'glory' is, as I note above, symbolic because the solutions proffered for its return do little to address the underlying issues. This new alliance, given shape through patriot identity, allows whites to express racial anxiety and pride through nationalistic coding, yet its manifestation is hollow, providing them with symbolic gains but few material ones. Their solutions resonate, however, because they tap into deeply held cultural values about rural self-sufficiency and a belief that localities should have some measure of control and say over their local circumstances. Indeed, both the hemp and biosphere issues reflect long-standing resentment over policies that robbed rural communities of just these things. There is, however, no reason why the left may not also intervene in this context, and to better effect than the right. The left can and should consider how to reconstruct the nation-state nexus in ways that unite the races not only through a common class based agenda addressed at the state level, but also through common invocations to shared citizenship at the national level. (Considering how a reconstructed citizenship at the national level might be integrated into cross- and trans-national forms of 'cultural citizenship' could prove useful at a later point as well – see Kroes, 2001 and Ong, 1999.) While these possibilities may seem remote given the right's current discursive control of categories such as 'American' and 'patriot', we must remember that no social category is fixed in meaning. As identity theory informs us, the category carries within it not only the seeds of its own destruction, but also of its reinvention.

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### Notes

- 1 For a more detailed analysis of this work, please refer to my book *On the Fault Line: Race, Class, and the American Patriot Movement*, forthcoming from Rowman & Littlefield Publishers ([www.rowmanlittlefield.com](http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com)).
- 2 Invocations to masculinity and its 'restoration' also inform the movement. I do not analyse its role here however because of limited space, choosing instead to analyse whiteness because it has a stronger place in the creation of patriot identity. As the history section of this paper illustrates, the movement's origins are closely tied to white supremacy, but not to the nascent men's movement. Moreover, while my informants regularly discussed race (telling me frequently they were not racists), they did not feel compelled to explain the gender disequilibrium in their group.
- 3 Founded in the late 1960s, the Posse Comitatus is a Christian Patriot group (Aho, 1990). Its members believe that the federal tax code is unconstitutional and that the Federal Reserve Board is controlled by a Zionist conspiracy. They also believe that the power of the county is the highest order of authority.
- 4 One patriot in my focus group was not a resident of Kentucky. He lived in Tennessee near its border with Kentucky. He is included in this study based on two criteria. First, he was recommended to me as an important person to interview in the movement. Second, the patriot who recommended him described him as an important regional activist for the Southeastern US, of which Kentucky is a part.
- 5 Hemp and marijuana are often confused as the same plant. They are actually different varieties of the same plant *Cannabis Sativa*. Hemp and marijuana have sufficiently different properties to make the use of each plant substantially different.
- 6 US Senate. 105th Congress, 1st Session. S 1414, Universal Tobacco Settlement Act. ONLINE. GPO Access. Available online: <http://web.lexis-nexis.com.congcomp/>

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