



The Federalist Gets It Really Wrong on Buckley and Birch Society

In a February 7 opinion piece for an ostensibly conservative website called The Federalist about white supremacy on college campuses, “Artistic Director” of “Blue Box World” David Marcus made a serious error about [The John Birch Society](#) and the late William F. Buckley, Jr. (shown, left) that he and his editors refused to correct — even though they know of the error. In fact, it is worse than a mere error: Marcus got the facts exactly backwards. Whether this was deliberate or accidental is not possible for this writer to know, though refusing to correct it after receiving irrefutable evidence of his error might offer a hint. Either way, the facts — and even Buckley — can speak for themselves.



In the piece, headlined “[The Right Can’t Ignore the Rise of White Supremacy on Campus](#),” Marcus, after discussing haters and white supremacists, brought up the JBS. “What conservatives must begin to do is to actively, not reactively, seek out and oppose those who spread hatred to college students,” opined Marcus, after incorrectly claiming that white supremacist “messaging” incidents “tripled” from 147 to 290 (that is not even doubling). “It is not enough to say, ‘These people are on the fringe, let’s laugh it off.’ Instead, conservative groups, especially those dealing with education, must forcefully denounce these individuals and groups, as William F. Buckley Jr. once denounced the John Birch Society.”

The implication was clear to anyone reading it. But it was also completely inaccurate. For one, William Buckley’s attacks on The John Birch Society had nothing to do with racism or hatred. Don’t take our word for it. You can read Buckley’s own comments on his reasons for attacking Robert Welch (shown, right), the founder of the Society, made in 2008. Basically, Buckley disagreed with Welch’s understanding of the severity of the communist threat in America — never once did Buckley even allude to racism, hate, or anything similar in his occasional rants against the JBS founder.

“His influence was near-hypnotic, and his ideas wild,” wrote Buckley in his [2008 recounting of the anti-Welch crusade he instigated](#). “He said Dwight D. Eisenhower was a ‘dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy,’ and that the government of the United States was ‘under operational control of the Communist party.’” Basically, as Buckley told it, he did not want the “conservative movement” to be associated with those beliefs, which he disagreed with. Buckley said the same thing in the 1960s, and his *National Review* published a [similar summary just last year](#) extracted from a new book on Buckley.

Whether Welch was correct on the relevant point about Eisenhower, a statement that was made in a private letter that was later changed and turned into the heavily footnoted book [The Politician](#), is not the point here. Rather, the point is that Buckley’s attacks on Welch had nothing to do with hate, racism,



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 23, 2018

or anything of the sort, even according to Buckley. (As a side note, it's worth pointing out that the only person to serve two terms in Eisenhower's Cabinet, Ezra Taft Benson, [agreed with Welch](#) and urged everyone to join JBS as the "most effective non-church group in America against creeping socialism and godless communism.")

Of course, it would have been ludicrous for Buckley to have attacked Welch for hate. Indeed, Welch was publicly opposing segregation long before he founded the Birch Society in 1958. And that distaste for racism and segregation — policies which were then mainstream, particularly in the American South, where Welch grew up — was embedded into the fabric of the Society from the start. More than a few racists and anti-Semites, including a member of Congress, were actually expelled from JBS as a result of their views. Those policies forbidding hate are still firmly in place today.

Again, don't take our word for it. Even in 1963, when Buckley was getting ready to launch his attacks on Welch, the California Senate Fact-Finding Committee released [a report about its investigation of The John Birch Society](#), which was already being smeared by communists and globalists. The investigation's conclusions were unequivocal. "At any rate, our investigations have disclosed no evidence of anti-Semitism on the part of anyone connected with the John Birch Society in California, and *much evidence to the effect that it opposes racism in all forms*," the investigators wrote, adding that Welch was actively expelling any racists or anti-Semites who managed to get into JBS. (Emphasis added.)

Indeed, there were entire JBS chapters composed of black members of The John Birch Society, and this is also in the public record. In 1962, Congressman John Rousselot (R-Calif.) entered into the Congressional Record the conclusions of an investigation conducted by the Efficiency Research Bureau. The investigators found, among other facts, that "the John Birch Society isn't anti-Semitic, anti-Negro, or anti- any religious group," and that, "they, in fact, have chapters composed entirely of colored membership." The document also pointed out that the JBS "has Jewish members on the national advisory council."

As was the case then, false accusations of racism or anti-Semitism are extremely hurtful to the hundreds of thousands of wonderful men and women who have been involved in the fight for faith, family, and freedom with the JBS over a period of almost 60 years. Indeed, such false accusations — leveled in recent years against Trump, Republicans, William Buckley, *National Review*, The Federalist, the Tea Party, Fox News, the *New York Times*, and virtually anyone to the right of Obama — are hurtful to anyone. But those odious charges, sometimes made in ignorance, sometimes with malice, are particularly hurtful to the wonderful black and Jewish members and leaders of JBS.

Ironically, though, just a few years before his attacks on Welch, Buckley himself was openly advocating the denial of voting rights to black people, arguing that "Negro backwardness" was a threat to "civilization" — something the Birch Society, which [had](#) and [still has](#) many prominent black members, never would have imagined saying. Specifically, in a 1957 piece headlined "[Why The South Must Prevail](#)," Buckley wrote in his magazine *National Review* that white Southerners had not just a right, but a duty, to prevent blacks from voting. The "more advanced race," he argued, must do everything necessary — including use force — to prevent it.

In 1963, Buckley lamented a bombing of a black church that killed four children because it "set back the cause of the white people there so dramatically." In 1965, he warned that there would be "chaos" if blacks were allowed to vote. And in 1969, long after his attacks on JBS began, Buckley wrote a column "On Negro Inferiority" in which he celebrated pseudo-scientific findings claiming blacks were inferior.



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Today, prominent critics on the Left and the Right have referred to Buckley's ["vile" and "abhorrent"](#) views as those of a ["promoter of white supremacy."](#) And yet, in his column in The Federalist purporting to advocate fighting against white supremacy, Marcus blatantly promotes Buckley's 1960s attacks on the JBS!

Shortly before he died, perhaps realizing how vile such comments would sound today, Buckley recanted and acknowledged that he was "wrong." But the point is that not only was Buckley *not* attacking the John Birch Society for racism or white supremacy — that would have been ridiculous — Buckley could himself be considered an ardent proponent of such views, particularly by today's standards. Readers of Marcus' column, though, would have come away with the exact opposite impression.

To understand why the JBS was the subject of rampant smears and lies from communists, globalists, and their useful idiots in the early 1960s, FBI Special Agent and Salt Lake City Police Chief Cleon Skousen provided an excellent summary in his 1963 essay ["The Communist Attack on the John Birch Society."](#) Establishment operatives among Republicans in Name Only (RINOs) sometimes joined in the attacks, too. But even Buckley never would have dreamed of attacking the JBS for the reasons implied by Marcus. For more on Buckley — a member of the [globalist Council on Foreign Relations](#) and the [shady secret society Skull and Bones](#) — and why he truly went after JBS, the book [William F. Buckley, Jr.: Pied Piper for the Establishment](#) by JBS President Emeritus Jack McManus is a must.

When confronted by this writer with the facts about the inaccurate statements by Marcus, Executive Editor Joy Pullman of The Federalist, whom this writer has worked with before, initially suggested that she would publish a response, written by this writer, setting the record straight. She ignored the response, at first. Then, when informed that it would be published elsewhere, with [information on her visit to the Birch Society's headquarters for interviews](#), she claimed not to have received the e-mails. Eventually, after vowing to sort out the mess, she finally declined to publish the response "because it's not actually a response to what David wrote but your own inaccurate characterization of what he wrote."

"The sticking point is: Where does David [Marcus] ever say that Buckley versus Welch was about racism? That's the whole thing you seem to be arguing against, but unfortunately it appears to be a strawman," Pullman said in an e-mail after initially indicating that she had read it the same way. "David says that in today's race arguments the right should sideline the alt-right, like Buckley sidelined JBS. It's a parallel on tactics, not content."

However, Marcus did indeed intend to imply that Buckley had attacked JBS over alleged racism. And he admitted that publicly. "If you provide me sources that prove Buckley's rebuke of JBS was not a result of its racism I'd be happy to review them," Marcus [wrote](#) on social media in a post for which he was ridiculed as a racist himself. When supplied with Buckley's own words about why he attacked Welch and JBS, which make no mention of racism or anything remotely related to it, along with criticism of Buckley's racial language, Marcus said it was "a stretch given the broader context." What he meant was not immediately clear. Marcus, Pullman, and others declined to comment on The Federalist's fact-checking and correction policies for this article.

Of course, even if Pullman were right about Marcus intending to discuss Buckley having allegedly "sidelined" the JBS, rather than any race issue, it would still be highly misleading at best. According to prominent analysts on both the Left and the Right, the JBS views have now become what Senior Editor Heer Jeet at *Mother Jones* called "the dominant strain" of conservatism in America. Writing at the Huffington Post, Robert McElvaine argued that the Trump candidacy was "the culmination" of The John



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Birch Society's 60 years of educational efforts. Andrew Reinbach, also at the Huffington Post, argued years earlier that "the right wing's main ideas have been pushed for 50 years by the John Birch Society (JBS)." And more recently, Senator Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) argued that "the values of Robert Welch" were now "in the West Wing." Plenty of other prominent voices have echoed those remarks.

Even establishment-minded globalists have complained about The John Birch Society's effectiveness in stopping their agenda. The late Robert Pastor, for example, who led the Council on Foreign Relations' "North America" schemes to subvert U.S. sovereignty along the lines of the plot used to destroy the independence of European nations, pointed to the JBS for its key role in foiling [the globalist agenda on the North American continent](#). Among other concerns, he wrote in his 2011 book that the JBS was "effective in inhibiting the Bush administration and deterring the Obama administration from any grand initiatives" on North American "integration."

Marcus is hardly the first figure to smear the JBS with falsehoods, even in recent times. Last year, *Washington Post* columnist Marc Thiessen spread [objectively untrue information about the Birch Society as well. To their credit, though, every newspaper this writer knows of](#) that ran his column with the factual error (with the partial exception of the *Washington Post*, which made only minor changes to remove the outright falsehood) either ran a correction, published a guest editorial correcting the record, included a letter to the editor detailing the truth, removed the piece from its website entirely, or took more than one of those measures.

Basic journalistic and media ethics — not to mention basic decency and honesty — would normally require prompt action when readers might be misled. Every newspaper that re-published Thiessen's false claims did the right thing. But at the Federalist, two weeks have now passed, and readers there have still received no apology or correction for the misleading information supplied by Marcus.

Unfortunately, misinformation is everywhere — especially in this age of fake news and [establishment propaganda organs falsely dubbed "mainstream media"](#) pumping out hate against President Trump, the Tea Party, conservatives, Christians, and others. Sometimes, even otherwise decent conservative publications have been guilty of spreading it, even if inadvertently. But even more important than the fight against racism and hate that Marcus has called people to is the battle to protect and preserve *truth*. In this, everyone should be united.

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