

Civil Wrongs: 30 Years After!



By Steven Yates

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[Author's note: I'd originally planned this for November 4, but putting it up the day before the most contentious election of our lifetimes seemed like a bad idea!]

Thirty years ago, my first book was published. The publication date was November 4, 1994. I was a philosophy instructor at a major Southern university at the time.

Civil Wrongs: What Went Wrong With Affirmative Action (ICS Press) was a young scholar's work, and it didn't get everything right. Obviously, too, it's a bit dated. But I was told by more than one reviewer that it broke new ground by connecting the bizarre claims of radical "gender feminists" to affirmative action programs. (In those days, my books actually garnered reviews.)

The connection was that affirmative action programs had gotten university teaching jobs for poorly qualified (but hard-left) white women. I say "poorly qualified" not because these women were stupid – most weren't stupid at all – but because intellectual curiosity was not what motivated them. Nor did they have a sincere desire to make this world better, as opposed to empowering their tribe.

Efforts to recruit more blacks into academic philosophy had all but failed. There simply weren't any black applicants for philosophy teaching positions.

The book was unlikely, as the bulk of my education and

training had been in the history and philosophy of the physical sciences, and the theory of knowledge. I taught classes in logic, and a few in ethics. I'd been able to write the book because when I need to, I can pivot and do deep dives into new subjects, mastering a literature quickly.

Civil Wrongs, it goes without saying, damaged my academic career – badly.

Universities are places where departures from official narratives are punished – sometimes severely.

The narrative I challenged was that women and blacks were “underrepresented” groups, historically oppressed by us evil white guys, and deserving preferential hiring to correct the historical imbalances. The idea was then just starting to spread to sexual minorities.

What is “underrepresentation”? I'd already asked in letters to the editor and a few previous short pieces. It could only presuppose some concept of “correct representation.”

Who had any idea what that was?

Such queries were ignored. I'd been advised not to publish. “The left will eat you alive,” one correspondent told me.

I'd made a few rash and probably ill-advised statements out of a sense of injustice ... that white men of my generation “were being sacrificed on the altar of affirmative action” over wrongs we had no hand in creating or perpetuating. There'd been no chattel slavery in America since 1865. We had been lumped into one collective: white men (soon it would be straight white men and then straight Christian white men). The prevailing narrative assumed we were all uniformly privileged. We were not. Most of us from middle or working class backgrounds, and whose parents were not alumni or donors, had no special advantages whatsoever.

Because I'd been published in refereed journals as a doctoral student and cited in my department as "most likely to succeed," I'd only had to send out maybe 750 applications during my first five years out of school to be granted something like eight interviews at places where I didn't have a contact on the inside.

After 1994-95, that number dropped to zero, except for one institution arranged through an inside contact. The department lost funding for the position.

***Civil Wrongs* almost wasn't published.** I'd begun sending out queries to publishers in 1991. More than four dozen turned it down flat, some with hostile responses. A handful asked to see the manuscript. Then they sat on it. Follow-ups in 60 days, three months, were not answered.

Most were academic presses, as I'd written an academic book. A few were not. In early 1993 a think tank acquisitions editor asked to see the manuscript: the Institute for Contemporary Studies (ICS) based (of all places!) in San Francisco, which offered to publish it conditional on an extensive rewrite, incorporating material on how affirmative action bureaucrats had interfered with industries like construction.

I accepted ICS's conditions without hesitation, as I'd never assumed the problems were limited to academia. They sent me a trove of material, much of it showing how bureaucrats were threatening federal lawsuits against small businesses that didn't have bureaucratically correct ratios of blacks in their workforces.

The result was several new chapters and major rearranging. We finalized the manuscript in early 1994, and the waiting game began.

I wasn't especially looking forward to the book's appearance, strange as that sounds. By this time, numerous accounts were circulating of classes disrupted by black or leftist students

if the professor had used a word or phrase deemed “racist,” or “insensitive.”

Others had faced nuisance harassment by colleagues if they’d taken a stand against the politicizing of their departments (e.g., the departments had hired militant “third wave” feminists of the sort mentioned above). These were manifestations of what was then called political correctness, or PC, originally a term used for Leninists who towed the party line too closely. PC was clearly spreading and worsening. It struck me as antithetical to what a university should do.

***Civil Wrongs* came out with little fanfare.** It received no notification in the campus faculty bulletin where I was then teaching, the University of South Carolina–Columbia, an urban campus with a left-leaning faculty and administration. Sending such notices was up to the author, and I’d not sent them anything.

Instead, I did a guest op-ed for the city newspaper, *The State*, my point of departure being the election of that year which had seen the routing of left-liberal Democrats and the start of the Gingrich era. I argued that a lot of white males were tired of policies that clearly worked to disfavor them.

The article received a scathing and vaguely threatening reply by a black professor at a small, historically black college in Columbia. The newspaper refused my attempt at a point-by-point reply. A couple of anonymous threats were left on my answering machine. I began wondering if I’d need police protection until this blew over. I got an unlisted phone number.

Four copies of *Civil Wrongs* stood in the university bookstore in a section for faculty book publications. There was a copy in the display window of a bookstore and newsstand across the street from the State Capitol ... in South Carolina, the Confederate flag was then still flying over the dome. We

“right wingers” were being associated with that by left-leaning media even though I’d not once mentioned that issue.

For the ensuing six months I kept my head down on and around campus, and around the city, while doing publisher-arranged phone interviews with (mostly conservative) talk radio stations around the country. Most of these went well. I was, however, ambushed a few times. Par for the course, I was learning.

When academic year 1994-95 ended, I was handed the infamous pink slip.

Filing suit crossed my mind. I opted against doing that, having been counseled that any such action *definitely* would be career-ending. It wouldn’t matter how much I’d published. I’d be radioactive. I’d not been happy at the University of South Carolina, though. I mentioned the left-leaning faculty and administration. Students there struck me as, by and large, substandard. At least 30 percent couldn’t do college-level work, and I’d given a lot of low grades. This gets you bashed in teaching evaluations which the university’s defenders would have used in any legal proceeding – *he wasn’t fired because he wrote a book but because he’s ineffective in the classroom.*

This was before most watchdog groups had formed, not that they were ever that influential. There were a small handful of organizations devoted to “traditional” (i.e., not leftist-driven or postmodern “scholarship”) such as the National Association of Scholars, but like most academics they were unable to break out of the box of writing almost exclusively for one another.

For the next few years I struggled to survive, working at temp jobs and eventually earning a masters degree in health education.

Meanwhile, questions surfaced.

How powerful was the far left, anyway? How did it get this much cultural power, especially following the supposedly conservative Reagan-Bush years?

I began to think that *Civil Wrongs*, the final version of which was more about policy than it was history and philosophy, had barely broken the surface of a very deep well.

It was clear, we'd all been lied to about the intent, nature, and influence of affirmative action in academia. My own dissertation advisor had told me falsely years before that the policy was easily gotten around.

Suddenly, one morning (1996, and we were just getting the Internet), the question surfaced: what else had we been lied to about?

I'd long known of maverick scholars who argued that much of what was believed about the origins of civilization was wrong, and that evidence of relatively advanced but completely unknown cultures had been ignored or suppressed.

Who, for example, had created the originals that were compiled into the Piri Re'is Map, possessed by the early 16th century Turkish sea captain Piri Re'is which bore an accurate depiction of the coastline of South America. Since Piri Re'is had created the map from previous maps which predated South America's "discovery," I thought we were entitled to raise the question of who could have known about South America, how far back their knowledge went, and what the implications were. Among academic historians: crickets.

That's just one example, discussed in detail in historian and geographer Charles Hapgood's astounding book *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings* (1966).

Unrelated?

What if lies about affirmative action weren't the exception?

What if this sort of thing was the rule?

What if important aspects of history are fundamentally fraudulent, constructed to depict a linear advancement model which just isn't true, because in reality there have been "days and nights of civilization" which has moved in cycles?

We have an artifact from ancient Greece, after all, that depicts the solar system out to Saturn with startling accuracy. Other artifacts recovered from the Middle East, and elsewhere, look disturbingly similar to modern batteries, or even airworthy craft.

I began to review *all* the official narratives with an eye to asking, *did concrete, well-documented evidence actually support them, or was it all about the authority of Ivy League professors with bodies of dogma?*

To be sure, issues related to preserving both intellectual and political freedoms in the face of an advancing cultural hard left took priority over such esoteric concerns as the above, so I tabled them hoping someday to get back to them.

A fellow with a law degree named Robert Clarkson (deceased 2010) who'd been disbarred for challenging the IRS too many times on the legality of the tax code had begun inviting me to his meetings of renegade conservatives and a few libertarians. Someone in this group drew my attention to G. Edward Griffin's *The Creature from Jekyll Island* (also 1994) which delved into the shady origins of the Federal Reserve System and the power elite driven monetary philosophy behind it.

I also discovered Carroll Quigley's tomes *Tragedy & Hope: A History of the World In Our Time* (1966) and *The Anglo-American Establishment* (1981, posthumously).

Next came John Taylor Gatto's great works on public education. Gatto showed with great clarity that public schools were *never* about *real* education. They were about producing a certain kind

of mass that would work the jobs industrial civilization supplied, consume what corporations produced, and believe they really lived in a democracy.

Most did just that. In this sense, given its real aims, public education is *not* a failure like some insist. It is a spectacular success! It relies on the principle that if you want a controlled population, control the information reaching that population, and control the language in which that information is expressed.

Didn't professional philosophers analyze language, though? Yes, but not with *this* in mind! I came to realize that the discipline for which I'd trained for seven years had long ago been sufficiently neutered so that not even its best minds would threaten powerful interests, including those right under their noses on campuses.

They might *seem* to do so ... after all, leftists went on and on about "speaking truth to power."

Rubbish. They'd *become* power.

***The Matrix* came out in 1999. More scales fell from my eyes.**

No, we weren't plugged into an artificial intelligence that had filled our heads with a computer-generated dream world. What we were plugged into, figuratively speaking, was a "Real Matrix" generated by professionalized education, media-saturation, and the deep state. The men behind the curtains were working to bring about, little by little, "global governance," i.e., a *de facto* or *de jure* world government that would serve global corporations.

The "conspiracy theorists" were right!

One of the most significant bits of fallout from all this was my return to the Christianity of my youth. Like most "educated" pseudo-sophisticates with advanced degrees I'd

abandoned religion in college as the product of backwardness and scientific illiteracy. I'd once inveighed against "creationism."

Now I realized: materialism and secularism were a worldview, not rationally-grounded or based on real scientific findings. They had triumphed not because of decisive evidence in their favor, but from having pushed their primary competitor – Christendom – aside, in a long term battle for control over institutions.

They would continue to corrupt actual scientific methods and institutions until we arrived at the Tony Fauci era and calls to Follow The Science, and the idea that "you can be any gender you like (choose from a smorgasbord based on your feelings).

In short, by the 2010s the knowledge-seeking enterprise was melting down, and along with it the culture we were seeing all around us. If we were honest about it.

Narrative collapse within the Republican Party gave us Donald Trump, who, in 2015-16, stepped into the vacuum with his Make America Great Again. America had been undermined by false narratives about diversity being our strength, and globalization making us all rich and free and the world safe for liberal democracy.

Summarizing:

Where did *Civil Wrongs* fall short, whether through incompleteness or getting things wrong?

You'll find little or nothing in it about the Frankfurt School and the insidious role of cultural Marxist philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and his essay "Repressive Tolerance" (1965). This essay attacked free speech on the grounds that it amounted to freedom for *white* speech at the expense of *black* speech. Marcuse wanted a reversal, and this became the basis

of the preferential hiring mindset that affirmative action became.

Also, *Civil Wrongs* is far more libertarian than conservative (I dedicated it to the late libertarian philosopher and author Tibor R. Machan who'd been a colleague of mine at Auburn).

Libertarianism offers an unfortunate contrast with the collectivism of political correctness: the individual as *homo economicus*, in their view society's basic and most essential unit (not, e.g., the family). In this view there's no such thing as *society*, it's all individuals running around, like atoms. Traditions and time-tested ways of doing things are options and not necessities for the sustaining of civilization. It was these that the far left was attacking, though, not individual autonomy with which they have no problem if the subject is abortion or sexual preference or choice of "gender."

Libertarianism assumed that "free markets" would sort all this out if "we" just got rid of every law, every policy, every tradition that offered privileges to some at the expense of others. Just hire your individual economic atoms based on measurable personal merit, and everything else would take care of itself.

The problem is, *nobody does that*. Not even libertarians. Familiarity always trumps unfamiliarity, which explains the success of networking, and "it's not *what* you know but *who* you know." To purists, this seems ethically shady and isn't necessarily a good idea, but people naturally prefer known to unknown quantities. It's how we're wired.

I also assumed, incorrectly, that "movement conservatives" would be interested in this. They weren't.

"Movement conservatives" were – still are – too terrified of being called racists to make any attempt to seize the moral high ground, which I and a few others writing in the 1990s

were urging them to do. Left-liberals played the “white guilt” card for all it was worth, of course. “Movement conservatives” assume that if they’re “nice” to left-liberals they’ll retain a seat at the table. But leftists don’t respect this. They’re wolves in the sense I invoked here. They respect only power and assertion. So “movement conservatism” stayed at the table, but managed only to embarrass itself as it steadily lost ground. Guys like me, meanwhile, were increasingly ignored.

By 2000, corporations were pushing political correctness on the grounds that left-leaning black groups “had money to spend.” Single career (mostly white) women, too, were advancing by leaps and bounds, and their a-woman-needs-a-man-like-a-fish-needs-a-bicycle view of relationships culturally with them.

So much for the idea that “markets” alone were of help.

In that case, what did *Civil Wrongs* get right?

I believe it was prescient in predicting our current mess.

I’d tried to warn anyone who would listen that if political correctness was not opposed forcefully and beaten back successfully through conservatives taking back the moral high ground, it would continue to spread from academia until it had infiltrated and subverted every institution in the country.

I predicated a wave of “increasingly brazen politically motivated irrationalism,” which sounds very like present-day transgenderism which wasn’t on anyone’s radar in the 1990s but is now everywhere.

Wokeness is the apotheosis of political correctness, itself a product of affirmative action ideology. This mindset now dominates higher education, mass media, and much of the corporate world – especially the world of those rich enough to absorb the problems it creates, which frequently is having incompetent people around and having to minimize the damage

they can do. (Back in the 1990s, one dissident academic asked sarcastically “if feminist airplanes would stay aloft for feminist engineers.”)

Now we have “DEI”: diversity, equity, inclusion (or DIE, as I sometimes call it).

Given the overall ineffectiveness of race and sexual preferences, we have allegations that America is permeated with “systemic racism” that cannot be removed through reforms. Women still face a “glass ceiling” in many institutions, or so it is said.

What’s the implication? *Cultural revolution*, Maoist-style, which not merely censors but *cancel*s every dissenting voice, by whatever means necessary.

We now have a candidate for President of the United States, of a major political party, who owes the bulk of her appointments, including vice president (Biden once said so explicitly) to her status as a “woman of color,” and whose incompetence as vice president resulted in an unprecedented level of illegal migration that those on the ground will tell you is destroying their communities.

A Harris presidency would eventually legalize them all. They will then vote Democrat, and we’ll have a *de facto* one-party political system within four years. Maybe conservatives will be tolerated. Maybe not.

Leftists ruined California. They are in the process of ruining the entire country. (Indeed, the leftist mindset has corrupted and ruined every nation it has touched: Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Canada, the list goes on and on.)

The mystery, for some, is: *why* did corporate America get on board with this juggernaut?

There are billionaires such as Soros with hard left beliefs.

He's hardly alone. A lot of Silicon Valley types pushed "DEI" on their workforces and punished dissent. Computer engineer James Damore's story is telling: he penned a letter criticizing one of the assumptions of corporate leftism at Google, which is that men and women are fundamentally the same, should be interchangeable in job roles, so that any "gender" imbalance must result from "systemic" discrimination.

What's up with all the moneyed interests supporting this stuff?

The best I can figure out: our present-day billionaire class (much of it, anyway) shares a common premise with the hard left: *we're qualified to manage the world. If this means exercising force against the peasantry so that it knows its place, then so be it.*

That is the Platonist premise that has caused so much grief: Utopia is possible, and we're the ones to build it. We, of the World Economic Forum (for example), are the philosopher-kings. Because we have the knowledge, the insight, the motivation, and the commitment to "social justice" so that "history is on our side."

Within the billionaire class are transhumanists who, having abandoned God no less than Marxists, have set themselves up as God's replacement, literally able to reconfigure the natural order ("through our hormonal treatments and other gender-affirming care you can be any gender you like").

The corporations have the money; woke leftists have the will as loyal foot soldiers.

Meanwhile, those supposedly dominant – straight white Christian men – are the only ones losing ground: culturally, demographically, economically, healthwise, spiritually. We're group members for political purposes and atomized economically and psychologically, so that loneliness is epidemic as white men stay unmarried.

We're not having children in sufficient numbers. A population that doesn't reproduce itself, eventually dies out.

What did/do the corporate leviathans want? To transform as much of the world as possible into a single global marketplace based on mass consumption and debt, managed in top-down fashion. All else has been subordinated to that. What doesn't contribute to it, or what interferes with it, is expendable at best and must be eliminated if it can't be gotten around.

Hence the cold war on everything theological and everything traditional.

This system throws most of us to the wolves: that includes most women, most ethnic minorities, as well as most straight white Christian men, outside the enclaves of real privilege.

Watch for the coming of digital currency and the elimination of physical cash. Once the power elite techno-feudal order is set up, this is how its philosopher-kings will consign dissidents to starvation when their credit cards and bank accounts are canceled.

Globalists know that an agrarian feudal order was relatively stable for centuries. They believe their techno-feudal order can be made similarly stable. They are wrong. No empire based on lies, deceit, and when those fail, brute force, has ever endured.

Little of this was implicit in *Civil Wrongs: What Went Wrong With Affirmative Action*, which warned only of the coming of a world in which your abilities would count for nothing and your group identity, for everything. That warning stands. So do more recent ones, based on everything I've discovered since.

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Steven Yates is a (recovering) ex-academic with a PhD in Philosophy. He taught for more than 15 years total at several universities in the Southeastern U.S. He authored three books, more than 20 articles, numerous book reviews, and review essays in academic journals and anthologies. Refused tenure and unable to obtain full-time academic employment (and with an increasing number of very fundamental philosophical essays refused publication in journals), he turned to alternative platforms and heretical notions, including about academia itself.

In 2012 he moved to Chile. He married a Chilean national in 2014. Among his discoveries in South America: the problems of the U.S. are problems everywhere, because human nature is the same everywhere. The problems are problems of Western civilization as a whole.

As to whether he'll stay in Chile ... stay tuned!

He has a Patreon.com page. Donate [here](#) and become a Patron if you benefit from his work and believe it merits being sustained financially.

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His philosophical work *What Should Philosophy Do? A Theory* (2021) can be obtained [here](#) or [here](#).

His paranormal horror novel *The Shadow Over Sarnath* (2023) can be gotten [here](#).

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