

IDEAS

Kay: 'Many ethnic community leaders treat every use of the N-word or act of anti-Semitic vandalism as a signal of the KKK's return, or of another Kristallnacht'

The fetishization of hatred



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In 1994, Warren Kinsella — a man who would go on to fame as a high-profile aide to Jean Chrétien and political pundit — published *Web of Hate: Inside Canada's Far Right Network*. It was a solid piece of book-length investigative journalism that helped shine a light on Canada's cliques of organized hate-mongers. The book went to #2 on Canada's best-seller list, and arguably played some role in finishing off whatever tiny "far-right network" ever existed in this country. Yes, one still occasionally gets e-mails from any number of obscure groups that seek to kick

out immigrants or blame our problems on the Jews. But dig a little deeper, and you inevitably find the "group" consists of one or two pitiful old cretins operating out of a Yahoo! Mail account and someone's basement.

Unfortunately, Kinsella — and the whole human rights industry that rose to power in the years before his book was published — haven't figured this out. Nor have many ethnic community leaders and journalists, who treat every use of the N-word or act of anti-Semitic vandalism as if it signalled the return of the KKK, or of another Kristallnacht.

I'm singling out Kinsella here, because he is a blogger and political columnist who prides himself on being flavour-of-the-minute. But his opinions on anything to do with hate-mongering seem locked in a mid-1990s time warp.

Case in point: This week, Liberal MP Keith Martin put forward a private members' bill that would ensure hu-

man rights tribunals are no longer used as tools of censorship — an initiative sparked by recent gag actions against *Maclean's* magazine and Ezra Levant's (now defunct) *Western Standard*, both of which have published candid articles about the threat from militant Islam. Just about every intelligent person in the country

centre of the Canadian Human Rights Act — it is easy for guys like me to get dejected. And then I talk to a smart and courageous Jewish friend, who tells me we can't back down, because 'free speech' does not give anyone a licence to defame and intimidate others on the basis of their race or religion or sexual orientation."

As well as reproducing the earnest, lachrymose plea for censorship sent by his Jewish friend, Kinsella offers, by way

Kinsella and other Knights of Tolerance are fighting back racist hordes that long ago hung up their spurs

— on both sides of the political spectrum — has sided with Levant and Martin. But not Kinsella, who this week wrote on his blog: "Reading the ill-informed, ridiculous, knee-jerk utilitarian editorials in the *Globe*, *Gazette* and *Post* this morning — all on MP Keith Martin's plan to excise the

of proof, a photo he took of a tiny piece of childish graffiti that says "White Power" — alongside two crudely drawn swastikas.

Good on Warren for having his cellphone camera at the ready. But my reaction is: So what? When I was in junior high school, it was a common

practice for kids to carve this sort of stuff into their desk (and far worse) because we were desperate for attention, and this was the easiest way to shock people. This is hardly indicative that the "web of hate" is reconstituting itself. (Even a generation ago, in fact, that "web" probably never did amount to much — it turns out that a surprising number of alleged hatemongers were actually police informants.)

One of the things I find annoying about the anti-racism movement in this country is the manner in which it fetishizes — almost lovingly — the few vestigial instances of outright hateful expression that still can be found. Why — if not to prove their own relevance — are certain liberal bloggers so proud to post and promote whatever trickle of misspelled messages they get from Zundelian kooks? Likewise, it is a common practice at Jewish fundraising dinners to present elaborate, multi-media slide shows documenting the isolated vandalism of some local cemetery or synagogue, amidst misleading rhetoric

suggesting that Jew-hatred remains widespread.

This obsession with victimhood is outdated. We live in the most tolerant nation on Earth. And open racism and anti-Semitism were eliminated from mainstream society a generation ago. It is tiresome to receive earnest lectures from Knights of Tolerance who — for whatever political or psychological reason — keep raising the hue and cry against hateful hordes that long ago hung up their spurs.

Before 9/11, these self-righteous Knights were merely annoying. But no more. As the Levant/*Maclean's* case shows, they are actively defending a censorship regime that serves to persecute those sounding the alarm against radical Islam — which, unlike teenage Nazi graffiti, presents a real threat to our liberal society. Perhaps those who see themselves as the protectors of society's most vulnerable groups might cast an eye toward the challenges we face in 2008 — and stop battling the demons of 1994.

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