

These thugs know where to find you

Michael Costello

It was inevitable that the brownshirts would come to Washington. They certainly have a welcoming environment here. In California, after the passage of Proposition 8, which defined marriage as a union between one man and one woman and wrote that into that state's constitution, gay marriage advocates published the names and addresses of donors to the "Yes on Proposition 8" campaign online and used Google maps to provide directions to their homes. The obvious intent of this maneuver was to punish and intimidate political opponents.

The message: We know where you live.

Well guess what? The thugs are here, and they have inaugurated a similar campaign of intimidation in Washington. The only difference is that Washington's gay marriage advocates are deploying the California intimidation tactics preemptively. They have begun a campaign to publicize the names and addresses of people who dare to sign a petition for Referendum 71, an effort to overturn Washington's recently passed civil union law.

The message: We know where you live.

Brian Murphy of WhoSigned.org insists that his organization has no intention of promoting harassment. No. Of course not. Who would think such a thing? He says that he only wants to encourage "people to have conversations with their neighbors, to be able to have the discussion, and talk about how does this particular petition affect my family?"

This is the same gibberish that the California thugs used to wave off criticism of their efforts.

Similar Web sites that publicize the names and addresses of abortion providers would never be allowed to get away with that sort of whitewash.

In truth, the civil unions law is irrelevant. The same arrangement is available through contract law and always has been. Civil unions are just symbolic sop that neither side of the gay marriage debate should care about.

What's troubling about this is the mainstreaming of political harassment and intimidation that continues to acquire an uncomfortable, though technologically savvy, similarity to those employed by fascists against their opponents in 1930s Europe. The acceptance and use of intimidation to achieve political ends has become acceptable at the highest levels of power in this country.

Earlier this year, after whipping up angry mob mentality over the AIG bonus issue, the Association of Community Organization for Reform Now chartered a bus and traveled to the homes of AIG executives.

ACORN's message to AIG executives: We know where you live.

I wonder how ACORN would react if the names and addresses of its leadership were publicized with bus tours to drive home the point.

It's not surprising that banks pay protection money to ACORN. Bank of America, one of the banks that required federal bailout money to survive, recently passed on millions of dollars to ACORN. ACORN

stands to receive billions of taxpayer dollars from Obama's \$787 billion porkulus package.

Just in case ACORN's message wasn't clear enough, a couple of days after the tour, Obama called Wall Street executives onto his carpet and told them that he was the only thing standing between them and the pitchforks, and that they had better knuckle under. Has any U.S. president in history every delivered a more blatant threat?

Late last week, the Obama administration gave its endorsement to political thuggery when it dropped charges against the New Black Panther Party members who had wielded weapons at a Philadelphia polling place trying to frighten away voters whom they disagreed with. Just about the only way that the Panthers could infer a voter's potential preference was by skincolor. And this seems to be the method they used.

"You are about to be ruled by the black man, cracker," one of the thugs told a white poll watcher.

Career prosecutors in the Justice Department won the first round against the Black Panthers when the Panthers declined to contest the charges, but were overruled by Obama's political appointees. Perhaps not coincidentally, Obama's presidential campaign Website hosted a page for the Panthers.

Meanwhile, this same Justice Department forced Georgia to drop its voter identification program meant to protect against voter fraud. One of our most cherished rights, the right to vote, will be only selectively protected under this new thugocracy.

With this mainstreaming of brutish political threats and intimidation, Murphy's coercive tactics appear subtle by comparison. But for anyone thinking of signing the Referendum 71 petition, his message will be heard loud and clear.

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