

**The Most Dangerous Black Professor in America
Dr. Manning Marable
"Along the Color Line"
February, 2006**

Back in 1919, in the chaotic aftermath of World War I and the Russian Revolution, President Woodrow Wilson's administration sought to suppress radical and progressive intellectuals here at home. Government agents harassed W.E.B. Du Bois and the NAACP's journal, *The Crisis*. Copies of African-American socialist A. Philip Randolph's militant journal, *The Messenger*, were seized and destroyed. When President Wilson was given a copy of *The Messenger*, he declared that Randolph must surely be "the most dangerous Negro in America."

Randolph later went on to found the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925, the first successful African-American labor union. In the 1930's. Randolph conceived of the National Negro Congress, a black united front that challenged the racism of Jim Crow segregation and the inadequate programs of the Roosevelt administration in dealing with black unemployment. In 1941 Randolph pressured

Roosevelt with the call for a “Negro March on Washington, D.C.,” resulting in the desegregation of defense industry jobs generated by federal contracts. Randolph was indeed “dangerous” to the enemies of black freedom.

Randolph immediately came to mind when I learned recently that I was listed among “The 101 Most Dangerous Professors” in America’s colleges and universities. The indicted of these 101 “academic subversives” appears in a new book by right wing gadfly David Horowitz. Horowitz crashed the headlines several years ago when he circulated the provocative advertisement denouncing black American reparations for slavery and Jim Crow segregation as “racist.” His latest political maneuver is the demand for an “Academic Bill of Rights,” calling for state legislatures to restrict academic freedom on campuses.

The political sins of Manning Marable, according to Horowitz, are monumental. A “lifelong Marxist” and known associate of African-American radicals such as Angela Y. Davis and Amiri Baraka, Marable makes “no pretense to academic or scholarly inquiry” in his position at Columbia University. “Professor Marable advocates black

'resistance' as the only antidote to the 'inherent racism' of American society." To the charge of calling for black empowerment and full socioeconomic justice and political equality, I must plead guilty.

Horowitz's book is especially troubled by two specific projects that I have initiated: the "Africana Criminal Justice Project," and my biographical research on Malcolm X. For Horowitz and his research assistants, the funding my criminal justice studies have received from "George Soros's Open Society Institute" was politically motivated, "no doubt because it fits Soros's agenda of unseating Republicans" by restoring voting rights to former prisoners, who are disproportionately black, brown and poor. Nowhere in my own writing can one find the claim that I "[maintain] that the American criminal justice system is irredeemably racist," or that the "enemies" of my research on Malcolm X are "the white middle class, which he also believes to be the source of the inequities of American society that inflames his radical passions." Yet Horowitz doesn't mind twisting the facts to promote his bizarre interpretation of America's unequal racial realities.

“The 101 Most Dangerous Professors” reads like a “Who’s Who” of America’s most prominent public intellectuals and university scholars. Columbia University led the nation, with nine “most dangerous” scholars among its faculty, including internationally-known intellectuals like Eric Foner, Victor Navasky, Todd Gitlin, Lisa Anderson and Hamid Dabashi. Other African-American intellectuals stigmatized as “most dangerous” include bell hooks, Michael Eric Dyson, Maulana Karenga, Kathleen Cleaver and legendary legal theorist Derrick Bell. Several of the “dangerous” intellectuals are editorial board members of a journal I edit at Columbia, *Souls* – Foner, Dyson, Cleaver and Brooklyn College Professor Priya Parmar. Clearly for Horowitz this is additional proof that subversives are building incendiary networks for academic mayhem.

Horowitz’s objective is to discredit, isolate and stigmatize prominent scholars of the left by eliminating them from universities entirely. His bogus “Academic Bill of Rights” promotes the same goal by mobilizing conservative Republicans in state legislatures to impose ideological strait jackets on faculty appointments and tenure decisions. To accomplish this, he deliberately twists and distorts the

published writings and lectures of progressive intellectuals, taking phrases out of context or even inventing quotations, to mobilize political conservatives.

Only days before the “101 most dangerous” controversy erupted, however, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, headed by conservative Republican Ambassador John Bolton, requested me to speak and serve as moderator of a prestigious panel on the theme, “The U.S. Civil Rights Struggle: Its Global Implications,” which was held on February 24, 2006. The panel’s featured presenter was Miss Johnnie Carr, a confidant of both Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and a former leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association in Alabama. My politics are clearly at odds with Ambassador Bolton’s, yet our U.S. Mission at the U.N.’s invitation to me requested that I be provided with “the opportunity to address the international community on the importance of equal rights, not just in the United States, but globally.” Is Bolton wrong, or is Horowitz simply wrongheaded?

Critically-engaged scholarship for the oppressed must both inform and transform people’s lives. Documenting and preserving the

histories of black Americans frightens reactionaries like Horowitz.

Efforts to link social science research for reforming our destructive criminal justice policies, and restoring voting rights to the black, brown and poor disfranchised, causes equal consternation. In the tradition of Randolph, I make no apologies.

Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of Public Affairs, History and African-American Studies, and Director of the Center for Contemporary Black History, Columbia University, New York. "Along the Color Line" regularly appears in hundreds of newspapers worldwide. "Along the Color Line" is available at www.manningmarable.net.