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HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

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**For Immediate Release:
Statement and Background on Dinesh D'Souza Speaking in Bigfork, MT**

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Dinesh D'Souza: Wrong for the Flathead Valley and Montana

The [Montana Human Rights Network](#) and its Flathead-area affiliate [Love Lives Here](#) are calling the Flathead County Republicans' decision to sponsor a presentation by right-wing conspiracy theorist Dinesh D'Souza an insult to the community's values.

"The Flathead Valley knows what it's like to be attacked by actual Nazis, and rhetoric like the kind that Dinesh D'Souza regularly issues is an attempt to divide healthy communities that get along pretty well despite our differences," says Cheryl DeVries of Love Lives Here. "He's trying to stir up controversy in communities so he can sell books, and we will not sell out the Flathead Valley and Montana to his agenda."

Perceived as a conservative intellectual at the beginning of his career, D'Souza discarded this legitimacy to pursue extreme right-wing conspiracies. His current spiel is contorting history to claim that liberals and the Democratic Party are Nazis. He makes his living touring the country promoting his outlandish views to sell his books and films. During his career, he has contended that African-Americans fared well under slavery, blamed African-Americans for their "black cultural pathology," and, more recently, mocked Florida students seeking better gun control laws following a school shooting in their state. If all that wasn't enough, D'Souza is a convicted felon for violating federal election laws. The Human Rights Network provides more background on D'Souza regarding these and other topics in the briefing paper that follows. It can also be found here: <https://mhrn.org/resources/>.

"D'Souza is the most recent right-wing extremist to visit the Flathead Valley peddling conspiracy theories that attack certain members of our community," says the Network's Rachel Carroll Rivas. "The Flathead County Republicans and Last Chance Patriots, which are the groups bringing D'Souza to the area, should strive to make our communities better places. Instead, all they are doing is promoting fear mongering and divisiveness."

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Dinesh D’Souza: Right-Wing Media Figure Pushing Fear Mongering and Conspiracies

Starting back in the 1980s, Dinesh D’Souza has been a prominent talking head in right-wing politics. Initially, mainstream conservatives considered him a provocative intellectual. However, as numerous profiles have documented over the years, D’Souza eventually devolved into an extreme right-wing conspiracy theorist. As part of this transformation, D’Souza increased his divisiveness and reliance on what can, at best, be described as “alternative facts,” while also becoming a popular contributor to right-wing media outlets.

As a person of color, D’Souza has been able to deflect charges of racism while making statements that are recognizable to any white nationalist. As discussed below, he has claimed that African-Americans were treated well during slavery, and they are challenged, not by racism, but by their “cultural backwardness.”¹ More recently, D’Souza defended President Donald Trump’s remarks about immigrants-of-color from “shithole countries,” saying it was an accurate description.²

D’Souza has yet to meet a right-wing conspiracy theory he hasn’t liked. Following the recent school shooting in Florida, right-wing commentators started claiming that the students speaking out for better gun control policies were being coached and paid by liberal organizations. D’Souza whole-heartedly jumped on this bandwagon. He condescendingly stated it was interesting “to hear students who can’t support themselves for one day giving us lectures about American social policy.”³ Later the same day, he tweeted that a teenager being interviewed looked “coached” and a “bit deranged.”⁴ When the Florida House denied a gun control motion, D’Souza happily tweeted “Adults 1, kids 0.” He also noted the vote was the “worst news [for the students] since their parents told them to get summer jobs.”⁵ After being criticized widely for his comments, D’Souza said he could empathize with “genuine grief” but what he saw struck him as “phony and inauthentic.”⁶

While his remarks routinely play well in extreme right-wing circles, other conservatives sometimes push back. His offensive remarks about the Florida students led to the cancelation of at least one of his speaking gigs, an event for a local Chamber of Commerce in Texas. Likewise, the organizers of the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), which has featured D’Souza in the past, called his remarks “indefensible.”⁷

D’Souza Perfect Fit for Last Chance Patriots

D’Souza’s presentation in the Flathead Valley is sponsored by the Last Chance Patriots and the Flathead County Republicans, which have an overlapping membership.⁸ The Last Chance Patriots are the latest incarnation of Flathead ACT for America, a county level chapter of the anti-Muslim [ACT for America](#) which is designated an anti-Muslim hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Starting late last year, Flathead ACT started encouraging its followers on social media to switch to Last Chance Patriots, and Flathead ACT largely shut down its online presence.

There are a couple of possible reasons for this change. First, local right-wing activists frequently change group names if they feel one entity has acquired too much negative political baggage. Second, and most likely in this case, the members of Flathead ACT wanted to engage around more issues than just rabid Islamophobia. As

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the Human Rights Network's [report](#) on Flathead ACT discusses, the leadership and membership of the group overlapped extensively with local entities of the Republican Party. As seasoned political activists, Flathead ACT folks may have wanted to have a local entity to pursue other right-wing causes and activism, especially during a year that features a high-profile U.S. Senate race.

The banner may have changed to Last Chance Patriots, but the individuals involved remain the same. In a media article about D'Souza's event, Caroline Solomon was listed as the person to contact for more information.⁹ Solomon was one of the co-leaders of Flathead ACT and has been active with the local Flathead County Republican women's group over the years.¹⁰ Similarly, Dee Kirk-Boon is listed on the Facebook event for D'Souza's presentation.¹¹ Boon is a long-time activist with the local Republicans, and she played an important role in Flathead ACT's 2017 legislative campaign.¹²

D'Souza is the latest in a long line of right-wing conspiracy theorists sponsored in the Flathead Valley by Flathead ACT/Last Chance Patriots. As documented in the Network's [report](#), Flathead ACT hosted more than a dozen speakers over about a three-year period that categorized all Muslims as terrorists and framed Islam as, not a religion, but a political ideology out to destroy Western Civilization. These speakers brought nothing but false history and anti-Muslim bigotry into the community. D'Souza, with his inaccurate historical narratives and hyperbolic conspiratorial claims, continues this tradition.

D'Souza Started as "Intellectual" of the Political Right

Born into an upper-class family in Mumbai, India, Dinesh D'Souza came to America when he was 18 years old to attend the Ivy League's Dartmouth College as an exchange student.¹³ He first made a name for himself in conservative circles by helping to start a right-wing student publication called the *Dartmouth Review* and served as its editor-in-chief.¹⁴ D'Souza says his time with the *Review* "radicalized" him.¹⁵

While the *Dartmouth Review* wasn't affiliated with the school, it provided an "outlet for the rank bigotry of right-wing students," according to one media report.¹⁶ D'Souza's leadership of the newspaper provided a preview of his future – promoting an ultra-conservative agenda while pushing the boundaries of racism and good taste. Under his stewardship, the *Dartmouth Review* published an interview with a Ku Klux Klan leader accompanied by a doctored photo of a black student being lynched on campus; used stolen documents to out the campus leaders of the Gay-Straight Alliance; and ran editorials mocking the supposed speech patterns of African-Americans to oppose affirmative action.¹⁷

After graduating in 1983, D'Souza began the portion of his career that found him working for multiple right-wing foundations. After briefly working for a magazine called *Prospect*, the Heritage Foundation hired D'Souza to edit its flagship publication, *Policy Review*.¹⁸ The Heritage Foundation bills itself as the "the most influential conservative group in America," while others view it as a "well-oiled propaganda machine."¹⁹ D'Souza would go on to work for similar right-wing policy foundations, including the American Enterprise Institute and the Hoover Institution.²⁰ Between 1987 and 1988, D'Souza worked as a domestic policy analyst for the Reagan White House.²¹

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Convicted Felon for Violating Election Laws

D'Souza spearheaded an attempt to circumvent federal election laws that resulted in a felony conviction. He made payments to two couples to reimburse them for donations made to Wendy Long, who ran as a Republican against U.S. Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) in 2012.²² Long attended Dartmouth with D'Souza and worked with him on the *Dartmouth Review*.²³ D'Souza funneled \$20,000 in contributions from him through the four other people.²⁴ Campaign law allowed individuals to contribute \$5,000 to a candidate.²⁵

D'Souza was caught and indicted. He pled guilty to one count of violating federal election laws.²⁶ Prosecutors pushed for D'Souza to spend 10-16 months in federal prison; however, the judge sentenced him to five years of probation, eight months living in a halfway house, and a fine of \$30,000.²⁷ Throughout the case, D'Souza argued he was being selectively prosecuted by the Obama Administration because of his political views. The judge took issue with the claim, saying it was “nonsense” and such comments were “self-destructive.”²⁸ D'Souza's release from the halfway house happened in May 2015.²⁹

Right-wing media outlets treated D'Souza as a political prisoner persecuted by the Obama Administration. Rush Limbaugh claimed the case was proof that Obama's Justice Department was “trying to criminalize as many Republicans and conservatives as they can.”³⁰ Laura Ingraham claimed Obama was “criminalizing political dissent.”³¹ Extremist [Alex Jones](#) said D'Souza's trial was like something out of Nazi Germany.³²

Transitioning from “Intellectual” to Conspiracy Mongering

During his early career, D'Souza worked for right-wing think tanks viewed as credible, and his books were often considered provocative but well-received in mainstream academic circles. That seemed to change around 2007 with the publication of his book *The Enemy at Home*, which argued that Islamic terrorism was justified due to America's abandonment of morality.³³ Numerous media profiles document D'Souza's descent into hyperbolic conspiracy mongering. One such profile stated he went from a “star in the conservative intellectual world” to a “bomb-throwing filmmaker.”³⁴

Even if the fracture with mainstream conservatives started around 2007, its roots go back further. Throughout his professional career, D'Souza has pushed the boundaries of acceptability when it came to issues of race, frequently espousing viewpoints that lined up with the white supremacist and white nationalist movements. However, since D'Souza is a person of color, one media profile noted that his ideas weren't dismissed as those of a racist.³⁵

A case in point was his 1995 book *The End of Racism*. He wrote that slaves were treated “pretty well,” because they were treated like property. This promotes a white nationalist form of historical revisionism that frames white Southern plantation owners as benevolent masters.³⁶ D'Souza also claimed that segregation helped “protect blacks.”³⁷ He also stated that racial discrimination against African-Americans is due to their “destructive and pathological cultural patterns of behavior” which he identified as characteristics like relying on government assistance, “resistance to academic achievement,” celebrating criminality, and the “normalization of illegitimacy and dependency.”³⁸ Finally, D'Souza asserted that African-Americans were

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currently subjected to “rational discrimination” due to “black cultural pathology.”³⁹ *The Atlantic* noted that many viewed such statements in *The End of Racism* as “a dog whistle to the David Dukes of America.”⁴⁰

In 2012, D’Souza began his career in filmmaking by producing *Obama’s America*, which was the first in a trilogy of films promoting rabid conspiracy theories about the political left. The films were generally based on one of his books and marketed as documentaries. *U.S. News and World Report* noted that all his films are “blame-the-liberals-movies” that come out every two years to coincide with national elections.⁴¹ These political hit pieces became high-grossing films at the box office.

D’Souza described his film *Obama’s America* as outlining that “Obama’s agenda was in fact inherited from his father who harbored anti-colonial hatred toward the West,” one of D’Souza’s frequent claims.⁴² Along the same vein, the film claimed President Obama was driven by a “Third-World anti-American” viewpoint that led him to be “weirdly sympathetic to Muslim Jihadis.”⁴³ A few years after the film’s release, D’Souza told right-wing media personality Glenn Beck that it helped show Americans that Obama wanted to “see the shrinking of American prosperity and power.”⁴⁴

When Barack Obama was president, he was a frequent target of D’Souza’s attacks. In his 2010 book *The Roots of Obama’s Rage*, D’Souza repeated his claim that President Obama was driven by an “anti-colonial” ideology that he inherited from his father and that drove him to try and dismantle America.⁴⁵ Media Matters declared the book “takes Obama to account for the crime of being born to an African father.”⁴⁶ D’Souza’s hatred of Obama’s father continued. During the Ebola outbreaks of 2014 in Africa, D’Souza compared Obama’s father to the disease.⁴⁷ On Facebook, he questioned, “Which is a more dangerous infection: #Ebola, or the dreams from his father?”⁴⁸

When responding to President Obama releasing a video about the Affordable Care Act in 2015, D’Souza tweeted “YOU CAN TAKE THE BOY OUT OF THE GHETTO...” and said people could “watch this vulgar man show his stuff.”⁴⁹ D’Souza also accused President Obama of “actively supporting” terrorist attacks by “radical Muslims.”⁵⁰ He also claimed that President Obama was denying justice to white people.⁵¹ After Obama left office, D’Souza shared a meme on social media that called the former president a “gay Muslim” and Michelle Obama a man.⁵²

The film *America: Imagine the World without Her* came out in 2014. D’Souza used the film to combat what he believes are false narratives about American history, including “the theft of Native American and Mexican lands and exploitation of African labor,” because those historical realities distract from “the essential goodness of America.”⁵³ In the book by the same name, he asserted that African-Americans were better off due to slavery, saying today’s African-Americans are “better off as a consequence of their ancestors being hauled from Africa to America.”⁵⁴ D’Souza also excused the mistreatment of American Indians since their descendants have built resorts and casinos.⁵⁵

Hillary’s America came out in 2016, while Hillary Clinton was running for president. The film claims to tell the “secret history of the Democratic Party,” which according to D’Souza includes a history of slavery, genocide, theft, and murder.⁵⁶ One reviewer said the film’s general premise was that “if something bad happened in

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America in the last 200 years, the Democrats did it.”⁵⁷ D’Souza claims that *Hillary’s America* is “widely credited with contributing to Hillary Clinton’s defeat.”⁵⁸

In creating his narratives, D’Souza handpicks facts and ignores important historical and political developments. For instance, D’Souza makes no distinction between the current Democratic and Republican Parties, and how they existed in the 1800s and 1900s. Most of his arguments rely on the two parties being exactly the same. While the Democrats were pro-slavery and pro-segregation early in the country’s history, the two major parties basically switched their views on race during the 1960s.⁵⁹

The Political Left are Nazis

D’Souza’s most recent book is *The Big Lie: Exposing the Nazi Roots of the American Left*. On his website, D’Souza claims his book “expertly exonerates President Trump and his supporters, then uncovers the Democratic Left’s long, cozy relationship with Nazism.”⁶⁰ This forms the basis of his latest efforts to capture the political right’s imagination with false history and grand conspiracy theories. He’s currently touring the country giving various versions of the same stump speech – liberals are Nazis. Not surprisingly, D’Souza’s Facebook feed is full of posts reinforcing his theory, including:

- “FACT: The Democrats have an ideology virtually identical with fascism and routinely borrow tactics of political terror from the Nazi Brownshirts.”⁶¹
- “Hitler got some of his most maniacal ideas from the American Left.”⁶²
- “In both form and substance, Leftists are the real fascists in America today.”⁶³

His current book builds on the false narrative of history found in his previous published works. While he previously tried to connect the current Democratic Party to slavery and segregation, he now does it with Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party. It also appears that part of his tactical approach is using this argument to try and isolate President Trump and his administration from charges that it promotes racist and white nationalist policies.

Following the 2017 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, that resulted in the death of one anti-racist protestor, President Trump faced criticism for not condemning white supremacists and white nationalists. Instead he claimed there were troubling people on both sides.⁶⁴ D’Souza came to the president’s defense, agreeing with Trump that there were was a “fascist streak” running through both sides at the rally.⁶⁵ D’Souza also claimed the organizer of the rally was a “left-wing fascist.”⁶⁶ He promoted the baseless theory that the rally was “staged to feed the mainstream media’s big lie that racism and fascism are on the right.”⁶⁷

D’Souza also claimed that Trump couldn’t be pushing white nationalism, because “the whole concept of ethnic nationalism is a left-wing idea.”⁶⁸ He has stated the Democratic Party has “more of a fascist ideology” than “anything you see in the Republican Party.”⁶⁹ He further claimed that the Democratic Party had originally created white nationalism, but then he blamed the modern Democratic Party for encouraging “every form of ethnic nationalism except white nationalism,” since the party supports people of color seeking equal rights.⁷⁰ He lamented that “the white guy is not welcome at the multicultural picnic.”⁷¹ Overall, he has castigated the Democratic Party for trying to “create a national shaming of the right” by shifting blame to Republicans and President Trump.⁷²

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Conclusion

Dinesh D'Souza has made a career out of using dog whistle racism and other offensive rhetoric to build his public persona and line his own wallet. His latest attempt, around claiming that liberals are the real Nazis based on his inaccurate version of history, tries to help the current presidential administration dodge accountability for its white nationalist policies. D'Souza travels the country promoting fear, scapegoating, and bigotry. His message does nothing to bring communities together. Instead, all it leads to is more divisiveness.

"There is enough political toxicity coming out of Washington D.C. these days," says Carroll Rivas. "We need to be striving for real solutions at the local level. D'Souza and his brand of harmful 'alternative facts' offer nothing to help our communities work together. We hope residents of the Flathead Valley will see through this partisan pandering and reject D'Souza's divisiveness."

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