

Chapter 1

Donors to the Islamophobia network

A small group of conservative foundations and wealthy donors are the lifeblood of the Islamophobia network in America. They provide critical funding to a clutch of right-wing think tanks and misinformation experts who peddle hate and fear of Muslims and Islam—in the form of books, reports, websites, blogs, and carefully crafted talking points, which dedicated anti-Islam grassroots organizations and some right-wing religious groups use as propaganda for their constituency. These foundations and wealthy donors also provide direct funding to anti-Islam grassroots groups.

In this chapter of our report, we examine the top seven foundations and their principal backers who fund these Islamophobia groups. We then detail which of these groups receive this flood of cash to propagate their anti-Islam, anti-Muslim misinformation campaigns. Sometimes the money flowing from these foundations and their donors is clearly designed to promote Islamophobia, but more often the support provided is for general purpose use, which the think tanks and grassroots organizations then put to use on their primary purpose—spreading their messages of hate and fear as far and wide as they can. It is possible that some of these donors and foundations, who spend millions improving child health and creating a more equal society, have no knowledge of the hateful and inaccurate propaganda generated with their money.

Whether by design or by accident, the top seven philanthropic foundations we profile in this chapter are providing outsized support to a small but very vocal group of Islamophobic groups in our nation—groups that use their money to spread a deliberately misleading message about Islam and Muslims that is fundamentally antithetical to our nation’s founding principles of religious freedom, inclusivity, and pluralism.

According to our extensive analysis, here are the top seven contributors to promoting Islamophobia in our country:

- Donors Capital Fund
- Richard Mellon Scaife foundations
- Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation
- Newton D. & Rochelle F. Becker foundations and charitable trust
- Russell Berrie Foundation
- Anchorage Charitable Fund and William Rosenwald Family Fund
- Fairbrook Foundation

The financial information on these foundations is from 2001 and 2009, the last year for which complete information is available, with some of the financial information gathered accounting for only the more recent of those years and other information only available through 2008. We gathered this information from publicly available documents filed by the foundations with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. The most recent of these forms, known as 990s, are cited in this report so that readers can find their way to all of the documents.

The top seven funders of Islamophobia

A list of the seven largest donors to think tanks and organizations in the United States identified by the Center for American Progress as anti-Islam and anti-Muslim

	Investigative Project on Terrorism	CTSERF	Middle East Forum	CSP	
Donors Capital Fund	\$400,000		\$2,300,000		
Richard Mellon Scaife foundations		\$1,575,000		\$2,900,000	
Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation			\$305,000	\$815,000	
Newton D. & Rochelle F. Becker foundations and charitable trust	\$25,000	\$200,000	\$355,000	\$405,000	
Russell Berrie Foundation	\$100,000	\$2,736,000	\$273,016.22		
Anchorage Charitable Foundation and William Rosenwald Family Fund	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$2,320,229.33	\$437,000	
Fairbrook Foundation	\$25,000		\$410,000	\$66,700	
Total	\$560,000	\$4,526,000	\$5,963,246	\$4,623,700	

Source: CAP research based on the seven foundations' Form 990s files with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service from 2001 to 2009.

Some of these organizations are donors to conservative causes in general, such as the Richard Mellon Scaife foundations and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. In 2009, for example, Richard Mellon Scaife’s Sarah Scaife Foundation contributed \$550,000 to the conservative American Enterprise Institute,¹ and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation sent \$4.45 million to the Federalist Society.²

Some provide philanthropic support to important efforts to protect equality and religious freedom. Take the Russell Berrie Foundation. It provided grants in 2009 totaling \$145,000 to the New Israel Fund—an organization that promotes “equality for all the citizens of [Israel] regardless of religion, national origin, race, gender or sexual orientation.”³ But others, such as the Donors Capital Fund, are clearly dedicated to funneling large sums of money to right-wing, and in many cases Islamophobic, organizations.

Here are the top seven foundations, ranked according to the amount of funding provided to this network, beginning with the Donors Capital Fund.

	Clarion Fund	Jihad Watch	David Horowitz Freedom Center	American Congress for Truth	Total
	\$18,053,600		\$15,000		\$20,768,600
			\$3,400,000		\$7,875,000
			\$4,250,000		\$5,370,000
	\$15,000		\$86,000	\$50,000	\$1,136,000
					\$3,109,016
	\$25,000		\$11,000		\$2,818,229
		\$253,250	\$618,500	\$125,000	\$1,498,450
	\$18,093,600	\$253,250	\$8,380,500	\$175,000	\$42,575,296

Donors Capital Fund

Donors Capital Fund is a 501(c)(3), 509(a)(3) supporting organization associated with DonorsTrust, a so-called “donor-advised fund” that disburses money based on the directions of a donor. Since the fund handles money from multiple donors and donors names aren’t disclosed, contributions made through the Donors Capital Fund are difficult to trace. Potential donors are required to open a minimum \$1 million account to utilize the fund’s services.⁴

The Donors Capital Fund facilitates philanthropic contributions to “a class of public charities firmly committed to liberty” and charities that “[promote] private initiatives rather than government programs as the solution to the most pressing issues of the day.”⁵ The board of Donors Capital Fund has several well-known conservatives. The chair is Adam Meyerson, the president of the Philanthropy Roundtable, a national association of individual donors and trustees.

In addition, it includes Senior Fellow Christopher DeMuth of the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington, D.C., think tank with a history of fostering an aggressive U.S. foreign policy, and his colleague AEI Weyerhauser Fellow Steven Hayward. Other board members include: Acton Institute (a conservative Christian think tank) Executive Director Kris Alan Mauren; Institute for Justice (a libertarian public interest law firm) President William H. Mellor; conservative economist and *Wall Street Journal* editorial page columnist Stephen Moore; and Heritage Foundation Vice President John A. Von Kannon, representing the top conservative think tank in the country.⁶

In 2009, Donors Capital Fund provided nearly \$60 million in contributions to a variety of mainstream conservative groups, none of which are Islamophobic. Donations included: the American Enterprise Institute (\$2.7 million); the anti-regulatory Americans for Prosperity Foundation (\$1.1 million); the Sam Adams Alliance, which seeks to “raise awareness of free market principles and policy” (\$3.2 million);⁷ the Heartland Institute, an advocate of free-market principles and partner with cigarette maker Philip Morris (\$2.2 million);⁸ the State Policy Network, a network of free market-oriented think tanks (\$2.6 million); and the Federalist Society, a conservative organization that promotes an originalist interpretation of the Constitution (\$1.3 million).

The Donors Capital Fund makes our top seven list of contributors in this report because it contributed \$21,318,600 to groups promoting Islamophobia from 2007 to 2009. These funds went to the Middle East Forum, Clarion Fund, Investigative Project on Terrorism, and the David Horowitz Freedom Center.

Donors Capital is most famous for contributing more than \$17 million to the Clarion Fund in 2008, the largest recipient of Donors Capital's largesse "by a large margin," according to CounterPunch's Pam Marten.⁹ Indeed, Donors Capital Fund's contributions made up 96 percent of all the funding Clarion Fund received that year.¹⁰ That \$17 million, provided by a single anonymous source (who is alleged to be Chicago businessman Barre Seid, according to the website Salon.com¹¹), helped pay for a DVD the Clarion Fund distributed, "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West," to more than 28 million swing-state voters before the 2008 presidential election.¹²

And that DVD, says the Florida Security Council's director Tom Trento, who helped distribute the film in 2008, is "the single most powerful piece of media over the past five years in persuading average Americans to the Islamist threat."¹³ In the subsequent chapters of this report, we'll demonstrate just how accurate Trento's observation is.

Reached for comment, a Donors Capital Fund executive said DFC was established to promote liberty and so long as recommended groups are IRS-approved charities eligible for grants then DFC will honor account advisor recommendations.

Richard Mellon Scaife foundations

Richard M. Scaife is the billionaire "funding father of the right" who contributes to numerous mainstream conservative causes, think tanks, foundations, and advocacy groups through three foundations: the Sarah Scaife, the Carthage, and the Allegheny.¹⁴ He is the principal heir to the Mellon family banking, oil, and aluminum fortune, with an estimated worth of \$1.2 billion. He is ranked 993 on *Forbes* magazine's list of billionaires.¹⁵

Scaife is currently the chairman of his three foundations. Michael W. Gleba, a Pittsburgh attorney, is the president of the Sarah Scaife Foundation and treasurer for the Carthage Foundation. Scaife maintains close ties to the Heritage

Foundation in his capacity as the vice chairman of the conservative think tank.¹⁶ Heritage president Edwin Feulner serves as a trustee for the Sarah Scaife Foundation, according to its latest tax filings. In 2009, the Sarah Scaife Foundation contributed \$550,000 to the conservative American Enterprise Institute; \$125,000 to the hawkish American Foreign Policy Council; and \$40,000 to *Commentary*, a neoconservative magazine and online publication.¹⁷

Between 2001 and 2009, Richard Mellon Scaife's foundations contributed \$7,875,000 to Islamophobic groups profiled in this report. Among the recipients were the Center for Security Policy (\$2,900,000), the Counterterrorism & Security Education and Research Foundation (\$1,575,000), and the David Horowitz Freedom Center (\$3,400,000).¹⁸

The Richard Mellon Scaife foundations did not respond to requests for comment by time of publication.

Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation

The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation serves as a legacy for two brothers, Lynde and Harry Bradley, co-founders of the Allen-Bradley Company, a manufacturer of factory automation equipment.¹⁹ The Bradley Foundation is an established supporter of conservative causes. Its programs “support limited, competent government; a dynamic marketplace for economic, intellectual, and cultural activity; and a vigorous defense, at home and abroad, of American ideas and institutions,” according to the foundation's website.²⁰

The Bradley Foundation has contributed millions of dollars to mainstream conservative think tanks and groups that are not Islamophobic, including the Cato Institute, the Federalist Society, the Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institution, the Institute for American Values, and the Hudson Institute, to name a few.²¹ Between 2000 and 2005 the foundation also contributed more than \$1.2 million to the Project for the New American Century, a highly influential think tank during the George W. Bush administration that helped develop his military and foreign policy.²²

The Bradley Foundation's board comprises well-known conservatives and some lesser-known names, including columnist George Will; Terry Considine, chief executive of AIMCO Apartment Homes, who serves as the foundation's chairman; David V. Uihlein, president of Uihlein-Wilson Architects; Michael W. Grebe, the foundation's president and chief executive officer; Princeton University Professor Robert

P. George, whom *The New York Times* describes as “this country’s most influential conservative Christian thinker;”²³ Marshall & Ilsley Corporation Chairman Dennis J. Kuester; Wausau-Mosinee Paper Corporation Chairman San W. Orr Jr.; attorney Thomas L. Smallwood; and the president of Milwaukee’s Messmer Catholic Schools, Brother Bob Smith.²⁴

The Bradley Foundation from 2001 to 2009 provided \$5,370,000 in funding to the Islamophobia network. These funds went to the Middle East Forum (\$305,000), the Center for Security Policy (\$815,000), and the David Horowitz Freedom Center (\$4,250,000).²⁵ The Bradley Foundation, however, also supports organizations that seek to explain mainstream Islamic thoughts and values. The foundation, for example, provides funding to the American Islamic Conference, an organization that began for the purpose of “promoting tolerance and the exchange of ideas among Muslims and between other peoples.”²⁶

The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation did not respond to requests for comment by time of publication.

Newton D. & Rochelle F. Becker Foundation, Newton and Rochelle Becker Family Foundation, and Newton and Rochelle Becker Charitable Trust

In 1957, Newton Becker founded the Becker CPA Review, which helps students prepare for the CPA exam. In 1996, the Becker CPA Review was acquired by DeVry Inc. for \$18,421,000 plus \$17,935,000 for its copyrights and intellectual property.²⁷ Becker also is a founding investor and chairman of Luz International, a company that manufactured solar power plants and had research and manufacturing facilities in Israel²⁸ until its dissolution in 1992 and the loss of its entire \$45 million in funding.²⁹

The Newton D. & Rochelle F. Becker Foundation’s tax filings describe its mission statement as conducting philanthropy “directed to the Jewish community, particularly Jewish organizations and programs that combat media bias against Israel and the Jewish people, Israel advocacy, and democracy defense.”³⁰ Board members of the foundation include Newton Becker, board president; Marvin Schotland, president of the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles;³¹ Rochelle Becker, Newton Becker’s wife; Allan Cutrow, former president of the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles;³² Mark Karlan, a member of the advisory board for the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles;³³ David Becker, Newton and Rochelle’s son; Michael Januzik, a senior

vice president at the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles;³⁴ and Fay Althausen, an account executive at the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles.³⁵ Board members of the trust include David Becker, the executive director, and Rochelle Becker.³⁶

In addition to important educational and cultural projects, the Becker Foundation, Becker Family Foundation, and Becker Trust, between 2001 and 2009 together contributed \$1,136,000 to Islamophobic organizations examined in subsequent pages of this report. Among the recipients: the Investigative Project on Terrorism (\$25,000), the Counterterrorism & Security Education and Research Foundation (\$200,000), the Middle East Forum (\$355,000), the Center for Security Policy (\$405,000), the Clarion Fund (\$15,000), the David Horowitz Freedom Center (\$86,000), and Act! For America (\$50,000).³⁷

The Newton D. & Rochelle F. Becker foundations and charitable trusts did not respond to requests for comment by time of publication.

Russell Berrie Foundation

The Russell Berrie Foundation was created in 1985 by the late multimillionaire Russell Berrie, who made his fortune in the stuffed animal and toy business and was named in 1998 as one of the 40 most generous Americans by *Fortune* magazine.³⁸ Berrie died in 2002. The Berrie Foundation board includes Angelica Berrie, the wife of Russell Berrie,³⁹ Myron Rosner, an attorney in New Jersey; and Scott Berrie, the son of Russell Berrie.⁴⁰

The goal of the Russell Berrie Foundation is to “promote the continuity and enrichment of Jewish communal life,” foster “the spirit of religious understanding and pluralism,” and to raise “the awareness of terrorism.”⁴¹

The Russell Berrie Foundation funds a large number of mainstream Jewish and Israeli charities that are not Islamophobic. Grants in 2009 included \$10,000 to Israel Documentaries for Education; \$291,000 to Rutgers Hillel; and \$5,330,000 to American Society for Technion, which supports the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology.⁴²

Along with the important philanthropic work listed above, the Russell Berrie Foundation contributed \$3,109,016 between 2001 and 2009 to organizations engaging in anti-Muslim work profiled in this report. Among the recipients: the

Counterterrorism & Security Education and Research Foundation, receiving \$2,736,000; the Investigative Project on Terrorism (\$100,000); and the Middle East Forum (\$273,016.22).⁴³

The Russell Berrie Foundation did not respond to requests for comment by time of publication.

Anchorage Charitable Fund and William Rosenwald Family Fund

David Steinmann, a director at American Securities Management, and Elizabeth Varet, the chairwoman of American Securities Management and a granddaughter of Sears Roebuck founder Julius Rosenwald, both serve as trustees for the Anchorage Charitable Fund and the William Rosenwald Family Fund. Steinmann also is a board member on Frank Gaffney’s Center for Security Policy and Daniel Pipes’s Middle East Forum.

Additional board members of the Anchorage Charitable Fund include Michael A. Varet, Sarah R. Varet, David R. Varet, and Joseph R. Varet.

The Anchorage Fund contributed tens of thousands of dollars to mainstream conservative institutions such as the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a nonpartisan policy institute; the Hoover Institution; the Hudson Institute; the American Enterprise Institute; and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.⁴⁶

Between 2001 and 2008, the Anchorage Charitable Fund and William Rosenwald Family Fund contributed \$2,818,229 to Islamophobic organizations. Among the donations: \$2,320,229.33 to the Middle East Forum; \$437,000 to the Center for Security Policy; \$25,000 to the Clarion Fund; \$15,000 to the Counterterrorism & Security Education and Research Foundation; \$11,000 to the David Horowitz Freedom Center; and \$10,000 to the Investigative Project on Terrorism. The Rosenwald Family Fund also contributed to the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, one of the think tanks profiled in this report because the head of it, Zuhdi Jasser, is often tapped by the Islamophobe network as a validator of their views on Islam and Muslims in America.⁴⁷

We should note that in the 2008 tax year, the Anchorage Fund “suffered a complete loss of its investment through PJ Administrator LLC,” according to its 2008 tax filings.⁴⁸ PJ Administrator is listed as a client of Bernie Madoff,⁴⁹ who was

exposed in 2008 as running an elaborate Ponzi scheme. Charitable contributions from both funds have significantly declined since 2008.

The Anchorage Charitable Fund and the William Rosenwald Family Fund did not respond to requests for comment by time of publication.

Fairbrook Foundation

The Fairbrook Foundation, an affiliate of the California Community Foundation, is controlled by Aubrey and Joyce Chernick.⁵⁰ Aubrey Chernick is a Los Angeles-based software engineer whose net worth is estimated to be \$750 million,⁵¹ due in large part to selling his software company to IBM Corp. in 2004.⁵² In 2002⁵³ he founded the security firm National Center for Crisis and Continuity Coordination.

Aubrey Chernick is president and chairman of the Fairbrook Foundation board. Joyce Chernick serves as vice chair. In 2009, the last year for which we have complete financial information, the Fairbrook Foundation provided tens of thousands of dollars to mainstream conservative foundations that are not Islamophobic, such as the Hudson Institute and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.⁵⁴

Between 2004 and 2009, the Fairbrook Foundation contributed \$1,498,450 to Islamophobic organizations profiled in this report. Among the recipients: ACT! For America, receiving \$125,000; the Center for Security Policy (\$66,700); the David Horowitz Freedom Center (\$618,500); the Investigative Project on Terrorism, (\$25,000); Jihad Watch (\$253,250); and the Middle East Forum (\$410,000).⁵⁵ Importantly, the foundation provided the majority of the \$920,000 in support going from the David Horowitz Freedom Center to Robert Spencer's Jihad Watch, according to *Politico*.⁵⁶

Separate from the Fairbrook Foundation, Aubrey Chernick is a trustee of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy⁵⁷ and helped provide the \$3.5 million⁵⁸ in initial capital to start the conservative blog Pajamas Media, which used its online platform to oppose the Park51 community center in New York City.⁵⁹

Reached for comment, a Fairbrook executive said it is the foundation's policy not to comment on inquiries regarding donor grants beyond noting that the foundation is a tax-exempt public charity.

The importance of this charitable giving to the Islamophobia network

Altogether, these seven charitable groups provided \$42.6 million in total to Islamophobic think tanks between 2001 and 2009—funding that supports the misinformation scholars and experts that are the subject of our next chapter as well as some of the grassroots groups, which are the subject of Chapter 3 of our report. The importance of this funding cannot be overstated. This money enables a very small and tight-knit group of radical right-wing scholars, experts, and grassroots organizers to craft and share reams of misinformation about Islam and American Muslims.

This enables them to mutually reference each other’s highly inaccurate or purposively deceptive material as facts and then subsequently disseminate it to other grassroots groups and politicians through right-wing media outlets. We look at those media outlets in Chapter 4 of our report, and then examine how some right-wing politicians, including several Republican Party presidential candidates, use these media outlets and grassroots groups to support their Islamophobic political rhetoric in search of political donations and voters.

Endnotes

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