FROM THE PRESIDENT

In PRA’s 20 years of monitoring and analyzing the US political Right, we have not seen a more dangerous period for democracy and for progressive values. The movement that began in the 1970s with the rebirth of the Old Right as the New Right, played a role in electing Ronald Reagan, and launched a self-styled “revolution,” has now achieved its stated goal. The Right dominates the Republican Party, and now has the ability not simply to complete the Reagan agenda but to go far beyond it.

When PRA opened its doors in 1981, our goal was to explain to doubting progressives that the New Right was a dangerous movement that must be taken seriously. We urged progressives not to caricature the followers of right-wing organizations and to appreciate the shrewd strategic abilities of the movement’s leadership. Throughout the Right’s subsequent ups and downs, defeats and victories, apparent dips and overreaching self-congratulation, those original observations have withstood the test of time.

Because we wanted the public to understand the connections between the Far Right and the electoral Right, we took on the enormous task of studying, analyzing, and publishing on the entire spectrum of the Right. In the early 1980s we saw a bright line between the Republican Party’s right wing and the paramilitary Far Right, such as the KKK, Christian Identity and the Posse Comitatus. But the growing power of the Right in the electoral sphere created an opening for the ideas of the Far Right to begin a steady creep into state legislative chambers across the country and ultimately into the Congress. The vehement anti-government rhetoric of the militias was no longer so distinguishable from the rhetoric of right-wing politicians.

The work we do at PRA can be infuriating. Trying to truly understand our political enemies is a daily challenge. During my 20 years at PRA, there have been moments when that challenge seemed overwhelming, and many more moments when I have been thankful for the opportunity to play a role in the all-important resistance that people of good will must continue to mount. At this time, in the beginning of the 21st century, we can do no less. We ask you to please join us in our work to simultaneously defeat the Right and build the progressive movement.

Jean Hardisty

PRA Through the Years

1981 Founded in Chicago as Midwest Research, with a staff of three.

1982 Midwest Research produces two posters emphasizing the broad spectrum of right-wing violence.

1983 Researcher Chip Berlet appears live on the NBC Today Show discussing the Posse Comitatus recruiting in the beleaguered farm belt.

1984 Berlet is named as a defendant in a defamation lawsuit brought by Lyndon LaRouche against NBC News and others. In response to the New Right’s “pro-family” movement, Midwest Research publishes its first monograph, Nostalgia on the Right: Historical Roots of the Idealized Family, by historian Nancy Theriot.

Jean Hardisty
FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Dear Friends of PRA,

“May we rise to the challenge to struggle for our rights. Come what will or may and let us never falter.” A magnet holds this quotation posted on my refrigerator door. Daily, A. Philip Randolph, labor leader extraordinaire, founder and president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, speaks to me in words as timely today as they were in the 1940s. The challenge is before us.

There are no quick fixes. It’s ironic now to recall the pundits expounding on how dull the 2000 presidential elections would be, and how Al Gore and George W. Bush had the same agenda. Now, more and more people recognized how insidious are the coded wedge messages that appeal to fears and to narrow definitions of “us” and “them”. Those of us working for an equitable future must equip ourselves for the hard work ahead. One of the challenges is to cut through public cynicism about what is possible and what is not.

PRA helps us maintain our center rooted in justice. The Public Eye, Chip Berlet’s new book Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close For Comfort (Guilford 2000), the Activist Resource Kits, Jean Hardisty’s award-winning analysis in Mobilizing Resentment (Beacon 1999)—in the midst of all this, PRA faced rising rent costs and searched for near-illusive affordable office space in the Greater Boston area. Finally, in November 2000, PRA found its current space. Staffers pulled together resiliently through all the chaotic twists and turns of moving an office and a huge research library from one place to another.

So, in a new location, with expanded staff and strengthened research and analysis capacity, PRA’s priorities remain clear: illuminating analysis. The organization is in stellar shape, thanks to the support of many of you. This annual report shares some of what has been happening. Clear and meticulous work is more needed than ever in monitoring the inroads from the Right. The rollback mounts on hard-won gains from people’s movements from the past decades. The challenge is before us to counter the backlash to civil and human rights progress for all—including the Right’s challenge to feminism, welfare rights, and GLBT movements. A. Philip Randolph, architect of the March on Washington Movement in the 1940s that led a federal role in fair employment practices, spurs me on. In the face of injustice, hope lies in the struggles for the well being of all people. Let us continue to inform ourselves for the coming challenges.

Welcome to the PRA 20th Anniversary report,

Loretta J. Williams
Chair, Board of Directors
Political Research Associates
**UNDERSTAND**

Since the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, the US political Right has become the dominant force in American politics. It leaders, by strategically focusing on message-promotion and movement-building, have mobilized a large and well-disciplined constituency on behalf of a reactionary and regressive agenda. Its many political victories include rolling back the gains of the civil rights movement, the women’s movement and the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender movement. By promoting the themes of family values, personal responsibility, and an unfettered free market, it has moved the political center markedly to the right. After achieving all this, the Right has strengthened its capacity by focusing on institution-building at the state and local levels.

Recently, under increasing criticism for intolerance and mean-spiritedness, many rightist organizations have adopted a softer tone. “Diversity” and “inclusion” are often promoted as part of the Right’s agenda. Indeed, so long as an applicant promotes the Right’s message, even those whose interests the Right opposes can achieve membership. “Ex-gay” ministries court gay men, Black conservatives recruit in the African American community, and libertarian, anti-feminist women organize young women.

Meanwhile the Right continues its aggressive pursuit of a profoundly anti-democratic agenda, including ongoing campaigns against labor rights, public education, separation of church and state, immigrants’ rights, women’s rights, environmental safeguards, and affirmative action. Even as the Christian Right, a major force within the movement, vies with secular organizations for dominance within the movement, the two groups network and collaborate to achieve the larger agenda. The convergence of a Republican-dominated Congress, a conservative Supreme Court and the George W. Bush Administration assures the Right’s continuing impact, not just in Washington but also in state legislatures, city councils, and local school boards.
1994 PRA completes groundbreaking research on Christian Reconstructionism, an ultra-fundamentalist wing of the Christian Right that has been a factor behind increased violence in the anti-abortion movement.


1996 PRA Executive Director Jean Hardisty serves as an expert witness in the successful legal challenge to the anti-gay Amendment Two in Colorado.

1997 In the face of the right’s demonizing rhetoric about “welfare queens,” PRA publishes Decades of Distortion, by welfare policy and welfare law expert Lucy Williams. The report documents the Right’s strategic misidentification and stereotyping of those aided by public assistance.

1998 A PRA research report, Calculated Compassion, by research analyst Surina Khan, identifies the Christian Right “Ex-Gay” movement as another, apparently softer, attack on gay rights.

**CHALLENGE**

To challenge the Right, liberals and progressives need to respond energetically and creatively on all fronts by helping to defend and support those under attack, mobilize to insert a progressive voice in policy debates, and work to rebuild the base of a movement for progressive social change. An essential component of all these activities is clear, complete and accurate information about the Right—its strategies, networks, funding sources and agenda. In order to be effective, progressive activists, organizers, and elected officials must be grounded in a thorough understanding of the opposition.

For 20 years, Political Research Associates (PRA) has been helping to facilitate just such an understanding. An independent nonprofit research center, PRA monitors and analyzes the entire spectrum of the Right, from the right wing of the Republican Party to paramilitary organizations such as armed citizens’ militias. Every year thousands of activists contact PRA for information and advice, use our library and educational materials, search our website, and attend workshops and conferences where PRA researchers speak. In addition, PRA proactively engages and encourages the progressive community through publications that alert and inform activists, policy-makers, and the general public about current right-wing attacks on a range of issues and democratic ideals. Although truly a behind-the-scenes player, PRA is critical to the progressive movement by supporting those on the front line who spend much of their energy opposing a well-designed and fully-funded attack on democracy, diversity and pluralism.
SUPPORT

PRA has provided support to activists in nearly every political battle over the past two decades.

In recent years, as the Right has continued its assault on basic civil rights, PRA has sought to unmask these attacks. In 1996, PRA President (then Executive Director) Jean Hardisty served as an expert witness in the successful legal challenge to the anti-gay Amendment Two in Colorado. In 1997, in the face of the Right’s demonizing rhetoric about “welfare queens,” PRA published *Decades of Distortion*, a report that documented the Right’s strategic and purposeful demonizing and stereotyping of those aided by public assistance. When the Christian Right developed the “Ex-Gay” movement to bring “hope and healing to homosexuals who want to become straight,” a 1998 PRA research report, *Calculated Compassion*, unmasked the movement’s roots and ideology as another, seemingly softer, attack on gay rights. And in 1999, as rightist national and state-level think tanks worked to promote public school privatization, denounce bilingual education, and attack programs that teach tolerance, PRA produced and distributed *Defending Public Education*, a resource kit that details the organizations and ideology behind these “reform” movements. This is just some of the recent work PRA has done to help activists, journalists, educators, policy-makers, and the public become aware of and challenge the misleading messages and divisive agenda of the Right.
Research and Publications

Research into all aspects of the Right is ongoing at PRA. By combing right-wing and alternative publications, the mainstream and progressive press, and websites where Rightists exchange information and ideas, PRA stays in tune with the Right’s movements and thoughts. Every day PRA receives direct mail, email, and newsletters from a vast array of right-wing organizations and leaders, all containing information that helps to sharpen and confirm our analysis. PRA staff also regularly attend conferences held by right-wing organizations to experience first hand how issues are being framed and strategies discussed within the Right. In addition, PRA regularly works with a network of researchers, activists, journalists, and analysts who direct information and material to our office via electronic and regular mail.

PRA transforms much of its research into useful, easily accessible information, which is widely shared through a variety of means. This includes our website, research reports, Activist Resource Kits, books, and our periodical, The Public Eye. Each year we produce and distribute a resource catalog which describes the range of materials available from PRA.

PRA’s Activist Resource Kits offer comprehensive information on a variety of issues. This project, which began in 1997, has already produced three kits: Defending Public Education, Defending Reproductive Rights, and Defending Democracy. As these titles suggest, each kit is designed to provide activists and researchers with timely information on the Right’s attack in a specific area.

Defending Public Education clarifies the different proposals. It identifies, by name, groups trying to put public money in private hands.

—Tennessee teacher
Each kit includes an introductory overview article, details of the Right’s arguments and examples of progressive responses, primary and secondary source materials, and a list of progressive and right-wing groups involved with the issue. PRA works closely with other organizations and researchers to produce each kit. For example, in the case of *Defending Reproductive Rights*, PRA convened a group of activists before research for the kit began. This diverse group, which represented a range of experiences and perspectives within the reproductive rights and women’s health communities, included, among others, Meizhu Lui from Health Care for All, Catherine Ragsdale from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Byllye Avery from the National Black Women’s Health Project, and Marlene Fried from Hampshire College’s Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program. PRA also worked in collaboration with several educational organizations to produce *Defending Public Education* and continues to distribute this resource to individuals and organizations that are fighting school privatization proposals. In 2001, PRA will publish our fourth kit, focused on immigrants’ rights and the anti-immigrant backlash.

**PRA research reports** document and detail the Right’s attacks on democracy, diversity, and social justice activism. Our 1997 report, *Decades of Distortion*, documented the Right’s strategic attack on welfare recipients. This report, which was cited in several newspaper stories that focused on the human impact of welfare reform, demonstrated how the Right purposefully misrepresented the demographic profile of people on welfare, promoting an image of welfare recipients as single, African-American women with many children. Our 1998 report, *Calculated Compassion*, detailed the development of the Ex-Gay movement, and identified the Christian Right leaders behind this attack on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.
**The Public Eye**, PRA’s remarkably thorough and informative periodical, is distributed to over 1,000 subscribers and collaborators three times each year. Each issue features an in-depth article which often serves as an “early warning” to our readers, alerting them to issues and strategies that are emerging within the Right. Recent issues of *The Public Eye* have addressed the Right’s work in opposition to reproductive freedoms, its attack on feminism at the United Nations, and the current state of the Christian Right in the US.

Our website ([www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org)) contains thousands of pages of material and attracts almost 1,000 visitors each day. It is regularly updated with relevant information and is linked to dozens of websites operated by collaborating organizations. Users can browse our site to gain detailed information on a variety of topics ranging from right-wing populism to the impeachment of President Clinton. Or they can study one of our online publications and get an accurate referral to other sites and organizations that may help them. For those who need hardcopy materials, the PRA site allows online ordering of any of our reports, resource kits and back issues of *The Public Eye*.

— Loretta Ross
Center for Human Rights Education

Nikhil Aziz, Research Analyst and Editor of *The Public Eye*
Books written by PRA researchers are helping the public better understand the network and effect of right-wing organizations, movements, and leaders.

*Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence from the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers,* authored by PRA President Jean Hardisty and published by Beacon Press in 1999, details the formation of right-wing movements that oppose the expansion of rights for women, people of color, and l/g/b/t people. By exposing to a wider audience the political analysis that PRA has developed over the past two decades, *Mobilizing Resentment* helps progressives, liberals, and others realize the threat the Right poses to democracy and diversity while identifying lessons learned from their success.

*Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort,* co-authored by Senior Research Analyst Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, was published in 2000 by Guilford Press. This provocative book exposes the dangers to democracy posed by right-wing scapegoating and conspiracism, and places contemporary right-wing populism in historical context.

Both of these publications help to educate people about the Right, while steering activists, researchers, and journalists toward additional resources and information that PRA can provide.

Replacing simple condemnation with sober analysis, *Mobilizing Resentment* raises the troubling question: what can we learn from people we fear?

— Howard Zinn, author of *A People’s History of the United States*
Additional Resources

The PRA Library anchors all of the work we do. One of the most comprehensive collections on the political Right in the country, our library houses more than 10,000 books, periodicals, pamphlets, videos, and other primary and secondary source materials. As PRA strives to adhere to the rigorous standards of social science research, we use the library to inform and fact-check our own work. PRA staff regularly access the library documents to answer information inquiries, and visiting researchers hunt down important documentation which is often not available elsewhere. Those we have hosted include labor activists investigating right-wing campaigns, students looking into anti-democratic movements and trends, researchers and writers needing to document and strengthen their work, and legal professionals preparing for civil rights cases.

PRA provides speakers for conferences and special events to help inform the general public of the threat the Right poses to democratic principles and ideals. From large, national organizations to small, local community groups, PRA staff members offer essential informational support with a personal touch. To illustrate, in September 2000, PRA President Jean Hardisty spoke to one of the nation’s oldest civic groups, The Ford Hall Forum in Boston. Her talk, which was later broadcast on the local National Public Radio affiliate, focused on the organizations of the anti-feminist women’s movement, detailing their successful campaign to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment and their ongoing efforts to roll back the gains of the feminist women’s movement, especially women’s access to reproductive rights.

In addition, PRA staff are often invited to participate in workshops that include activists or media personnel. For example, Senior Research Analyst Chip Berlet is a regular participant in Z-magazine’s Media Training Workshop conducted each spring.
All editors have a story that got away, the one they wish they’d published in time. So it is with us. The first thing we thought of when we heard about the Oklahoma City bombing was, ‘It’s those Waco avengers that Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons were warning us about.’

Since late last year, Berlet and Lyons had been trying to interest us in a story on the dangers of the far-right militias. The authors had sent us a first draft, which we sent back, and they were in the process of revising it when the terrible explosion went off.

An Editorial in the June, 1995 issue of The Progressive magazine

Media Support

The Right is masterful at capitalizing on today’s hectic information flow by offering clever slogans and sound bites that oversimplify complex public policy issues. Through skillful marketing the Right uses misleading terms such as “parental rights” and “personal responsibility” to oppose movements and organizations that promote tolerance and equality. Unfortunately, these methods are often served by the public’s desire for easy-to-digest, quick-fix solutions.

By looking beneath the sound bites and slogans utilized by the Right, PRA facilitates a more accurate inspection of the Right’s distorted presentation of the issues and encourages greater public awareness of the true goals of the Right. Because PRA has earned a reputation among news media as a reliable information source on the political Right, today an ever-growing number of journalists contact PRA to help develop and check facts for their stories. The PRA office receives dozens of information requests each month from print and broadcast media. These requests come from outlets ranging from mainstream newspapers and magazines such as The New York Times, The Washington Post and Time magazine, to broadcast stations such as National Public Radio and ABC News, to progressive outlets such as The Nation, The Progressive, and Pacifica Radio.

Political Research Associates 2001-2002
20 Years of Progress

In 1981 PRA began its work as Midwest Research. Our 250 square foot office in downtown Chicago housed a staff of three and a couple of Tandy computers with 8” floppy disks. Our early operation managed on a budget of less than $80,000. It was six years before PRA was able to hire an additional researcher, then another, and eventually a development officer to help with the difficult job of fundraising. The gradual responsiveness of foundations and the crucial role of individual funders allowed PRA to continue to keep an eye on the Right while modestly developing its staff and research capacity. Today, PRA has a staff of nine. In October 2000 we moved to new office space in Somerville, Massachusetts. We now produce a yearly catalog of publications and operate on a $750,000 budget.

In our new home and with a greater capacity to fulfill our mission, PRA continues to work to understand the right-wing leaders and organizations of the new century. As the political Right maintains its strength, we remain committed to helping people cut through its rhetoric and interpret its agenda.

Staff

Nikhil Aziz, Research Analyst/Editor
Wendy Beauchamp, Information Specialist
Chip Berlet, Senior Research Analyst
Stephanie Clark, Office Manager
Kate Cloud, Director
Jean Hardisty, President
Richard Allen Jackson, Jr. Director of Development and Communications
Mitra Rastegar, Researcher
Pam Chamberlain, Consultant
Ana Perea, Consultant

I am involved with PRA because they are not paralyzed by change—instead they provide a thoughtful analysis of why we are where we are. They are steadfast in providing rhyme and reason for how the Right has systematically taken control of so many state houses and transformed those debates into our national psyche and then policy.

— Michael Chapman
PRA Board Member

Front row: Jean Hardisty, Pam Chamberlain, Ana Perea
Middle row: Stephanie Clark, Wendy Beauchamp, Kate Cloud, Mitra Rastegar
Back row: Chip Berlet, Richard Allen Jackson
Missing from picture: Nikhil Aziz
Board of Directors

Rev. Joe Agne
Director, Racial Justice Connection
White Plains, NY

Miguel Martínez Bustos
Executive Director, Agricultural Land-Based Training Association
San Francisco, CA

Michael Chapman
President, Chapman and Associates
Chicago, IL

Jean Entine, Clerk
Executive Director, Boston Women’s Fund
Boston, MA

Jean Hardisty
President, Political Research Associates
Somerville, MA

Michael Kozu
Community Organizer
Jamaica Plain, MA

Vivien Labaton
Third Wave Foundation
New York, NY

Mohan Sikka
Organizational Development Consultant
New York, NY

Faith Smith
President, Native American Educational Services College
Chicago, IL

Paul Watanabe
Co-Director, Institute for Asian American Studies
Boston, MA

Loretta Williams, Chair of the Board
Director, Gustavus Myers Center for Human Rights
Jamaica Plain, MA

Lucy A. Williams, Treasurer
Professor, Northeastern University School of Law
Boston, MA

My experience working at PRA greatly enhanced my ability to work for a better world. Activists on the ground need to be prepared to challenge the backlash that inevitably accompanies progressive social change. PRA helped me develop a nuanced understanding of the Right and continues to provide the backup support and information I need.

– Surina Khan, Executive Director, International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission (and former Research Analyst for PRA)
Financials

PRA currently derives approximately half of its income from private foundations and half from a base of over 500 loyal donors. While space limitations do not allow us to print a list of individual supporters, all of us at PRA wish to express our sincere gratitude to those that stand with us. Our work simply would not be possible without your support.

The following is a list of grantmaking institutions that have contributed to PRA in the past year. PRA is extremely grateful to these foundations—their Board members, staff and program officers. It should be noted that the majority of our foundation support is in the form of general and multi-year grants. These crucial grants allow us to dedicate most of our time to research and analysis while remaining flexible and responsive to the Right’s attacks on democracy and diversity.

- Anonymous Foundation
- Astraea Lesbian Action Foundation
- C.S. Fund
- Chambers Family Fund
- Nathan Cummings Foundation
- Gill Foundation
- Goldberg Foundation
- Albert A. List Foundation
- Ms. Foundation for Women
- Public Welfare Foundation
- Streisand Foundation
- San Francisco Foundation
- Tides Foundation / Pequod Fund
- Tides Foundation / Underdog Fund
- Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock
- Working Assets

- Brian Goldberg,
The Stephen A. and Diana L. Goldberg Foundation
# Financial Summary

Summary of PRA Financial Statement for FY2000 (January 1- December 31)

**Income**

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Grants and contributions</td>
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<td>Program revenue (sales of publications etc.)</td>
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<td>Interest and other</td>
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**Expenses**

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<td>General and administrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change in net assets $132,804

Net assets at beginning of year $566,857

Net assets at end of year $699,661

Audited Financial Statements prepared by Kenneth Freed and Company, CPA, Boston, MA.
Monitoring the Right’s campaigns of prejudice, paramilitarism and paranoia is dirty work, but someone’s got to do it. Fortunately for the rest of us, that ‘someone’ is PRA—a consistently reliable and accessible source of information and analysis. As a journalist and an activist, I turn to PRA again and again, and the response is always friendly, immediate, and right on-target.

— Barbara Ehrenreich
Independent Journalist