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Book Review

Crying Wolf – Hate Crime Hoaxes in America

by Laird Wilcox

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Any police officer will tell you that extra caution in jumping to conclusions is the normal practice when investigating unusual crimes, or those which suggest too obvious a solution without direct evidence.



The history of crime is replete with examples of murder, arson, and many other crimes, in which a false trail is laid by the perpetrator to confuse the police, often with some financial motive – for example a fraudulent insurance claim. It is a very easy matter for a property owner to set a building on fire after carefully painting a picture suggesting that the crime has been committed by others – perhaps a forged threatening letter. There are many other motives too which can provoke the staging of crimes in a manner which is deliberately misleading.

The recent history of 'hate crimes' in the United States is no exception, as Laird Wilcox's recent publication shows only too well. Wilcox's interest in the subject was aroused in 1988 when he learnt that a 'cross burning' during the 1960s. had been carried out by

civil rights workers. There was no available systematic study of racist and anti-semitic hoaxes.

In 1989 Wilcox decided to start the 'Hoaxer Project', to draw together information. A short published report followed, which soon generated 300 cases of hoaxes documented from newspapers and personal accounts – not all in the United States. The cases in *Crying Wolf* are drawn from this resource. The same sort of thing happens regularly in Britain – witness the 1993 march held by a Trotskyite group in Brighton, England, in protest against a daubing of swastikas in the local Jewish cemetery which, in fact, never took place. Perhaps we need our own 'Hoaxer Project'! (see Race attacks – myth and reality in our library)

Wilcox views hoaxes as a market process – the frequency increases with the pay off. If the potential rewards are high then there is a great temptation to create bogus victimisation. There has been more than one case in Germany of individuals, who craved attention, scarring themselves with swastikas. The initial publicity, needless to say, far exceeded the coverage after the hoaxes were exposed!

None of this, of course, in any way suggests that genuine and very serious hate crimes do not occur, or disrespect for the victims, merely that a good deal of caution should be exercised in jumping to conclusions, and particularly when a knee-jerk hue and cry is raised by the media.

The range of hoaxes in Wilcox's book is a testament to both man's ingenuity, and also the range of motives which can underpin such events.

In 1991, the Home of Peace Jewish cemetery in Los Angeles was daubed with swastikas and tombstones overturned. Within a few days police identified the culprits – the owners of a security firm which wanted to discredit the existing contractor and get the job of guarding the cemetery!

In 1994 three Tacoma homosexuals smashed up their own apartment and painted swastikas in it. They claimed on insurance, and bagged a large sum in donations from sympathisers after a press campaign about 'hate crimes'. The three were arrested.

In 1988, WWII vet David Rubitsky claimed to be a victim of anti-semitism. He said he had single-handedly killed 600 Japanese in New Guinea in 1942, but had been told he

could not have the Congressional Medal of Honour. He said a colonel told him: "We don't give the medal to Jews". Rubitsky also said crosses had been burned in his lawn. The press went wild about 'anti-semitism', after 92 congressmen signed a resolution on Rubitsky's behalf sponsored by the Jewish Anti-Defamation League.

Members of Rubitsky's unit said that his claims were "fairy tales", as did the army after a two year investigation.

The Anti-Defamation League was found in 1993 to have illegally penetrated and stolen police files in San Francisco, as part of its disinformation and destabilisation operations against opponents. The ADL, an organisation with a budget of \$34 million, was, curiously, far more interested in leftist organisations than the right. The reason was fear that the US civil rights establishment would back the Palestinian cause.

The supposed abduction and rape of a young black girl, Tawana Brawley, by whites, became a cause celebre in the US some years ago. Brawley claimed she had been raped by six white men, one wearing a badge, and then released covered in excrement. The supposed crime transpired to have been an elaborate invention, whose exploitation was orchestrated by the New York Reverend Al Sharpton and the girl's mother – the former believed by many to provide the model for one of the characters in Tom Wolfe's novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Those who have attended a Sharpton meeting, as has the writer of this review, will appreciate the point.

The faking of black history is an interesting area covered by Wilcox.

In 1992, the Public Broadcasting System film *The Liberators* purported to show how an all-black unit, the 761st. Tank Battalion, had liberated Dachau in 1945. In fact the unit was nowhere near the camp. The hoax was part of a scam by journalists to ease black-Jewish relations – "common history of oppression" and so on.

The late Alex Haley's spurious book about slavery *Roots* is now well known to have been a fraud intended to inflame white guilt. Haley fabricated many of the characters supposed to have been his ancestors.

The campus at Slippery Rock University near Pittsburgh convulsed in 1993 after anti-black epithets were found painted in a dormitory. Black Lewis Williams, who initially

reported the incidents, later confessed to doing it himself. He painted abusive racial slogans on other black students' bedroom doors.

In a rather similar case at Emory University in Atlanta in 1990 Sabrina Collins claimed she was a victim of anti-black graffiti and death threats. There was a march and the usual 'crackdown on racism' demands. Police later revealed that the event was hoax.

On the other hand, a feminist activist from George Washington University, Mariam Kashani, claimed in 1990 that a white student had been raped at knifepoint by two black men. Admitting the hoax, Kashani used a common excuse. She said she hoped "the story would highlight the problems of safety for women". Ronnie Thaxton, a black student activist, said he was outraged by "attempts by white people to discredit black males".

An interesting hoax occurred at Richard Montgomery High School in Maryland in 1990. The school was broken into twice, and swastikas as well as messages signed by 'Nazi youth' were scrawled on walls. \$650,000 in damage was caused. Police arrested two students, one black and one Jewish.

There are too many hoaxes in Wilcox's book to document fully here . The list goes on and on. You'll just have to buy it! Next time you read one of those 'wave of Nazi terror attacks' stories in your newspaper, consider a little. It might be true, but then again it might not.

Not covered in Wilcox's publication is the arena of fake eye witness accounts of events in concentration camps, which were such a feature of the trials in Canada of Ernst Zundel during the 1980s.. Several 'eye witnesses' to the operation of mass murder had their testimonies demolished. None could identify the colour of bodies poisoned with cyanide correctly – despite claims to have seen them.

One witness, Rudolf Vrba, author of a celebrated 'eye witness account' of gas chambers entitled *I Cannot Forgive*, lamely admitted that he had converted rumours he had heard into an 'eye witness account' in order to warn people – something of the same reasoning as in the Kashani case above. As Vrba put it, his book containing written and pictorial descriptions of gas chambers was "only an artistic picture of what I heard it might look like". Incredible? See the *Toronto Sun* for January 24 1985. You certainly won't be reading about it in the British newspapers!

Perhaps we might end with the UK newspaper which contacted the BNP, a year or two ago, with the story of a break-in, theft, and supposed daubing of BNP in the home of a non-white. Had the BNP carried out the attack they asked? Investigations revealed it had never taken place at all, as the newspaper well knew. But that's another story.....