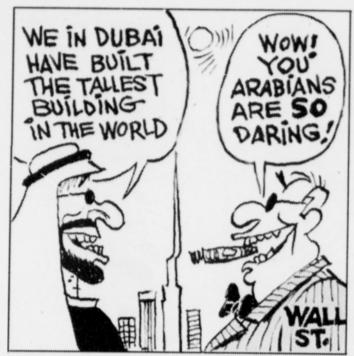
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21st Century McCarthyism:

Right-wing pundits, think tanks,

activists, and some Republican Party

officials are taking McCarthyism to

Intimidation and

character assassination

BY PETER MONTGOMERY

Fifty years ago, the U.S. Senate voted to censure Wisconsin Sen. McCarthy, who achieved notoriety

in his time for a ferocious campaign against supposed communist infiltration of the U.S. government.

The Wisconsin Republican played on the era's fears of global communism beginning with a speech in West Virginia, in which he falsely claimed to have a list of 205 people in the State Department known to be members of the Communist Party.

For nearly four years, he built power and a massive national following by exploiting the fear of communism, destroying the lives and careers of many along the way.

McCarthy's irresponsible campaign, boosted by conservative think tanks, media figures, and some clergy, brought down sitting senators and intimidated even President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his advisors.

McCarthy was only able to do as much damage as he did -- and ruin as many lives as he did -- because too many other public officials knew

what he was doing was wrong, but doesn't appear to love America." were unwilling to stand up to him.

> Today, right-wing punofficials are taking McCarthyism to new heights. Together, they engage in character assassination and challenge the

loyalty and patriotism of their targets, with rhetoric aimed at President Barack Obama such as, "I don't know whose side he's on."

new heights.

The right wing has seized on the

"elites vs. real Americans" theme,

charging that America is threatened

from within by "elites" within the

Obama administration and the me-

dia who are willing to subvert

For example, a Washington

Times editorial attacked Obama's

nominee to a judicial seat on the

Northern District of California, Judge

Edward Chen, saying "Another day,

another Obama nominee who

America's interests.

This outlandish claim is based on tacks were targeted to innocent the fact that Chen expressed condits, think tanks, activists, cern following the 9/11 attacks that four Republican members of Conand some Republican Party many would place the blame on in- gress warned could be "spies."

nocent Muslim Americans. They use guilt by association to attack the patriotism and integrity of targets who opposes them or their political goals.

After engineering a public drubbing of ACORN, including Sen. John McCain accusing ACORN of "maybe destroying the fabric of

democracy" during a televised de-

bate during the 2008 election sea-

son, the right wing has tried to use

even the most marginal relationships

to the organization as a means of

disqualifying people for public ser-

nominee David Hamilton for can-

vassing for ACORN for one month

while he was 22, as if it were a major

portion of his career-never mind that

it was 30 years ago.

Conservatives attacked judicial

Some of their most egregious at-Muslim interns on Capitol Hill, who

dent Harry Truman's Secretary of Defense, Gen. George Marshall, who McCarthy accused of being part of a "great conspiracy" to "diminish the United States in world affairs" and "to weaken us militarily," rightwing leaders today are impugning the integrity and patriotism of military leaders they disagree with.

Recently, Pennsylvania state Rep. Daryl Metcalfe blasted veterans who disagree with his opposition to climate change legislation, calling them, "a traitor to the oath he or she took to defend the Constitution of our great nation!"

McCarthy was finally exposed in the televised Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954 as a reckless and vicious bully. The full Senate eventually voted overwhelmingly to con-

Who will stand up to the Glenn Becks and Rush Limbaughs who are carrying on McCarthy's legacy of political intimidation and character assassination?

Peter Montgomery is a senior fellow at People for the American Way.

Like McCarthy's attack on Presi-

demn him.



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