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FBI admits probing 'radical' historian Zinn for criticizing bureau

By [Daniel Tencer](#)
Friday, July 30th, 2010 -- 3:22 pm



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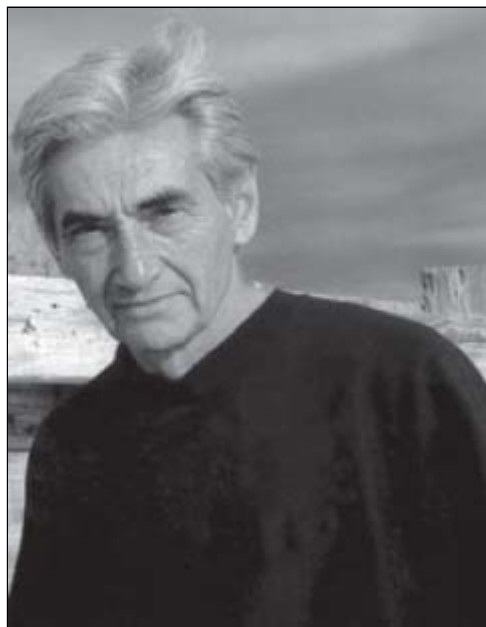
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FBI files show bureau may have tried to get Zinn fired from Boston University for his political opinions

Those who knew of the dissident historian Howard Zinn would not be surprised that J. Edgar Hoover's FBI kept tabs on him for decades during the Cold War.

But in a release of documents pertaining to Zinn, the bureau admitted that one of its investigations into the left-wing academic was prompted not by suspicion of criminal activity, but by Zinn's criticism of the FBI's record on civil rights investigations.

"In 1949, the FBI opened a domestic security investigation on Zinn," the bureau states. "The Bureau noted Zinn's activities in what were called Communist Front Groups and received informant reports that Zinn was an active member of the CPUSA; Zinn denied ever being a member when he was questioned by agents in the 1950s.



"In the 1960s, the Bureau took another look at Zinn on account of his criticism of the FBI's civil rights investigations."

Story continues below...

On Friday, the FBI released a [243-page file on Zinn](#), who [died in January](#) at age 87. The release describes the historian as "radical." The documents show the bureau taking an active interest in Zinn since the late 1940s, when he was a student at New York University. The interest continued through the 1950s, as Zinn worked on his PhD at Columbia University.

When the FBI again took an interest in Zinn in the 1960s, documents show the bureau evidently tried to have the historian fired from his job as professor at Boston University.

In a document from the Boston FBI office (see PDF file [here](#)), an FBI "source," whose name was redacted from the publicly released documents, was quoted as being outraged over Zinn's comment at a protest that the US had become a "police state" and that prosecutions of Black Panther Party members were creating "political prisoners."

The bureau's Boston office then indicated it wanted to help the source in his or her campaign to unseat Zinn. "[The] Boston [office] proposes under captioned program with Bureau permission to furnish [*name redacted*] with public source data regarding Zinn's numerous anti-war activities ... in an effort to back [*redacted*] efforts for his removal."

The bureau's response to the request does not appear to have been included in the released documents.

(Raw Story reporters will continue to mine through the documents for more details. If you want to help, you can view the FBI files [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) (PDF). Send us what you find to tips@rawstory.com.)

The FBI notes that its investigations of Zinn -- three in total, over 25 years -- "ended in 1974, and no further investigation into Zinn or his activities was made by the FBI."

Zinn had harsh words for the FBI during his academic career. In a [paper](#) published not long before his death, Zinn said the best thing the public could do to curb the FBI's powers was to "continue exposing them."

Of the FBI, he said, "They don't like social movements. They work for the establishment and the corporations and the politicians to keep things as they are. And they want to frighten and chill the people who are trying to change things. So the best defense against them and resistance against them is simply to keep on fighting back, to keep on exposing them."

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jleman Today 09:26 AM

2 people liked this.

All of the "police establishments" like the FBI want to instill the fear of the "Secret Police" or the "Gestapo" - but they don't want to be known as such. They want the power, but only through secrecy and forget about responsibility. Similar to their cohorts, the corporations.

Like

Reply



Yavo Today 09:21 AM

1 person liked this.

J. Edgar Hoover sleeps with a nightlight.

Like

Reply



shinyorbs Today 09:12 AM

1 person liked this.

I wonder wtf Hoover did for fun. Kind of get grossed out thinking about it....yuk.

The FBI created by prohibition to destroy the mob that was also created by prohibition-- the FBI's fearless leader for decades was a closet cross dresser gay man that secretly must have hated himself for having to live such a lie. sick prick spying on anyone and everyone while his own life was a fucking Fellini movie

Like

Reply



Cal Today 06:54 AM

5 people liked this.

Radical and dissident? It would seem as if Zinn had it just about right.

Like

Reply



donaldforbes Today 05:11 AM

7 people liked this.

I am not sure if we need the FBI but if we do it must be exposed every time it makes one of its unbelievable charges against anyone or any organization. Zinn is right keep up the exposure. We need millions of people like Zinn.

Like

Reply



harlinredlands Today 01:22 AM

6 people liked this.

So... is the FBI still capable of this behavior?

And if so, why do all Republicans and most Democrats in federal office still support giving them additional power?

Like

Reply



AtlanticCapers Today 09:40 AM [in reply to harlinredlands](#)

Obama uses the FBI to commit crimes on an ongoing basis. So did Bush. The FBI must be torn down and rebuilt. The CIA must be torn down and burned.

Like

Reply



MarleneB Today 06:24 AM [in reply to harlinredlands](#)

7 people liked this.

Absolutely! All during the Bush regency he set the FBI on *any* group who opposed his immoral and illegal invasion of Iraq! There have been numerous examples of the FBI monitoring even the most innocuous groups.

Like Reply



cohentelstar Yesterday 10:53 PM

Is this about the Hoover vacuum cleaner? That sucks all dirt underneath his dress? Howard Zinn is actually a member of the Communist Party, so sucks to all of you. Are you, or have you ever been, a proponent of accurate and benevolent human management? And what literature have you read that proposes "The greatest good for the greatest number," and aren't you de facto guilty of Stalin's purges and Mao's massacres? Sure, we all like Chinese food, but they're not on par with American Exceptionalism a la the "Fatburger" restaurant chain, if J. Edgar Hoover were alive today, he'd be seen at Fatburger with his boyfriend of the day. (I actually do not support any authoritarian gov't structure including communism. this is a satirical comment)

Like Reply



n3542576 Yesterday 09:22 PM

1974 is a touch remote - any more recent activities?

Like Reply



enorceht Today 06:09 AM in reply to n3542576

4 people liked this.

nixon happened in 1974 - then ford, carter, reagan, bush, clinton, bush

not capable of reading history ? or are you too far above it to read any

and if you don't know history from as recently as 1974 how can you make judgements about what's happening today

i'd suggest reading "A People's History of the United States" (the original or any updated version) but it might be too heavy for you (physically)

Like Reply



enorceht Today 05:58 AM in reply to n3542576

2 people liked this.

nixon happened right before 1974 - then ford, carter, reagan, bush, clinton, bush

not capable of reading history ? or are you too far above it to read any

and if you don't know history from as recently as 1974 how can you make judgements about what's happening today

i'd suggest reading "A People's History of the United States" (the original or any updated version) but it might be too heavy for you (physically)

Like Reply



Adam503 Yesterday 08:10 PM

5 people liked this.

Since I'm a 9/11 Truther I've probably got my own personal FBI agents.

I kinda feel sorry for the guys FBI agents assigned to me. That's some boring duty. The only thing I can think of more boring than my life is being assigned to watch me live my boring life.

"...What he doing now?"

"Getting more fuckin' carrots...."

Like

Reply



dennycrane Yesterday 04:40 PM

9 people liked this.

The FBI:

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it." Winston Churchill

The Tories, as we speak, are trying to rewrite history at every turn. Textbooks, wikipedia, their toxic books, etc.

Like

Reply



QuadSlacker Yesterday 04:09 PM

9 people liked this.

Many of the most influential and important Americans have been investigated by the FBI. If not most.

Read Zinn's papers and those of his peers. He was a brilliant man, in so many ways ahead of his time. There are millions of Zinns out here, still watching and still exposing the betrayers seeking to destroy real democracy in America.

Like

Reply



Volker Today 05:24 AM *in reply to QuadSlacker*

4 people liked this.

> betrayers seeking to destroy real democracy in America. <

Real Democracy....it's a myth, in the USA decayed to a sham, if it really ever really exists is more than questionable

Like

Reply



harrylord Yesterday 03:38 PM

9 people liked this.

Bill Kurtis Investigative Reports Secret History of the FBI;

Enforcement is inherently a highly selective endeavor, the case of Dread Scott invoked the 5th Amendment to maintain slavery, [the birth of the FBI emerged out of a local and federal law enforcement shootout at the Kansas City Union Station] that was blamed on mob gangsters to justify the creation of the FBI. Gangster Adam Rechetti was framed and executed for this local and federal cop gunfight.

Bradley Birkenfeld, Leonard Peltier, Micheal Riconosciuto, Delmart "Mike" Vreeland, Jeffery McDonald, all framed and serving time for crimes that the government committed.

Like Reply



shinyorbs Today 09:16 AM [in reply to harrylord](#)

the government did not kill Jeffery McDonalds wife and kids, what the hell was their motive? No he killed them, it came out it court...bedwetting, hitting the kids blah blah

Like Reply



GringalnMexico Today 12:23 AM [in reply to harrylord](#)

3 people liked this.

Also Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Like Reply



Genessender Yesterday 10:27 PM [in reply to harrylord](#)

8 people liked this.

Not to mention the Black Panthers and AIM members assassinated by the FBI.

Like Reply



consumed Yesterday 01:35 PM

5 people liked this.

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you . . .

Like Reply



bilweeler Yesterday 01:29 PM


9 people liked this.

Zinn was a patriot, despite the FBI inquisition.

If you haven't read it, I highly recommend Zinn's "A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present."

Seems historians have told part, but not all, of the story. "A People's History" will make you think hard about what it means to be an American.


Like Reply

 **Prattvictory** Yesterday 01:28 PM

4 people liked this.

Only Alan Dershowitz can get professors fired for their views.


Like Reply

 **Scott Burnell** Yesterday 02:19 PM [in reply to Prattvictory](#)

2 people liked this.

haa

Like Reply


 **tim34994** Yesterday 01:17 PM

9 people liked this.

Criticism such as the FBI framed Leonard Peltier of the Wounded Knee incident. Or, the FBI attempted to get the goods on Martin Luther King in the hopes that he might commit suicide and perhaps having some involvement in his assassination..Or the bureau's harassment of other black leaders. Oh and lets not forget perhaps the bureau's foreknowledge of the assassination of Malcolm X. Or, like the FBI trying to frame Richard Jewell for the 1996 Olympic bombing in Atlanta. And maybe just maybe they stood by and let both President John Kennedy and his brother Senator Robert Kennedy be assassinated.

Oh yeah, what a country! It does border on a police state. Fuck the FBI! Is that criticism enough for you!

Like Reply

 **MarleneB** Yesterday 04:19 PM [in reply to tim34994](#)

6 people liked this.


The dictator of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, was *so* paranoid, he had the boys (there were no female agents in *his* Bureau!) investigate *anyone* he himself deemed a "threat"!

Just about every LGBT person who picketed and protested for LGBT rights were investigated, and the Post Office confiscated issues of "One" because of its frank discussions about homosexuality.

One additional thing on MLK, Tim -- because of his association with former Communist Bayard Rustin - who was also openly gay! -- Hoover tried to produce "evidence" that he and Rustin were having an affair in order to discredit him!

He saved his most vicious wrath on both the public AND any agents who even *hinted* that he and his longtime aide Clyde Tolson were lovers!

Like Reply

 **enorceht** Today 06:05 AM in reply to [MarleneB](#)

4 people liked this.

all these problems plus trying to hide his little silk panties, and i totally agree with your comment


Like Reply

 **TheDevilCanDance** Yesterday 01:16 PM

6 people liked this.

Ouch. I had the feeling America was a political shit hole, but this is "la folie des grandeurs"More like a giant septic tank.


Like Reply

 **n3542576** Yesterday 09:21 PM in reply to [TheDevilCanDance](#)

1 person liked this.


Do the attendants know you have accessed a computer?

Like Reply

 **Genessender** Yesterday 10:28 PM in reply to [n3542576](#)

Knowing French doesn't mean you're crazy.


Like Reply

 **TheDevilCanDance** Yesterday 11:32 PM in reply to [Genessender](#)

1 person liked this.

For him that's offensive, he is a Michael Savage fan.....:)

Like Reply

 **Raven** Yesterday 01:01 PM

11 people liked this.

Anyone who doesn't play their game, and tries to talk about the truth is a danger to those at the top. God forbid that Americans become a critical thinking society. Just sit back and keep watching your American Idol and all that good propaganda the corporate MSM pumps out. Everything is just great! The truth is that the world needs a lot more Howard Zinn's, and then maybe we could educate more people. Never forget. Those at the top fear intelligent and enlightened people more than anything else. They know that when you see through their smoke and mirrors the propaganda doesn't work anymore, and the game is up.

Like Reply



Orangutan. Yesterday 12:54 PM

20 people liked this.

Howard Zinn cared about the people of this country. That's more you can say for the FBI, CIA, and many elected officials we have today.

Like Reply



GonzoVeritas Yesterday 12:44 PM

12 people liked this.

I can only hope that there is another Howard Zinn out there somewhere.

Like Reply



AtlanticCapers Yesterday 12:46 PM [in reply to GonzoVeritas](#)

2 people liked this.

Right here.

Like Reply



GringalInMexico Today 12:28 AM [in reply to AtlanticCapers](#)

6 people liked this.

Anyone who makes such a claim about themselves should do so under their real name. I choose to post anonymously on the internet, but do not pretend to be someone as courageous, intelligent, and insightful as Zinn.

Like Reply

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