

# 'American Sniper' and the Far Left's Culture-War Losing Streak

*American Sniper* isn't just a hit; it's on its way to a colossal box-office return. It's already the 10th-highest grossing movie of 2014 (the movie opened in select theaters at Christmas) and is well on its way to the top three—this despite a furious backlash from the Left, with rhetoric that routinely borders on the hysterical. Yet the people still come in droves. Friends of mine are relating how, days later, the movie is still having an impact on them, making them think more about the war, about the experience of veterans, and the nature of our enemy.

All of this represents a defeat for a cultural Left that is used to getting its way. It is used to exercising the power to name and shame—to exclude politically incorrect discourse and entertainment from American pop culture and public life. Until recently, anyway.

If one looks back at the large-scale cultural fights of the past three years, there's an emerging pattern: When the Left butts heads with a "red" institution, seeking to diminish its influence in red America, the backlash is intense. Remember the Chick-fil-A boycotts so swamped by "buycotts" that restaurants actually ran out of chicken? Or remember A&E's capitulation in the face of overwhelming support for Phil Robertson? Then there was of course the almost laughably ineffective boycott of Hobby Lobby, where hosts of people who never go to craft stores anyway pledged to somehow put the company out of business for resisting the HHS abortion-pill mandate.

The attacks on *American Sniper* follow this same script. While

veterans are hardly ideologically monolithic, they do tend to be more conservative, and conservative Americans recognized quickly that many of the movie's leftist critics dropped entirely the "support the troops but oppose the war" facade and went right after Chris Kyle personally, creating a false moral equivalence between an exceedingly precise sniper who killed identified enemy combatants and depraved terrorists who intentionally killed and maimed as many civilians as they could. Certainly many liberals have enjoyed the film and honor Chris Kyle for his service (including friends of mine), but outside of the fever swamps of Lew Rockwell-land, the attacks on the film have come overwhelmingly from the Left.

And they've mainly succeeded in making the movie more popular and, ultimately, more influential.

But while it's a promising development that red culture is increasingly immune to the politically correct left-leaving them howling with impotent rage as "our" institutions continue to prosper—the news is "much less good" if you're a red individual or red institution in America's blue regions. In a recent print edition of *National Review*, I wrote about the persecution of Gordon College, a Christian college near Boston facing threats to its accreditation—and thus its very existence—simply because its policies reflect and uphold orthodox Christian sexual morality.

And it's fighting its battle without (so far) a groundswell even of Christian support, much less conservative support. Yesterday, I wrote about the California Supreme Court barring judges from serving as scoutmasters, with minimal controversy. And while Phil Robertson kept his job and still reaches millions of Americans every week on his TV show, Brendan Eich was forced out of Mozilla with the greatest of ease.

The Left's recent culture-war failures show that they've haven't yet succeeded in drowning out conservative voices, but

the end result hasn't necessarily been increased liberty but increased tribalism. We protect our turf. They control their turf. Meanwhile, liberty—and our shared American identity—wither away.

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