

Creating Brownshirts: The Ayn Rand Institute

by Benjamin Deniston,
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The Ayn Rand Institute was founded in 1985 by Leonard Peikoff, and received its tax-exempt status in 1987. Wildly anti-government, and spreading a “survival-of-the-fittest,” beast-man philosophy, the ARI focusses largely on brain-washing youth to be the brownshirts in the movement for the destruction of the nation-state. They call it “education,” “to cultivate a generation of intellectuals who will be effective advocates for the fundamentals of reason, rational self-interest, individual rights and capitalism.” The ARI supports clubs on college campuses nationwide, and even does outreach to high schools, giving cash prizes to students for essay contests. They state clearly where they see the front line in the war over the future of the United States: “The major battleground in this fight for reason [!] and capitalism is the educational institutions—high schools and, above all, the universities, where students learn the ideas that shape their lives.”

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the ARI is funded through donations, but they have refused to disclose the source of their funding. In 2005, ARI had a total revenue of \$4,732,631, but spent less than 63% on their stated goals as a nonprofit, ranking them among the least efficient 10% of nonprofits.

Here are brief profiles of ARI’s principal figures:

Yaron Brook: President and Executive Director of ARI. Brook was born in 1961 in Israel, and was in Israeli Army Intelligence. He received his B.Sc. in civil engineering from the Technion Israel Institute of Technology, his Ph.D. in finance from the University of Texas at Austin in 1994, and was an assistant professor of finance at Santa Clara University (California) for seven years. Brook founded Lyceum International (a firm specializing in Objectivist conferences), and BH Equity Research (a venture-capital consulting firm in San Jose, California); he is still a managing partner in the latter. He authors articles supporting his beast-man views, lectures around the country, and is the executive director of the ARI’s Objectivist Learning Center (OLC).

In October 2006, Brook gave a lecture at UCLA, saying our military should kill hundreds of thousands of “supporters” (i.e., civilians) of “enemy” states, including in Iraq and Iran. In a December 2004 interview with FoxNews’ Bill O’Reilly,

Brook said, “The only way to win this insurgency is for America to be a lot more brutal. We should start bringing the consequences of this war to the civilians who are harboring terrorists and insurgents. . . . I would like to see the United States turn Fallujah into dust, and tell the Iraqis, if you are going to support the insurgents, you will not have schools, you will not have mosques.”

Leonard Peikoff: Founder of ARI. Born in Canada, 1933, Peikoff befriended Ayn Rand in 1951. He obtained his doctorate in philosophy at New York University, 1964, studying under Sidney Hook (founder of the University Centers for a Rational Alternative, the predecessor to Lynne Cheney’s American Council of Trustees and Alumni). Less than a month after the attacks of Sept. 11, with a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, Peikoff was calling for attacks, not on the Taliban or al-Qaeda, but on Iran, saying there needed to be a full ground invasion and occupation, because, “what Germany was to Nazism in the 1940s, Iran is to terrorism today. Whatever else it does, therefore, the U.S. can put an end to the Jihad-mongers only by taking out Iran” (“End States That Sponsor Terrorism,” Oct. 2, 2001).

Harry Binswanger: ARI Board of Directors, director of the Objectivist Academic Center. Binswanger was born in Virginia, 1944. He received his B.S. in Humanities and Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and his Ph.D. in philosophy from Columbia University. He taught philosophy at the City University of New York, Hunter College from 1972 to 1979, and at the University of Texas, Austin in 2002.

On claims of an intelligence failure in the build-up to the Iraq War Binswanger wrote, “The only intelligent question was: which lousy Middle East pesthole-dictatorship are we going to crush first? Not: was or was not the threat from this particular statist sewer ‘imminent’ or only ‘growing?’ ” (“The Big Lie: Intelligence Failure in Iraq,” by Harry Binswanger, February 23, 2004).

Onkar Ghate: Fellow at the Ayn Rand Institute; teaches at the Objectivist Academic Center. Ghate received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Calgary, Canada. He is critical of the Bush Administration for not “eliminating” Iran, and has attacked professors who have pointed out censorship operations on the campuses (for documentation of Lynne Cheney’s censorship operations, see the LaRouche PAC pamphlet “Is Joseph Goebbels On Your Campus?”). Ghate wrote an article in 2002, “Innocents in War?” calling for the targetting of civilians in the war on terrorism: “If our war on terrorism is to have any chance of success in such places as Iraq, which is more heavily populated and industrialized than Afghanistan, we must recognize that our government’s concern—shared by many Americans—about killing civilians is morally mistaken. In fact, victory with a minimum of one’s own casualties sometimes requires a free nation to deliberately target the civilians of an aggressor nation in order to cripple its economic production and/or break its will.”