

Your Friendly Neighborhood Cultural Relativist Cyclops: Antifa, Marx, and Other Straw Men
of Contemporary American Hate Groups

A number of recent commentators and bloggers have observed the proclivity of contemporary groups espousing racist ideologies to appropriate the symbols and language of classical antiquity. From the Spartan *molon labe* to wooden mock-ups of hoplite shields sported as riot-sheik, recent rallies like “Unite the Right” have appropriated the iconography of ancient Greece and Rome and made the defense of the West the rallying cry in what they represent as a battle between the traditional Western values and violent leftist extremists like Antifa and Marxist multiculturalists.

My contribution briefly examines the appropriation of classical culture as racist iconography in recent well-publicized rallies like “Unite the Right.” I discuss the rhetoric used by these ideologues to support their racist cant, arguing that their attempt to conjure a culture war between largely imaginary conspiracies of marginal leftist extremists and defenders of the classics fundamentally misrepresents the centrality of classics in the discourse of racial and ethnic toleration which runs throughout early American history. A close analysis of select passages in the writings of George Sandys and Pennsylvania anti-slavery activist Francis Daniel Pastorius will demonstrate the role of a conversation with Classical letters in the emergence of a centrist ideology of humanistic optimism regarding the ability of the ethnically diverse peoples of the New World to cohabit at close quarters in the cities of the English New World.

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