

INVESTIGATION

How The Biden Administration Used A Counter-Terrorism Grant To Fund Anti-Conservative Propaganda

'Propaganda can also be used for socially beneficial purposes,' wrote government-funded 'media literacy' group

By **Luke Rosiak**

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Credit: Photographer: Kaylee Greenlee Beal/Bloomberg via Getty Images.

The Department of Homeland Security paid an activist group \$700,000 to create self-described propaganda that attacked conservatives, a new investigation found.

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conservatives under the guise of “media literacy,” the Media Research Center found through public records requests.



In its funding application, the University of Rhode Island’s Media Education Lab declared that “propaganda and misinformation concerning topics including immigration [and] racial justice” had become “disruptive.” It asked DHS for funding to run “community-created counter-propaganda.”

“Propaganda can also be used for socially beneficial purposes. Indeed, because the public has long been recognized as being suggestible, the United States has long made use of beneficial propaganda during WWI, WWII, and the Cold War,” the grant application said.

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on Americans to create a mandate for increased censorship. The Daily Wire reported last week that the same groups were also paid by the State Department, which had them arrange for German anti-“disinformation” activists to train U.S. school teachers on the techniques used in that country, which has some of the most anti-free speech policies in the West.

MRC said the grant shows that Congress must abolish all domestic censorship programs.

“The Biden administration is able to get something quite special with its \$700,000 TVTP grant,” the MRC concluded in its investigation.

“Harnessing the Media Literacy Now ‘network’ and, ultimately, paying children to advocate for ‘media literacy’ mandates ensnares the whole of the American public school system in its agenda.”

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supercharging a censorship industry devoted to an inherently anti-American philosophy hidden beneath the asinine monicker of ‘media literacy,’” it wrote.

The DHS grant led to an entity known as “Courageous RI,” helmed by U-RI professor and leftist activist Renee Hobbs, which said that its program would use the funds to manipulate the public and policymakers into demanding policies to crack down on “misinformation.”

It said “media literacy” training was especially needed in Rhode Island because “the Southern Poverty Law Center identified several active hate groups in the state,” and that some residents of the January 6 “insurrection that breached the Capitol Building” were from the state.

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The anti-terrorism grant program was created under the Obama administration, and Miles Taylor, the DHS chief of staff under Donald Trump who gained notoriety for writing a New York Times op-ed admitting to undermining Trump from within, maneuvered to ensure that it lived on despite his boss' wishes, according to a 2020 [Politico](#) article. By this year, the program was being used to explicitly liken people who believed that there is a “deep state” – the idea that unelected bureaucrats might behave like Miles – to Holocaust deniers.

The Rhode Island Lab used the DHS money to pay people \$250 each to write blog posts about “misinformation, disinformation, media literacy... and more!” The articles pushed for Left-wing policies, even though federal grants cannot be used to fund lobbying. The posts sometimes had less to do with “media literacy” than political opining, railing against the [National Rifle Association](#) and [Stand Your Ground](#) laws.

“We are all living in a darker, scarier, angrier, less hopeful country thanks to Mr. Trump’s influence. Are we on the verge of civil war?” one post said,

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It won't be easy, but we really have to reduce Trump's influence, it pledged.

“Content moderation decisions of digital platforms actually do not violate ordinary people’s constitutionally guaranteed speech rights. That’s because private social media companies are not bound by the First Amendment,” another said, claiming that “the political right enjoys higher amplification compared to the political left.”

The DHS-funded entity served to bring together federal and state law enforcement officials, anti-speech activists, teachers, and Democrat advocacy groups.

Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg Amore, a Democrat, made his department an official partner of Courageous RI, and assigned his staff to ghost-write the program’s “Manifesto.” The Manifesto said that “anti-government theories... can lead to targeted violence and domestic terrorism.”

“We have become so focused on individual rights, we have forgotten about the collective good,” Amore said at Courageous RI’s launch event.

The Rhode Island School Superintendents Association and the U.S. Attorney for Rhode Island, Zachary Cunha, are also among Courageous RI’s “coalition” members, as is Moms Demand Action, a Left-wing anti-gun group.

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Media Contest” gave cash prizes of up to \$1,000 to students who generated “public service announcements ... with support from local state public safety experts as well as communications and public relations professionals.”

As part of its “Media Literacy and Civic Engagement Curriculum,” it trained teachers to use the classroom to root out “misinformation,” encouraging them to “address[] controversial current events.” It said with DHS funding, it would train more than 6,800 educators and students to embed “media literacy and terrorism prevention in many different kinds of community programs.”

The final prong in the program was “Courageous Community Conversations.” A June 2023 event pushed a video that said that the reason Hispanics tilted towards the Republican Party in 2020 was because of “disinformation” against Joe Biden in “Spanish-language media,” with Russia possibly to blame. It called for social media companies like Meta to more aggressively censor information in response.

The conversations also included a podcast series. In one episode, DHS agent Robert Mahoney, the grant’s administrator, appeared as a guest. “Somebody who has access to guns or has anti-government theories or has conspiracy theories, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they’re going to mobilize to violence, but it does mean in the sense of wanting to do

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Courageous RI official Pam Steager asked how people could “help them before they get to the point where they could be radicalized so much that they turn to violence.”

Those precursors to theoretical extremism could include mainstream American positions. In another podcast episode, Hobbs promoted a lesson plan that had children listen to a podcast in which a Southern Poverty Law Center employee likened opposition to illegal immigration to Nazism.

“You know, if one looks at the anti-immigration movement today, it is astounding the things that are said by mainstream people. You know, we have national politicians right now walking around this country talking about how illegal aliens are, quote ‘coming here to kill me, and kill you, and kill our families,’” the SPLC official claimed.

The podcast also featured authoritarian leftists like Jennifer Lima, a school board member who said that students who “misgendered” people committed an “act of violence” that should be “dealt with accordingly.” Hobbs said she wanted to “inspire people to be as courageous as you are.”

Yet another podcast guest was former Congressman David Cicilline, who wrote that the “key threat to our democracy” is the GOP, which he described as “a Trumpist authoritarian cult.” On the podcast, Cicilline said

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group.

Using the DHS money as seed money to leverage private donations, the group is now taking the program national, and is hosting a “Courageous Conversation” in Charlottesville, Virginia on Wednesday.

An activist group closely linked to the University of Rhode Island’s Media Education Lab called Media Literacy Now is intent on making these “media literacy” trainings mandatory for all American children, but only when media literacy is used to promote liberal views. It opposed a Texas bill that instituted media literacy, but which included the 1619 Project as an example of misinformation.

The head of the Rhode Island Media Lab, Hobbs, is also an advisory board member of MLN. She once convinced the National Council for Teachers of English to call for focusing on turning children into “change agents” through critical race theory, then claimed that a veteran Washington Post reporter needed to be subjected to her “media training” when he criticized it.

Hobbs did not return a request for comment on her work, nor did DHS.

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