

Lamar Criminal Justice Newsletter



Lamar Presence in Spain

Lamar University Professors, Dr. Sanaz Alasti and Dr. Jim Mann, organized and chaired the Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice workshop that took place over a two-day period, May 21st to May 22nd, 2015, at the Onati International Institute for the Sociology of Law in Spain.

The workshop brought together 25 leading international scholars, practitioners and activists from Lamar University and Harvard University in the U.S., University of Hull in England, Ariel University in Israel, Alexandria University in Egypt, and University of Naples in Italy.

Professor Eric F. Bronson, Director of the Criminal Justice Program at Lamar University, presented a paper on the death penalty and the families of murder victims, who are collateral victims of the crime. The subject of capital punishment, a controversial issue in Europe, prohibited by the European Union, generated much debate at the presentation.

The Lamar team of professors also held study abroad classes on comparative criminal justice issues for 12 Lamar University Students in Spain. Besides the knowledge gained in the classroom, the students were taken to the Guardia Civil headquarters in Madrid, the equivalent of gaining access to the Pentagon.

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**Upcoming Event: Jeff Ferrell,
Adventures in Ethnography,
April 11, 10:30a.m-12:00 p.m.,
Landis Auditorium**

Editor-IN-Chief:
Dr. Vidisha Barua Worley, Esq.,
 Associate Professor of Criminal
 Justice, Lamar University

Greetings from the CJ Director



Dr. Eric F. Bronson

Greetings to the Lamar community! It is with great pride that we introduce the first issue of the Lamar Criminal Justice Newsletter. As a growing division in the larger Department of

legislators, attorneys, law enforcement and correctional officers from our local community. The event was a great success and holds great promise for our program in the future.

Our criminal justice student organizations are very active both on campus and in their involvement with the community. Our alumni have become successful in the field of criminal justice. Some of them have proceeded to get their Ph.D. at other esteemed universities.

Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice, we are proud to announce that as of 2015, we have 267 CJ on-campus students, 256 Online BS students, and 173 Online MS students in Criminal Justice.

We are also working on building a strong relationship with community leaders and practitioners so that our students can benefit from real world experiences and job opportunities they have to offer. Recently, on November 17th, we held a symposium on campus that brought in judges,

Our faculty members are regularly presenting at regional and national conferences and publishing peer-reviewed articles while providing excellent education to our students in the classroom.

Through this semiannual newsletter, our goal is to reach out to the Lamar community, our alumni, and the pillars of our society who can then get a good understanding of what we are doing and be able to contribute their bit to our continued success. I would like to thank Vidisha Barua Worley for putting together this first issue of the newsletter.

CJ Division welcomes new provost Marquart!



Dr. James Marquart

The Division of Criminal Justice is proud to welcome a new member. Dr. James Marquart, who holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Texas A&M University, joined Lamar in July 2015 as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Marquart is widely known as one of the nation's leading experts on prison systems. His extensive research includes more than \$2 million in funded projects, presentations and more than 60 peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and seven books. Among many awards, he received the 2005 Bruce Smith Senior Award for the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.

Before joining Lamar, Marquart served as Vice-Provost of Academic Affairs at the University of Texas-Dallas since 2012. He also served as Associate Provost, Dean of the School of Economics, Political and Policy Sciences, and Department Chair and Professor of the Criminology Program at UTD.

Study Abroad: Trip to China



Professors Chiung-Fang Chang and Cheng-Hsien Lin with Lamar University students

Drs. Chiung-Fang Chang and Cheng-Hsien Lin of Lamar University organized a trip to Taiwan and China for Lamar students to study abroad in the summer of 2015. This is the second time that the Sociology Program at Lamar University has offered this course to the students. This year, five students received the Gillman Scholarship for the Study Abroad trip to China and Taiwan. One of these students is Toryria Munson, a Criminal Justice major.

As part of their volunteer work, the group of Lamar University students who went on this trip, held a workshop at the Tainan First Senior High School in Tainan City, Taiwan. The students stayed on the National Cheng-Kung University (NCKU)

campus for 10 days and attended Chinese language and cultural/art classes. They were paired with NCKU students who later become their Taiwanese buddies helping them broaden their learning experience in NCKU. The Lamar Study Abroad team toured many attractions in Taiwan and Beijing including magnificent historical architectural wonders such as the Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City, the Prince Mansions, and the Olympic Park, and took part in several cultural activities. Their visits to Shang-Hai, and the nearby water cities of Hongzhou, Suzhou, Wuxi, and WuZhen enabled the students to truly appreciate the diverse cultural aspects of both ancient and modern China.



Professor Eric Bronson (Last person on the right); Professor Jim Mann (First Row, second from left); Professor Sanaz Alasti (First Row, fourth from left); Mayra Picon (Second row, fourth from left); Madeline Culver (Second row, third from left), Alejandro Guadian (Last person on the left).



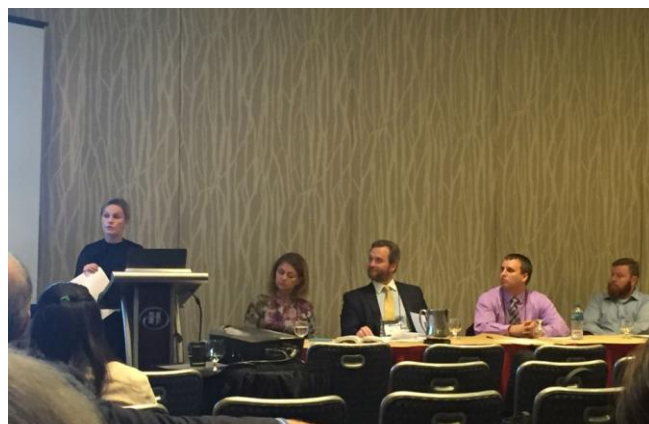
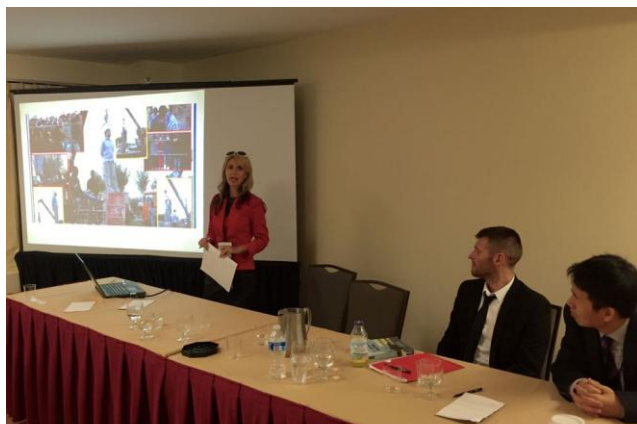
Lamar Presence in Spain

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The group of professors and students from Lamar were also fortunate to see the Madrid Municipal Police in action. The incident involved the suspect stealing a whole strip of sun glasses from a vendor in the street. He was caught red handed and the police took him into custody by putting him in the back of the patrol car.

Professor Bronson observed, “I did not notice any use of force during the incident. There were no handcuffs either.” “The entire procedure was quite civil. It was a good learning experience for our students to see the Madrid police in action,” added Bronson.

Lamar Criminal Justice Faculty Participate in American Society of Criminology Conference



Dr. Sanaz Alasti (left) presenting a paper and Dr. Robert M. Worley (right) chairing a panel at the ASC Annual Meeting held in Washington D.C. in November 2015.

At the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology held in Washington D.C. from November 16th to 19th, 2015, several Criminal Justice professors from Lamar University presented papers. Dr. Sanaz Alasti and Dr. Eric F. Bronson presented a paper titled, “Capital Punishment in Authoritarian Regimes.” Dr. Vidisha Barua Worley and Dr. Robert M. Worley presented a paper on municipal liability for the inappropriate use of tasers and stun guns. Dr. Robert M. Worley chaired a panel on gang violence and desistance. Dr. Chen Hsien Lin and Dr. Chiung-Fang Chang presented on the impact of parent-child relationship vs strain on delinquency among Taiwanese adolescents. Mr. Amir Fakhraivar and Dr. Sanaz Alasti presented a paper on Sunni vs. Shiite extremism.



Mr. Alejandro Guadian presenting a paper

Lamar Faculty, Students take Active Part in Mid-South Sociological Association Meet

Lamar CJ Master’s student Alejandro Guadian, Drs. Garret Harden, Jesse Garcia, and Eric F. Bronson presented their current research on inmate personal ads and gender roles at the Annual Meeting of the Mid South Sociological Association. Drs. Robert M. Worley, Vidisha Barua Worley, and Henda Hsu presented a paper titled, “Can I trust my Coworker?: Examining Correctional Officers’ Perceptions of Staff-Inmate Inappropriate Relationships Within A Southern Penitentiary System” at the same conference held from October 22nd to October 24th, 2015.

Judge Crenshaw Suggests Loan Forgiveness for Students Who Agree to Take Public Sector Jobs



Judge Cory Crenshaw with his staff members

In a Q&A with Vidisha Barua Worley, Judge Cory J. H. Crenshaw, Criminal Court Judge of Jefferson County, Beaumont, TX, eloquently spoke about his association with Lamar University and his vision for the Criminal Justice Program.

Q 1. You are closely linked to Lamar University and our Criminal Justice Program. You teach a class for us. It is great for our students to be able to interact with a judge on a regular basis. How do you feel about our students and the class that you teach on drugs and society?

A: I continue to be impressed with the caliber of students that I have had the pleasure of teaching in the Criminal Justice Program. Lamar is doing an outstanding job in recruiting students who are diverse, energized, and dedicated. All of these

attributes are paramount to success in the challenging field of criminal justice. In the classroom, I do my utmost to bring my experiences in public service which include being both a state and federal prosecutor, and now as a criminal court judge, to my students in an effort to ensure that they have not just an outstanding education, but they are prepared for what lies ahead of them outside the classroom.

Q2. Being closely associated with our program, what are some of the changes that you envision for us in the near future and how do you think we could accomplish them?

A: The field of criminal justice is changing and I am sure we can all agree that many of the changes are for the better. The "War on Drugs" mentality

of the 1980s has transformed **today** to more of a "Smart on Crime" approach. Instead of incarcerating non-violent drug offenders, we are placing more emphasis on rehabilitation and treatment. This shift in resources from building prisons to shortening incarceration periods is creating the need for more professionals and facilities to accommodate these offenders outside of prison walls. Additionally, more reliable scientific testing and the public's demand for more reliable evidence in the courtroom is significantly straining our crime labs and funding for forensic testing. As budgets increase to allow for this shift, the need for more crime scene technicians and forensic lab professionals will increase. Lastly, society entrusts its public servants in criminal justice not only with great responsibility, but often with significant budgets, and so, the demand for transparency and financial oversight is increasing. We must look at our current degree programs and add the types of courses that will allow our students who obtain management positions to have the skills they need to be good stewards of the funds they are trusted with. Overall, our program must ensure that the degrees we are offering are applicable to these changes and give our students the education that they need to be successful in their careers.

Q3. You are also on the advisory board for Lamar University. In that capacity, what would be some specific advice you might have for our criminal justice program?

A: My vision for the advisory board is to create a model where we can not only do more to financially assist our students, but also help them obtain the skills they need for job placement through mentoring, internships, and clinics. Many of the jobs associated with our program are in the public sector and pay less than private sector jobs. Often our students are graduating with significant debt and obtaining jobs that make it difficult to support a family. How incredible would it be if our program could offer loan forgiveness for students who agree to take jobs in the public sector for a certain period of time after graduation! This would place an emphasis on public service while at the same time creating an incentive for those who feel they simply cannot afford a job serving their community and the greater good. I have no doubt that with the right funding and support from campus leadership, our program will lead our state and be a model for the nation that encourages public service and makes that noble calling financially obtainable for all.

Upcoming Event

Speaker: Critical Criminologist Jeff Ferrell

Topic: 'Adventures in Ethnography'

Date/Time: April 11, 10:30 a.m-12:00 p.m.

Venue: Landis Auditorium, LU



Criminal Justice Students Association at Lamar pie the professors as a fund-raiser on November 23, 2015!



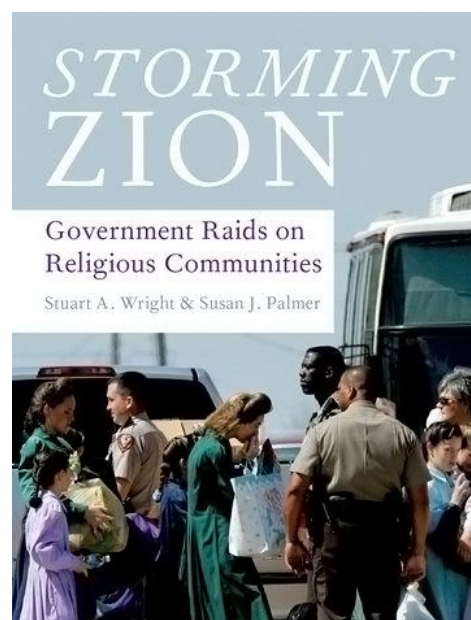
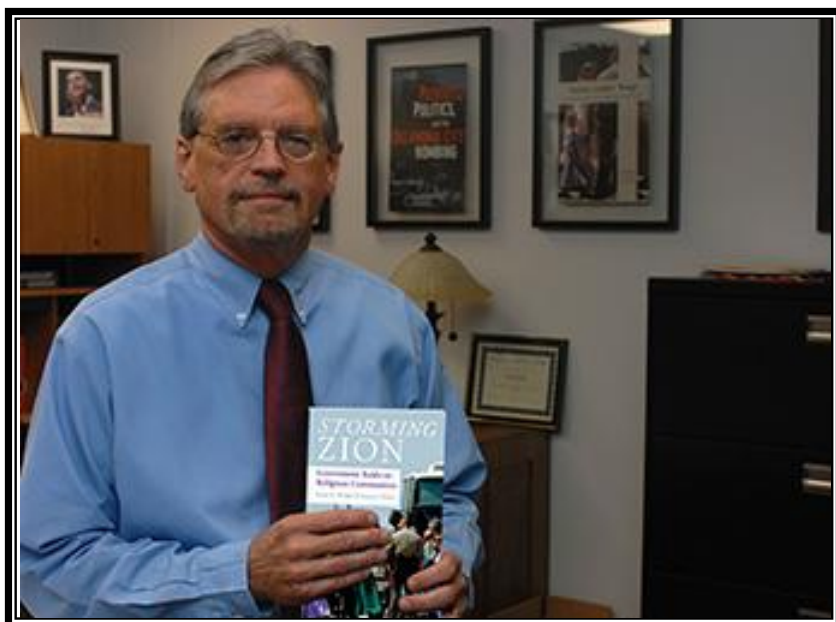
CJ Lamar Builds Relations with Community Leaders

The Division of Criminal Justice at Lamar held their Community Relations Board Meeting on November 17, 2015. Criminal Justice instructor and former Supervising United States Probation Officer for the Eastern District of Texas (1994-2013) Karen Roebuck was instrumental in inviting legislators, judges, federal, state, and local law enforcement personnel and corrections officers to the symposium, said CJ Director Eric F. Bronson.

11 Lamar students inducted into Alpha Phi Sigma

The Criminal Justice Honors Society induction ceremony was held on December 2, 2015. Eleven students were inducted into the Lamar chapter of Alpha Phi Sigma, the national criminal justice honors society. They were Victoria Curtis, Tieranny DeCuir, India Frederick, Alejandro Guadian, Kneco Jones, Jennifer Luna, Byroneisha Mathews, Charlie McGill, Guadalupe Pride, Kashira Robinson, and Brittany Wood.





‘Most New Religious Movements are Not Violent or Abusive’

*The new book, **Storming Zion: Government Raids on Religious Communities**, authored by **Stuart A. Wright and Susan J. Palmer** has just been released by the Oxford University Press. In an interview with **Robert M. Worley, Professor Stuart Wright**, the Chair of the Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice at Lamar University, removes common stereotypes about non-traditional religious movements, often pejoratively referred to as “cults.”*

Q 1. You mention that religious raids often involve paramilitary actions in spite of the fact that very few new religious movements actually have a history of violence. Why do you suppose governments are so quick to employ aggressive use of force?

A. We argue in the book that these raids do not take place in a social vacuum. They are often the product of countermovement activism and

mobilization. In particular, we show that a “white-hot,” transnational mobilization of anticult movement (ACM) organizations in the late 1980s and 1990s helps to explain a dramatic increase in the rate of government raids primarily in North America and Western Europe. The aggressive use of force can be attributed to several factors. First, the claims lodged against new or nontraditional religious movements (NRMs), typically labeled “cults” by organized opponents, are invariably inflated or exaggerated. The escalation of claims produces a perception of threat by authorities that is grossly disproportionate to any real threat posed by the religious group. However, officials act on the perception of an inflated threat by using extreme enforcement actions such as paramilitary raids. Second, there has been a three-decade long trend toward the “police militarization” in which enforcement actions taken against groups defined as a threat to the social order are likely to be

targeted. Research by criminologists, particularly the work of Peter Kraska, has documented this trend in police organization and culture.

Q 2. In your book, you write that the number of governmental raids on new religious movements has increased exponentially within the past several years. Why is this?

A. Well, the rapid, transnational mobilization of a countermovement accounts in part for the dramatic increase in raids. But this was predicated on a pivotal change in public attitudes and laws regarding child protection in the 1980s. Criminologist Phil Jenkins has written extensively about the “Child Abuse Revolution” that took place in the U.S. significantly altering the way in which child abuse definitions were expanded and laws passed requiring mandatory reporting. The shift produced a widespread public perception that child abuse was an epidemic leading to a “moral panic” about “threatened children.” Since many NRMs were passing through a second-generation stage, they became easy targets for child abuse allegations by opponents, even in the face of weak or unsubstantiated claims. Because the state has a mandate to protect children, these allegations triggered investigations and enforcement actions which often were carried out in the form of police raids.

Q 3. From reading your book, it seems that the anti-cult movement began mainly in the United States. Why do you suppose this is?

A. The American anticult movement arose in response to a growth in new or nontraditional religions in the late 1960s and 1970s. Some of these movements were part of the emergent counterculture and the social experimentation of young people that occurred during this period. We must also be aware of the influx of Eastern-based religions that followed the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that abolished immigration quotas. This quota system

avored immigrants from Northern and Western Europe and excluded Asians altogether. After 1965, we saw a sharp rise in immigrants from Asia (88 percent of immigrants now come from non-European countries). Many of these Asian immigrants brought their religion with them. As a result, there was a surge of Eastern religions with odd-sounding names like Nichiren Shoshu, International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Parmahansa Yogananda’s Self-Realization Fellowship, Transcendental Meditation, Soka Gakkai, Deva-Light, Divine Light Mission, Sathya Sai Baba, and the Unification Church. As many young people joined NRMs, distraught parents, relatives, friends, and even religious leaders saw this as a threat to traditional values and roles. At a loss to explain the attraction of mostly youth to these religions, opponents claimed that their loved ones were being “brainwashed” and demanded action by authorities to intervene. Anticult organizations evolved out of this reactionary response labeling new or nontraditional religions “cults” and developing an elaborate ideology to paint these groups as a dangerous threat to society.

Q 4. The discussion of deprogramming as a method to combat so-called cult brainwashing proved to be very interesting. You mention, however, that beginning around the 1980s, it began to face legal challenges, especially in the U.S. Why was deprogramming so controversial in the U.S. but perhaps not as controversial in France?

A. The justification for the use of “deprogramming” (or forcible deconversion) was based on the idea that converts to new or nontraditional religions were “programmed” (i.e., “brainwashed”). In some early legal challenges in the U.S., attorneys for deprogrammers who were charged with unlawful detention or false imprisonment were able to employ “cult experts” who would testify to the existence of psychological brainwashing. Juries heard this testimony and often acquitted the

deprogrammers. But the scientific research did not support the brainwashing theory and as the evidence against the theory began to mount, the viability of this legal argument faltered. Both the American Psychological Association and the American Sociological Association rejected the brainwashing theory as lacking credible scholarly or scientific evidence. But the theory was exported abroad and adopted by ACM organizations as credible science. In France, the concept was modified; first in the form of “manipulation mentale” and later embedded in the concept of “abus de faiblesse” (abuse of weakness). This third-generation of brainwashing theory is based largely on the highly questionable work of French psychiatrist Jean-Marie Abgrall. Abgrall has been heavily criticized by other scholars and it has been noted that he is an ACM activist as well. But for reasons I cannot possibly explain in this limited space, the French have aggressively prosecuted and repressed sectarian religions, casting them as a threat to rational thought and a hindrance to French nationalism or “la Republique.”

Q 5. You mentioned in your book that U.S. courts now tend to bar "brainwashing" or "mind control" theories from being introduced as evidence or in expert testimony. Why is this?

A. Expert testimony advocating the “brainwashing” theory met its demise in a 1990 federal court case, *United States v. Fishman* (1990). The defendant, Steven Fishman, was a former member of the Church of Scientology charged with mail fraud. Fishman claimed he was brainwashed by the church and could not be held accountable for his actions. The court took a serious look at the scientific viability of brainwashing and determined that it did not meet federal standards for admission into court as scientific evidence. The court barred the testimony of well known “cult experts” who had for years propped up the brainwashing theory as

credible and established science. Once the government became a party in litigation and was forced to investigate the claims of brainwashing, the use of this pseudo-science in the courts was finally stopped.

Q 6. Since deprogramming is now fairly controversial, perhaps even illegal in the U.S., what is now being done by activists to dismantle new religious movements in the U.S.?

A. As we outline in the book, once organized opponents realized that the tactic of deprogramming was becoming problematic, they devised a different strategy that focused on child abuse. Given the changing social and political climate surrounding child protection in the 1980s, ACM actors seized upon a political opportunity to exploit a moral panic about threatened children. Many NRMs were well into a second generation and were vulnerable to sensational allegations of “cult child abuse.” New laws strengthening child protection had the effect of inverting the constitutional presumption of innocence since even the mere allegation of child maltreatment triggered the response of child protection agencies to investigate. Parents found themselves having to prove their innocence. The stigma of belonging to a “cult” placed them at a distinct disadvantage in the eyes of the courts and the public. We found this tactic to be significant in explaining the dramatic increase in government raids on NRMs. Beginning around 1990, a wave of raids were launched where allegations of child abuse were made, usually originating with organized opponents.

Q 7. The discussion of how the media rely upon "cult experts" was extremely insightful. What qualifies someone to be a "cult expert," and why do you suppose that the media tend to rely on these individuals rather than objective religious

scholars when reporting on new religious movements?

A. There is a curious dynamic here involving language. If one were to Google “cult” or “cult experts,” the search would produce a virtual who’s who of anticult activists and self-proclaimed experts. And it would probably not produce even a single scholar of new or nontraditional religions though there are dozens. This is because scholars have largely abandoned the term “cult” since the definition has become problematic and the concept has been hijacked by opponents and popular media. In its original formulation, the term “cult” was benign. But in recent years, “cult” has become a pejorative term. It is not an objective or impartial description of a religious group; it is a slur, a term of derision or contempt. To call a religious group a “cult” is to condemn the group as dangerous, evil, or destructive. It plays to some of the worst stereotypes imaginable (mass suicide, child abuse, sexual abuse, stockpiling weapons). Research clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of NRMs are not violent or abusive; they present no threat to their members or society. Some scholars, such as Rod Stark, have tried to reclaim or rehabilitate the term for use in sociology, but I think the effort has largely failed. So, most scholars simply opt for neutral or non-judgmental

terms like new or nontraditional religions. I have found over the years that reporters are often in a hurry to find an “expert” to comment on their story. If they haven’t already carefully cultivated contacts who are scholars and researchers in the field, they will simply go to the internet and Google “cult expert.” Reporters typically have short deadlines and they want to get the story quickly. Consequently, after a news story breaks involving an NRM, it is not uncommon to see an anticult activist masquerading as an expert on TV or quoted in a newspaper trotting out the “brainwashing” explanation or some version of it. The public is given the impression that they are hearing or reading an expert when in fact the person in question is an anticult activist engaged in a political or moral campaign.

Q 8. In your opinion, is it difficult for a new religious movement to obtain tax exempt status in the U.S.? Do you feel as though this is granted too often or not enough? Please elaborate.

A. Actually, I don’t think this has been a major problem for minority religions. The U.S. tax laws have been written very broadly and there seems to be little incentive for the IRS to use its authority to police such groups.

Happy Holidays

