

Advisory:
Speech by war-crimes denier Michael Parenti cancelled by U.S. peace group
July 1, 2012

Background: Since the early days of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, Michael Parenti, along with some other left-wing intellectuals, has misrepresented the conflict and blamed the victims of Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic-cleansing campaign. He [minimizes](#) the extent of the [Srebrenica massacre](#) of 8,000 men and boys by Serbian forces. He [questions](#) the fact that [Serbian concentration camps in Bosnia](#) were death camps. He [plays down](#) the [camps in Bosnia](#) where rape was used as an instrument of Serbian policy to demoralize the entire non-Serb population in the service of ethnic cleansing.

When a peace group in San Jose, California, recently invited Parenti to speak at a fund-raiser, the group was met with an outpouring of protest from progressive activists, groups of Bosnian survivors, and Muslim activists world-wide, as well as from some of its own members. Leaders of the peace group eventually met with survivors of the war and were shocked to hear the story from the point of view of the victims, as opposed to that of ideologues who justify Milosevic's wars. Finally, the group rescinded the invitation to Parenti.

One organization representing survivors of the war wrote to the peace group:

We acknowledge the importance of freedom of speech, however, falsifying facts and denying genocide is unacceptable and deeply traumatic for the survivors and their families who continue to suffer due to the physical and emotional trauma they underwent. ... All genocide deniers directly undermine peace and justice because the only way to peace and reconciliation is to acknowledge the truth and punish those responsible. Dr. Parenti's work and constant expression of denial is damaging to the healing process of the survivors of the genocide in Bosnia and we urge you to stand up for justice and truth and reject all affiliation with Dr. Parenti and his work.

A North American solidarity activist who has spent many years working with Bosnian survivors wrote to the group as follows:

There are times when it is appropriate to be impartial and let all voices be heard. There are other times when there can be no compromise between the need to expose and safeguard the truth, on one hand, and the freedom of speech of those whose message is destructive and, essentially, hateful. Now is one of those latter times when we must not make this compromise. Mr. Parenti has crossed the rhetorical line into atrocity denial, along the way trampling on the memory of the tens of thousands who were raped, tortured, imprisoned, and murdered for the profit of a few warlords.

What you can do: Avoid sponsoring events featuring those who deny or minimize war crimes committed against victimized populations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. Please be aware that such denial is highly offensive to Bosnian and Muslim populations in the U.S. and worldwide. Descriptions of denialist activities can be found at <http://balkanwitness.glypx.com/articles-deniers.htm> .

You can read more about this affair, including more letters from concerned human rights activists on several continents, at <http://balkanwitness.glypx.com/parenti.htm> .

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