

# Nat Hentoff Will Be Missed

Great human rights activists tend to know each other. Wednesday, Wesley J. Smith joined me on radio to talk about life, Nat Hentoff, and Wesley's [tribute](#) in National Review Online last weekend.

*Hentoff's advocacy cut a wide swath across what are often called 'the life issues.' Indeed, his unyielding stand over many years against abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, unethical human medical experimentation, and the ongoing bioethical construction of a "duty to die" has made him a moral beacon for those who believe that universal human liberty depends on society's embrace of the intrinsic equality of all human life. And for decades he...connected the dots for his vast audience, expertly charting the consequences of our steady, but. not always slow, slide down the slippery slope toward a veritable culture of death.*

NRO ran [this piece](#) the next day, by Jack Fowler, who also knew Hentoff and called him "a unique advocate for the humanity of the unborn child."

(Sounds like a very fitting commentary for today.)

Fowler published a snip from [Hentoff's column](#) on what happened at that 'free speech discussion' at Cooper Union, on whether a liberal could be pro-life.

*It was an infamous event that has seen itself repeated many times, and with great intensity, over the years; and over them, Hentoff was on hand to bear witness to the assault on free speech in places where open debate and discussion were supposed to be the rule, and to call out those who were supposed to be protectors of the First Amendment.*

Then, with the tinge of resignation that Wesley Smith expressed at the end of his tribute to this singular, Fowler posted a 1967 video of Hentoff in debate with the inimitable William F. Buckley on an episode of Firing Line. It was priceless. Though the topic of that was 'Black Power' and civil rights, defense of the vulnerable and our duty to the

poor in need, some of Hentoff's remarks were remarkably relevant to this very day's news of politics and 'culture wars'.

"Liberals seem to be amused by their own language" he said. "It's not a conspiracy, they've just stopped thinking. They don't think about things after they've talked about them."

He was sincere, knowing from whence he spoke. Continuing to explain the liberal mentality, Hentoff added: "You don't really do things, you plan things."

In [that column](#) with that video, Fowler left the reader this note, presuming readers would watch two great intellects speak, and listen, to each other for genuinely civil discourse, with conviction and respect.