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# MAC Arrow

Unitarian Universalist  
Multiracial Unity Action Council  
(UUMUAC)



“For the Unity of the  
light and dark skinned  
people of the world.”

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## **The Mission Statement**

It is the mission of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus to carry out and foster anti-racist and multiracial unity activities both within and outside the Unitarian Universalist Association through education, bearing witness and other actions, and expansion of our membership both within and outside the walls of our congregations.

We also seek to defend our UU Principles against those who seek to undermine them.

## **The Vision Statement**

We envision our congregations, denomination, and society as not being color blind but color appreciative; as judging and treating members of the world’s rank and file by the content of their character, not the color of their skin or their cultural heritage; and as treasuring diversity in the context of the “Beloved Community.” We call this vision Multiracial Unitarian Universalism.

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## THINKING ABOUT THE UUA'S ASSERTION THAT UU CULTURE IS "WHITE SUPREMACIST"

**Rev. Richard Trudeau**

The claim that UU culture is "white supremacist" was made, without evidence, by then-UUA Trustee Christina Rivera in the spring of 2017. Shortly afterward the claim was upheld, without evidence, by the three interim co-presidents of the UUA, and then endorsed, without evidence, by that year's General Assembly.

I think it is important to note how *committed* UU officials are to this unsupported claim.

In its May 5, 2022, letter to UUMUAC denying our application for a booth at GA, the UUA said that UUMUAC's mission was incompatible with "the core values or commitments of the UUA." But our mission is to use the 7 UU Principles to promote multiracial unity in our congregations (and beyond); how can that be incompatible with the core values or commitments of the UUA? To my mind the answer is that, while our *goal* is not incompatible with the proclaimed values or commitments of the UUA, our *strategy* is incompatible with the UUA's commitment to the claim that UU culture is "white supremacist."

In other words, it appears that UU officials are more upset about our denial that UU culture is "white supremacist" than they are pleased that we share their proclaimed goal of fighting racism. The UUA's *primary* commitment appears to be *not* to actually fight racism, but rather to assert that the culture of UU congregations is "white supremacist."

I find this assertion to be false. Perhaps the strongest indication that not only is it false, but that UU officials *know* it is false, is their refusal to discuss it. If they could back it up with logic or evidence, why have they not done so?

Why, then, are UU officials committed to this assertion in the first place? I suggest, because it is an *accusation* that puts the white UU majority on the defensive. It makes white UUs, who are generally an accommodating group, even more accommodating. Whites generally are horrified of being called racist. (In a sense, the r-word is the white version of the n-word.) Tell a white UU, "Do X or you are racist," and any resistance the person may have to doing X is undercut. And of course, to be considered as supporting "white supremacy" is even more horrifying to the average white than to be called racist.

"Give us 5.3 million dollars or you are racist," said BLUU in the fall of 2016. "Pay reparations or you are racist," UU officials are saying now. "Oh, and we're going to rewrite the Bylaws. We promise to invent a new UUism that is free of white supremacy. Trust us."

I can't shake the notion that the whole kerfuffle over the last five years has been, at root, a power-grab, and a scam, benefitting only a few insiders. I can't prove it, and I do not want to think it, but I confess that think it I do.

**The Day of Pentecost and the Road to Damascus —  
A Theological Analysis of the April 2022 Convocation and the Emergence of the  
Non-antagonistic Contradictions between the Left and Center Forces within  
the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Council  
By Dr. Finley C. Campbell**

Theologically speaking, our wonderful April 2022 Convocation, held on April 9, 2022, revealed the non-antagonistic contradictions which are emerging in our organization, created by the synergy between left and center forces in our organization. The focus of this our third Convocation was our theological opposition to the Proposed 8th Principle cabal and its followers with a mandate to mobilize our fellow UU's to oppose their perfidious intentions.

We had approximately 30 people in attendance, consisting both of members and friends, representing a variety of viewpoints and reflecting the national character of our organization at the present time. Our key speakers — Craig Moro, Todd Eklof, Richard Trudeau, Finley Campbell, Kelvin Sandridge, Beverly Seese — gave various interpretations on the nature of our struggles against the proposed 8th principle (p8p). During my session brotha Kelvin and I gave the following alternative to the p8p declaration, calling for it to be considered a call to action instead of a principle and with the new wording: “multiracial” rather than multicultural, “accountable to each other” rather than some abstract accountability, and using the phrase: “the historic task of eventually dismantling racism.” Most of all, we had an important dialogue expanding on the metaphor that the p8p was in fact a Trojan horse being dragged in by UU dupes into the citadel of our faith, the theological foundation/foundations of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. And we had some powerful interlude music by Sista Lia McCoo, especially as she led us to the singing of that incredible hymn which is becoming our battle cry of freedom, Rank on Rank, Number 358 in our old great hymnal.

Let us now examine the second aspect of this essay.

Being self-critical there were some negative aspects to our Convocation which I have not raised previously. Multiracial Unitarian Universalism is fundamental to our opposition to the proposed 8th principle, grounding, as we have done, the general concept of multiracial unity specifically in our Seven Principles as found in Article 2 of our by-laws. We did not make it clear that this is the only way to successfully oppose the proposed 8th principle as a form of neoracism, and not simply as a bad alternative way of fighting racism.

While our key speakers, Brotha Reverend Todd and Brotha Reverend Craig Moro, presented profound theological analysis of the background to this fraudulent concept, they, like me and Kelvin, did not underscore the role which UUMUAC has to

play in light of our Vision and Mission in leading the fight against this racist corruption of our principles, what my L'il Brotha Todd calls the endarkenment.

In addition, there was a need to have more participation from those at the Convocation who did not speak on the question of the p8p as a Trojan horse, to ascertain if they agreed with our assessment or not, to ascertain if at the end of the Convocation, they were willing to be a part of the mobilization against this danger to our historic faith.

More than that: I did not make a major call for membership, so enthralled was I by the important discussion we shared that day, for without expanding our membership based on our mission and vision as found in our brochure, we cannot effectively lead struggles against the neo-racists in our local congregations.

In Marxist-Leninist historical theism or MLHT, this is called a non-antagonistic contradiction.

The essence of the contradiction is between those who see UUMUAC as a militant anti-racist organization (the left) and those who see it as a wonderful alternative to those UUA Congregations controlled by or embroiled with the Bluunitarians and their allies (the center). The way in which God works in the universe is through dialectical materialism, the scientific philosophy which asserts that the universe is governed by the creation and resolution of contradictions, a process rooted in the heart of the atom itself. When a contradiction is resolved in such a way that it leads to a peaceful resolution (called synergy), then it is called non-antagonistic; when the contradiction leads to synergy through violent resolution, it is called antagonistic.

Our non-antagonistic contradiction is between those who see our mission and vision as our paramount motivation for our work: the expansion of UUMUAC as an organization dedicated to the elimination of the power of racism as an ideology controlling the minds, hearts, and souls (consciousness) of millions and millions of people, trapped in the illusion that "race" actually exists and that it is the determining force of human history, rather than class struggle. On the other side are those who have joined us either out of desperation created by the neoracist conquest of their own UU congregations or in outrage at a world where racial / national conflicts seem total and see us as a refuge from that reality, or, quite possibly, because we are a wonderful gathering of Unitarian Universalists committed to the great traditions laying behind the social humanist vision which we tried to implement with the merger in 1961.

The essential action which shapes the work of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity ACTION Council is our promulgation of our mission and vision among the rank and file — workers, students, and professionals —of the world — through words and deeds, by being an organized, faith-driven force, engaged in theological struggle against racism in all its vicious forms.

In other words, as we exist today, as revealed by Convocation 2022, we are a center-left organization in which we on the left see our future as becoming a mass, abolitionist organization, a third abolitionist organization: committed to abolishing the **ideological** power of neo-racism as the first step in liberating the UUAC from the control of the Afrocentric neo-racist cabal presently controlling the UUA

## UU Reparations You Never Heard About

Wesley V. Hromatko, D.Min.

© June 19, 2021

<sup>3</sup> But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”<sup>[a]</sup>

Matthew 6:3-4 New Revised Standard Version

For former slaves there was aid and some measure of Government reparations resulting from the establishment of the Freedmen’s (sic) Bureau and the private reparations of the Unitarians and Universalists.

The Freedmen’s Bureau built hospitals and schools and provided food and medical care for former slaves. Its biggest success was in education. Now forgotten and unknown to most people it really was an effort of restorative justice and reparations. It did not, however, give the land of the slave holders over to the freed slaves owing to President Johnson’s veto. There were some reparations, but the expectations were greater than the reality.

Unitarians and Universalists Volunteers went south to work in the Freedmen’s (sic) schools after the war in the time of the first Klan, who were still fighting for the lost cause and its structural racism. It was dangerous to be a teacher in the south, because they were trying to build a new and better educational structure. Even with all the war losses and expense of the Sanitary Commission, Unitarians and Universalists went south and the AUA contributed as an organization to help those who had been freed.

While it is clear that Universalists as a whole supported every law that would give the freed equality with other citizens, it is much harder than the case of the Unitarians to put a monetary value on their efforts. Funds were collected as well as volunteers, but how much was collected through churches and conventions is hard to know and there is room for more research.

Those who went south to work with the Bureau for former slaves discovered that the education of the white population was often just as bad as for the freed slaves, and they also tried to improve or establish schools for everyone. Universalist Rev. W. N.V an de Mark, former Chaplain of the 92<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry became the head administrator of the Freedman’s Bureau for Louisiana and was the Superintendent of the New Orleans Negro Schools with 14000 pupils For the Unitarians Rev. Mayo, for example, worked to improve schools in Cincinnati. As we had for the Union soldiers, we sent boxes of books to schools. The 1868 aid for former slaves from the American Unitarian Association, as an institution, **was administered by AME, African Methodist Episcopal** churches, just as our Service Committee in our time has worked through local existing organizations. By



one measure the value of the aid in today's dollars "... would be the same proportion of output as measured by **GDP** that **\$10,730,070.53** is today." The majority of the aid was for what are now traditionally black colleges such as Wilberforce, and Hampton. Professors from Antioch, including President George Hosmer, came to teach at Wilberforce.

Years later Gene Reeves, who was once Meadville President, told me a story about his experience with Wilberforce. As a new Ph.D. he was having a hard time finding a teaching post. Having failed at other colleges he decided to try to apply to Wilberforce. In the interview he was asked if he was a Unitarian. His heart sank because the University was A.M.E. He said yes because he was one of us. He was then warmly welcomed by the interviewer, who said that they remembered Unitarians had given them books and professors to start Wilberforce.

On July 4, 1881 and for the first 8 years it was given 6,000 dollars a year. Tuskegee Institute was given \$11,274,799.83 by individual Unitarians and churches but it was not a project of the A.U.A. as the 1868 effort was. The amount from Unitarians went up to \$10,000 a year.. When the contributions stopped is not known to me. The amounts seem astronomical. If you find errors on my part let me know. We seem to have been then far wealthier than we are today.

To these past efforts must be added those closer to our time. There was the important social settlement movement. In Chicago there was the Abraham Lincoln Center, open to all. Also, the Universalist Unity House in Minneapolis where Henry Fonda worked. He continued to donate for years. Others could be named, like Chicago's Ryder House that became the Darrow Center in 1960. The Universalist Service Committee aided in desegregation in the Civil Rights years. We cannot forget all the money raised for the now free-standing Chicago Children's Choir which started in 1956. I have no idea of how much money was raised and spent on these efforts to bring people together. To the total would have to be added the money actually spent in 1968 and the recent 5.3-million-dollar contribution to BLUU.

(Note: If you would like to receive a footnoted copy, write to the editor)

**I sent this to the UUA Board,  
with a copy to the COIC and to Carey McDonald.  
Dick Burkhart**

- I. The UUA Board should not be relying on the "The Widening the Circle of Concern" report from the Commission on Institutional Change. This report implies substantial and widespread harm in the UUA to BIPOC but provides no data to support this view. In fact, it appears to be more an assumption than a conclusion. See the analysis at the bottom by UU statistician Allan Pallay. I agree with his analysis, as a Ph.D. mathematician specializing in applied math and computing and as a science generalist.

The information presented in the COIC report is almost entirely what statisticians call “anecdotal”. As Allan says, this only supports “reasonable evidence that there is some degree of problems in this area”, not evidence that it is substantial or widespread. The basic problem here is that the 1,100 UUs who answered the call for testimony are not a random sample of UUs, or even of UUs of color.

The COIC called for “stories of how racism has effected your experience as a Unitarian Universalist” (p xxi), guaranteeing a highly biased sample. Even many BIPOC UUs might not feel like responding, not just because it would be painful for some but because others have learned to either brush off routine racial biases or as opportunities to build shared understanding rather than to show resentment. And some non-BIPOC UUs may have experiences, clearly not sought by the COIC, where they felt they were falsely accused of racism or where they learned about their misconceptions or about BIPOC sensitivities in an appreciative way.

In other words, it is clear from the biased methodology that the COIC came into this project with a very strong prejudgment as to the prevalence of racism in the UUA, assuming that this is the reason for the small number of BIPOC in most UU congregations. It only sought anecdotal stories to validate these assumptions.

That is, this was an exercise in “confirmation bias”, perhaps fearing that an unbiased methodology would reveal the far more complex and nuanced pictures typical of the social sciences, instead of the binary and linear views favored by ideologies like Critical Race Theory. Ironically, this resort to confirmation bias, in addition to my own experience and general knowledge, has convinced me that racism is not likely prevalent in the UUA.

II. Anecdotal stories which illustrate statistical results are extremely useful and are a staple of good journalism. In addition anecdotal stories may point to the need for statistical studies, which powers science. But anecdotal stories are no substitute for good statistical studies. That is, if your assumed or speculated diagnosis is wrong, then the corresponding actions are likely to fail, or even be counterproductive. I think that’s situation we are in right now. In particular the UUA has failed to account for many issues of class and culture, which many of us with decades of experience have concluded are more important than race in most UU settings today.

Therefore I recommend that the UUA go back to square one – a big study, guided by the goals neutrality and objectivity, conducted by an outside body with the specific purpose of developing a rigorous and unbiased statistical understanding of problems of race and class, and of all other cultural factors that impact race and class. Statistics can identify the relative importance of different factors in addition to the correlations between them. This would include breakdowns by age, region, gender, ethnicity, social politics, religious orientation, church size and setting and practices related to race and class, and anything else that might be relevant.

Then surveys and interviews and focus groups should ask questions that are relevant to the full range of UUs, not just BIPOC, to capture the full diversity of views, understandings, and misunderstandings, steering clear of ideology and partisan agendas. The goal should be a report that most UUs would see as fair, balanced, and highly informative – the basis of an open and honest dialogue that would aim at learning, not finger pointing. That’s how real “truth and reconciliation” works, as Nelson Mandela realized as he matured.

Only then should recommendations be developed - by a different outside group, but one with more organizational and UU expertise. This must have input from the full diversity of UUs, engaging in a variety of small groups and congregations, over an extended period of time, with full exposure to pros and cons, aiming toward well-informed agreement. If one black musician, Daryl Davis, can convert hundreds of the KKK to racial justice, mostly just by listening respectfully, then finding common ground, why can't we treat our own members with such respect?

III. The current campaign for the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> principle shows exactly how not to do it: That is, the cons are being actively suppressed at both the national and the congregational level. Instead, the Kenneth Ing video ([https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u1CbaGcJ\\_gPdbtYASmUZECO1h08-ldnP/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u1CbaGcJ_gPdbtYASmUZECO1h08-ldnP/view)) should be distributed to all congregations with the suggestion that it be shown and discussed as the “con” view in conjunction with the usual “pro” speeches, followed by open dialogue and debate. Today's UUA comes across as both a partisan and authoritarian one-party rule that is defeating its own purposes, as it is directly violating both our 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> principles, coming from an ideologically based misdiagnosis of the problems.

Likewise the Article II Study Commission continues to flounder, without directly stating alternative proposals, followed by dialogue and debates on their pros and cons, followed by revised proposals and more pros and cons, etc. They even claim that we are a “covenantal faith”, which is not true. That is, our only covenant in the current article II is to our 7 principles, which are aspirational, unlike the authoritarian doctrines of other faiths or the Hebrew covenant with God.

Nor do most UUs want to worry about claims that they are “out-of-covenant” for disagreeing with the ideology or politics of the accusers, a popular tactic in the UUA cancel culture. In fact, this would require a whole new legal process to adjudicate fairly, to be consistent with our 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> principles.

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IV. If the UUA wants to become part of the solution, not the problem (identity politics and the culture wars), then a good way is now clear: Across society, from Left to Right, an increasing number of people are yearning for real engagement with others, to get out of their social media bubbles, to create new and more positive forms of civil and visionary discourse.

Yes, this can be emotionally uncomfortable at times, given our strong ideological indoctrination, but otherwise we'll succumb to elite divide and conquer tactics. This will escalate conflict both locally and globally, even renewed warfare and forms of civilizational collapse as the world reaches its limits-to-growth.

We could do no better than to re-invigorate our 7 principles and openly reject those aspects of Critical Race Theory which subvert these principles, especially in Article II and the bylaws. Yet we also need a new congregational welcoming program for principled dissidents of all stripes, not just the woke – citizens who are committed to a new historically and globally aware discourse. The national UU groups I help lead are already making good



progress in this direction.

**Dick Burkhardt**

## **How to Make Universities Mediocre**

**JUNE 2, 2022 / DAVID CYCLEBACK**

*Examining an intolerant and illiberal culture on some American campuses*

There has been much talk about illiberalism and “woke intolerance” in institutions, with the focus here on universities. There is no question that censorship, illiberalism and intolerance have long existed within the political far right. However, such qualities are now also associated with social justice and identity politics areas within the far left. New York University social psychology professor Jonathan Haidt said, “Most people are horrified at what’s going on at universities.” (MTC 2016)

The following are several of the more egregious recent examples of illiberalism on campuses:

Skidmore College student activists called for the firing of and boycotting the classes of art professor David Peterson because he observed a Pro Police rally. They also called for the firing of his wife even though she was not employed by the university. Peterson said he and his wife didn’t go to support the rally but to watch out of curiosity. (Churchill 2020) (Soave 2020)

Local newspaper reporter Chris Churchill wrote: “A supposedly damning photo of the Petersons circulated by students shows them standing at the rally, which was advertised as a ‘positive, all-inclusive event’ designed to humanize and support officers. The Petersons weren’t wearing pro-police T-shirts. They weren’t carrying a banner, holding a sign or waving a black-and-blue flag. They appear to just be listening. But merely listening to an opinion that some Skidmore students find objectionable is apparently enough to get a professor in hot water.” (Churchill 2020)

UCLA accounting professor Gordon Klein was suspended and publicly called out by the Business School Dean because he told a student that he would not grade black students differently nor delay their tests following the George Floyd riots in Minneapolis. The university’s Faculty Code of Conduct prohibits the failure to hold exams as scheduled and to evaluate students other than their course performance and engaging in race-based discrimination. Klein said, “I was following university policy meticulously in refusing to discriminate.” (Morey 2020) (Klein 2020) (UCLA 2019) St. Olaf College philosophy professor David R. Anderson was the Director of the school’s Institute for Freedom and Community. With a slogan of “Dialogue that opens minds,” the institute’s mission is to bring in prominent speakers to expose students to heterodox ideas. Anderson was removed as director after a group of students protested that they didn’t like some of the views of speaker Peter Singer, a Princeton bioethics professor and one of the world’s preeminent moral philosophers. (Morey 2022)

A headline was, “St. Olaf ousts faculty director of institute dedicated to bringing controversial speakers to campus — because speakers caused controversy.”

University of Chicago climate scientist Dorian Abbot co-wrote with Stanford professor Ivan Marinovic an Op-Ed piece arguing for meritocracy in student admissions, faculty hiring and the bestowing of awards. This is a position held by the majority of Americans. Student activists petitioned for Abbot to be removed from a position, and under pressure from a Twitter campaign, MIT canceled a prestigious annual public science lecture he was scheduled to give. (Abbot 2021) (Small 2021) (Abbot & Marinovic)

Scholar Robert P. George wrote that the decision to cancel Abbot’s lecture was “chilling to academic freedom and free speech.” (Sobey 2021)

University of Southern California business school foreign languages professor Greg Patton was publically called out by the Dean and removed from teaching for using in lecture the Mandarin word for “that” ( 那个, pronounced nà ge or nèige) that sounds similar to an English-language racial epithet. He had taught the class dozens of times over ten years with no complaint. (McGahan 2020) (Agrawal 2020) (Nakagome 2020)

The irony was that, as USC has a large ethnic Chinese population, there was a backlash against the university’s actions. Ethnic Chinese on campus and beyond decried it as anti-Asian bigotry with the professor being punished for speaking Chinese. It made newspaper headlines in China, and Chinese graduates of the business school signed a letter likening the university’s actions to Mao’s Cultural Revolution. (Volokh 2020) (Stevens 2020)

Further, a survey showed how outraged and scared were many of Patton’s fellow professors. Quotes from the survey included:

“There was no judge, jury, or anything, only cancellation. If faculty with long records of good performance can lose reputation in a flash or parts of their job for this kind of 5-second mix up, which can happen to anybody by accident given how much material we have to cover, it means we will become a society where people always talk slow, prescreen every word, and take the safest possible route on everything they say. By nature, that will make us irrelevant.”

“It makes me frightened to teach students who can have a faculty member removed for giving an innocuous example in another language. It makes me feel like the dean’s office is willing to throw faculty under the bus in order [to] preserve the appearance of diversity and inclusion instead of opening up dialogues on both sides.”

“I will never teach about anything having to do with diversity, or touching on anything having to do with diversity, if I can at all help it. It will clearly get me fired, regardless of how well I do it.”

:The question is if these and other instances of overreaction and sometimes ridiculousness are aberrations or are they representative of a general trend.

Veronique de Rugy and Tevi Troy of George Mason University's Mercatus Center and Samuel Abrams of Sarah Lawrence University see a widespread increase in campus intolerance. However, Columbia University political science professor Jeffrey Adams Sachs does not. Haidt sees a rise in illiberalism but sees it primarily in East Coast elite schools, including Ivy League schools, and in areas of the West Coast. Haidt also wrote, "The academic world in the social sciences is a monoculture – except in economics, which is the only social science that has some real diversity. Anthropology and sociology are the worst — those fields seem to be really hostile and rejecting toward people who aren't devoted to social justice." (Troy 2021) (Morey 2020) (Sachs 2019) (MTG 2016)

Polls have shown that professors are increasingly politically left. However, professors' political persuasions are not an inherent problem when the professors and schools allow a diversity of views and debate. I studied at a famously progressive private university and in a humanities department with a clear political and ideological slant. The professors and classes not only allowed but encouraged debate and the expression of a diversity of ideas. Well argued dissent and outside-the-box thinking were rewarded. (PRI 2019)

Polls show that "intolerance is on the rise" among university students. Incoming freshmen are more willing to shut down speech they find offensive and more willing to ban extreme speakers. In turn, a survey showed that 80 percent of students self-censor out of fear of being criticized or called out. A liberal arts college professor wrote that "not a week goes by that I don't hear from frustrated students who feel they cannot speak freely." (HERI 2019) (Rampell 2016) (Harden 2021) (Abrams 2021)

### **Such illiberalism, censorship and intolerance are bad for students, education and research**

Liberalism, freedom of speech and the exchange of a diversity of ideas are essential for a university and education. They are necessary for creativity and learning. Students must learn to listen to and consider different opinions and views. This is how they expand their minds, how they become prepared for the multicultural world. Studies have shown that students who have friends with different views become more tolerant and open-minded. (Higher Ed 2020)

Such freedom of thought and inquiry is necessary for academic research and science. Social psychologist and research fellow Sean Stevens writes about the new illiberalism: "Research and scholarship will suffer . . . Why place one's job, or even one's career, at risk by investigating a politically controversial topic or worse, publishing a finding that reaches a conclusion that is politically unpalatable to most of your colleagues?" (Stevens 2021)

### **What are the Causes Beyond the New Illiberalism and Intolerance?**

Psychologists, sociologists, political scientists and philosophers have identified the following intertwined influences behind the new “woke” intolerance and illiberalism on some campuses.

### **The Infantilization of Students**

Everyone should be aware of racism and other bigotry including in the dominant culture and language. We all have much to learn, we must listen and be sensitive to others’ perspectives and experiences. However, sensitivity can move to the extremes of fanaticism.

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt says that safe spaces, excessive focus on microaggressions and the idea of being emotionally “harmed” by words and ideas are not only bad for campuses and education but students’ health. He said campuses that are illiberal and intolerant are emotionally and educationally stunting young people. Haidt and education lawyer Greg Lukinoff have written extensively about this in the book *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. (Haidt 2018)

This is all done in the name of emotional well-being. Students are being raised and taught to be emotionally fragile and immature and that they must be protected from the normal tribulations of everyday life.

Haidt says that students and young people have been taught that their subjective emotional reasoning or feelings are truth and that it is wrong and harmful for these feelings to be countered. Minorities’ subjective opinions are treated as indisputable “truth-telling,” and activists say it causes “harm” to even question their truths or ask for evidence. This leads to a stifling of debate and inquiry, and a lack of due process in disputes. In the earlier examples, the professors were often punished without hearing or being able to tell their side of the story. For the administrators, subjective claims of “harm” from a small group of students were all that was needed.

Not only is the climate bad for learning, but it is for the students mental health. Young people must be exposed to a diversity of ideas, views and challenges to grow into emotionally healthy and resilient people. Teaching young people that their subjective feelings are unquestionable truths is not only clearly false but is child abuse, leaving them unable to function and cope in the real world where not everyone will agree with or defer to them and where they will not always be correct. It contributes to mental health problems including anxiety, depression and cognitive distortion. (Haidt 2018) (Haidt 2019)

It becomes so extreme that a population of students demand trigger warnings to prevent them from encountering words and ideas they don’t like.

Harvard law students asked professors not to teach rape law and not even use the word violation, as in “a violation of the law”, because it might cause distress. Law students called for the firing of University of Illinois Chicago professor Jason Kilborne because he used witness court testimony on a test that included a redacted racial epithet and redacted word ‘bitch.’ He

2014) (Jacobson 2021)

Harvard law professor Jeannie Suk Gerson compared this all to trying to teach “a medical student who is training to be a surgeon but who fears that he’ll become distressed if he sees or handles blood.” ( Gerson 2014)

### **A Culture of Victimhood**

Sociology Professors Bradley Campbell, of Californian State University Los Angeles, and Jason Manning, of the University of West Virginia, have researched and written extensively how there is a new victimhood culture on campuses and elsewhere. (Campbell and Manning 2018)

They have written how social justice activists have created a new caste system, where those who deem themselves most “marginalized” are morally and socially superior to others. Haidt identifies the groups that are currently treated as sacred: racial minorities, LGBTs, Latinos, Native Americans, people with disabilities, and Muslims. White, heterosexual males are at the bottom. An individual’s place in the caste system and the value of one’s opinions are not based on personal character or merit, but such things as the color of one’s skin, ethnicity or gender. (Friedersdorf 2020) (Campbell & Manning 2018)

Hallmarks of victimhood culture are taking offense and expressing outrage at perceived microaggressions, censorship of opposing views and trying to prevent heterodox speakers, demanding safe spaces, politically correct language, publicly calling out and shaming perceived heretics and characterizing people with different views as immoral. (Friedersdorf 2020) (Campbell & Manning 2018)

Campbell and Manning wrote: “The combination of high sensitivity with dependence on others encourages people to emphasize or exaggerate the severity of offenses. There’s a corresponding tendency to emphasize one’s degree of victimization, one’s vulnerability to harm, and one’s need for assistance and protection. People who air grievances are likely to appeal to such concepts as disadvantage, marginality, or trauma, while casting the conflict as a matter of oppression . . . The result is that this culture also emphasizes a particular source of moral worth: victimhood. Victim identities are deserving of special care and deference. Contrariwise, the privileged are morally suspect if not deserving of outright contempt. Privilege is to victimhood as cowardice is to honor.” (Lehman 2018)

Former Yale professor William Deresiewicz writes that, unlike Vietnam War protests in the 1960s, the campus social justice crusaders are not protesting against institutional authority but appealing to it. This relates to the childlike fragility described by Haidt. Haidt writes that in normal interpersonal conflicts such appealing to authority “makes sense in situations when you’re talking about children; when reaching adulthood, however, students and potential employees should be able to navigate social interactions (even unpleasant but not harassing ones) themselves.” (Deresiewicz 2015) (Haidt and Lukianoff 2021)



Professors and social critics John McWhorter, of Columbia University, and Glenn Loury, of Brown University, say that, unlike previous civil rights movements and social justice movements outside the United States, these students peculiarly portray themselves as weak, not strong and resilient. The professors say the claims of harm and the need for emotional protection and safe places often are transparent performances to gain power and social status. Virtue signaling is defined as a hollow public display to raise one's social and perceived moral status over others. (Loury & McWhorter 2022)

Education scholar George Leef writes, "Once students figured out that declaring themselves to be victims of an evil society gave them a great deal of power, a culture of victimhood rapidly spread across our college campuses." (Leef 2021)

Viewing one's identity primarily and inescapably as a victim is mentally unhealthy and dysfunctional, contributing to depression, anxiety and other disorders. Teaching children a victim mentality and to view the world and people through a binary "victim versus oppressor" lens is a form of child abuse setting them up for a lifetime of failure, unhappiness and unhealthy relationships. (WebMD 2022)

### **Social Justice Ideologies That Are Illiberal and Dogmatic**

Extreme social justice activists not only use the victimhood caste system but present their ideologies as dogma. Critical race theory argues that logic, reason, the scientific method and traditional Western Enlightenment methods of debate and inquiry are methods historically used by the dominant culture to maintain power, and thus should be rejected. Dogmatic scholar-activists such as Ibram X. Kendi and Robin DiAngelo present their views as unquestionable truths, with Kendi saying it is "racist" to disagree and DiAngelo saying it is 'fragility' to question her theories.

As critical race theory believes dominant voices should be "decentered" and "deplatformed," many critical race theorists argue for the suppression of freedom of speech and expression. Professor Chris Damaske writes in the First Amendment Encyclopedia, "In general, (CRT) scholars argue that there is no societal value in protecting speech that targets already oppressed groups. They also question the logic of using the First Amendment to protect speech that not only has no social value but also is socially and psychologically damaging to minority groups." (Demaske 2020)

Dogmatic and zealous adoption of these ideologies, such as has happened on some university campuses, clamp down on standard educational methods of debate, free inquiry and exchange of ideas.

### **Hyperpartisanship**

Compounding all this, things have become "us versus them" hyperpartisan in much of American society, with some students believing that people with dissenting views are not just wrong but bad and immoral. It is easier to silence and punish people and

views deemed immoral.

A 2020 Scientific American report noted that many Americans have “ a basic abhorrence for their opponents—an ‘othering’ in which a group conceives of its rivals as wholly alien in every way. This toxic form of polarization has fundamentally altered political discourse, public civility and even the way politicians govern.” In her New York Times column *America Has a Scorn Problem*, Anglican Priest Trish Warren Harrison wrote, “We find one another repugnant — not just wrong but bad. Our rhetoric casts the arguments of others as profound moral failings.” (Aschwanden 2020) (Pew 2019) (Harrison 2021)

There are important and insightful thinkers all along the political spectrum. Even though you aren’t going to agree with everything they say, it is an intellectual loss to not listen to and learn from the sharp minds on the other side of the aisle.

### **The power of Twitter and other social media platforms**

All of the incidents described at the beginning involved Twitter campaigns to call out, shame and try to punish the professors, and campus administrators who reacted out of fear of the Twitter campaigns.

These social media campaigns come from a small minority of students and activists. The Pew Research Center reported that 10 percent of Twitter users make 80 percent of the tweets. Of that ten percent, users are more likely to be younger, Democrats, politically active, more highly educated and women. Studies have shown how Twitter movements can be controlled by a small but vocal minority unrepresentative of the larger population and how manipulative and corrosive this is to society and discourse. (Pew 2019) (Schlosser 2015) (Haidt 2019) (Zimmerman 2021) (O’Sullivan 2021) (Friedman 2018)

Writes McWhorter: “I think the spark for the current situation is perhaps more mundane than we’d like to think. I don’t think that for some reason everybody went crazy. I don’t think it’s because of the president we happen to have in office. I think it’s social media. Social media, especially when you have it in your pocket in the form of the iPhone, allows bubbles of consensus to come together such that you can whip people up in a way that was not possible a generation before, or even ten years before.” (Friederdorf 2020)

### **University Administrators as Enablers**

A key problem isn’t the students, but that they are enabled by administrators. Undergrads are young. The school presidents, deans and other administrators are supposed to be the adults in the room. However, administrators fear bad publicity and see students as paying customers to be catered to. (Handa 2021)

Samuel Abrams, a political science professor and advisory council member of the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), additionally argues that many administrators belong to an ideological monoculture, with over half having education degrees

where they were schooled in the same pedagogical theories. (Abrams 2021) (Morey 2020)

Responding to MIT's cancellation of Dorian Abbot's lecture, MIT chemical engineering professor Bernhardt Trout wrote that "upper administration would clearly have just wanted to cancel Professor Abbot and be done with it and only spoke in defense of speech because of pushback from the community." (Sorey 2021)

### **This New Culture Is Bad for Communities**

Communities where people and their social and moral worth are seen by the color of their skin, gender or nationality, and not by their personal character and merit, are what societies should be moving beyond. Caste systems should be relics of the past.

Communities that do not allow the expression of a diversity of thought, communities where people are intimidated into silence and unable to express their personal truths, are unhealthy and dysfunctional. It is oppressive of minorities themselves, suppressing the diversity of voices, experiences and views within each racial, ethnic, gender and other demographic.

Suppressing the diversity of ideas, debate and the consideration of different ideas is bad in a myriad of ways. Forced conformity through shaming, punishment and censorship should not be tolerated anywhere, but especially in places of learning and education.

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## **Replace ‘Deference Politics’ by ‘Constructive Politics’**

a review by Dick Burkhardt of

### **Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (And Everything Else)**

By Olufemi Taiwo (2022)

This marvelous and readable little book takes a deep dive into today’s identity politics and dares to say “The Emperor Has No Clothes”. Taiwo, though raised in the US and well-schooled in racial identity, comes from a Nigerian family and brings a welcome African point of view, steeped in the history of liberation— both US and post-colonial Africa.



Taiwo notes, contrary to the proverb, that emotional trauma or pain is often a poor teacher, whether born of oppression or not: Its “suffering is partial, short-sighted, and self-absorbed”. That is, “oppression is not a prep school”. Automatically deferring to identity victims is asking them “to shoulder burdens alone that we ought to share collectively”...instead of “lifting of lifting them onto a pedestal in order to hide below them” (p 120).

“Deference politics” is the doctrine, associated with Critical Theory, that individuals from groups identified as oppressive (European or “white”) must defer to selected individuals from groups identified as victimized (black or other people of color). For example, “white allies” must hold themselves “accountable to” designated people of color in all relevant organizational decision making, deferring to the “lived experience” of those individuals, especially experiences identified as harmful or oppressive. “The cunning of trauma politics is that it turns actual people and struggles ... into matters of injury..., not by their aspirations or sheer humanity” (p 120).

An even bigger objection by Taiwo to deference politics is that those “designated people of color” who are “in the room” of conferencing and decision making, are rarely representative members of their identity groups. Instead they are elite members (by education, status, etc) who tend to represent their own or class interests more than majority interests. This is especially true when those elite members are not elected or otherwise held accountable by a formal democratic process.

Hence the book title “Elite Capture”. These elites use tactics like “performing symbolic identity politics to pacify protesters without enacting material reforms” (p 5), also efforts to “rebrand existing institutions” without carefully engineered change. He also quotes a Marxist that identity politics “is an essential tool utilized by the bourgeoisie to maintain its class domination over the working class by keeping workers divided along racial and gender lines” (p 6).

In contrast, Taiwo’s “constructive politics” is far more demanding, asking us to become “planners, designers, and builders” of both infrastructure and institutions and “to be accountable to those who are not yet in the room” (p 118). Many would include future generations in that room, not just those who struggle today, and using the best methods of social science to get an unbiased representation of the majority.

In addition to this wakeup call to activists who think they’ve found the “truth”, Taiwo narrates some lesser-known but illuminating history to illustrate “constructive politics”. For the US he tells us about Edward F. Frazier and his controversial 1957 book “Black Bourgeoisie” about class in black politics. Then about educational reformer Carter G. Woodson and the psychology of elite capture.

From Africa we learn fascinating history about notable activists and intellectuals like Amilcar Cabral (Guinea-Bissau, a former Portuguese colony on the mid-coast of West Africa) and Lilia Boal (Cape Verde, islands off the coast just north of Guinea-Bissau, also a former Portuguese colony). Both colonies were important to the Atlantic slave trade. Both of these leaders played important roles in colonial liberation (finally in 1974 for Guinea-Bissau and in 1975 for Cape Verde), illustrating constructive politics.

Taiwo summarizes his thesis: “To opt for deference, instead of interdependence, may soothe short term psychological wounds. But it does so at a steep cost; it may undermine the goals that motivated the project – and it entrenches a politics that does not serve those fighting for freedom over privilege, for collective liberation over mere parochial advantage” (p 82).

