

BATTLE

FOR ACADEMIC

FREEDOM



BY DAVID HOROWITZ

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Battle for Academic Freedom

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1. The Battle for the Bill of Rights

(Why the Academic Bill of Rights Is Necessary and Why Only Legislation Will Make It Possible)

I spent the beginning of October visiting universities in the state of Colorado, where I had gone to promote the Academic Bill of Rights, a document designed to take politics out of the university curriculum and to protect the right of students to get an education rather than an indoctrination. In practice, this meant that I was throwing down the gauntlet to the tenured leftists who have colonized the faculties of American colleges and turned American campuses into their political base. Not coincidentally in the weeks preceding my trip, the Academic Bill of Rights had become the focus of a fierce political battle in Colorado and the chief education issue in the state.

The cause of the furor was a media leak which revealed that I had met months earlier with Governor Bill Owens and Senate Majority Leader John Andrews and that Senator Andrews was planning legislation based on the bill. The mischief started with a news feature that appeared on September 6, by *Rocky Mountain News* reporter Peggy Lowe called “GOP Takes On Leftist Education.”

Lowe reported that, “Top Republican legislators, are working on a plan that would require Colorado colleges and universities to seek more conservatives in faculty hiring, more classics in the curriculum and more ‘intellectual pluralism’ among campus speakers.” The only truth in these claims was the last one. The Academic Bill of Rights does call for pluralism in the selection of speakers. It does not call for affirmative action for conservatives. In fact it stipulates that academic hires should be made on merit and forbids the hiring of anyone on the basis of his or her political viewpoint: “All faculty shall be hired, fired, promoted and granted tenure on the basis of their competence... No faculty shall be hired or fired or denied tenure or promotion on the basis of his or her political or religious beliefs.”

Contrary to the Rocky Mountain news story, the Academic Bill of Rights does not call for more classics in the curriculum either.

Instead, it clearly states that, “curricula and reading lists in the humanities and social sciences should reflect the uncertainty and unsettled character of all human knowledge in these areas by providing students with dissenting sources and viewpoints where appropriate.... Academic disciplines should welcome a diversity of approaches to unsettled questions.” In other words, assigned reading texts should *not* reflect only one point of view.

In short, the Academic Bill of Rights is an *anti*-quota bill, designed to challenge quotas presently imposed on by an academic establishment dramatically skewed to the left side of the political spectrum. How dramatically? Two reports recently released by the Center for the Study of Popular Culture reveal that 93.6% of the faculty at Colorado University (Boulder) and 98% of the faculty at Denver University who registered in political primaries were Democrats, a distribution that clearly suggests a bias in the system of training and hiring academic faculty. A previous report by the Center showed that the average ratio of Democrats to Republicans on 32 elite colleges was 10 to 1 and in some schools was as high as 30-1.

On September 9, the other major Colorado news source, the *Denver Post* followed the *Rocky Mountain News*' distorted account with a lead editorial called, “Absurdity In Higher Ed,” which began by asking, “When is a quota not a quota? When it benefits Republicans, it seems.” According to the *Post* editors, “The same party that’s been squawking over race-based college admissions now apparently wants universities to check voter-registration rolls when hiring faculty to ensure more conservatives are added to the ranks.”

Not only was this utterly false, but the *Post* editors had gotten their facts exactly backwards. Republicans and conservatives were opposed both to liberal race quotas *and* to liberal quotas that restricted non-liberals and their ideas to a marginal representation on college campuses. The Academic Bill of Rights was designed to promote equal opportunity and thus intellectual diversity. It was liberals who were pushing agendas that were contradictory. They supported quotas based on race, but were outraged by the idea of quotas if that would mean a diversity of views on college campuses.

The same day the *Post* editorial appeared, the *Rocky Mountain News* ran a story headlined “Democrats call Academic Bill of Rights McCarthyism.” The false story that liberals had concocted was apparently spreading. “Democrats lashed out Monday at a GOP plan to get more Republicans on Colorado’s college campuses, calling it academic McCarthyism and quotas for conservatives,” the article began. The Democrats’ Senate Minority Leader, Joan Fitz-Gerald, denounced the bill as “affirmative action for conservative Republicans, to get them into universities,” and warned: “There is something chilling and troubling about a movement like this. They’re going to create a climate of fear in our universities, fear of being the professor who says the wrong thing.” In fact the Academic Bill of Rights does just the opposite: it explicitly *defends* professors’ absolute rights to say the wrong thing, and forbids administrations or legislatures from punishing them for their political opinions.

For an entire week, liberal columnists across Colorado had a field day attacking the “quotas,” allegedly required by the bill of rights. Meanwhile, a hundred faculty members demonstrating for a faculty union at Metro State Denver College added the bill of rights to their grievance list. Their leader, Joan Foster, who was also head of the Metro Faculty Senate called for an investigation into the “secret meeting” I was alleged to have had with Governor Owens to discuss the bill. This secret meeting was as mythological as the quotas supposed to be embedded in the bill of itself. My office had made an appointment with the governor and I walked in the front door of his office to spend a half hour with him, a privilege of ordinary citizens. It wasn’t as though I was the Oil and Gas Lobby.

This surreal media circus was interrupted on September 16, by an editorial appearing in the *Rocky Mountain News*. Written by editor Vince Carroll, it was titled “Tone the Rhetoric Down” and actually attempted to set the record straight. After rehearsing the Democrat charges against the Academic Bill of Rights, Carroll pointed out that, in fact, it would do “none” of the things claimed: “The Academic Bill of Rights advocates precisely the opposite of political litmus tests,” he explained. The *News* printed excerpts from the

bill of rights to prove the point. But this dose of reality had almost no effect on the bill's opponents, who continued their scorched earth tactics and bizarre attacks.

Two weeks after the *Rocky Mountain News* editorial appeared, I arrived in Denver to give a speech at Metro State College. As is often the case when I arrive on the scene, the left at Metro State had prepared an event to illustrate exactly the problem I had come to speak about. When I got to the campus, a demonstration to protest my speech—in advance of my speech—was already in progress.

The leader of the demonstration was a leftist named Felicia Woodson, who also served as the Metro State student body president. Woodson appealed to the crowd: “Why was he even allowed to come to campus to speak?” To which one heckler responded, “Free speech.”

The Auraria campus of the Colorado university system is built on the site of a defunct gold mining camp and houses three colleges—Metro State College Denver, University Colorado at Denver and Colorado Community College. These public institutions are presumably dedicated to educational agendas—opening minds and exposing them to a marketplace of ideas. Yet here was a protest to close down that marketplace for a speaker who had been invited by students—and in fact by the official student activities board—to talk about academic freedom.

That students should think it appropriate to protest a speech they hadn't heard was itself a problem. But where were the adults?

In fact, they were on the platform leading the protest. Most prominent among them were Joan Foster, the head of the Faculty Senate and Jim Martin, a trustee of the University of Colorado system. Their presence as leaders and sponsors of the protest showed just how confused some educators have become about the educational mission.

This spectacle naturally provided the text of my talk to the 800 students assembled in the Metro Student Union. “One would

expect an educator to encourage students to listen to an invited speaker,” I told them. “The same educator might be expected to say, ‘If you disagree with what you hear, prepare a reasoned and civil answer to it.’ That is what an education is about. Or should be. Using one’s brains, instead of just one’s tongue. Learning to use logic instead of relying on raw emotions. This is a university, not the Hannity and Colmes show.” This comment drew laughs of recognition.

I had conducted a study of the Metro State campus which showed that among 85 members of the social science departments at Metro, 41 were registered Democrats and none were registered Republicans in a state which was overwhelmingly Republican. In fact we had missed two Republicans on the faculty, one of whom introduced himself to me at the event. The figures merely indicated the existence of a problem and were not meant to define it.

Far more important than the distribution of faculty and the possibility of bias in the hiring process was the university culture itself. If the leader of the Faculty Senate and a university trustee could not distinguish the educational mission of the university from that of the political arena, how many teachers at the institution did? And if many did not, what were the implications of this for the quality of education on the Auraria campus? “You can’t get a good education if they’re only telling you half the story,” I said, repeating a slogan of the academic freedom campaign.

To illustrate the politicized culture of the academy, I described a visit I had made before my speech to the Political Science Department of University Colorado at Denver, one of the three schools on the Auraria campus. The Political Science Department is along a narrow hallway flanked with offices on either side, whose doors are solid wood and which are sandwiched between bulletin boards that are used for professorial announcements. The only times students come to the Department offices are when they are seeking guidance and help from their professors. Perhaps they are falling behind in their grades and want advice that would aid them in improving their scores. Perhaps they are contemplating a professional career and want guidance in

pursuing it. Whatever the reason for their visit they are seeking a counselor, someone they need to be able to trust.

Yet every bulletin board in this narrow hallway and two-thirds of the wooden office doors that students would have to open in order to visit their professors were plastered with dozens of anti-Republican, anti-Bush, anti-conservative cartoons and similar political messages. There were no counter-balancing postings in sight. Such political propagandizing has no place in this academic setting. Do professors feel so impotent that they have to hector a captive audience of students who are placed in their professional charge and over whom they exercise enormous institutional power? Does it not occur to them that inflicting their partisan viewpoints on students whose education has been put in their trust is a form of harassment and a betrayal of their professional obligations? And if they do not, even in this limited but instructive setting, how do they teach their actual courses? How do they insure that their students are getting an education and not an indoctrination?

I recalled to my audience the time President Reagan was shot. When he was brought to the hospital and put on the operating table, just before he was put under the anesthetic, he looked at his doctors and said with a wink, “Are you guys Republicans or Democrats?” We can all laugh at the President’s humor because we trust our doctors to follow their Hippocratic Oath and to treat us equally without regard to our political affiliations or religious beliefs. It is a basic professional responsibility to do so. But while we can still trust our doctors in this regard, the same cannot be said of our teachers. And that is a serious institutional problem, which the academic freedom movement has set out to address.

Just how bad the situation was in the classrooms of the Metro State campus was brought home to me the day after I left. I received the following email from a student who had come to hear my speech:

Dear: Mr Horowitz

I am a Special Forces soldier, former Marine, and currently a student at Metro State University. Today I heard your speech. While your views are not popular

ones, I do feel they are the right ones, in regards to making the American education system more equally representative in the view points it offers. I have witnessed first hand the abuse of a teachers' political rhetoric in classes at Metro State.

As a service member I have served in Panama (Just Cause), Gulf War I, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and most recently Afghanistan and Iraq. I have been told in classes by my professors that my views are aggressive, violent, racist, and offensive in regards to my opinions on world politics. I have even been told that the wearing of my uniform in class is inappropriate, and offensive.

My current duties are with the state of Colorado as an Officer Candidate School instructor. I try to conduct myself as a professional at all times whether in or out of my classroom. The service has taught me to respect others, and their opinions, no matter what they are. I try to instill that in my students. Yet as a student myself in college I am forced to endure hours of political rhetoric about past wars which I have fought in, and lost friends in.

Most recently I had to endure hours of liberal rhetoric on how badly this administration is doing on the war on terrorism, and how the troops in Iraq are the reason other countries hate us. These viewpoints come from individuals who have never served their nation in a time of war, or had friends die in these wars they talk so knowledgeably about.

I endure this attitude, and grief in order to get my degree. Like other veterans I am trying to improve myself by going back to school and getting a higher education. Or as I like to call it, a low education. I am proud of my veteran brothers who take on the challenge of raising a family and improving their knowledge base. I feel we have only learned not to spit on our vets as was done during the Vietnam War. We have not learned that their opinions may hold merit, or that maybe they have some real world knowledge we can learn from.

I would like to thank you Mr. Horowitz for trying to improve the system and make it a better place to learn and not just a liberal indoctrination program. On behalf of all my veteran friends serving and not, I would like to say you have our support, and thank you.

SFC Mark J. Elrod
USARMY 10TH SFG(A)Special Forces.

Several days in Colorado was enough for me to see that the excessively politicized debate over the Academic Bill of Rights was partly the aftershock of a bitter redistricting fight that Democrats had lost. This posed the question, which several people raised in the course of my visit, as to why I had not gone directly to universities with my proposal instead of the legislature.

In fact, I had. Of course, the ideal way to introduce the Academic Bill of Rights would be for universities themselves to adopt it. The problem is that universities have themselves become political institutions and their entrenched political forces will reject the bill in order to preserve their own dominance.

I was made aware of this fact when I first came up with the idea of an Academic Bill of Rights in the course of discussions with the chairman of the board of regents of one of the largest public university systems in the United States. The chairman was enthusiastic about the bill and assured me he would make it the policy of his institution. He was particularly encouraged because he could see no objection to its particulars that might be raised from any quarter. In fact, in the year since our first discussions, not a single individual opposing the Academic Bill of Rights identified a single clause or statement in the bill they found objectionable. It is the idea that the bill is necessary—and its sponsors—that they reject.

I also brought the proposal to the chancellor of a private university, but to no avail. Again there was no objection to any specifics in the bill itself. Instead, like the chairman of the state university, the chancellor was afraid of his faculty left.

The leader of a university—whether private or public—is a fundraiser first, last and foremost. To achieve his goals he needs to assemble the best talent (faculty) in order to produce the best product (students). The one thing a university head can't afford is to have an institution in turmoil because his faculty—or the activist wing of his faculty led by professors like Joan Foster—has mounted a crusade against him. The fear induced by such a prospect induces paralysis in them.

It is difficult to fight a political faction waging an unprincipled battle under the cloak of educational neutrality and academic professionalism. It is doubtful that there are many college presidents who are up to this challenge. Yet the problem and its inequities persist. This makes the intervention of an overtly political institution like the legislature necessary if the interests of students, scholars who are not political, and the general public are to be served.

It is my view that the majority of university professors, particularly those on whom institutional prestige is based and who are situated in professional schools like medicine, engineering, business and the hard sciences, will welcome the Academic Bill of Rights. They will directly benefit from strengthening academic integrity and thwarting the agendas of political ideologues. However, it is still the case that in the politics of university administration a minority of ideologues can dominate a majority composed of scholars who are politically inactive.

In April 2003, for example, when American troops were in Baghdad and Iraqis were rejoicing over their liberation from one of the world's most tyrannical regimes, the Academic Senate at UCLA—representing a fraction of the total faculty—voted 180-7 to condemn the American “invasion” of Iraq. Even Democrats were not so lopsidedly opposed to the war. This underscores the fact that it will take legislatures to actively begin the process of restoring academic freedom and educational integrity to our collegiate institutions.

After I left Colorado, the President of Metro State College rejected the request by the Faculty Senate president Joan Foster to have my meeting with Governor Owens “investigated.” But he went on—in the words of the *Rocky Mountain News*—to say that, “the Academic Bill of Rights is not needed on Metro State’s campus because the Board of Trustees has committed to academic freedom in [its] personnel handbook and policy manual.” This is what the Metro State manual says: “The Board of Trustees endorses the principle of academic freedom, which means the freedom to discuss academic subjects fully, engage in research and publish the results of research, and write or speak as citizens without fear of institu-

tional censorship or discipline, provided individuals do not represent themselves as speaking for the College.”

Even the casual reader of this statement will note that this is about academic freedom for professors not students. There is not a word in it that would protect students from the abuses of ideological faculty who confuse the university with a political platform and education with indoctrination. This is why the Academic Bill of Rights is necessary and why only the actions of legislators will begin the necessary process of reform.

When I returned to California, I appeared on the Michael Reagan radio show to talk about my trip. Before I could begin, Reagan had an anecdote of his own. His daughter was a freshman in college who had just begun her classes. One of the first courses the granddaughter of Ronald Reagan elected to take was a beginning acting class. On the first day, in the course of introducing himself to the students the professor said: “I am a liberal Democrat. If there are any Republicans here, I advise you to drop the class.”

The college attended by Ronald Reagan’s granddaughter was Cal Lutheran, a school with a reputation for being “conservative.”

2. Progress: My Visit to Brown

In the spring of 2001, I placed an ad in the student paper at Brown giving “Ten Reasons Why Reparations For Slavery Is A Bad Idea – And Racist Too.” I thought it was a bad idea because it was being proposed 137 years after the fact, and that it was racist because it made all non-black citizens responsible for slavery and promised restitution on the basis of skin color rather than any actual suffering of the individuals to whom restitution was to be made. Even though recent polls showed that the opinions in my ad reflected the anti-reparations attitudes of three-quarters of the American public, forty college newspapers

refused to print the “Ten Reasons” on political grounds. On the thirty campuses where the ad was allowed to appear, there were protests by student leftists. The protesters threatened the editors of papers printing the ad and tarred the names and reputations of anyone associated with it, denouncing them as racists.

The worst of these disturbances was at Brown, a school that had already earned a reputation for itself as being one of the most politically intolerant campuses in the nation. Leftists stole and destroyed the entire issue of the *Brown Daily Herald*, where the ad had appeared, and threatened to continue their attacks until the paper folded or was brought to its knees. In a signed statement, sixty members of the Brown faculty supported this vandalism and joined the protesters attack on the ad suggesting that its author and the student editors who printed it were “racists.” The faculty statement was an explicit rebuke to Brown’s president, Sheila Blumstein, who had made mild remarks in defense of a free press and free speech.

The ugly intolerance that now enveloped Brown so affected the lives of its student community that there are still convocations, two-and-a-half years later, to deal with the repercussions. One year after the event a member of the Undergraduate Student Council still recalled its traumas: “Last year on UCS, I returned from a meeting physically shaking after being called a liar and other names by council members for defending *The Herald’s* printing of David Horowitz’s reparations ad.” Many other testimonies appeared in the *Herald* written by bewildered students who had recently voted for Ralph Nader or Al Gore but now found themselves stigmatized as bigots and worse.

During the controversy meetings were held to discuss the issues and deal with the roiling emotions. Leftist organizations brought in outside speakers, including a Black Muslim and a Black Panther to stir the campus brew. Brown’s College Republicans attempted to set up a debate between the head of the Providence NAACP and myself. In the Salem-like atmosphere that had enveloped Brown, I considered it a small victory that the most famous civil rights organization decided not to join the mob and shun me. But the invitation was soon withdrawn when two campus leaders – the head of the College Democrats and a spokesman

for the International Socialist Organization — threatened violence if I came. Without a formal invitation, there was no way for an outsider like me to get to campus so the event never happened.

The left succeeded in keeping this ban in force for the next two years. Brown's College Republicans could not summon enough courage to invite me and no alternative offer was forthcoming from the Brown Administration or other campus groups. In the fall of 2003, however, the College Republicans decided to try again. Under the leadership of senior Joseph Lisska who had been a freshman when the first invitation was withdrawn, they renewed the invitation and were even able to secure funding from the student government to pay for the speech.

One of the factors leading to this turn of events was a change in the institutional environment at Brown. In the fall of 2001, the university installed Dr. Ruth Simmons as its new President. The daughter of a Texas sharecropper and the great-great granddaughter of slaves, Dr. Simmons was the first African American to head an Ivy League school. Inspired by her mother who taught her to face life's challenges with "grace, magnanimity and aplomb," Simmons earned a doctorate in Romance Languages and Literature at Harvard, and served as a translator for the State Department and in several administrative university posts and before taking on the job at Brown.

At her inauguration, Dr. Simmons had made an oblique reference to the reparations controversy: "The protection of speech that is offensive or insulting to us is one of the most difficult, difficult things we do," she said. "While confidence may be found in silence, truth cannot dwell there." She concluded her address to the class of 2005 with these words: "If you've come to this place for comfort, I urge you to rise, walk through yonder gate, and don't look back."

Dr. Simmons was an authority figure the left was bound to respect and her support for intellectual tolerance had already had a visible effect before my arrival. In the spring of 2003, Defense Department advisor Richard Perle was invited to campus for a panel discussion. A leftwing fringe did turn out to protest and call Perle a "war criminal," which was the foreign policy equivalent of "racist." But this time, the negative

campus reaction against the hecklers was widespread and impressive.

I had been encouraged myself by a remark Dr. Simmons made the first time she met with students as Brown's president. One questioner asked her about the reparations controversy. She replied that David Horowitz should have been invited to campus. I immediately emailed her that these were the wisest words anyone had uttered in the course of the controversy and offered to come at her invitation. She emailed me back suggesting that would be fine but her fall schedule was full and plans for a visit would have to wait.

It turned out to be more than a wait, as the invitation never came. I was disappointed but not surprised by this result. If Dr. Simmons were to invite me as a guest of Brown she would be throwing down a gauntlet to the 60 leftist professors, who had attacked me and the *Daily Herald* editors. It would be a profound (and richly deserved) slap in the face to the faculty intolerance brigade. But I reasoned that no college president could afford this kind of war with her own faculty, and resigned myself to the situation.

In my disappointment, I had underestimated Dr. Simmons. When I arrived at Saloman Hall, the main campus theater, it was packed to the rafters with 600 students and many had to be turned away. Amazingly, there were no protesters and the Dean of the College, Paul Anderson, was there to introduce me – itself an almost unprecedented occurrence in the 250 or so appearances I had made on college campuses (so thorough is the institutional dominance of the left in the university culture). And there, sitting in the front rows and honoring me with her presence, was a magnanimous and gracious Dr. Simmons herself.

I began my speech by thanking Dr. Simmons for attending, acknowledging her leadership in committing Brown to intellectual diversity, and expressing the hope that the evening's event would help her in accomplishing this goal. The dramatic change in tone at Brown that Dr. Simmons' interventions had brought about was evident throughout the evening. The audience was multi-ethnic and more than half those present appeared to be politically liberal or left. Considering that I had been made a campus pariah and was a symbol of the right wing demon its

radicals had been schooled to hate, the Brown audience was as polite and respectful as any university where I have spoken. Dr. Simmons' presence was probably responsible for the lion's share of this result, but it was still no small achievement nonetheless.

While civility prevailed, the evening's proceedings were not without a sharp retort or two and the occasional expression of audience opposition. My subject subject was "Academic Freedom: A Vanishing Ideal at Brown." I introduced it as I do all my campus speeches with this proposition: "You can't get a good education if they are only telling you half the story, even if you are paying \$35,000 a year (the tuition fee at Brown)." I followed this remark by observing that registered Democrats on the Brown faculty outnumbered Republicans 30-1, a statement that was greeted with enthusiastic applause by half the packed house. Apparently, at Brown, many students are uncomfortable with the democratic idea.

Nonetheless, a dialogue was beginning, and Brown's administration was supporting it – an enormous stride forward from the recent past. Opportunities had suddenly opened and I attempted to speak to them. "A university is not a political party," I said, "and an education is not an indoctrination." I pointed out that when we go to our doctor's office we don't expect to find political slogans on the office doors or partisan political cartoons on the waiting room walls. Yet that it is precisely what many students encounter when they go to their professors' offices for counseling and guidance. "We can trust our doctors to be professional, to minister equally to their patients without regard to their political or religious beliefs. But we can no longer trust our professors to do the same.

Pursuing the subject, I recalled an occasion on which I had invited Leon Panetta, former chief of staff for the Clinton White House to speak in Los Angeles at the Wednesday Morning Club, a lunch forum I had founded. Since leaving the White House, Panetta had set up his own public interest foundation, devoted to "statesmanship" and training public servants. The speech he gave was about civic virtues and those concerns that united Americans as a community, beyond party interests. He was even gently critical of his former bosses President Clinton and Vice President Gore, when they came up short of these ideals.

The conservative audience that had gathered to hear Panetta reacted with warm enthusiasm to his speech and said afterwards how impressed they were by the views he had expressed. I did so as well. “Mr. Panetta,” I said, “your speech was quite wonderful. On the other hand, when you were in the White House and I saw you on television I wanted to throw my shoe at the set I was so provoked by what you were saying. What happened?” He gave me a knowing smile and replied, “Oh, that was just the partisan thing.”

I paused and looked out into the crowd of faces in the Brown audience and said: “We all can do the partisan thing. We all know what it is. It’s the sound bite and the spinning of facts. It’s the labeling and demonizing of opponents. We all do it because politics is about power, and that’s what’s required to win. But this is only one aspect of who we are. We have another side as well. We can also call on the better angels of our nature and rise above partisanship. We can come together and listen to each other civilly and seek a better understanding the problems that confront us as members of a shared community.

“This is what a university should be about. A university is not a political party and should not be a political platform for partisan campaigns. Instead, it should aspire to be a house of reason, to bring out the better angels of our nature, to school us in civil discourse. A university’s mission is to seek out a better knowledge and to educate us in the problems that confront us as human beings. There is a place for politics in our society, but there also needs to be a sanctuary where reasoned discourse is the prevailing ideal. Universities like Brown should be a place for something other than politics, something worthy of the name ‘higher learning.’”

The uproar over my ad was really the reverse of this idea. I had laid out ten reasons for rejecting reparations, but not a single one of my reasons had been answered by the Brown community that was opposed them. Instead the ad – and everyone associated with it – was stigmatized and demonized by ugly smears. In effect, a warning was issued to the Brown community to shun anyone who even defended the appearance of these thoughts and the right to free speech.

I pointed out how absurd the stigmatization was. Anyone reading the ad with the slightest care for what it actually said would have noticed, for example, that the 10th and final reason for rejecting reparations began, “Black Americans were here before the Mayflower. Who is more American than the descendants of African slaves?” What racist, would launch an argument by claiming that the descendants of African slaves are more American than anyone else?

In the remainder of my talk I tried to observe the Panetta ideals. I addressed my words to the common interest of liberals and conservatives in a university community in insisting that academic dialogue be civil, in keeping political agendas at bay and in supporting the presence of diverse viewpoints. The more ideological a university became, the more everyone’s education would suffer.

When I finished, the microphone was opened for questions. They were interesting and civil and even indicated that some re-thinking had already begun. Among those who spoke was Brown University’s new “Associate Provost and Director of Institutional Diversity,” Brenda Allen. The Associate Provost expressed her disagreement with some of my remarks wondering aloud if I hadn’t played a “cheap trick” on the audience in referring to the fact that Democrats and liberals controlled most of America’s large inner cities and thus bore responsibility for many of the deplorable conditions found in them, in particular their failing public schools. Provost Allen suggested that Democrats may not have controlled the finances of those inner city governments. I assured her that they did.

Right after my event, Provost Allen attended a meeting called by the coalition of leftist students who had stolen the *Daily Herald* during the reparations dispute who, according to a report in the *Herald*, said they were still “not emotionally prepared” to come to listen what I had to say. Provost Allen supported their boycott: “If anyone left [Saloman Hall] feeling they learned something significant about anything,” she told the students, “that’s a shame. That man doesn’t have a clue about race in America. He’s a waste of time.” These were understandable comments for a political agitator but puzzling coming from an educator.

Earlier, with Dr. Simmons in the room, and myself available to respond to such comments, however, she spoke in a very different voice. Her remarks, in fact, were prefaced with the observation that she supported intellectual diversity and considered it part of her institutional mission. Even more important, she wanted to know if I would come back to Brown to debate Randall Robinson, the leading spokesman for reparations, and thus continue the discussion. I said I would be more than glad to do this and praised the idea itself, which supported the educational ideal towards which Brown and I were now both apparently striving.

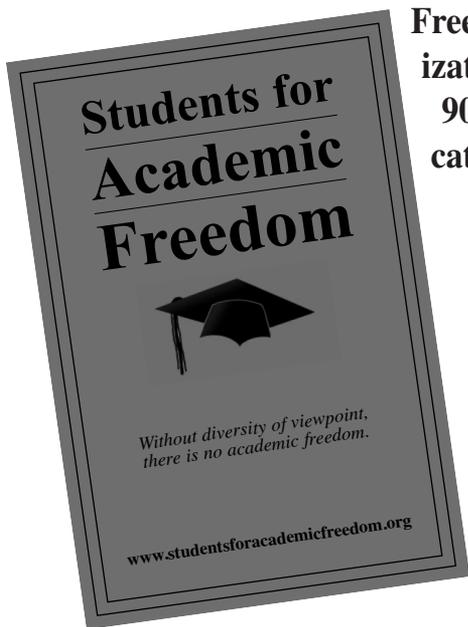
To further my end of this effort, I had created a national organization called Students for Academic Freedom, which was already represented on 90 campuses and had a chapter in formation at Brown. After my event, I met with the organizers and encouraged them to build a coalition across the political spectrum and to work with Dr. Simmons and Provost Allen in promoting intellectual diversity at the school. I encouraged them to begin discussions with the administration about codifying students' academic freedom rights. These were laid out in the "Academic Bill of Rights" we were sponsoring as an organization (text available at www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org). A day prior to my speech at Brown, a bill based on our document was introduced as legislation in the House of Representatives by Georgia Representative Jack Kingston.

When the question and answer period was over, I stepped down from the stage and met Dr. Simmons for the first time. Her greeting was friendly and she said she would like to talk to me further, but she was also unhappy with what I had said about Brown and, in particular, the way I had characterized the Brown faculty, calling it hostile to diverse intellectual viewpoints. I said that if I had painted the faculty with such a broad brush, it was inadvertent, and also incorrect. During the controversy over my ad, several Brown professors had stood up courageously against the would-be censors. Moreover, the vast majority of faculty at Brown, as at other institutions are not ideologues, but scholars. Unfortunately, when political issues like the reparations controversy arise an intolerant minority can intimidate them along with everyone else.

In my talk, I had also perhaps failed to make a sharp enough distinction between the old Brown that had responded so negatively to my ad and the new Brown I had just discovered, that she was trying to create. I told her I regretted any generalization that offended her, and was eager to work with her if I could be of any help in improving these matters.

On balance my visit to Brown could be counted a success — even greater than I had imagined possible. My student host Joseph Lisska agreed. “The evening went better than even I hoped,” he told the *Daily Herald*. “This was exactly what the university needed.”

It was a heartening evening. Brown will not change overnight and perhaps only very slowly and over a long period of time. But changes will come. There is a will now among conservative students to challenge the orthodoxies of their environment. There is support from students who are not conservative but who are also under siege from the campus ideologues, and who want the opportunity to breathe a freer air. And there is the support Brown’s new President is providing for a more open, less ideological, academic culture. These are positive developments and I will do what I can to encourage them. For openers I will not call my next talk on campus: “Academic Freedom at Brown: A Vanishing Ideal.”

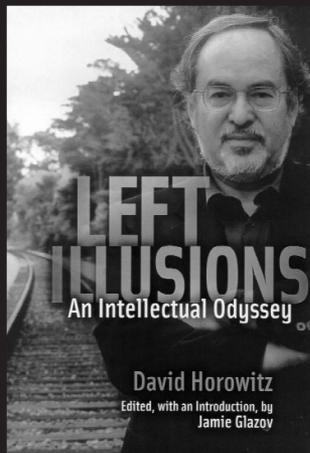


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