

# spectra

The Magazine of the National Communication Association

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## FREEDOM OF **EXPRESSION** ON CAMPUS



# ABOUT spectra

Spectra, the magazine of the National Communication Association (NCA), features articles on topics that are relevant to Communication scholars, teachers, and practitioners. Spectra is one means through which NCA works toward accomplishing its mission of advancing Communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry.

NCA serves its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems.

The views and opinions expressed in Spectra articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Communication Association.

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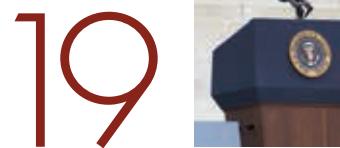
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### DID YOU KNOW

In his 1953 "overview" of the Communication discipline, 40<sup>th</sup> NCA President Karl Wallace said:

"...The field as a whole, as we have sketched it, has a political responsibility to a society which, among other things, has always stood fast for freedom of thought and discussion."

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# 2018: A Year of Transformation and Relevance

By Ronald L. Jackson II, Ph.D.

“ It takes no compromise to give people their rights... it takes no money to respect the individual. It takes no political deal to give people freedom. It takes no survey to remove repression.”—Harvey Milk

If you’re like me, you begin each year approaching it as a new chapter, with new opportunities for growth. The same could be said for NCA. As NCA President, I envision 2018 as a year of transformation that can be catalyzed by two very important streams of public dialogue: addressing human problems and freedom of expression.

Our mission states that the National Communication Association “promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems.” Although we are an association comprised of Communication scholars, educators, and practitioners, we are also, as the last line of our mission statement indicates, an organization that is dedicated to using what we know about communication to solve human problems. As you may know, NCA does this well in a variety of ways already, and principally our members or associates see much of it.

In the last two years, we were perhaps more outward-facing or public than we have ever been at our Annual Conventions. In 2016, we hosted the Social Justice Exchange as well as an International Scholars Reception. Years ago, former NCA President Richard West initiated NCA’s first Day of Service event, and it was wildly successful! At the 2017 Annual Convention, Kendall Hunt sponsored NCA’s second Day of Service, and we served six schools by providing back sacks to 2,500 local school children. We presented our first \$1,000 annual NCA Legacy Scholarship to a local college student majoring in Communication to

support her educational advancement. We launched the first Legacy Training Seminars, where Communication scholars train the public on a range of topics pertaining to our expertise. We invited the public to our first Lyrical Justice spoken word poetry slam event, and we saw members of the Dallas community attend and be energized and enlightened by social justice-inspired poetry. This is just the beginning. We can do more.

Building on this momentum, in 2018 I’d like for us to collectively consider how NCA might further apply our communication expertise to solve human problems. What does it take for NCA to become a public asset? What mechanisms need to be in place for this to happen? What kinds of expertise can be deployed to solve problems we see publicly, and how do we partner with others to extend our reach and get the word out about the work we do? These are only a few questions we should consider.

I have developed a two-year Task Force to explore developing a new Center for Communication, Community, Collaboration, and Change, with a goal of deploying our communication expertise to assist under-represented and/or vulnerable communities in their quests for progressive and sustainable community change. This vision of partnering with local communities to develop scalable communication-related solutions that will decrease their vulnerability has the potential to meaningfully extend our reach. This Task Force is in the midst of exploring best practices, which will be followed by a proposal that includes a set of recommendations.

The purpose is neither to serve some self-gratifying impulse by publicly heightening excitement about NCA, nor simply to tell the world we do good work in communication, but rather to *improve the quality of human life and relationships*. If we can measurably enhance the degree to which we work to solve human problems using our expertise, then I propose we do so soon, often, and loudly.



We must use our voices to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. We must use our voices to ensure that our collective humanity is valued. We must use our voices for those who are vulnerable, lest we surrender our collective freedom, capacity, and authority to speak.

interrogate repressive state politics, and to hold accountable our elected officials. Those of us with the privilege to speak must strategically assert our voices. We must use our voices to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. We must use our voices to ensure that our collective humanity is valued. We must use our voices for those who are vulnerable, lest we surrender our collective freedom, capacity, and authority to speak.

The presumption here is that we all value freedom. Some of us imagine freedom as something individuals attain for themselves. Yet, I would maintain that the freedom we seek, the freedom we publicly yearn for as a society, is not as individualized as we’d like. It is far too simple to presume that as long you personally feel free to avoid thinking about oppression, that you *are* free. The social movement protests we have witnessed around the world are demanding that the state apparatus permits citizens to experience freedom in an enduring way so that vulnerable communities can be at peace. The achievement of peace offers a sense of *collective* freedom that is deliberately alive.

Freedom is a peculiar condition. The structural inequalities that reflect the evacuation of social justice present obstacles with real, material consequences. In a neoliberal public sphere, where capitalism runs rampant, non-market values such as greed, competition, and self-centered individualism are at the epicenter; they dictate what constitutes happiness, success, life satisfaction, etc. Consequently, we are left with a range of marginalized groups that are starving for full respect, inclusion, equity, and access to citizenship.

I would like NCA to be at the center of helping to improve the quality of life of citizens around the world by deploying our communication expertise. Your elected officers and representatives on various NCA boards will be working arduously this year to critically explore next steps for NCA as we continue to work to advance the legacy and relevance of communication. ■

# Spotlight

## PUBLIC PRESENCE

### NCA Hosts Anti-Bullying Summit for Dallas Educators

On Tuesday, November 14, more than 85 Dallas Independent School District educators participated in a full-day Anti-Bullying Summit. The event was organized by the NCA Anti-Bullying Task Force as part of past President Christina S. Beck's Presidential Initiative, and was held at Abilene Christian University.

The Summit included a keynote address by task force Co-Chair Keith Berry, three interactive modules incorporating communication concepts and techniques that are relevant to anti-bullying intervention, and a closing session that allowed for audience interaction and reflection. In addition to the keynote speaker, session presenters included Garry Bailey, Lisa Bateman, Christina S. Beck, Carol Bishop-Mills, Renee Cowan (task force Co-Chair), Katie Margavio Striley, and Stacy Tye-Williams.

Participants included assistant principals, counselors, and teachers from myriad schools throughout the district. Their varied roles and institutional affiliations enriched conversations during the day's sessions.

Materials from the Summit are being shared with educators throughout the Dallas Independent School District, as well as on the NCA Anti-Bullying Resource Bank at [www.natcom.org/advocacy-public-engagement/nca-anti-bullying-resource-bank](http://www.natcom.org/advocacy-public-engagement/nca-anti-bullying-resource-bank).

A second anti-bullying outreach effort will be held in conjunction with the 2018 NCA convention in Salt Lake City.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

### New Internationalization Initiatives

Under the guidance of then-NCA President Stephen J. Hartnett and the Task Force on Fostering International Collaboration in the Age of Globalization, the association has recently released a number of new internationalization initiatives.

A new Internationalizing the Communication Discipline brochure provides Communication scholars, educators, and administrators with information about the rationale for "internationalization," current efforts in this regard, and possible future directions.

As one way to encourage internationalization of the discipline, NCA has partnered with the Communication University of China (CUC) to create the new Visiting Fellows Program for Communication and Media Research (VFP). The program will provide a unique space for collaboration, wherein NCA members and our Chinese colleagues will work alongside, study with, and learn from one another. VFP fellows will spend one semester on the CUC campus.

Also in partnership with the CUC, NCA announces the second biennial conference on Communication, Media, and Governance in the Age of Globalization, to be held June 22–23, 2018, in Beijing, China.

Finally, NCA is offering *Fostering Education in the Age of Globalization*, a two-day, on-campus experience that provides customized guidance and assistance to campuses seeking to create a more inclusive, international educational environment.

For more information on all of these initiatives, visit the NCA website at [www.natcom.org/academic-professional-resources/internationalization](http://www.natcom.org/academic-professional-resources/internationalization).

THE VISITING FELLOWS PROGRAM FOR COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA RESEARCH

The logo for the Visiting Fellows Program. It features a stylized globe with red, white, and blue colors, positioned above an open book. The text "THE VISITING FELLOWS PROGRAM FOR COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA RESEARCH" is written in a serif font above the book.

AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CO-HOSTED BY THE COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA (CUC) AND THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION (NCA)

Call for Participants for the Second Biennial Conference on:

**Communication, Media, and Governance in the Age of Globalization**

BEIJING, CHINA  
JUNE 22-23, 2018

The logo for the conference. It features a circular emblem with a traditional Chinese dragon design. The text "Call for Participants for the Second Biennial Conference on: Communication, Media, and Governance in the Age of Globalization BEIJING, CHINA JUNE 22-23, 2018" is written in a serif font below the emblem.

FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

AN ON-CAMPUS EXPERIENCE PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

The logo for the "Fostering International Education in the Age of Globalization" program. It features a stylized world map where each continent is composed of a stack of books of different colors (blue, red, yellow, green). The text "FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION" is written in a serif font above the map, and "AN ON-CAMPUS EXPERIENCE PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION" is written below it.

## IN OUR JOURNALS

### Darrin J. Griffin, San Bolkan, & Barbara J. Dahlbach, "Scholarly Productivity in Communication Studies: Five-Year Review 2012-2016," *Communication Education* 67 (2017): 88-101.

This article examines scholarship trends in Communication Studies based on individual publication rates in 24 disciplinary journals, including a subset of journals deemed to be most central to the discipline. This analysis found 32 individual authors who could be considered prolific scholars across the 24 journals, and nine individuals who could be considered prolific across the more central journals (*Human Communication Research*, *Communication Research*, *Communication Monographs*, and *Journal of Communication*). The authors found that to be considered prolific, individuals needed to publish between seven and nine articles in a five-

year period. Results indicate that all of the prolific scholars who published in the central journals, and two-thirds of the prolific authors in the 24 general journals came from Carnegie-classified Research 1 institutions. The trends found in this study are similar to recent analyses. The authors discuss implications for faculty mentoring and development, as well as individual and institutional variables that impact research proliferation.

### Maude Gauthier and Kim Sawchuk, "Not Notable Enough: Feminism and Expertise in Wikipedia," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 14 (2017): 385-402.

In this essay, Gauthier and Sawchuk highlight their experiences navigating the Wikipedia community in an effort to edit Wikientries on ageing to include an intersectional

perspective, particularly in regard to gender. The authors found that certain entries act as sites of contestation between different communities of practice, such as between feminist scholars and Wikipedia editors. The authors also indicate that certain entries become victims of strict applications of Wikipedia's editing guidelines. Gauthier and Sawchuk explore three interconnected discursive guidelines over which contestation takes place: notability, verifiability, and tone. They suggest that Wikipedia entries should include a much broader range of knowledge on key topics.

### Stacey L. Connaughton, Jasmine R. Linabary, Arumina Krishna, Kai Kuange, Agapitus Anaele, Kelly S. Vibber, Liliya Yakova, and Christina Jones, "Explicating the Relationally Attentive Approach to Conducting Engaged

### Communication Scholarship," *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 45 (2017): 517-536.

This article was written in response to what the authors saw as a growing need for concrete examples on how engaged Communication scholarship is done. The authors offer a set of concrete communicative choices for conducting engaged scholarship—specifically the practices of convening inclusively, deferring, supporting, and validating—and offer a model of impact that stems from these choices and is communicative. The authors introduce the relationally attentive approach (RAA) to engaged scholarship, and relate the communicative choices made in enacting RAA to the impacts of engaged scholarship. The authors present the work of the Purdue Peace Project as an example of how engaged scholarship can be done.

# Save THE DATES!

## Communication at Play

NCA 104<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention

November 8-11, 2018

Salt Lake City, Utah

[www.natcom.org/convention](http://www.natcom.org/convention)

In 2018, the National Communication Association's 104<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention will be held in scenic Salt Lake City, Utah. The convention theme, "Communication at Play," is intentionally and playfully ambiguous. Imaginative, experimental, strategic, creative, and fun, play offers opportunities to discuss important aspects of communication, while also providing rich metaphorical resources for reconsidering the role and function of communication in breaking impasses, challenging cultural practice, providing perspective, and creating identifications through shared delight.

The convention location will feature a spectacular view of the Wasatch mountains, and an array of interesting restaurants, historical sites, and outdoor experiences.

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND!

AN INTRODUCTION



## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ON CAMPUS

For decades, college campuses have been a hot seat for issues of free speech and freedom of expression.

And in the last few years, free speech controversies on campus have continued to heat up. As with the general population, college and university communities have become increasingly politically polarized, and social media and technology have contributed to widespread hate and vitriol across the ideological spectrum.

This issue of *Spectra* examines the current landscape of freedom of expression on campus through the lens of multiple Communication scholars and leading free speech experts. In the spirit of the theme, the authors offer a variety of perspectives and opinions.

To remind us of the history of free speech on campus, David Henry takes us back to the 1960s at Berkeley, the site of the Free Speech Movement (FSM), when students spoke out for and against the Vietnam War, civil rights, reproductive rights, and more. Henry tells the story of three key players in FSM (Mario Savio, Clark Kerr, and Ronald Reagan), and compares the controversies they confronted to those of today. "One obvious shift is a penchant for violence as a legitimate means of expression," he writes. He advocates for a set of guidelines for campus administrators (as suggested by the University of California-Irvine) to help universities "again become sites where advocates agree to disagree as they work toward the common good."

Next, Howard Gillman and Erwin Chemerinksy lay out "The Various Threats to Free Speech on Campus," outlining public universities' obligations to promote and support free speech, academic freedom, freedom of thought, and free inquiry without interference. While they acknowledge that "free speech is not absolute," they believe that the "mere expression of an idea is not enough to trigger the exception." The

authors suggest that college officials who succumb to pressures to disinvite speakers or cancel events "risk undermining an academic culture that welcomes the unfettered exchange of ideas—one where it is simply assumed that the best response to dangerous or offensive views is rebuttal and exposure rather than silencing."

It is not only controversial speakers that feel the effects of a supercharged campus. Dana Cloud's essay dives into the repercussions of bullying of faculty, which she contends often is precipitated by the alt-right targeting "critical and activist professors, taking scholars' words out of context." Cloud's own experiences as a victim of harassment for publicly challenging ideas and activities of the far right included receiving massive amounts of hate mail and criticism. "The successful persecution of professors threatens a chilling effect on critical debate and activism on our campuses," she writes. Skeptical of support from university administration, Cloud urges academics to leverage unions—and one another—to fight back.

To close the issue, Andrew Ledbetter provides his perspective on the ideological bias he argues pervades academia, writing that "political bias against conservatives is no trivial concern." He shares Communication scholars' anecdotes that illustrate their experiences with political bias, and he offers actionable suggestions to foster ideological diversity within the discipline, using the "wealth of scholarship about effective communication across lines of difference."

As part of NCA's mission to "foster and promote free and ethical communication," we will continue to track and share ongoing discourse, policy, and media coverage related to free speech and freedom of expression, while supporting our members' important research on this topic. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Spectra*. ■

# Free Speech at Berkeley: Then and Now

By David Henry, Ph.D.



Mario Savio on the Sproul Hall steps, UC Berkeley, 1966.

“Controversies over freedom of speech on college campuses have existed as long as there have been college campuses. But the specific issues vary with each generation.” So write Erwin Chemerinsky, Dean of the Berkeley Law School, and Howard Gillman, Chancellor and Professor of Law and Political Science at the University of California, Irvine, at the outset of their book, *Free Speech on Campus* (Yale UP, 2017). “In recent years,” they continue, “the tension has been between the desire to protect the learning experience of all students and the desire to safeguard freedom of expression.” (See following article, authored by Chemerinsky and Gillman.) Although free speech issues may well have existed since the inception of American higher education, perhaps no college is as strongly associated with the topic as the University of California at Berkeley, site of the 1960s Free Speech Movement (FSM). Yet the contrasts between the campus’s experiences of 1964–67 and far more recent events suggest that Berkeley is a useful case for exploring the “tension” to which Chemerinsky and Gillman refer.

The late James Arnt Aune and I contended in a recently published essay that a key story of FSM resided in the relationships between and among three advocates: Mario Savio, Clark Kerr, and Ronald Reagan. Savio



Approximately 200 students gathered in UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza and marched down Telegraph Avenue, 2017.

entered Berkeley as a transfer student in 1963. Raised a Catholic, and the nephew of two nuns, early in his life he considered a life in the church. As Savio became disenchanted with his faith, though, he turned his attention to political issues, particularly civil rights. In March 1964, he was among those arrested at the Sheraton Palace hotel during a demonstration demanding that the San Francisco Hotel Association hire black employees for other than menial positions. Three months later, he was in McComb, Mississippi, where he spent the summer teaching in a “freedom school” for black children, as part of the Congress of Racial Equality’s (CORE) Freedom Summer. Savio’s civil rights work and his early devotion to the church both informed his approach to FSM. Through his work, he became committed, he recalled, to “combatting evil and doing good.” And the links between civil rights protest and religion made the movement a logical site for doing so. Not least, he determined the value of adapting civil rights activists’ habits of civil disobedience and nonviolent protest to challenging “the system.” (See: Henry and Aune, in *Social Controversy and American Public Address in the 1960s and Early 1970s*, ed. Richard J. Jensen [Michigan State UP, 2017].)

Clark Kerr first arrived at Berkeley as a graduate student in 1933. After completing his doctorate six years later, he conducted research and taught Labor Economics at Stanford

Although free speech issues may well have existed since the inception of American higher education, perhaps no college is as strongly associated with the topic as the University of California at Berkeley, site of the 1960s Free Speech Movement (FSM).

and the London School of Economics, among other institutions. Kerr returned to Berkeley in 1945 to head the Institute of Industrial Relations. In short order, he became the first Chancellor of the Berkeley campus in 1952, and six years later the Board of Regents appointed him the 12<sup>th</sup> president of the multi-campus University of California.

## FSM: 'The Legacy Is Freedom'



In the fall of 1964, a student protest movement galvanized this campus and shocked the nation. It soon resonated on campuses throughout the United States, inspiring student struggles for social justice and against the Vietnam War.

In contrast to Savio's radical advocacy, Kerr worked for change within "the system" and practiced traditional liberalism. That liberalism entailed a belief in progress, in which both the government and the university must play critical roles; a commitment to free expression, and a belief in the fair and just application of the rule of law. Kerr remained devoted to the Quaker precepts on which he was raised as he pursued policies that were responsive to the demands of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century education, governance, and culture. In combination with his training in and practice of labor economics, these precepts entailed a faith and trust in rationality, a respect for discussion and negotiation when exploring alternative resolutions to problems, and a practice of civil engagement in which participants can agree to disagree.

For Ronald Reagan and the nascent neo-conservative movement of the early 1960s, though, Kerr was too willing to engage dissidents civilly, regardless of the UC president's professed commitment to the rule of law. Following early career stops in radio broadcasting and films, Reagan found a niche in 1950s and early 1960s television as host of the General Electric Theatre. His work for GE included travel as a corporate ambassador, during which he delivered what were intended to be inspirational speeches to employees. During his travels, he read politically conservative periodicals and began to compile note cards he eventually used in his speeches. His shift from motivation to politics led to the end of his GE career. In 1964, he delivered a version of what came to be known as "the speech," based in part on the accumulated note cards, on behalf of the Republican presidential candidate, Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-AZ). Moved by Reagan's performance, conservative business leaders and political operatives in southern California approached him as a potential candidate for Governor of California in 1966.

FSM had emerged in the fall of 1964. At least since the 1930s, Berkeley had accommodated free speech on campus, first at the landmark Sather Gate and later at the southern entrance to campus.

Fifty years after FSM, free speech controversies at Berkeley and elsewhere are far more complicated.



Initially reluctant, Reagan eventually agreed. In both the primary against former San Francisco Mayor and liberal Republican George Christopher, a more moderate and substantially favored candidate, and in the general election against two-term incumbent Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, he used Berkeley, FSM, and Clark Kerr as political foils. Central themes of his campaign included that university and statewide leadership alike had been overly lenient in dealing with "communists on campus," rampant drug use and sexual promiscuity among students, and the "filthy speech movement." The resulting "leadership gap" and "morality gap" demanded that he seek the state's highest office so that he could "clean up that mess in Berkeley."

The "mess" in question, FSM, had emerged in the fall of 1964. At least since the 1930s, Berkeley had accommodated free speech on campus, first at the landmark Sather Gate and later at the southern entrance to campus. While President Kerr was out of the country in the summer of 1964, Berkeley's Chancellor and Vice Chancellor, convinced that advocates were using the free speech area for unsanctioned purposes, ordered the Dean of Students to close the free speech area. Reluctantly, Dean Katherine Towle followed orders, suspending the "Sather Gate tradition" on September 14. Newly returned from his travels, Kerr understood the potential ramifications of this action, but he hesitated to countermand campus authorities. He counted his failure to do so as one of the two biggest mistakes of his tenure as Chancellor at Berkeley and President of UC. (The other mistake, he wrote, was in not opposing in the 1950s the then-president's decision to require loyalty oaths of all faculty in the UC system.)

Student reaction to the suspension of free speech was swift and sustained. For the next two weeks, leaders of an *ad hoc* student protest committee and Dean Towle exchanged demands and responses. On

September 30, students representing CORE and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) established recruitment and information tables in front of Sproul Hall, the central administration building, without required permits. Eight students were subsequently suspended. Undeterred, former student Jack Weinberg set up a table for CORE on October 1, declined to identify himself or leave when authorities approached him, and was arrested. When police placed him in a squad car at the edge of campus, several hundred protesters surrounded the car and began a sit-in, the second in two days.

For 36 hours, the squad car remained immobile with Weinberg in the back seat. Crowds grew from several hundred initially, to 7,000 within 48 hours. Kerr, meanwhile, met with the Chancellor, campus deans, law enforcement, and aides from the governor's office to shape a response. That response included an agreement that the university would not press charges against Weinberg, that a committee of administrators and students would be formed to discuss political activities on campus, and that students would forgo illegal protest activities as discussions proceeded. Despite the temporary truce, during the remainder of the fall term, FSM led a return to Sproul Plaza when negotiations failed, sit-ins followed rallies that grew in numbers of participants and media coverage, Mario Savio articulated the rationale for student rights in compelling speeches on December 2 and 4, the Board of Regents acceded to Kerr's proposals for resolving disruptions, and on December 6, Kerr addressed a convocation of 16,000 to announce amnesty for those who had violated campus policies before December 7, and to reassert the administration's commitment to the rule of law.

With students and administrators both at least temporarily assuaged, FSM began 1965 with its first legal rally at Sproul Hall. Although the movement waned

thereafter as grassroots dissent, its influence continued throughout the decade, and Berkeley remained a persuasive target for Ronald Reagan's gubernatorial campaign. He first defeated the favored moderate candidate in the Republican primary, and then carried nearly 58 percent of the vote in defeating Governor Brown. Governor Reagan became an *ex officio* member of the Board of Regents. He worked with other Regents predisposed to terminate Kerr. So, in January 1967, Kerr "left the office as he entered it," he recalled later, "fired with enthusiasm."

As a case study in free speech, the Savio-Kerr-Reagan example is instructive. Convinced that students would be denied opportunities to speak if they deferred to administrative authority, Savio and FSM emulated civil rights movement tactics with sit-ins, marches, and rallies. Once protesters had the attention of Kerr and the administration, representatives of both sides deliberated with third parties to establish free speech policies that were amenable to all. And though Reagan made Berkeley fodder for his campaign messages, like Savio and Kerr, he employed political system resources to counter their radicalism and liberalism, respectively, with a new conservatism that would flourish nationally in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And despite their differences, all exhibited a respect for debate, deliberation, and what might today be termed "civic engagement."

Fifty years after FSM, free speech controversies at Berkeley and elsewhere are far more complicated than the radical-liberal-conservative clashes between and among Savio, Kerr, and Reagan. One obvious shift is a penchant for violence as a legitimate means of expression. A key case in point took place in August 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia. When white nationalist or neo-Nazis rallied for a Unite the Right event, counter protesters assembled. As the counter protesters marched, an avowed supporter of Unite

Ironically, given that FSM sought to increase the number of voices heard, it is the case that at Berkeley and on other campuses, particular viewpoints and speech content are often pre-judged and deemed unfit for uttering.

the Right drove his car into the crowd, killing one person and injuring at least 19 others. Nor is extremism unique to the right, as witnessed by Antifa's increased presence. As social movement and media scholar Todd Gitlin wrote in an August 28, 2017, *New York Times* op-ed piece, Antifa is "the backlash to the backlash, a defensive response to the growing presence of right wing extremism."

Dean Chemerinsky of the Berkeley Law School differentiates what is currently taking place from the events at UC in 1964 by noting that FSM "involved students protesting and an administration trying to stop them. But now it is about outside speakers coming to campus, like [conservative radio host Ben] Shapiro and [right wing commentator Milo] Yiannopoulos and [conservative author and lecturer Ann] Coulter, and outside agitators, like Antifa, threatening violence." (*Sacramento Bee*, 3 Oct. 2017).

This is not to suggest that Coulter, Yiannopoulos, or Shapiro equate to the white nationalists, neo Nazis, or Antifa. It is to observe, though, that even when violence is not a resource, free speech is not necessarily the goal of event organizers or those in opposition. Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ, for example, differentiated between an appearance by Shapiro and a failed "free speech week" announced by Yiannopoulos. Shapiro's speech had a campus co-sponsor, as required by campus speech event policy; planning time allowed for required security and its funding (estimated at \$600,000); those opposed to Shapiro's themes rallied outside the venue and did not disrupt his appearance, the press conference afterward, or campus business. Yiannopoulos, in contrast, announced a four-day "free speech week," replete with speakers, events, and a schedule. But details of Yiannopoulos's "free speech week" were incomplete at best. Among other challenges, campus co-sponsorship was unclear, not all scheduled event times included speakers, not all speakers who were listed had agreed to participate, and funding for increased public safety

(by one estimate close to \$1 million) was not in place. It was as if Yiannopoulos had engaged in "planned failure," the objective to complain later that the event was cancelled because his views did not align with Berkeley's liberalism-radicalism.

That last point is not inconsequential. Ironically, given that FSM sought to increase the number of voices heard, it is the case that at Berkeley and on other campuses, particular viewpoints and speech content are often pre-judged and deemed unfit for uttering. One criterion for judgment is whether portions of the potential audience perceive the speaker as "offensive." In 2014, for example, Berkeley commencement planners invited political comedian/commentator Bill Maher to deliver a commencement address. A petition soon circulated demanding that the invitation be withdrawn because of Maher's comments on Islam. Planners declined to rescind the offer, and Maher spoke. But given his own experience in 2014, three years later Maher was quick to speak on Ann Coulter's behalf when it appeared that she might be denied a platform because her views made some on campus uncomfortable. At issue, at least in part, is the perspective that universities should provide students with a "safe space," presumably safe in part from ideas with which they do not already agree. But Dean Chemerinsky reminds us that:

The central principle of the First Amendment—and of academic freedom—is that all ideas and views can be expressed. Sometimes they are ideas and views that we might consider noble, that advance equality. Sometimes they might be ideas that we abhor. But there is no way to empower a government or campus administration to restrict speech without allowing for the possibility that tomorrow, it will be our speech that is restricted. (*New York Times*, 13 Sept 2017)

What, then, might universities do to promote free speech in an age when, unlike in 1964, audiences seem increasingly to want to hear only speakers with whom



they already agree? Chemerinsky and Chancellor Gillman of UC, Irvine, offer a "checklist for administrators" to help guide their thinking as they contemplate speech events in 2018. They recommend that campuses:

1. Disseminate a clear statement of free speech values and create opportunities to teach the campus community about free speech.
2. Publish a clear statement supporting the presence of controversial speakers before incidents occur.
3. Devise and publicize transparent and neutral procedures for approving events.

4. Ensure everyone's safety.
5. Put in place rules that prohibit disrupting the speech of others during authorized campus events—with disciplinary measures when appropriate. (*Wall Street Journal* 4 Sept 2017)

To a large extent, these guidelines reflect the values that prevailed during FSM's engagements with President Kerr in 1964. If employed similarly in 2018 and beyond by the left and right alike, perhaps university campuses might again become sites where advocates agree to disagree as they work toward the common good. ■



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# The Various Threats to Free Speech on Campus

By Howard Gillman, Ph.D. and Erwin Chemerinsky, J.D.

The principles of free speech, academic freedom, freedom of thought, and free inquiry require that all ideas and views be expressible on a college campus. At a minimum, they impose an obligation on campus officials not to censor or punish people merely because they express an controversial idea. But they also impose an obligation to nurture a culture that values the robust exchange of ideas, and that stands against efforts to silence speakers by means other than official censorship or punishment.

The temptation to ban or punish expression has been used at various times in history to prevent people from advocating for or even teaching about abolitionism, Darwinism, labor rights, resistance to war, socialism and communism, and civil rights. We have learned the hard way that, unless we protect the right to express any idea, the power of the censor will inevitably be used to disastrous effect. Conversely, strong protections for expression of views considered controversial or even

dangerous have been a driving force for social progress and for improvements in our understanding of the world.

The First Amendment prohibits public universities from censoring or punishing the expression of ideas on campus. Although they are not legally required to do so, private colleges and universities should also treat protection of the expression of ideas as central to their mission, because otherwise controversial new ideas may be stifled, and wrongheaded or dangerous ideas may not be exposed or rebuffed.

Of course, free speech is not absolute. If a circumstance meets the legal definitions of incitement, harassment, or true threats, then the speech is not protected. But what all of these exceptions have in common is that the mere expression of an idea is not enough to trigger the exception.

Free speech on campus can be undermined in many ways. Most obviously, a campus can prohibit and punish certain speech, such as with hate speech codes that have

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The mission of inquiry and discovery will be forestalled if it becomes a commonplace assumption on campuses that certain ideas cannot be expressed or heard.

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been adopted at many universities. Also, campuses can restrict speech through restrictive permit systems, which are a prior restraint of speech, long disfavored under the First Amendment and frequently subjected to constitutional challenges. Every campus hate speech code that has been considered by a court has been declared unconstitutional.

But there are other ways, too, that free speech can be thwarted. Even in institutions that are dedicated to advancing truth and questioning past assumptions, the pressure to conform to dominant opinion is an ever-present threat. The success of academic communities depends on both establishing formal protections for speech and academic freedom, and continually reinvigorating a culture that welcomes the expression of nonconformist opinion. Every advance in knowledge came first as an assault on sacred dogmas. The mission of inquiry and discovery will be forestalled if it

becomes a commonplace assumption on campuses that certain ideas cannot be expressed or heard.

One increasingly frequent problem is where students and others try to prevent speech by shouting down a speaker. They claim that they are preventing the campus from providing a “platform” to those whose speech they deem to be repugnant. In the fall of 2017, disruptors prevented an ACLU lawyer from speaking at the William and Mary Law School, and University of Oregon President Michael Schill was kept from delivering a state of the campus talk at his institution.

Those engaged in such disruptive behavior contend that their actions are constitutionally protected; that they did nothing but engage in speech. For example, when student protestors prevented Schill from delivering his speech, the group explained, “Free speech is the right of individuals and communities to express themselves



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It has long been recognized constitutional law that the “heckler’s veto”—defined as the suppression of speech by an official in order to appease disruptive, hostile, or threatening members of the audience—can be as much a threat to rights of free expression as government censorship.

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without repression from the state. The students are not the state nor the repressors. Taking to the stage and using this platform was an act of free speech—not a violation of it.”

It’s not a new argument. When a group of students acted to prevent Israeli ambassador Michael Oren from delivering a speech at the University of California, Irvine in 2010, one of them explained that “rights can only be trampled upon and censored by the government, not by individuals,” and “acts of protest must be judged by their ability to empower marginalized voices and demand their basic human rights....” These students, too, said that they had a First Amendment right to use speech to keep another from speaking.

Contrary to the view of these protesters, individuals do not have a right to prevent others from speaking. It has long been recognized constitutional law that the “heckler’s veto”—defined as the suppression of speech by an official in order to appease disruptive, hostile, or threatening members of the audience—can be as much a threat to rights of free expression as government censorship.

If audience members had a general right to engage in disruptive or threatening behavior by using loud, boisterous, or inciting speech, it would give any determined individual or group veto power over the expression of any idea they opposed. Only the most benign or inoffensive ideas would be expressible. It would empower people to believe that, “if we can’t get the government to censor the speech, then we’ll do it.”

The only protection against the heckler’s veto is to require officials to make every effort to control the disruptors or to deter their efforts by treating the disruption as a punishable breach of the peace. Of course, it is possible that, despite best efforts, safety or public order cannot be maintained without calling an end to a controversial event.

But this should be a last resort, one pursued only after exhausting all efforts to control those who are creating the threats against the lawful expression of speech.

The idea that private individuals cannot censor what the government is required to protect played a vitally important role during the civil rights movement, when courts prevented officials in the South from stopping speeches and marches based on the threat of hostile audiences. But the United States Supreme Court made clear that it is not permissible to silence a speaker based on the reaction of the audience.

Importantly, however, prohibitions against disruptions also have their limits. For example, protecting a controversial speaker assumes that the speaker has a right to speak in a particular location at a particular time.

When that is not the case—for example, in a true, open “public forum” on campus grounds, where anyone is allowed to be and to talk—no one speaker has any more rights to express a point of view than any other speaker. If a Christian fundamentalist preacher were to use an open public space on a campus to preach against non-heterosexual activity, there is no reason why members of the campus community could not surround the preacher and enter into a boisterous back-and-forth. Everyone in such a group has a right to be protected against violence or threats of violence. But there is no right in an open campus square, or in an open city park, to speak uninterrupted.

The reason why recent campus controversies are different is that, in those cases, the campus has created a process whereby particular individuals (e.g., student sponsors and their invited guests) are given a “right” to have access to specific campus venues (for example, through a reservation process). Once the campus has

followed its policies and assigned rooms for particular activities, those who have secured the reservations have recognized claims to that space at those times.

In such a limited public forum—and in other places on campus where certain activities are assigned and recognized (such as teaching classrooms, or rooms that are reserved for presidents to give a presidential address, or administrative offices)—those who have been given the access to the space have the express rights associated with that space. This includes the right to be protected against disruption of their authorized activities.

Also, while opponents cannot disrupt a talk by an authorized controversial speaker, it is also true that the speaker has no right to a cooperative or supportive audience. Those who disagree are allowed to express their disagreement in ways that nevertheless allow the person to have their say. This includes the right to hold counter-protests or competing events, or to distribute critical material to audience members. But it also includes expressing disapproval as a member of the audience, so long as that disapproval does not undermine the rights of the speaker or their sponsor.

There are always judgment calls in addressing disruptive protest activity on campuses. We favor a more accommodating approach when protestors focus on administrators, for practical reasons rather than because of First Amendment principles. Campus leaders have many avenues to express their views, and so an occasional tactical decision to move on is understandable.

But accommodation is much less appropriate when some members of the campus community are attempting to prevent others from exercising their rights. In such cases, “heckler’s veto” principles argue in favor of strong campus rebuffs of the claims of the

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Importantly, however, prohibitions against disruptions also have their limits.

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disrupters. Otherwise, vulnerable or controversial opinions will never be expressible on a campus, and this would represent an abandonment of foundational principles of modern American higher education.

A much harder question from the perspective of the First Amendment arises when a college or university, often in response to student pressure, chooses to cancel a planned speaker from appearing. No speaker has a First Amendment right to be invited to speak on campus. There are an infinite number of potential speakers, and those not chosen, for whatever reason, have no basis for claiming that their rights have been violated.

However, college officials who succumb to these sorts of pressures risk undermining an academic culture that welcomes the unfettered exchange of ideas—one where it is simply assumed that the best response to dangerous or offensive views is rebuttal and exposure rather than silencing.

There are many high-profile instances of speaking events being canceled or invitations withdrawn. A study by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education has found that since 2000, there have been 192 incidents in which students or faculty have pushed for invited speakers to be disinvited. In 82 of those instances, the speaker ultimately did not speak. In 53 of these cases, the speaker’s invitation to campus was revoked, while in 17, the speaker withdrew in the face of protest.

We believe a better approach was advocated by President Barack Obama when he addressed Rutgers graduates in 2016. Noting that Condoleezza Rice had declined to speak at Rutgers after students protested an invitation that was extended to her, the president suggested a better strategy than refusing to listen:

Campuses have a duty, not only to avoid official censorship, but also to... take the steps necessary to allow even unpopular speakers to appear.

"If you disagree with somebody, bring them in and ask them tough questions. Hold their feet to the fire. Make them defend their positions. If somebody has got a bad or offensive idea, prove it wrong. Engage it. Debate it. Stand up for what you believe in.... Use your logic and reason and words. And by doing so, you'll strengthen your own position, and you'll hone your arguments. And maybe you'll learn something and realize you don't know

everything.... Either way, you win. And more importantly, our democracy wins."

We live in a deeply polarized time. It means that there likely will be ever more efforts by students and faculty to stop speech that they don't like. But campuses have a duty, not only to avoid official censorship, but also to withstand this pressure and take the steps necessary to allow even unpopular speakers to appear. ■



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# Your Invitation is withdrawn: THE CONTROVERSIAL SPEAKER CONTROVERSY



**CAMPUSES ACROSS THE NATION** consistently made headlines in 2017 because of free speech and expression issues: professors were fired for inappropriate remarks in class or online, students protested and marched against everything from President Trump's travel ban to the now dead proposal to tax graduate school tuition waivers, and administrators confronted a variety of campus speaker controversies. According to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), 2017 was one of its busiest years in recent history. Some of the most common of these 2017 controversies were related to guest speaker disinitations or calls to withdraw invitations. Students and faculty alike protested appearances by conservative pundits and writers Ann Coulter, Milo Yiannopoulos, David Horowitz, Ben Shapiro, and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Calls for disinitations also came from the right for speakers such as WikiLeaks source Chelsea Manning, co-chair of the Women's March and political activist Linda Sarsour, and California Attorney General Xavier Becerra. A survey released by FIRE in October 2017 found that while a majority of students on college campuses support inviting a variety of speakers, more than half agree that disiniting guests should be an option, depending on the speaker. Within that group, Democratic or

liberal students are 19 percent more likely to support disinitations than their Republican or conservative peers. Despite this, few students report that they would participate in actions to prevent a guest speaker event from taking place. See the figure below for actions students reported they might take in response to a controversial speaker invitation.

Disinitations were issued to speakers who have made racist or hateful comments or participated in criminal activity or professional misconduct, when the school was unable to provide adequate security for the event, to avert planned protests, and for other reasons.

FIRE has kept a "Disinvitation Database" for several years. A record number of attempts by students, faculty, and others to prevent speakers from appearing on campus occurred in 2016, when 42 such incidents took place. In 2017, that number decreased to 29. The database lists the school, speaker, event type, controversy topic, whether a disinvitation was extended, and if the attempt to block the speaker was made from the left or right on the political spectrum.

Learn more about this topic and FIRE's efforts to defend and sustain individual rights at U.S colleges and universities at [thefire.org](http://thefire.org).

Student Reactions to Guest Speakers with Whom They Strongly Disagree



Note: Not all answer options for the question graphed here are represented in this figure. Students could select as many answers as applied.

Source: *Speaking Freely: What Students Think About Expression at American Colleges*. Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. Accessed January 11, 2018 from [www.thefire.org/publications/student-attitudes-free-speech-survey/student-attitudes-free-speech-survey-full-text/#guestSpeakers](http://www.thefire.org/publications/student-attitudes-free-speech-survey/student-attitudes-free-speech-survey-full-text/#guestSpeakers).

# Defending Critical and Activist Scholars in the Neoliberal Academy:

## A Social Movement Perspective

By Dana L. Cloud, Ph.D.



The current wave of faculty bullying began in the spring of 2017, following Keeanga-Yahmatta Taylor's (right) commencement address at Hampshire College. In that address, she criticized the Trump administration....

Taylor began receiving death threats, including racist lynching threats, rape threats, and other threats of violence after these remarks went viral online through right-wing opinion hubs.



Since the Spring of 2017, forces of the white-supremacist “alt-right” have targeted critical and activist professors, taking scholars’ words out of context and using them as a warrant for a barrage of hostile communication in both virtual and physical worlds. These attacks are experienced as deeply personal and sometimes disabling. However, they actually represent a social movement tactic on the part of the right to propel campuses into a “spiral of silence”—a dynamic of fear and isolation—about the rise of the right in the context of neoliberal austerity.

### ACADEMICS UNDER ATTACK

The current wave of faculty bullying began in the spring of 2017, following Keeanga-Yahmatta Taylor’s commencement address at Hampshire College. In that address, she criticized the Trump administration, saying,

The president of the U.S., the most powerful politician in the world, is a racist, sexist megalomaniac. It is not a benign observation but has meant tragic consequences for many people in this country, from the terror-inducing raids in communities of undocumented immigrants to his disparaging of refugees in search of freedom and respite.

Taylor began receiving death threats, including racist lynching threats, rape threats, and other threats of violence after these remarks went viral online through right-wing opinion hubs such as Campus Reform, Turning Point, and Ann Coulter. A leader in the Black Lives Matter movement and an organizer of the January 2017 Women’s March, Taylor was forced to cancel her nationwide speaking tour. In this way, the campaign against Taylor achieved its goal: to temporarily silence a key voice in the resistance against the rise of the right in the United States.

Taylor’s case was soon followed by waves of internet harassment and threats against other professors, among them Johnny Eric Williams at Trinity College, George Ciccarello-Maher at Drexel, and Lisa Durden at Essex County College. I was among this group targeted in the summer of 2017. Each of us had publicly challenged the ideas and activities of the far right. Each of us was the target of a punishing barrage of hate delivered via email, Twitter, and Facebook. Ciccarello-Maher has since resigned, saying he was unable to withstand the barrage of vitriol directed against him. The successful persecution of professors threatens a chilling effect on critical debate and activism on our campuses.

## STRATEGIES FOR TARGETED FACULTY

1. Take steps to ensure your physical safety and the safety of family, friends, and pets. On campuses, make a safety plan with campus security.
2. Reverse the right's narrative. Document and archive your hate mail, phone messages, threatening emails, tweets, and Facebook posts and messages. If you get phone messages, archive them also. Compile these into a packet or presentation, showing the types of racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic (and so on) motives of your attackers. Show how they are the ones threatening actual violence. Present these examples to your chair, dean, provost, president, chancellor, or trustees.
3. Find your allies on campus. Ask faculty you know from activism and governance, along with friends and other colleagues, to sign and circulate a statement in your defense. If there are student organizations that would support you, tap them to get involved. At some point, if needed, they could mount a public student campaign to demand the protection of your academic freedom.
4. Get the support of major organizations that defend academic freedom. In particular, contact the AAUP; the organization has been campaigning for targeted professors and has crafted an important statement defending them. AAUP can circulate the details of your case and any petitions or other material you are sending out. Contact press outlets such as *Inside Higher Ed* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to schedule interviews.
5. Get signatures from academics and allies everywhere. Use social media and political organizations to circulate an online petition to gather hundreds, if not thousands, of signatures. The presence of this support can pressure or give administrators "permission" to do the right thing. This work also builds long-lasting networks of mutual support.
6. Get help. It is difficult to do all of these things by yourself, especially when under siege. If you have comrades in a political organization, or a posse of friends and colleagues who could take on some of this labor, use them. Someone can archive and document; another person can get a faculty statement going; another can contact the AAUP and set up press interviews; another can set up the online petition; and so on.
7. Get organized. Being part of activist organizations, including faculty unions, the AAUP, field-specific organizations, and national and international organizations is crucial to our self-defense. Being organized means that you have the networks and help already in place when it is time to do battle. And you will be ready to defend everyone else if and when they face similar assaults. Organize to protect vulnerable untenured and adjunct faculty.

Adapted from a piece that originally appeared in *Inside Higher Ed*; see [www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/11/07/tips-help-academics-respond-right-wing-attacks-essay](http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/11/07/tips-help-academics-respond-right-wing-attacks-essay).



Those of us who have survived such blitzes have received ever growing numbers of new calls and emails from faculty confronting this kind of bullying, asking what they can do to defend themselves and make sense of the ugly discourse aimed at them. I published a brief guide in *Inside Higher Ed* (November 7, 2017; see sidebar at left) emphasizing the need to go public and build a campaign to challenge the narrative that the right is putting forward. There are untold numbers of isolated faculty enduring such harassment.

Publicity campaigns are crucial to faculty security as individuals and organizations on the right attempt to convince university administrators to punish and even fire the "offending" academics. Unfortunately, in the cases of Durden, Ciccarello-Maher, and Williams, the institutions succeeded in sanctioning the radical faculty.

At Syracuse, I was gratified by my administration's support. I believe that the public campaign I launched against the attacks on me was influential in garnering that support. With the backing of my department chair, I crafted a narrative that explained how those calling for my head belonged to a broader movement phenomenon that was not primarily or even actually about anything I had said in public. I was able to identify, with the help of others more Web-savvy, the explicit invocations of neo-Nazi and other white supremacist symbolism (including icons of "Pepe the Frog," the Iron Cross, and the double lightning bolts signifying "SS") in the hateful mail and tweets. These elements of the right-wing rhetoric helped convince higher administration that I was not the agent of violence in this situation.

In addition, I received the support of many of my faculty and many organizations, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the Campus Antifascist Network, and my own political home, the International Socialist Organization. Among us, we

Publicity campaigns are crucial to faculty security as individuals and organizations on the right attempt to convince university administrators to punish and even fire the "offending" academics.

circulated a mass petition that garnered more than 1,500 signatures on my behalf. In my case and others, this approach was effective in giving university administrators cover for retaining the activist faculty under attack.

The resulting statement made by Chancellor Syverud at Syracuse University has been held up by the AAUP as a model expression of the academy's commitment to academic freedom. Without mentioning me by name, the Chancellor refused demands to fire me, writing,

We are and will remain a university. Free speech is and will remain one of our key values. I can't imagine academic freedom or the genuine search for truth thriving here without free speech. Our faculty must be able to say and write things—including things that provoke some or make others uncomfortable—up to the very limits of the law.

As the AAUP noted, this statement is exemplary and should be taken as a model for any administration whose faculty face right-wing harassment.

I endured my first of three bullying campaigns when David Horowitz published a list of what he considered to be the "100 most dangerous professors." I was on that list as a result of my opposition to war. Later, I was targeted as an outspoken advocate of Palestinian liberation.

In two published studies of my own hate mail (in *Communication, Culture & Critique* in December of 2009 and in the volume *Academic Repression: Reflections from the Academic Industrial Complex*, AK Press, 2010), I discovered how right-wing radio programs and websites organized and trained people in the language to use against intellectuals. Communication scholar Sarah Jackson's recent work on Twitter storms and other social media phenomena show that the same dynamic is at work today—but amplified geometrically. It was clear then, as it is now, that it was the right-wing culture leaders and pundits who were

leading the charge, and that it was not about me or any other individual. It was a clear, organized political effort to demean and demoralize us—thus weakening campuses as sites of critique and activism.

## BACKGROUND ON THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

The phenomenon of bullying intellectuals has a deep history that is tied not only to far-right scapegoating, but also to the connection between higher education and capitalism in the United States. As historian Henry Heller (*The Capitalist University*, Pluto Press, 2016) and education writer Nancy Welch ("Educating for Austerity," *International Socialist Review*, Fall, 2017) have demonstrated, the American university system has since its inception been dependent upon being useful to corporations, industry, and the state. Heller describes how, in the 1950s, University of California Chancellor Clark Kerr, facing an insurrection, defended his vision of the university as a provider of workers and knowledge to corporations and the state. The academy, like other cultural institutions, suffered under McCarthyist persecution of the left.

But the Free Speech Movement of 1964 and the waves of other social movements sweeping campuses across the country into the 1970s altered the dominant vision of the purpose of higher education: not for the training of corporate cogs or the production of profitable scientific knowledge alone, but also for the understanding of our shared humanity and the production of new ways of knowing in service to the common good. Out of these movements, black studies, women's and gender studies, international studies, and the inclusion of the experiences and contributions of the oppressed in general flourished. The centers we defend today against budget cuts and the logic of instrumentality were products of those movements.

The backlash beginning in the 1980s against the gains of the radical social movements of the previous



two decades (women's rights, affirmative action, welfare expansion, environmental protection, opposition to war) also targeted campuses. The first expression of this backlash was the whipped-up antagonism toward "political correctness," or respect for and inclusion of the oppressed. The ideological assault corresponded to the rapid decline of state support for higher education, which picked up pace in the 1990s and continues to this day.

The *New York Times* (December 31, 2017) editorial board summarized the state of the academy as "higher ed's low moment," citing a Pew survey showing that 58 percent of conservatives believe that universities and colleges have a negative effect on American society. The public assault on universities is best exemplified by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's deep cuts in the budgets of state universities and the elimination of tenure—and the academic freedom that it guarantees to scholars engaged in critique, controversy, and activism.

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities reported on August 23, 2017, that state funding of higher education in 2017 is \$9 billion less than it was in 2008, writing, "The funding decline has contributed to higher tuition and reduced quality on campuses.... At a time when the benefit of a college education has never been greater, state policymakers have made going to college less affordable and less accessible to the students most in need."

Overall, the persecution of critical intellectuals is not only a product of a recent proto-fascist movement in our society; it also participates in a longer history of pressure on the academy to give in completely to the imperatives of neoliberal capitalism—a version of capitalism that requires greater austerity, privatization of social responsibility, massive student debt, and a resulting downward standard of living among ordinary people.

In this context, we should be skeptical about the capacity of administrators to be part of the solution. They

have been at the helm of this yacht from the outset. And we should challenge discourses of civility that equate our voices with those of the right. Administrators often argue that all perspectives should be included in contentious political debates on campus. As Victor Ray, writing in *Inside Higher Ed* (June 30, 2017), explains, the right has "weaponized" the idea of free speech. Our rhetorical work can help to expose the opportunistic, violent, proto-fascist, and fascist interests inherent in efforts to intimidate us.

#### FIGHTING BACK

The question remains as to how to fight back. A wide range of literature in the study of social change has recognized that movements combining persuasive, collective, and economic leverage are the most powerful. For this reason, all academics should organize, not only on our own behalf, but on behalf of every member of the academic community.

The biggest source of power for us today will be unions. Since the National Labor Relations Board Yeshiva Decision in 2016, graduate students in both public and private universities across the country have started union campaigns and used their unions to win real gains and protect themselves against austerity and exploitation. Despite some defeats and bitter opposition by administration, they have won higher stipends and better working conditions at Columbia, Yale, Chicago, NYU, and many other places.

It is more difficult to organize faculty into unions, because professors think about themselves primarily as individuals in a meritocracy; that if they just work hard enough, publish enough, get good teaching evaluations, and so on, they will be protected from precarity. But over the decades of the right-wing capitalist assault on the academy, things have only gotten worse for professors. And where faculty are unionized, they do better. It is little wonder that faculty unions are on the rise.

Overall, the persecution of critical intellectuals is not only a product of a recent proto-fascist movement in our society; it also participates in a longer history of pressure on the academy to give in completely to the imperatives of neoliberal capitalism...

In July, unionized contingent and part-time faculty at Duke won higher pay and longer-term appointments. In March, administrators at Ithaca College, threatened with a strike, gave in to worker demands. In November, in a union election held by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Fordham University contingent faculty voted overwhelmingly to join Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 200United. There are dozens of examples of faculty unionizing over the past year.

Despite decades of union decline, unions still are the best protection that workers—including intellectuals—can muster against the logic of austerity. As a unified economic force, unionized professors and graduate students

can threaten a university's profitability and reputation. It can bargain for all faculty and graduate students as a bloc, securing protections and advances for all.

We are not just defending ourselves against the thuggery of the Trump presidency and its licensing of anti-intellectualism and white supremacy. We are pushing back against a decades-long attempt to render our campuses safe for capitalism and precarious if not dangerous for its critics. Our collective, unified, economic power is the most serious weapon we have in this fight. We can use it not only to improve the terms of our work, but also to keep our public spaces of dialogue, critique, controversy, and activism alive. ■



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# Yes, Ideological Bias in Academia is Real, AND COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS MUST HELP SOLVE THE PROBLEM

By Andrew M. Ledbetter, Ph.D.

I am grateful that NCA invited me to write this essay on “what some have called the chilling effect of ‘liberal’ academia on freedom of expression among conservative professors and students.” As a social scientist, I think of this as two related empirical questions: What is the political tilt of academia? And, does that political tilt silence conservative voices? Fortunately, scholars have gathered data on these questions, and so I will briefly review a few findings. Then, I will share the lived experience of some of our colleagues and suggest how we might promote ideological diversity in our discipline.

## RESEARCH EVIDENCE

To the first question: Evidence indicates political skew in academia toward the left. Over a decade ago, Gross and Simmons’s study on the American professoriate found that 44 percent identified as liberal, 47 percent as moderate, and only 9 percent as conservative, with moderates leaning center-left rather than center-right. Particularly relevant to

our discipline, the greatest imbalance emerged in the social sciences (58 percent liberal, 5 percent conservative) and the humanities (52 percent liberal, 4 percent conservative). Their monograph, although published only online, has received more than 100 citations since 2007. More recent peer-reviewed research on party affiliation suggests that the imbalance has widened. In a 2016 article published in *Econ Journal Watch*, Mitchell Langbert and his co-authors found that registered faculty Democrats outnumbered Republicans by 11.5 to 1 overall, and in Communication/Journalism, by 20 to 1. In many departments, members of minor liberal parties (such as the Green Party) are more common than Republicans. Academia leans to the left, and the Communication discipline is no exception.

And so, to the second question: What is the effect of this ideological tilt? The literature has focused on two competing hypotheses for why the imbalance exists: that conservatives self-select out of academia, or that



**“I never should have told him who I voted for!”**

conservatives experience bias that deters them. As sociologist George Yancey has contended, these explanations are not mutually exclusive. Both likely occur, yet the available evidence indicates that political bias against conservatives is no trivial concern. I only have space to summarize a few key findings here, but interested readers would benefit from exploring Heterodox Academy, which advocates for ideological diversity in university life.

- In a study published in 2012 in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, Inbar and Lammers asked psychology scholars about their perception of academia’s political climate. Liberals reported the least hostile climate (1.9 on a seven-point scale), moderates significantly more (3.7), and conservatives the most hostile (4.7). The more a scholar moves away from a liberal identity, the more ideological heat she or he perceives.
- That study also found that some liberal professors admitted willingness to engage in bias that would harm

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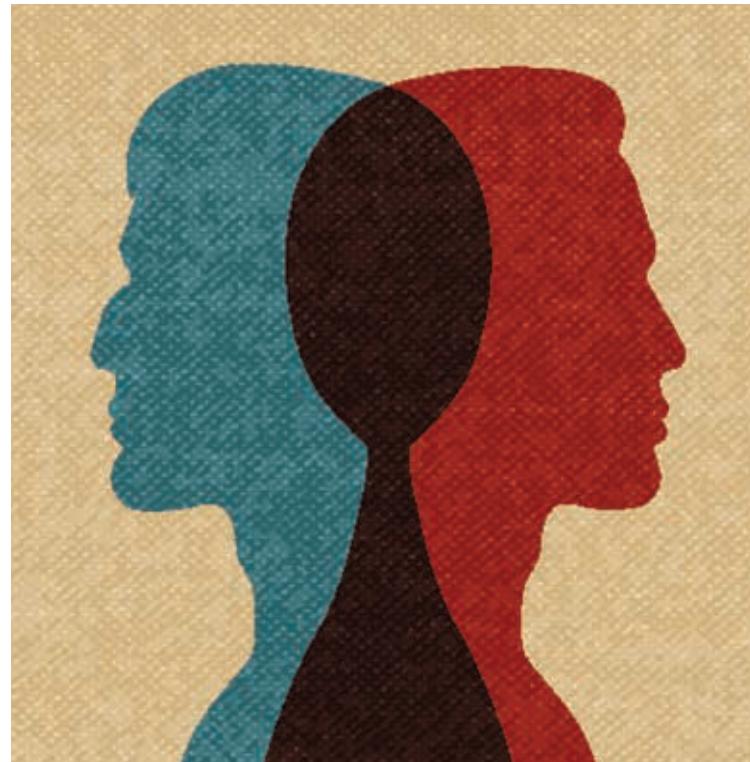
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the career of conservative academics: “Hostility toward and willingness to discriminate against conservatives is widespread. One in six respondents said that she or he would be somewhat (or more) inclined to discriminate against conservatives in inviting them for symposia or reviewing their work. One in four would discriminate in reviewing their grant applications. More than one in three would discriminate against them when making hiring decisions.”

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Some progressive scholars disregard claims of ideological bias, despite their abiding concern for other forms of discrimination.

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- Jussim, writing in the same journal in response to Inbar and Lammers, acknowledged the privilege he enjoys as a liberal academic, including: “If I apply for a job, I can be confident my political views are more likely to be an asset than liability”; “I can avoid spending time with colleagues who mistrust me because of my politics”; “I will feel welcomed and ‘normal’ in the usual walks of my academic life.”
- Yancey, Reimer, and O’Connell, writing in 2015 in *Sociology of Religion*, found that academia can be particularly hostile to religious conservatives. Yancey testified to his own experience in an article published in *The Stream*: “Indeed when I read academic literature about my faith it is like I am reading about some alien I cannot recognize. Its description of conservative Christians is often some bizarre caricature of the worst of my faith.”
- Yancey’s empirical work has further documented bias that conservatives (religious and otherwise) face in academia, particularly in the processes of hiring, promotion, and tenure. Like Inbar and Lammers, he conducted direct surveys of academics, finding that about half would be less likely to hire a conservative Protestant, about 40 percent someone who is part of the NRA, and about a third someone who is a

Republican. In contrast, being a member of a liberal group such as the ACLU is seen as an asset.

I am not claiming that these are perfect studies (no study is), or that all progressive scholars hold bias against conservatives (clearly not). Nor am I claiming that anti-conservative bias explains 100 percent of the variance in the political affiliation of scholars in our discipline or elsewhere. That would be absurd. Yet, given the evidence, I am persuaded that it would be even more absurd to claim an effect size of 0 percent. As Yancey put it in a *Patheos* article, some progressive scholars tend to “focus on self-selection with a slight nod to the possibility of bias. This is exactly opposite from what our empirical evidence has told us.”

Also, the reality of anti-conservative bias does not discount the very real threats to academic freedom experienced by my progressive colleagues. Even as we disagree on ideology and public policy, we should stand together against all threats to ideological diversity, from whatever part of the political continuum they arise.

I encourage those interested to check out these and other sources. I especially encourage my liberal colleagues to do this because, as Yancey noted when I spoke with him recently in a public forum, some progressive scholars disregard claims of ideological bias, despite their abiding concern for other forms of discrimination.

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#### LIVED EXPERIENCE

I am unaware of any study of political bias that focuses exclusively on our discipline. So, to document such bias and vivify the claims above, I invited members of our discipline to share their experiences anonymously. With their permission, here are a few stories I heard:

“During my first job interview for a tenure-track position, I sat through an uncomfortable meal where a senior faculty member, assuming I was liberal, openly mocked economic beliefs that I hold. I wasn’t sure what to do, so I just kind of smiled and nodded.”

“I haven’t been to NCA in years. As a conservative woman, there is no space for me there.”

“When I was in graduate school, the Department Chair got up and started talking about how stupid Republicans are. I remember being shocked that the Chair was using a position of power to degrade others.”



“During a campus visit at a potential graduate school, I wore a cross necklace. A faculty member pointed it out and said, ‘Cross necklace? You aren’t welcome here.’ This interaction almost deterred me from pursuing any sort of graduate education.”

“I wrote an article on conservative artistic performances that the Editor responded to with high praise, followed by a request for a few revisions. After I made the requested revisions, the Editor rejected it. He told me that he wanted to publish the article, but that the conservative content of the performances had so offended the other members of his editorial staff that he ‘dared not run it’ lest he have to deal with a ‘full blown revolution.’”

“Political bias is one reason I left academia soon after receiving my doctorate.”

“When I write papers that suggest liberal bias in the media, they get rejected, and so I now write about other things. In a world where promotion is determined by publication/presentation rate, I have no desire to spend more time writing articles that will never see daylight.”

“As a graduate student, I remember being told at a conference that I couldn’t be a critical/cultural scholar because I had a Christian worldview.”

“Before I had tenure, a senior professor who knew my political leanings jokingly referred to me as ‘a Nazi.’ This occurred in front of students.”

I know we would be concerned (and rightly so) if we were to hear such lived experiences from other groups. Those concerns should be no less when the stories pertain to ideological diversity.

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### PROMOTING IDEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN THE DISCIPLINE

So then, what should we do to foster ideological diversity in the Communication discipline? I've heard a variety of ideas from conservatives and concerned progressives. Here are a few actionable suggestions that, to me at least, seem to flow from the available evidence.

1. *As a small but important first step, admit the reality.* If a conservative scholar shares an experience of bias with you, they're probably taking a brave step. Don't minimize that. They're showing you a remarkable degree of trust. Also don't assume that all conservatives are alike; like liberals, we're a diverse bunch. So listen. Even if you can't affirm their beliefs, affirm their humanity and academic freedom. More generally, our field would benefit from the kind of discussion about political bias that Jonathan Haidt has spearheaded in Social Psychology.
2. *Affirm ideological diversity* when you have the opportunity to do so. I find the statement that Heterodox Academy asks its members to sign to be a helpful one that resonates with NCA's Credo for Free and Responsible Communication in a Democratic Society: "I believe that university life requires that people with diverse viewpoints and perspectives encounter each other in an environment where they feel free to speak up and challenge each other. I am concerned that many academic fields and universities currently lack sufficient viewpoint diversity—particularly political diversity. I will support viewpoint diversity in my academic field, my university, my department, and my classroom." Scholars who agree may want to join—it's easy, free,

and a gateway to good conversation among scholars with diverse disciplinary and political orientations.

3. *Refrain from assumptions of political homogeneity in the discipline.* This is perhaps nowhere so true in our discipline as partisan political statements passed in the form of NCA resolutions. Let us be candid: These have no discernible impact on public policy. As a Texan myself, I can assure you that the 2017 convention has come and gone and has made no difference in Texas politics. But some events there may speak volumes to conservatives in our field, particularly those who lack the academic privilege that comes with publication success and tenure. As one graduate student voiced after an e-mail from the NCA leadership ahead of the Dallas convention, "Can we maintain membership at NCA in light of this statement?" I look forward to a world where our students never have to ask that question, no matter their political stripe.
4. *Use online fora judiciously.* For all their benefits, we know that online spaces can tempt us to engage in communication that dehumanizes others. Whatever strengths it may have, I am not convinced that the Communication listserv CRTNET has served as a healthy venue for political discussion. Perhaps more substantive online conversation could be facilitated by communication technologies newer than 1980s-style e-mail listservs.
5. *Purposely build warm relationships with those whose beliefs differ from your own.* To be utterly clear and emphatic: Over the course of my career, my relationships with progressive colleagues and friends have been overwhelmingly positive rather than negative. When

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we talk politics, the conversations may be animated, but most of the time they occur in a spirit of mutual respect. Often, we aren't talking about politics at all, but about our personal lives or mutual professional interests regarding Communication research, theory, and pedagogy. And, indeed, such research tells us that intergroup contact reduces bias.

I believe NCA has the social capital and goodwill among its membership to address ideological bias. Some of my conservative colleagues do not share that optimism, but a panel at the 2017 convention gave me hope. Organized by then First Vice President Ronald L. Jackson II, co-sponsored by the Public Dialogue and Deliberation Division, and chaired by Laura Black (Ohio

University) and Leah Sprain (University of Colorado, Boulder), the panel addressed public dialogue and polarization within NCA and featured scholars from diverse political orientations. People spoke candidly, but respectfully, and I think we all gained insight from the discussion. I see no reason why that spirit of goodwill amid disagreement cannot extend to the entire association, our departments, and the discipline.

Our discipline possesses a wealth of scholarship about effective communication across lines of difference. We can apply this knowledge to foster ideological diversity within our discipline—and then, if we are so inclined, we can turn and use that knowledge to help other disciplines solve this trans-disciplinary problem. ■



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