

## **Political Correctness and Religious Freedom**

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A specter is haunting freedom of speech in America, the specter of political correctness, much like its communist counterpart haunted Europe in the nineteenth century according to Karl Marx's fevered imagination. What is political correctness? It is the application of linguistic rules designed to banish certain words and ways of thought from the public sphere and to replace them with expressions that meet the approval of political, academic, and media elites. Indeed, it is difficult for ordinary citizens to go about their everyday lives without encountering many examples of political correctness. Thus, for instance, a morning news broadcast reveals that an illegal alien is now referred to as an "undocumented immigrant"; a new handicap apparatus at one's workplace is designed for the "differently abled"; and suffering from mental retardation means that one is "intellectually challenged." Perhaps worse, one reads or hears that the American flag is being banned someplace because a few observers might object; and your child returns from school teary eyed because of a policy that equates munching on a pop tart in a fashion that makes it resemble a pistol constitutes grounds for suspension.

Beyond the silly, the annoying, and the alarming, however, is something deadly serious at work throughout American society, especially in the realm of freedom of expression in education, religion, government, and the military. That is, the systematic denial of freedom of expression on the grounds that one's words might offend the sensibilities of selected minorities has become a salient issue in American politics today.

How did we arrive at such a situation, where, for example, a simple expression of faith in a public setting generates screams of outrage from a bevy of secular mavens in the media, academia and political settings? In short, what are the origins and practices of political

correctness, as applied specifically to the area of religious freedom? Answering these questions entails, first, doing some intellectual archeology that will take us to a brief review of philosophical developments in Europe after the First World War. Second, we shall explore how strands of thought known as critical theory crossed the Atlantic and created the foundation of a systematic program of denigration against American social institutions, from the sixties to the present. Finally, we shall conclude with comments about how threats to religious freedom must be seen in the context of larger efforts to transform America into a secular society, inspired more by the ghost of Karl Marx than by the principles of James Madison.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of Marx, perhaps the best way to start is to note his famous quip that great events and personages appear in history twice, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.<sup>2</sup> Marx's widely applicable observation is particularly relevant in understanding a statement made by one of the master's greatest twentieth-century interpreters, Georg Lukács, who in 1918 cried in exasperation: "Who will save us from Western Civilization?"<sup>3</sup> Fast forward to the 1980s at Stanford University, to the second event, where Jesse Jackson chanted with an approving crowd, "Hey, hey, ho, ho! Western civ has got to go!" These words have echoed with triumphant glee throughout the land since the time he uttered them.

Consistent with Marx's formulation, we may suggest that the first time this calumny was made about Western civilization, it was a tragedy, because it presaged the agenda of another Marxist, Italian Antonio Gramsci, which called for "capturing the culture via infiltration of

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<sup>1</sup> Among the many sources that deal with critical theory, three in particular stand out. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism, Part 3: The Breakdown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Robert J. Antonio, "The Origin, Development, and Contemporary Status of Critical Theory," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 24:3 (Summer 1983): 325-351.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 594 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Mihailo Markovic, "The Critical Thought of Georg Lukács," in *Lukács Today: Essays in Marxist Philosophy*, ed. Tom Rockmore, 18 (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1988).

schools, universities, churches and the media by transforming the consciousness of society.”<sup>4</sup> In short, the goal was to conquer the “commanding heights” of Western culture, and the means was waging cultural war through what we now refer to as political correctness. The second event—Jesse Jackson’s rant, —was of course a farce, but one whose substance has gained primacy throughout American culture.

Which, of course, was Gramsci’s goal to begin with, though obviously as an Italian Marxist in the first half of the twentieth century, his project was to transform European institutions, for which he had unbridled contempt. He was especially incensed with the influence of the Catholic Church and he had particular loathing for all religious symbolism. Obviously, Christianity had been the foundation of Western civilization for around two millennia, and Gramsci concluded that it was extremely difficult to wrench Church doctrines out of the consciousness of the masses, rendering them nearly impervious to Marxist teachings. To transform an exasperatingly obtuse proletariat, the Western world would have to become de-Christianized, he declared in his *Prison Notebooks*, by means of a “long march through the culture.”<sup>5</sup> Since any conventional proletariat worth his hammer and sickle wouldn’t be available for a long time to carry out a revolution, Gramsci went on to suggest that a new proletariat comprising criminals, women, and racial minorities could prove fertile intellectual grounds for revolutionary appeals. As we shall see, this view would prove to be uncannily prescient.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Jeffrey D. Breshears, “A Brief History of Cultural Marxism and Political Correctness, Part I,” Web site, Areopagus, <http://theareopagus.org/docs/Culture-War-7b-A-Brief-History-1.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Linda Kimball, “Cultural Marxism,” in *The American Thinker* (15 February, 2007), *American Thinker* Web site available at: [http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/archived-articles/./2007/02/cultural\\_marxism.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/archived-articles/./2007/02/cultural_marxism.html), (accessed 29 May 2013). See Antonio Gramsci, “Prison Notebooks,” in *An Anthology of Western Marxism: From Lukács and Gramsci to Socialist-Feminism*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb 112-145 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Gramsci wrote his *Prison Notebooks* while serving a twenty-year sentence for subversion, after Mussolini’s government decided to crack down on dissidents.

In fact, Gramsci was grappling with a problem that bedeviled all serious Marxists after the Great War, and that was the very great disappointment they all had on the revolutionary prospects for Marx's beloved proletariat. Indeed, the working classes had not only been coopted by the suffocating influence of corporate capitalism, but during World War I, they "instantly converted from Marx to Mars,"<sup>7</sup> in Barbara Tuchman's felicitous phrase, and eagerly fought their counterparts in other countries. Marx, of course, had insisted that workingmen have no country. Not only did proletarians, however, prove to be patriotic, but also they failed to develop the sort of class-consciousness necessary to engage in revolutionary acts—an utterly revolting situation for orthodox Marxists.

Now, Lenin had foreseen this development when he observed that, left to their own devices, proletarians would not advance beyond attaining "trade-union consciousness," which entailed demands for such irrelevant things, in his view, as better working conditions, higher pay, and fewer hours. Worse, in Germany under Otto von Bismarck's shrewd policies, they got all those things; it's hard to want to overthrow capitalism when you have social security and full bellies. Lenin's answer to this problem was the creation of the "Vanguard of the Proletariat," that is, the communist party whose main task was to lead working classes to the performance of their historical functions. On the other hand, one of the German responses was the creation of The Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, otherwise known as the Frankfurt School.

This organization was the brainchild of Felix Weil, the son of a wealthy businessman and a fervent Marxist with time on his hands, money in his pocket, and an agenda to pursue. At first, he wanted to establish a Marxist study center patterned after the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, but for public relations purposes in a country that had only recently suppressed communist insurrections in Bavaria as well as Berlin, settled on a less provocative name. Indeed,

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Random House, 1962), 88.

anything that drew attention to Marx or Soviet influence was suspect in Germany between the wars, especially as central Europe was littered with failed experiments in Marxist-Soviet governments.

One of the most bizarre of these took place in Hungary, where Georg Lukács was presented with a unique opportunity to rid his home country of Western civilization. He was appointed the “People’s Commissar for Education and Culture” in the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, where he proceeded to eradicate the Christian-bourgeois foundations of the country through an ambitious program that involved sexual experimentation, free love, revolt by children against their parents, and other measures that so outraged the nation’s working classes that the government was overthrown in 1919 after only four months in power. Undeterred, Lukács wrote a powerful treatise titled *History and Class Consciousness*, in which he averred, “...A worldwide overturning of values cannot take place without the annihilation of the old values and the creation of new ones by the revolutionaries.”<sup>8</sup>

Such a program was not part of the original goals of the Frankfurt Institute when it was established in 1923. But after Max Horkheimer, a brilliant young Marxist, took over in 1930, the work of the Institute’s team of scholars, which eventually included, in addition to Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Eric Fromm, Wilhelm Reich, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, and Herbert Marcuse, the Frankfurt team moved in the direction of Lukács’s radical formulations. Nowhere was this clearer than in the development during the thirties and forties of what came to be known as “Critical Theory.”

One of the more interesting aspects of this term is that its practitioners seemingly could not agree on exactly what it meant. Indeed, Leo Lowenthal admitted in an interview that took

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Breshears, “A Brief History, Part I,” 18. See also Lukács, “History and Class Consciousness,” *Western Marxism*, 54-111.

place in 1981 that it took the efforts of an American historian of ideas, Martin Jay, to outline its main themes.<sup>9</sup> These perhaps were nowhere better summarized than by Paul Piccone, who stated that "...all of the works of the major figures of the Frankfurt School share one fundamental objective: to come to terms with the new emerging forms of organized capitalism and to radically reconstitute the project of human emancipation that in traditional Marxist theory had been projected as the proletarian revolution."<sup>10</sup> In short, instead of focusing on the form of domination that characterized the relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, which may be considered as somewhat old-fashioned, the new approach, Critical Theory, examines domination, exploitation, and impairments to freedom wherever they appear in advanced capitalist society. Hence, the emphasis on contemporary culture, which from the standpoint of the Critical Theorist, is saturated with power relationships of domination, involving for instance, whites versus nonwhites, elites versus masses, majorities versus minorities, men versus women, and so forth. Clearly, this reconceptualization of Marxist theory opened an immense and seemingly endless array of relationships in modern society characterized by domination and oppression. The "scientific socialism" of orthodox Marxism, which after the failed Soviet experiment and the flexibility of the American New Deal, was not taken so seriously any more, was reborn as Critical Theory, whose horizon is vast and for all practical purposes, unlimited.

The serious enterprise of Critical Theory, however, sometimes also referred to as cultural Marxism, barely got off to a start when the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933 and closed the Institute down. Which meant that a Marxist-oriented think tank dominated by Jewish intellectuals had a problem: where to go next? Fortunately for Horkheimer and company, they had developed a number of contacts overseas, especially in the United States. Thus, when

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<sup>9</sup> Antonio, "Status of Critical Theory," 326.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Antonio, "Status of Critical Theory," 326.

Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, offered scholars of the Frankfurt School an affiliation with Columbia, Horkheimer could hardly believe their good fortune. Martin Jay cites the institute's director exclaiming that "...America, especially the United States, is the only continent in which the continuation of scientific life is possible. Within the framework of this country's democratic Institutions, culture still enjoys the freedom without which, we believe, it is unable to exist."<sup>11</sup> When the move took place, Critical Theory had arrived in the United States.

And came to stay, especially with the production of a myriad of studies during the 1930s and 1940s that explored marriage and the family, authoritarianism, race relationships, the intricacies of Nazi society, aesthetic theory, and aspects of mass culture in America, which they all disliked intensely and subjected to withering criticism.<sup>12</sup> One of the more impressive theoretical accomplishments of the Institute during this period of time was the fusion of Freudianism and Marxism, which in America seemed as unlikely a pairing of opposites as a marriage between the Hatfields and the McCoys. But the Institute's scholars made it work, linking the micro-analysis of Freudian sexual repression with the Marxian emphasis on social and economic oppression—a mix that eventually resulted in the spectacular success of Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, published in 1955.<sup>13</sup>

As noteworthy as Marcuse's accomplishment was, however, it paled in comparison to the longer-term effects of Theodor Adorno's massive tome that appeared in 1950, titled *The Authoritarian Personality*. Building on work carried out by Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933) and Erich Fromm, *Studies on Authority and the Family* (1936),

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 167.

<sup>12</sup> See especially Jay, Ch. VI, "Aesthetic Theory and the Critique of Mass Culture," *Dialectical Imagination*, 173-218.

<sup>13</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon, 1955).

“which concluded that sado-masochism was the core characteristic of the authoritarian/Fascist personality,”<sup>14</sup> Adorno and his associates carried the argument a step further by the construction of their celebrated “F-Scale” to measure precisely those characteristics of a personality most conducive to Fascist appeals. As Martin Jay points out in his review of that thousand-page work, the Fascist personality is understood by reference to the following variables:

CONVENTIONALISM. Rigid adherence to conventional middle-class values.

AUTHORITARIAN SUBMISSION. Submissive, uncritical attitude towards idealized moral authorities of the ingroup.

AUTHORITARIAN AGGRESSION. Tendency to be on the lookout for, and to condemn, reject, and punish, people who violate conventional values.

ANTI-INTRACEPTION. Opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, the tender-minded.

SUPERSTITION AND STEREOTYPY. The belief in mystical determinants of the individual’s fate; the disposition to think in rigid categories.

POWER AND “TOUGHNESS.” Preoccupation with the dominance-submission, strong-weak, leader-follower dimension; identification with power figures; overemphasis upon the conventionalized attributes of the ego; exaggerated assertion of strength and toughness.

DESTRUCTIVENESS AND CYNICISM. Generalized hostility, vilification of the human.

PROJECTIVITY. The disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world; the projection outwards of unconscious emotional impulses.

SEX. Exaggerated concern with sexual “goings-on.”<sup>15</sup>

In short, the Fascist personality is a rigidly conventional individual with religious convictions, who respects strength and toughness, abjures ambiguity or diversity, and is bigoted toward others.

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<sup>14</sup> Breshears, “A Brief History, Part I,” 14.

<sup>15</sup> Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 243.



In other words, as several of his critics pointed out, the authoritarian personality is sort of a typical political conservative.

Or, at least this seemed the implication, as some observers of the study pointed out, then and now. “Why, they asked, was authoritarianism associated with fascism alone and not communism? Why was not the F Scale not the ‘C Scale,’ or at least the ‘A Scale?’ Why was political and economic conservatism seen as connected with authoritarianism, while the demand for state socialism was not?”<sup>16</sup> In fact, Adorno and his Critical Theory colleagues could not abide such questions, which is not hard to understand, given their definition of a prototype liberal, who not only demonstrates the opposite of those tendencies measured by the F-Scale, but “actively seeks progressive social change” as well. Pretty hard to beat that. Indeed, academic prejudices about this stereotypical and most admirable chap, along with his cartoonish and reactionary counterpart, have remained with us today.

Consider, for instance, the sort of research into political and personality types that gets public funding, as Linda Kimball reported in *The American Thinker*: “In August 2003, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) announced the results of their \$1.2 million taxpayer-funded study. It stated, essentially, that traditionalists are mentally disturbed. Scholars from the Universities of Maryland, California at Berkeley, and Stanford had determined that social conservatives...suffer from ‘mental rigidity,’ ‘dogmatism,’ and ‘uncertainty avoidance,’ together with associated indicators for mental illness.”<sup>17</sup> From all this it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Critical Theory promoters are the liberals and the good guys in any social analysis, while their troglodytic adversaries are not only repulsive but most likely politically dangerous.

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<sup>16</sup> Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 247-48.

<sup>17</sup> Kimball, “Cultural Marxism.”

Why put up with political conservatives at all, then? This question was explored by one of the sixties' best-known academic gurus, and, next to Adorno and company, perhaps the most influential member of the Frankfurt School in the United States, Herbert Marcuse. By the time the tumultuous decade that followed the publication of *Eros and Civilization* came about, he was, of course, already well known. Among Marcuse's other publications that received great attention was *One Dimensional Man*,<sup>18</sup> and an extremely important essay that summarized many of his thoughts in that book, which appeared in 1965, titled "Repressive Tolerance."<sup>19</sup>

One would think initially that these terms hardly belong together; after all, how could social tolerance be "repressive?" For this question Marcuse had a facile answer, consistent with Marx's famous position on "false consciousness," in that those who suffer from such a condition have been indoctrinated by their overlords and are not consciously aware of their true interests or the extent of their subjugation. This, of course, was the problem with the proletariat that prompted Lenin's famous solution about creating a political party that constitutes the vanguard of the proletariat, as we have seen. In a sense, the problem was worse in a democratic society because it officially and ostentatiously practices tolerance for all points of view.

The problem with this situation, according to Marcuse, is that only a small minority in such societies, that is, the United States, are capable of the sort of rational thought that would generate truthful conclusions about the mass's lack of awareness of the indoctrination they have endured, of the subjugation they have suffered. He states that there are two kinds of tolerance practiced under such circumstances: "(1) the passive toleration of entrenched and established attitudes and ideas even if their damaging effect on man and nature is evident; and (2) the active, official tolerance granted to the Right as well as to the Left, to movements of aggression as well

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<sup>18</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964).

<sup>19</sup> Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse (Boston: Beacon, 1965), 81-123.

as to movements of peace, to the party of hate as well as to that of humanity.”<sup>20</sup> No mistaking of his meaning here: Marcuse claims, consistent with the Frankfurt School’s Critical Theory about the authoritarian personality, studies on Nazism, the role of domineering fathers in families, and so forth, that the political Right is the guilty party. The political Right is the party that embraces hate, fascism, and as this line of thought developed in the following decades, sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism, ageism, and a host of other isms noxious to the development of a progressive society.

The question is what to do about it. Again, Marcuse’s answer is clear in that tolerance is repressive if it permits the expression of those points of view that maintain an existing situation of domination, indoctrination, and consequently, false consciousness among the masses. “Certain things cannot be said,” he declared. “Certain ideas cannot be expressed, certain policies cannot be proposed, certain behavior cannot be permitted without making tolerance an instrument for the continuation of servitude.”<sup>21</sup> In brief, strict censorship, which he terms as “liberating,” means “intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.”<sup>22</sup> Acting upon such strictures is especially important in American colleges and universities, where it is vital that “new and rigid restrictions on teachings and practices in the educational institutions”<sup>23</sup> are necessary. Enter, stage far Left, the speech codes of American universities from the sixties to the present, and their metastasized presence throughout American society since that time. In fact, Marcuse’s stunning performance in “Repressive Tolerance” constitutes the definitive position of restricting free speech in American society today.

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<sup>20</sup> Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 85.

<sup>21</sup> Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 88.

<sup>22</sup> Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 109.

<sup>23</sup> Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 100.

To sum up, the origins of political correctness are found in the intellectual developments that took place in Germany between the wars, which were physically transferred to America during the 1930s, and through the work of Gramsci, Lukács, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and others, carried out projects of Critical Theory that created the foundation for what is now known as political correctness. The goal of political correctness is to shield favored surrogates of the proletariat on the political left—immigrants, minority groups, feminists, radical students, homosexuals, and anyone opposed to conservatism—from any criticism whatsoever. And if this entails efforts to delegitimize many segments of American society, then so be it.

One thing that proponents of political correctness do not share with Marx, however, is some vision of a better future, beyond assuming that it would be bereft of the sort of things they attack. Critical Theorists were always on shaky ground in this respect. Even Martin Jay, an observer sympathetic to the Frankfurt School, admitted that their “dialectics was superb at attacking other systems’ pretensions of truth, but when it came to articulating the ground of its own assumption and values, it fared less well....”<sup>24</sup> But in attacking what they despise, the PC police have been relentless and consistent. Indeed, in the words of George Lukács, who had Christianity in mind when he stated that, “any political movement capable of bringing Bolshevism to the West would have to be Demonic.”<sup>25</sup>

Certainly it has seemed this way to those who are terrified about the effects of this brand of Bolshevism and America’s freedom of expression in religious matters. Consider, for instance, the Pentagon’s hiring of Mikey Weinstein to offer advice on religious expression in military ranks. Weinstein is head of his own organization called the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, whose goal is to monitor and stifle religious speech wherever it occurs within the

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<sup>24</sup> Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 62.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Breshears, “A Brief History, Part I,” 18.

confines of the military. As he explained on Huffington Post, “Today we face incredibly well-funded gangs of fundamentalist Christian monsters who terrorize their fellow Americans by forcing their weaponized and twisted version of Christianity upon their helpless subordinates in our nation’s armed forces.”<sup>26</sup> Whether this means in practice that ordinary exchanges of religious views in a military setting would subject one to the harsh discipline of military justice is not clear.

It is unquestionable, however, that Weinstein has found plenty of monsters to destroy. For instance, his organization pressured the Air Force to remove a stunning presentation that was patterned after the Dodge Ram Super Bowl commercial entitled, “God Created a Farmer.” Inspired by this clever usage, an Air Force Chaplain at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst wrote a poem he called, “God Created a First Sergeant,” which was then developed into a video. Its narrative proved to be stomach-churning for the politically correct Weinstein, who threw a hissy fit over lyrics that stated, “On the eighth day, God looked down on His creation and said, ‘I need someone who will take care of the Airmen. So God created a First Sergeant.’”<sup>27</sup> On Weinstein’s recommendation, these anodyne Christian words proved too much for the Air Force as well, whose spokesperson lamented that the “Proliferation of religion is not allowed in the Air Force or military. How would an Agnostic, Atheist, or Muslim serving in the military take this video?”<sup>28</sup>

Of course, one response would be simply that you don’t care, but that, too, would kindle the wrath of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, which had also succeeded in getting an inspirational painting with the words, “Blessed are the Peacemakers” removed from Mountain

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<sup>26</sup> “Religious Freedom Threatened by a Political Correct Pentagon,” *The Washington Examiner*, May 1, 2013, *Washington Examiner* Web site, <http://washingtonexaminer.com/national-editorial-religious-freedom-is-threatened-by-a-politically-correct-pentagon/article/2528628>.

<sup>27</sup> Todd Starnes, “Air Force Removes Video that Mentions God,” *Townhall* Web site, <http://townhall.com/columnists/toddstarnes/2013/06/07/air-force-removes-video-that-mentions-god-n1615400> (June 8, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> Starnes, “Air Force Removes.”

Home Air Force Base in Idaho. “It’s extremely frustrating,” an airman remarked. “The Air Force is living in fear of Mikey Weinstein,” an interesting observation, considering that an organization that had bombed the Third Reich to rubble, pulverized North Vietnam, and laid waste to Sadaam Hussein’s military machine, now quivers and quakes in the face of a handful of politically correct zealots.<sup>29</sup> Further, an inquiry from *The Patriot Post* revealed that the Air Force Academy has dropped the words, “so help me God” from the Cadet’s Oath of Allegiance.<sup>30</sup> All of which rather takes the edge off any commitment to fight for God and country.

In fact, it’s not difficult to find examples of political correctness influencing decisions made in military circles. For instance, in 2012 Lieutenant General William “Jerry” Boynton was compelled to withdraw speaking at West Point after a media firestorm was raised about previous comments he had made concerning radical Islam. Some politically correct groups, such as *People for the American Way*, were appalled that such an appearance would give too great a platform for him and further would “suggest approval by the nation’s military leadership of Boykin’s extremism, religious bigotry, and calls for discrimination.”<sup>31</sup> Franklin Graham, son of the evangelist, Billy Graham, was treated the same way in 2010, when he was disinvited to speak at the Pentagon on the National Day of Prayer, because he had earlier characterized radical Islam as “evil and wicked.”<sup>32</sup> Graham went on to say that “the official explanation of my disinvitation was dripping with political correctness: ‘His past statements are not consistent with the multi-faith emphasis and inclusiveness of this event.’”<sup>33</sup> Which amounts to saying that Christians must

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<sup>29</sup> Starnes, “Air Force Removes.”

<sup>30</sup> Mark Alexander, “Obama to DoD: Courts Martial for the Faithful,” *The Patriot Post*, May 2, 2013, *Patriot Post* Web site, <http://patriotpost.us/alexander/17989>.

<sup>31</sup> See “The Mythical Martyrdom of Jerry Boykin,” *People for the American Way*; *People for the American Way* database, <http://www.pfaw.org/rww-in-focus/mythical-martyrdom-jerry-boykin> (accessed June 6, 2013). General Boykin provides his side of the story. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AELFBMBGXHY> (accessed June 6, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Franklin Graham, “Political Correctness Gone Amok,” Billy Graham database, <http://www.billygraham.org/articlepage.asp?articleid=8496> (accessed on June 6 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Graham, “Gone Amok.”

be careful in how they express their thoughts, lest they be accused of “extremism” or religious bigotry.

Or hate speech. Consider further an *NBC Today* interview in 2012 given by Ann Curry with actor Kirk Cameron, who is also a Christian. She was reacting to a statement he had made several weeks earlier about his views on homosexuality, which he described as “unnatural,” as well as “detrimental and ultimately destructive to so many of the foundations of our civilization.”<sup>34</sup> Few things trigger outrage on the part of a modern devotee to political correctness than comments like these, so Curry pursued her concerns with a series of remarks about the effects of taking such a position. “Many people are suggesting that this is hate speech,” she offered, then asked, “Are you encouraging people to feel hate towards gay people?”<sup>35</sup> Naturally, this query put the actor into a difficult position: Either he could recant his views and agree with her, in which case he would have to renounce his core beliefs, or he could defend his statement, endure denunciation and be labeled as a hater, or gay-basher. The best that Cameron could come up with was a comment to the effect that they were dealing with a subject about which “all of us who really think deeply about social issues, like gay marriage, and abortion, and homosexuality, have convictions on issues.”<sup>36</sup>

Certainly this is the case with American colleges and universities, many of which have followed the Marcusean script with regard to embracing of the politics of political correctness, while expunging the thought of those who disagree.<sup>37</sup> The Bowdoin College Project of the National Association of Scholars (NAS) provides an instructive example, also believed by the

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Cindy Simpson, “Christianity or Thoughtcrime?” in *American Thinker*, April 1, 2012; *American Thinker* database, [http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/04/christianity\\_or\\_thoughtcrime.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/04/christianity_or_thoughtcrime.html).

<sup>35</sup> Simpson, “Christianity or Thoughtcrime?”

<sup>36</sup> Simpson, “Christianity or Thoughtcrime?”

<sup>37</sup> Several organizations have been tracking campus bias for years. See for instance *Mind the Campus*, <http://www.mindingthecampus.com/index.html>; the *National Association of Scholars*, NAS database, <http://www.nas.org>; and the *Foundation for Individual Rights in Education* (FIRE) FIRE Web site, <http://thefire.org>.

authors to be representative of the majority of college campuses in America.<sup>38</sup> As noted in the NAS Bowdoin College Project conclusions, the College is devoted to something called “global citizenship,” multiculturalism, diversity, and the notion that most of what we take for granted in society is not somehow grounded in nature, but rather the result of social constructs. Consider, for instance, the following statement about gender equality: “Courses in Gender and Women's Studies investigate the experience of women and men in light of the social construction of gender and its meaning across cultures and historic periods. Gender construction is explored as an institutionalized means of structuring inequality and dominance.” This assertion was found in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, of all things; Herbert Marcuse couldn't have stated it better. Finally, the college is committed to sustainability, which the NAS authors interpret as hostility to “free market economic systems, and the materialistic, bourgeois values that drive them.”<sup>39</sup>

None of which would be especially problematical if opposing points of view were taken seriously or at least allowed, but the NAS authors, Peter Wood and Michael Toscano, concluded that the above dogmas are not “open to debate,” and alternate ways of looking at the world are simply not permitted, which is understandable according to the dictates of Repressive Tolerance. Of course, one could argue that Cultural Marxist professors do a perfectly adequate job explaining positions that differ from their political convictions, but Wood and Toscano doubt that is the case. To offer one example, “Patrick Rael of the history department referred to conservative Bowdoin students who had advocated for an ‘Academic Bill of Rights’ as

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<sup>38</sup> Consult NAS database, [http://www.nas.org/projects/the\\_bowdoin\\_project](http://www.nas.org/projects/the_bowdoin_project). See Peter Wood and Michael Toscano, “What Does Bowdoin Teach? How a Contemporary Liberal Arts College Shapes Students,” NAS database, [http://www.nas.org/images/documents/What\\_Does\\_Bowdoin\\_Teach.pdf](http://www.nas.org/images/documents/What_Does_Bowdoin_Teach.pdf) (accessed October 18, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Peter Wood, “The Evidence of Things Unnoticed,” Minding the Campus database, [http://www.mindingthecampus.com/originals/2013/04/what\\_happens\\_today\\_at\\_a\\_libera.html](http://www.mindingthecampus.com/originals/2013/04/what_happens_today_at_a_libera.html) (accessed June 3, 2013).



"McCarthyite...anti-democratic...and Far Right."<sup>40</sup> There's little reason to suppose that this is not a representative example on a campus where one hundred percent campaign contributions went to Barack Obama, perhaps the most radically "progressive" President in the country's history. And the most "politically correct" as well.

Indeed, where can a person with religious convictions speak without fear, without having his or her freedom of speech questioned or being accused of violating someone's civil rights? As the Bowdoin case indicates, certainly not on many American campuses, and perhaps not even in social media, either.<sup>41</sup> Thus, in 2009 at Spokane Falls Community College, a pro-life group was forbidden by the college administration to argue against the disproportionate abortion rate among African-Americans because the group's speech was biased, which could lead to hate speech, which could engender genocide, unless the group presented both sides of the issue.<sup>42</sup> Also in 2009, a student at Los Angeles Community College lost his case in a judgment by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals involving his challenge to that institution's speech code, which he violated by talking about the role God had played in his life and in the process defended traditional marriage.<sup>43</sup> And at Vanderbilt, thirteen Christian groups were forced to leave the campus for refusing to comply with the University's "all-comers" policy, which required such groups to accept anyone who wanted to join, or even to run as an officer of the group, regardless of his or her religious convictions. In short, Christian groups were not in a position to control

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<sup>40</sup> Wood, "Things Unnoticed."

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Karen Lugo, "Federal Contempt for Free Speech: Federal officials in Tennessee will suggest limits on public speech considered violative of Muslim civil rights," PJ Media Web site, <http://pjmedia.com/blog/federal-contempt-for-free-speech/?singlepage=true> (accessed June 7, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Mike Adams, "Postmodern Political Correctness and Christianity," Townhall Web site, [http://townhall.com/columnists/mikeadams/2012/01/17/postmodern\\_political\\_correctness\\_and\\_christianity\\_ii/page/full](http://townhall.com/columnists/mikeadams/2012/01/17/postmodern_political_correctness_and_christianity_ii/page/full) (accessed June 7, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Adams, "Postmodern Correctness."

their own membership, or to read from the Bible and require a Christian lifestyle on campus.<sup>44</sup>

This case is particularly interesting because university administrators argued on the basis of a Supreme Court decision that did not apply to private institutions.<sup>45</sup> No matter; if you wanted to maintain the integrity of your group, you could not do so within the confines of the university.

The question, of course, is whether those who believe in freedom of expression are permitted to say or to do anything in the public square that reflects their religious beliefs, especially in light of an interesting shift in the Obama Administration's rhetoric about these matters, which took place in 2010. Instead of speaking in assertive terms about freedom of religion, President Obama, since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, has been using the term "freedom of worship." These are not exactly the same things; neither is this change in wording innocuous. As Randy Sly from *Catholic Online* reports:

Let's be clear, however; language matters when it comes to defining freedoms and limits. A shift from freedom of religion to freedom of worship moves the dialog from the world stage into the physical confines of a church, temple, synagogue or mosque. Such limitations can unleash an unbridled initiative that we have only experienced in a mild way through actions determined to remove roadside crosses, the wearing of religious t-shirts and pro-life pins as well as any initiatives of evangelization. It also could exclude our right to raise our children in our faith, the right to religious education, literature or media, the right to raise funds or organize charitable activities and the right to express religious beliefs in the normal discourse of life.<sup>46</sup>

Such an approach is, of course, perfectly consistent with Marcuse's view on Repressive Tolerance as well as with speech codes enforced in many American universities, and throughout the culture. The injunction is clear: Keep your religious views to yourself, within the confines of a church, and don't dare to apply Christian convictions to the broader stage where public policy

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<sup>44</sup> Nick Gillespie, "VID 'Harvard of the South' Vanderbilt as Repressive as Harvard of the North," FIRE Web site, <http://thefire.org/article/14815.html> (accessed June 7, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez*, 561 US ---- (Docket No. 08-1371) (2010).

<sup>46</sup> Randy Sly, "Obama Moves away from 'Freedom of Religion' toward 'Freedom of Worship?'" Catholic Online database, [http://www.catholic.org/national/national\\_story.php?id=37390](http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=37390) (accessed June 7, 2013).

is discussed, on the penalty of being accused of offending officially protected groups, perpetrating hate speech, or worse.

The results of these developments leave those who with religious convictions, particularly Christians, in a difficult and rather confining position with regard to freedom of expression in religious matters. Indeed, Gramsci's "long march through the culture" was actually completed in a scant generation that followed the cultural turmoil of the 1960s, such that by the beginning of the twenty-first century, political correctness permeated every sector of American society, such as the military, media, and education, as we have seen in numerous examples, but also throughout government and business as well. The question is, what can those who are concerned about freedom of expression do to reopen the public square for religious points of view? There are two answers to this question, neither one of which may be considered satisfactory.

First, individual acts of defiance against the enforcers of political correctness, with the hope that carried out with enough frequency will bend the culture back to a position more conducive to the expression of religious views. Such was the tactic by Roy Costner, a determined valedictorian at Liberty High School in Pickens, South Carolina, who tore apart his prepared statement at his high school graduation ceremony and instead recited the Lord's Prayer.<sup>47</sup> His performance generated an interesting response from the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which declared: "The valedictorian who so insensitively inflicted Christian prayer on a captive audience at a secular graduation ceremony, is a product of a school district which itself set an unconstitutional example by hosting school board prayer." To "inflict" a Christian prayer on a "captive audience" pretty well summarizes that Foundation's politically correct perspective, one

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<sup>47</sup> Todd Starnes, "Anti-Religion Group Blasts Teen Valedictorian's Prayer," Townhall Web site, <http://townhall.com/columnists/toddstarnes/2013/06/06/antireligion-group-blasts-teen-valedictorians-prayer-n1614933> (accessed June 8, 2013).

which without question has judicial backing. Which is why such efforts remain isolated, ineffective, and soon forgotten.

A second method to reclaim the public square is for those in favor of freedom of expression to conduct their own “long march through the culture,” by committing to a generation’s worth of work to transform media, education, politics, and business. As the Media Research Center points out, this would be a difficult task, since political liberals in the media, who are usually committed to political correctness, outnumber conservatives by a factor of anywhere from four or ten to one, depending upon the study.<sup>48</sup> This situation is even more pronounced in higher education. Surveys of the political propensities of professors consistently indicate an overwhelming preponderance on the political left, especially in the social sciences and humanities.<sup>49</sup> Throw in the effects of tenure, and the only thing that those yearning for greater freedom of expression in religious topics have on their side is the actuarial tables; which further are nullified because educators work like members of Soviet-style politburos when it comes to accepting new members into their ranks in terms of requiring similar points of view.<sup>50</sup>

None of which of course is very encouraging for advocates of freedom of expression in America. Thus, short of revolution, those who desire wider latitude to express their convictions

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<sup>48</sup> Rich Noyes, “Updated for 2012: The MRC’s ‘Media Bias 101’ Links to Scores of Studies Showing Journalists’ Liberal Views,” M. Newscasters Web site, <http://m.newsbusters.org/blogs/rich-noyes/2012/04/22/updated-2012-mrc-s-media-bias-101-links-scores-studies-showing-journalis> (accessed June 8, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Scott Jaschik, “Moving Further to the Left,” *Inside Higher Ed*, Inside Higher Ed database, <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/10/24/survey-finds-professors-already-liberal-have-moved-further-left> (accessed June 8, 2013). See also Howard Kurtz, “College Faculties a Most Liberal Lot, Study Finds,” *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2005, *Washington Post* Web site, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A8427-2005Mar28.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Emily Esfahani Smith, “Survey Shocker: Liberal Profs Admit They’d Discriminate Against Conservatives in Hiring, Advancement: ‘Impossible Lack of Diversity’ Reflects Ideological Intimidation on Campus,” *The Washington Times*, August 1, 2012, *Washington Times* Web site, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/aug/1/liberal-majority-on-campus-yes-were-biased/?page=all>.

in the public square had better get accustomed to America's Brave New World of political correctness.