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Peter W. Wood

President, National Association of Scholars

Angri-culture and Disagreement

Intellectual freedom is the bedrock of our republic. Without it, our other freedoms have no foundation. What is freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, or freedom of religion if individuals are not free to think for themselves? Without intellectual freedom, those freedoms become mere conformity to prevailing opinion. Without intellectual freedom—without freedom of thought and conscience—the right to vote is reduced from a choice to an empty gesture. And education without intellectual freedom is just indoctrination.

Our intellectual freedom, however, is menaced by several cultural changes. I am an anthropologist who has studied and written several books on long-term cultural change in America; and I am also the president of the National Association of Scholars, an organization devoted to the preservation of intellectual freedom. I speak today for the National Association of Scholars, but my own scholarship also informs my testimony.

I will have something to say about how and why we have reached a point in American society in which intellectual freedom and free speech have been badly compromised, but first I want to give some examples of what has been happening in higher education. I'll mention fourteen recent incidents, though there are hundreds more reported and no doubt thousands unreported.

- (1) **John McAdams** is a tenured associate professor of political science at Marquette University in Milwaukee, a private Catholic institution. He was suspended from his position in December 2014, and banned from campus after he criticized a fellow faculty member on his blog. In 2016 Marquette fired McAdams because he refused to comply with the university's demand that he apologize in writing in a manner that would endorse Marquette's official view of the case. McAdams' appeal was heard by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in April, which handed down a 4-2 decision in July ordering Marquette to reinstate McAdams immediately.

I was an expert witness for McAdams and the National Association of Scholars separately filed an amicus brief. The case exemplifies the breakdown of academic freedom in America. McAdams got in trouble because he criticized a faculty member for silencing a legitimate classroom discussion on political grounds. Marquette by-passed its contractual guarantee of McAdams' academic freedom on the grounds that the faculty member he criticized was also a graduate student. And the university attempted to compel McAdams to say things he did not believe. It took the Wisconsin Supreme Court to set matters right.

- (2) **Amy Wax** is a tenured professor of law at the University of Pennsylvania. In August 2017 she co-authored a brief article in the Philadelphia newspaper, *The Inquirer*, titled “Paying the Price for Breakdown of the Country’s Bourgeois Culture.” Wax and her co-author Larry Alexander praised traditional American values such as:

“Get the education you need for gainful employment, work hard, and avoid idleness. Go the extra mile for your employer or client. Be a patriot, ready to serve the country. Be neighborly, civic-minded, and charitable. Avoid coarse language in public. Be respectful of authority. Eschew substance abuse and crime.”

A group of unionizing graduate students, Graduate Employees Together—University of Pennsylvania (GET-UP), denounced the op-ed:

“We are outraged that a representative of our community upholds, and published, these hateful and regressive views.”

Wax was immediately condemned by students and faculty at the University of Pennsylvania. Ted Ruger, Dean of the Penn Law School, wrote to disavow Wax, implicitly to characterize her argument as “divisive, even noxious,” and to “state my own personal view that as a scholar and educator I reject emphatically any claim that a single cultural tradition is better than all others.” Ruger also smeared Wax by implying that her views had something in common with those of the neo-Nazi murderer in Charlottesville: “Although uncoordinated and substantively distinct, the contemporaneous occurrence of these two events has generated widespread discussion both internally and externally about our core values as a university and a nation.”

Wax weathered this storm but her critics regrouped. In March 2018 those critics launched a new attack on the basis of a podcast from September 2017 in which Wax was interviewed by Brown University professor Glenn Loury. On that occasion Wax had observed how racial preferences in Penn Law School’s admissions had resulted in the admission of less qualified black students, whose academic performance fell below that of other students. In this case the protesters demanded that the dean remove Wax from teaching all first-year law students. Dean Ruger granted the demand. Although Dean Ruger asserted that Wax’s statements about minority students were false, and that students might perceive that she is biased against them, he has declined to produce any objective proof in support of those accusations, or any data or facts on student performance or the effects of affirmative action at the law school.

Professor Wax is a member of the board of the National Association of Scholars and in April NAS presented her with an award for academic courage.

- (3) **Bruce Gilley** is a tenured professor of political science at Portland State University. In the fall of 2017 he published a peer-reviewed article, “The Case for Colonialism,” in a prominent academic journal, *Third World Quarterly*. More than 16,000 people petitioned

to have the article removed and digitally erased. Some called for more extreme measures, including revoking Gilley's Princeton Ph.D. The publisher capitulated in the face of death threats against the editor and erased the article. No arrests were made. Gilley continues to hold his position, although his university made a spurious charge against him of "harassment and discrimination" based on the article. The charge was dismissed after a five-month investigation.

Gilley is a member of the National Association of Scholars and head of our Oregon affiliate. In the summer 2018 issue of our journal, *Academic Questions*, we have reprinted "The Case for Colonialism," to make it publicly available once more.

- (4) **Charles Murray**, now retired from the American Enterprise Institute, was invited to lecture at Middlebury College in March 2017. Murray was shouted down and forced, after 45 minutes of raucous protest, to give his talk in a private room on closed-circuit television. He and a Middlebury faculty member, Alison Stanger, were assaulted on leaving the building. Stanger was hospitalized with neck injuries. No arrests have been made. The topic of Murray's invited lecture was his recent book, *Coming Apart*, but the protesters focused on a book he had published in 1994 with co-author Richard Herrnstein, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. The NAS provided the first detailed account of what happened at Middlebury and has stayed in touch with members of the community as the college attempted to repair its reputation.
- (5) **Bret Weinstein** was a "regular" (similar to tenured) faculty member teaching biology at Evergreen College. A mob invaded his classroom in spring 2017, after he refused to cancel classes on a day when white professors were supposed to remove themselves from campus. The college president declined to protect him as further threats against his physical safety emerged. Weinstein and his wife, Heather Heying, who was also a faculty member, resigned. No arrests were made. Evergreen settled out of court with Weinstein and his wife for \$500,000. Dr. Heying is preparing an article for NAS's journal *Academic Questions* about the role of the Evergreen administration in instigating the campus disorders.
- (6) **George Will**, the syndicated columnist and political commentator with a Ph.D. from Princeton University, was invited by Scripps College in 2014 as a speaker in a series explicitly devoted to conservative speakers, the Elizabeth Hubert Malott Public Affairs Program. In October 2014, the president of Scripps, Lori Bettison-Varga, disinvited Will. In her statement to the Scripps community, President Bettison-Varga explained:

"Sexual assault is not a conservative or liberal issue...and it is too important to be trivialized in a political debate or wrapped into a celebrity controversy. For that reason, after Mr. Will authored a column questioning the validity of a specific sexual assault case that reflects similar experiences reported by Scripps students, we decided not to finalize the speaker agreement."

As president of the National Association of Scholars, I wrote in turn to the Scripps' board of trustees, President Bettison-Varga, and the student newspaper seeking further discussion of this decision, if not its reversal. I received no answers or even acknowledgements. This was, however, the first time I encountered the idea that the mere presence on campus of someone who holds a particular view could be seen as endangering the "safety" of students.

- (7) **Josh Blackman** is an associate professor of law at the South Texas College of Law. Blackman was invited to speak at the City University Law School in New York in March 2018, but was confronted by protesters who attempted to disrupt his talk. Shout-downs like this are now so common that it requires something unusual to take note of any particular incident. The CUNY shout-down of Blackman actually provided three unusual features. First, some of the law students disrupting Blackman are caught on video shouting "F___ the law!" Second, a university administrator eventually quelled the shout-down by threatening to intervene. Third, after the event CUNY School of Law Dean Mary Lu Bilek decided there would be no punishments for the protesters because their protest was "limited and reasonable." What made it "limited," of course, was the intervention of the other CUNY administrator. But this dismal event featured a law dean deciding that ten minutes of law-breaking—violating a university policy and shutting down an invited speaker—didn't really violate university policy.
- (8) **Christina Hoff Sommers**, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, was invited to speak at Lewis and Clark Law School in March 2018. Her lecture too was disrupted by protesters. The notable novelty in this case is that, in response to the disruption, the law dean told Sommers to abbreviate her lecture and instead have a "dialogue" with the protesters who wore jackets enjoining students to "Stay Woke."
- (9) **Heather Mac Donald** is an attorney who serves as a fellow of the Manhattan Institute and who writes frequently on higher education and on policing. She was scheduled to speak at Claremont-McKenna College in April 2017, but her lecture was cancelled because the building was surrounded by a student mob that wouldn't let anyone enter or exit. Under widespread criticism for its inaction, the administration of Claremont-McKenna eventually suspended three students for one year and two students for one semester. Hundreds of other identified students were not disciplined because, according to Claremont-McKenna, they were enrolled at neighboring Pomona College. The administration of Pomona College promptly announced it saw no need to take action.
- (10) **Teresa (Wagner) Manning**, formerly Deputy Assistant Secretary of Family Planning Programs in the Department of Health and Human Services, was the leading candidate for a full-time appointment as a writing instructor at the University of Iowa Law School in 2007, until it was discovered that she was pro-life and had served in the Reagan administration. A law school official wrote a memo to the dean explaining that, despite Manning's qualifications, she shouldn't be hired because the faculty objected to her

political views. Manning sued and her case wound its way through the legal system for more than a decade. Ultimately the University of Iowa prevailed, mostly because the courts allowed the university to keep changing its story. Typically in disputes over faculty appointments in colleges and universities, the process is so opaque that it is impossible for courts to nail down how a decision is reached, let alone whether the decision has been tainted by bias. In this case, the plaintiff had the smoking gun in the form of the memo, but the university cast doubt on whether the explicit bias was material to the decision. NAS was an early supporter of Manning's appeals and filed an amicus brief in her last appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to take the case.

- (11) **James Enstrom** was an accomplished UCLA epidemiologist who contested the claim that air pollution (fine particulate matter) causes premature deaths. In addition, he uncovered that the lead "scientist" for the California agency using this claim for costly diesel regulations had a mail order PhD. The ensuing scandal touched several powerful UCLA and UC professors and in 2010 Enstrom was fired on the stated grounds that his research was "not aligned with the academic mission" of his department. Enstrom filed suit and in 2015 UCLA settled with him so that he could continue his research in retirement. In 2016 he gained access to American Cancer Society data that had been secret since 1995. In 2017 he published conclusive evidence that fine particulate matter does not kill Americans. This evidence provides the basis for reassessing several costly EPA regulations. Although it ended his UCLA career, Enstrom's questioning of campus orthodoxy has had positive benefits for scientific integrity. He has submitted his own statement for the record.
- (12) **Briscoe Cain** is a member of the Texas House of Representatives for District 128. Cain was invited by the Federalist Society to speak at Texas Southern University on October 10, 2017, but was shouted down by protesters claiming he had ties to the Alt-Right and that he is anti-LGBT. The protesters were removed, but as soon as Cain started to speak again, the president of the university, Austin Lane, brought the protesters back and then cancelled the event, saying that it had not been scheduled through the "proper channels." The Federalist Society replied that the event was indeed properly cleared and that Rep. Cain had been "greeted by campus officials" when he arrived and was escorted by them to the lecture hall.
- (13) **Laura Kipnis** is a professor of media studies at Northwestern University and a well-known feminist who published an essay in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in February 2015 titled "Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe." In it she wrote, "The feminism I identified with as a student stressed independence and resilience. In the intervening years, the climate of sanctimony about student vulnerability has grown too thick to penetrate; no one dares question it lest you're labeled antifeminist." Essentially Kipnis argued that contemporary campus feminists were over-reaching in their accusations of sexual harassment. A student at Northwestern then lodged a complaint that Kipnis's

article was itself an act of harassment. Kipnis spent six months fighting the accusation before the university dropped it.

(14) **Nicholas Christakis** was a Yale sociology professor and physician who was swept up in a controversy after his wife, Erika Christakis, also a Yale faculty member, sent an email to students on October 29, 2015, advising them to make their own decisions about Halloween costumes. Christakis was surrounded on the quad by an angry mob of students who taunted him, an event that was caught on video. Nicholas and Erika, facing continuing attacks, received no support from the Yale administration. They subsequently resigned their appointments, blaming Yale for refusing to stand up for their intellectual freedom.

I've picked these fourteen instances partly because I am familiar with the details and partly in an effort to capture the breadth of the problem. The colleges and universities include public and private, secular and religious, and large and small institutions. They are all over the country, east, west, north, south, and central. When we talk about the crisis of intellectual freedom on campus and the break-down of civil exchange and tolerance, we probably think first of speakers being shouted-down by student mobs, second of disinvitations to well-known and respected individuals, and third perhaps of the polls that show large percentages of students who reject the whole idea of free speech. The latest of these polls, published by Gallup in March 2018, found that almost half of college students favor speech codes; two-thirds believe the U.S. Constitution doesn't or shouldn't protect "hate speech;" 73 percent support policies that restrict hate speech; and 60 percent favor restrictions on stereotypical costumes. Despite these carve-outs, over half the students surveyed—56 percent—said protecting free speech is "extremely important to society."

These trends are not isolated to college campuses. Students graduate and take their attitudes with them. James Damore, the Google engineer fired for accepting the company's invitation to share his thoughts about workplace diversity, is only the most prominent example. Civil, thoughtful argumentation was not welcome at Google, nor, as we have learned in these last few years, in increasing numbers of American cities, companies, and associations.

How have we arrived at a point where many students and working citizens think they support "free speech" and "tolerance" except for whatever speech they really don't like?

The magic phrase is "hate speech." Nearly everyone is against it, though it is really little more than a way of bundling together under one label all the ideas, words, and images that "we" don't like. Who gets to decide what speech is "hate speech" and therefore should be banned? The Southern Poverty Law Center? The ACLU? Black Lives Matter? The FBI? The AAUP? The Department of Education? Google, Facebook, or Twitter? The Supreme Court? Once this concept of a "hate speech" exception is added to the idea of "free speech," free speech itself is nullified.

The fourteen cases I've mentioned include five shout-downs—Murray, Blackman, Sommers, Mac Donald, and Cain—but the cases include many other violations of intellectual freedom. **McAdams** was fired because his blog irritated some powerful faculty colleagues. He criticized a

faculty member for suppressing free speech and ended up losing his own—along with his job. **Amy Wax** hasn't lost her job, at least not entirely, but she has been barred from teaching a first-year law class that she has taught for decades. And this resulted from things she said in a newspaper op-ed and in some comments she made on the unintended effects of racial preferences—comments on an hour-long podcast that were taken grossly out of context for the purpose of denouncing her. **Bruce Gilley** was vilified and threatened with death for publishing a peer-reviewed journal article. **Charles Murray** was singled out for attack on the basis of a few pages in a book he had published 23 years earlier and that had nothing to do with the speech he came to deliver. **Bret Weinstein** was mobbed and threatened with violence for deciding to teach his regularly scheduled class on a day that others wanted to use to drum up support for racial separatism. **George Will** was a classic disinvitee, a tactic that has grown so common that the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education—FIRE—keeps a running tally. Another organization, the William F. Buckley, Jr. Society at Yale, holds an annual Disinvitation Dinner in honor of the most celebrated disinvitee of the year.

Manning was denied a position because it became known to her colleagues that she was opposed to abortion and they couldn't abide having someone teach courses in legal writing who didn't share their own views on that subject. **Enstrom** was a whistle-blower who was unwilling to sit by idly while fake science was being advanced as the basis for state regulations. And the science doesn't get any faker than when it comes from a supposed Ph.D. from a degree mill run out of a mail box on Madison Avenue. Enstrom's reward was to be summarily dismissed from a position he had held for 36 years. **Kipnis** made enemies by publicly criticizing policies meant to curtail sexual contact between faculty members and students. Her views are surely controversial, but presenting them in the newspaper of record for higher education wasn't an act of sexual harassment by any stretch of the imagination. In the aftermath, Kipnis is now a pariah in women's studies circles. **Christakis** is among the most remarkable cases: surrounded in public, taunted, cursed, and belabored by Yale students who were upset over an innocuous email from his wife, and then abandoned by the Yale administration.

Six of the people I've mentioned are or were tenured: McAdams, Wax, Gilley, Weinstein, Kipnis, and Christakis. To be a tenured professor is to occupy one of the most secure positions in the universe of employment possibilities. Tenure comes with an iron-clad, titanium-reinforced guaranteed freedom to pursue research, teaching, and extra-mural utterance without restrictions beyond outright criminality, incapacitation, or dereliction of responsibility. But tenure proved to be a tissue-paper thin bulwark in these six cases. The ferocity of the new campus rejection of intellectual freedom sweeps away all obstacles before it, tenure included.

You can imagine how vulnerable *untenured* and sessional faculty feel. In fact, you have to imagine because untenured and sessional faculty members who harbor dissenting views on matters where there is a reigning majority opinion are almost totally silent. They live like the tiny mammals underfoot in the age of the dinosaurs—hoping never to be noticed. There are indeed a few exceptions such as untenured associate professor **Evan Charney** at Duke University. Professor Charney has been in the news recently. After teaching ethics and politics at Duke for 19 years using Socratic questioning in his classes to explore controversial issues, Charney was

suddenly let go. The Duke administration isn't saying why, but there is widespread suspicion that some students complained that his Socratic method had created a "hostile learning environment." The clue is that Duke offered to let him stay on in an adjunct position—a major demotion—if Charney agreed to undergo "diversity training," give up teaching required courses (the same punishment Penn Law inflicted on Amy Wax), and accept extra monitoring of his classes by other faculty members. These are the sorts of controls that universities can impose arbitrarily on untenured faculty members.

Speech inside or outside the classroom is subject to this new ferocious examination for unorthodox opinions. Publications in academic journals, popular newspapers, or personal blogs are equally subject to search and seizure. Recent opinions or those from a quarter-century past are swept into the dragnet. The attacks are not confined to conservatives. Liberals and progressives are vulnerable to attacks from those on the far left as well. No one would accuse Bruce Gilley, Bret Weinstein, Laura Kipnis, or Nicholas Christakis of being "conservative." The organization called Heterodox Academy just held a conference at the New York Times building featuring 28 speakers who gathered to complain about the assaults on their academic and intellectual freedom. 25 of the 28 were men and women who are avowedly left-of-center.

So far my remarks have aimed at painting a picture of how things are on campus. A great deal more could be said in this vein. I have passed over speech codes, bias response teams, efforts to root out microaggressions, imposition of trigger warnings, fears of cultural appropriation, and the incessant concern to combat "implicit bias." Verbal and sometimes physical attacks on students who violate the new social norms on campus, and the use of social media to humiliate fellow students, are all part of this picture. So is the transformation of scholarly associations into champions of political causes, and the all-too-common transformation of college classrooms into platforms for political propaganda.

And I have passed over with bare mention the failures amounting to complicity of college deans, provosts, presidents, and boards of trustees to maintain good order on their campuses. Their version of "tolerance" is often limited to tolerating the thugs who shout-down, menace, and disrupt. If forced by public opinion to respond to gross violations of intellectual freedom, they administer hand-slaps. Think of what followed the disruption and the attack at Middlebury. If you can't, it is because nothing followed but vapid statements of regret and empty gestures of disciplining some of the students.

In May 2013, a radical environmentalist group called Mountain Justice swarmed a meeting of the Swarthmore College board of trustees, seizing the podium and the microphone. A student named Danielle Charette, who was not part of the invasion but had come to participate in a debate, pleaded with Swarthmore president Rebecca Chopp to restore order. Chopp refused to intervene. Days later, Chopp invited one of the ring-leaders to a "constructive dialogue" about Mountain Justice's concerns. The ringleader, Kate Aronoff replied in giant letters on a printed broadside, "F---- Your Constructive Dialogue." I submit that bad as the break-down in civility and intellectual freedom is among the students, it is worse because of the unwillingness of college administrators to uphold the basic principles of their institutions. Often, like the dean at City College who condoned the disruption of Josh Blackman's speech, or the dean of Lewis and Clark

Law School who urged Christina Hoff Sommers to skip her talk and have a conversation with the protesters, the authorities are complicit in the disruptions. Are they afraid of standing up for the principles they are pledged to uphold, or are they really on the side of those who reject the very idea of free exchange of ideas when it comes to whatever is touted this week as “social justice?” It is hard to tell. Cowardice and complicity can look very similar.

All these things are expressions of the new intolerance and accelerants of a growing bigotry towards people and ideas that do not conform to the new orthodoxies. For the most part, I have tried to stay away from the substance of these orthodoxies to focus on the principle of intellectual freedom. The moment we begin to talk about the things that are forbidden to open discussion is the moment that minds begin to snap shut. Free speech is well and good, say the majority of those students in the Gallup poll, but what if the topic at hand has to do with race, gender, sexual assault, climate change, colonialism, immigration, guns, or any of a great many other issues on which Americans as a whole are divided? At that point the campus “consensus” declares that there is only one right view, and as some students put it, “No one has a right to be wrong.” That’s a dangerous edict—and a profoundly false one.

But rather than try to encompass the entirety of this terrible slide into intolerance, I want to let my list of fourteen examples stand as a fair representation of the problem and turn to the question of *why* this slide into intolerance has happened.

Observers have offered a variety of explanations, ranging from the long-gestated effects of the writings of the inter-war era Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to the overly-solicitous parenting styles experienced by millennial children. I don’t doubt that from Herbert Marcuse to Dinesh D’Souza, the culture wars have rubbed away some of our readiness to be nice to one another. But I’m going to offer a different kind of explanation.

Namely, we have shifted from a culture that celebrated self-control to a culture that celebrates self-assertion: *angry* self-assertion. I have sometimes called it the angri-culture. The older ethic of self-control was by no means a guarantee of peace and harmony. We have fought nasty political fights with one another since the Founding, embroiled ourselves in a Civil War, and lapsed from self-control in public and private life as often as we cursed—which was pretty often. But that ethic of self-control imposed limits and it had real consequences. Americans generally demanded of themselves a slow response to provocation, a readiness to hear the other fellow out, and a belief in fair play. People who frequently violated these unwritten rules were pushed out of public life.

That’s changed. Not overnight, but over several generations. We have become a people who, all too often, regard displays of anger as self-empowering, patience as weakness, and fair-play as surrender. Social scientists and philosophers have been observing these developments over the course of half-a-century and they have seen them accelerating in the last decade or so. Why has this happened? Our descent into angry incivility and unwillingness to listen to one another didn’t start out in politics. It travelled to politics on a long road that began with changes in other domains. We had all-angry-all-the-time poets before we had all-angry-all-the-time pundits. We had “play angry” golf pros before we had all-rant talk radio. There was a long cultural transition

from Gary Cooper mastering his anger in the 1941 movie *Sergeant York* to “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore” in the 1976 movie *Network*. It is the transition from recognizing anger as dangerous to ourselves as well as to the community, to believing that all anger is at bottom righteous indignation.

We now live in a time where indignation dominates. The celebration of anger did, of course, eventually arrive in the political domain, where it has given us a level of vituperation, insolence, and hatred of opposing views that goes far beyond anything in the American past. Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas didn’t agree on much, but after all they engaged in seven lengthy public *debates*. We have had astonishingly contentious presidential campaigns going back to the election of 1800 between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. But it is hard to shake off the impression that today’s political divisions go deeper and cut sharper than any before.

The National Association of Scholars is a non-partisan organization. We don’t endorse candidates or parties. Rather, our efforts are focused on sustaining the principles of liberal education in a free society. Liberal education is impossible without intellectual freedom, including its components of freedom of expression, willingness to let others have their say, and readiness to listen—*really* listen—as they say it. Intellectual freedom therefore requires patience, forbearance, and self-control.

Those are qualities of character that must be fostered over the many years of a child’s development and reinforced by social norms. When those qualities are left undeveloped, anger and indignation fill the void. Today’s campus where students and faculty members shout down, disinvite, assault, accuse, ostracize, vilify, censor, and reject, all in the spirit of self-approbation, is our reward for letting those older ideals of character fall by the wayside.

Phrasing this as a matter of character is one way of saying it won’t be easy to fix. Legislators can change some of the rules of the road, which would help, but new laws cannot undo the distortions of character that have become a deep source of the problem. Telling angry people to be calm and open-minded typically just makes them angrier.

What steps might be taken? I offer three. First, let’s examine the laws and regulations to identify and remove the incentives for angry rejection of dissenting views. Our current system is in fact full of rewards for those who strike take-no-prisoners, brook-no-disagreement positions. Programs that advance student activism, multiculturalism, and identity politics are, by and large, ripe for this sort of review. Legislators ought not to be taken in by the benign names of these programs. Beneath the feel-good label often lies funding for programs that aim at promoting division and resentment. Cutting such programs can easily be decried as censorship, but the real censorship is funding them in the first place, since their basic aim is to silence viewpoint diversity. These programs frequently depend on “service-learning” courses, which they use to give students college credit for vocational training as activists rather than for learning how to engage in free discussion within a classroom. A practical first measure would be for Congress to define all “service-learning” courses, which give credit for work for nonprofit organizations outside the classroom, as ineligible for student grants or loans.

Second, look to establish programs premised on our commonalities and shared stake in a vital national community. We have precious few of these. One step in that direction, for example, might be the American History for Freedom program, passed by Congress in 2009 but never funded. It should be reinstated as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. And there are many other ways in which Congress could reinforce the ideals of freedom of thought and freedom of expression in higher education. These ideals were enunciated in Title I of the original Higher Education Act, but never followed up with any effort to secure or enforce them.

Third, let's provide a model of what respectful disagreement looks like. All of us can put this into practice, but Congress could provide the very best example. What would that look like? There are some examples at hand. Maybe it looks like Cornell West and Robert P. George amicably debating one another at Princeton and elsewhere. Maybe it looks like the events sponsored by David Blankenhorn's organization, "Better Angels," that seeks to "reduce political polarization" by conducting "Red/Blue Workshops" around the country.

I've said we as a people have traded an older cultural ethic of self-restraint for a new one that prizes self-expression. Norms aimed at fostering a community in which disagreements could be *argued out* have given way to a sense that sheer *assertion* is more effective than argument and that community can be sustained by forcing those who disagree to shut up. These are false premises, and they have led to the false belief that dominating our opponents is actually better than persuading them—or at least listening to them. Rational argument is out; belligerence is in. Think of it as a shift from the volleys of tennis, to the relentless drives of football. Both games involve intelligent aggression, but one requires a nimble readiness to play the ball back and forth, while the other focuses on grim determination to maintain possession of the ball.

To maintain possession of the ball in intellectual debate means having as little debate as possible. That's why the instant response of students is to disinvite someone coming to campus to say something they disagree with. If that doesn't work, they resort to epithets meant to isolate and stigmatize the individual, and step-by-step graduate to shout-downs. Nowhere on this path do they stop to wonder whether this person might have something they should listen to and consider. That would be playing tennis. Or experiencing intellectual freedom.

Congress, like higher education, isn't supposed to be an intellectual football game. Both are meant to be deliberative, even if disagreement is at their heart. Higher education is the pursuit of truth by disciplined inquiry. College is, or should be, about acquiring accurate knowledge of important subjects, developing widely applicable intellectual skills, working productively with others who have diverse views, and sustaining our free society. Taking possession of the ball and trying to keep others off the field accomplishes none of this. College doesn't work that way. Trying to play football on a tennis court is just anarchy.

We need to rid ourselves of the rationalizations for keeping others off the field. These rationalizations are dreadfully familiar. When someone says "free speech" is just an excuse for domination by whites or by white males, we should ask if Frederick Douglass believed that. When someone says the traditional curriculum is just the way the wealthy and the privileged keep everyone else down, we should ask if W.E.B. Du Bois thought that. If someone claims that

“academic standards” are just code for racism, or that anyone insisting on free speech is really seeking to oppress others, we should ask if Martin Luther King, Jr. entertained that view. These anti-intellectual clichés generally go unchallenged, because to challenge them on today’s campus is to court accusations of racism or other thought-crimes. But those clichés are actually made of flimsy stuff. They fall apart the moment they contact real history.

Our job is to bring those arguments. On several occasions, I have been fortunate to see what happens when students for the very first time are confronted with a counter-argument. A young woman once blithely dismissed some point I was making by reciting the cliché, “The personal is political.” When I said “No. The personal is personal, and the political is political. They are different,” it was as if a chasm had opened up at her feet. She had never even conceived of the possibility that there might be a valid distinction between public and private life. I have had similar experiences many times speaking on and off campus about “diversity” and “multiculturalism.” The very possibility that these concepts could be open for critical examination is utterly foreign to today’s students. Some scream at me to stop the dangerous idea in its tracks, but quite a few get wide-eyed, quiet, and reflective.

Which is to say that their cultural programming and the deformations of character are not the end of the story. Every human being has a mind that is, deep down, thirsty for true understanding. No one can provide instant truth that answers that thirst, but we can provide the cup from which to drink. That cup is intellectual freedom. We need to make sure it is within reach of every student.