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The Manufactured Free Speech 'Crisis'

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Abstract

This article situates the contemporary campus free speech 'crisis' in Canada within the broader contours of 'cultural conservatism,' a strategy initiated by the Right—and funded by the corporate community—in the United States in the 1980s. It examines the current manufactured 'crisis' as another iteration of the decades-long anti-political correctness campaign and how conservative organizations have strategically appropriated and weaponized the principle of free expression to marshal cultural anger for what are, ultimately, political and economic aims.

In August 2018, the newly-elected Conservative Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford issued an edict requiring the province's publicly funded universities and colleges to "develop, implement and comply with a free speech policy" that met a "minimum standard prescribed by the government." Commencing in September 2019, institutions would report annually on their "progress" to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario; those failing to comply could be "subject to a reduction in operating grant funding" (Office of the Premier, 2018). Ford had campaigned on the issue and a press release announcing the new policy trumpeted his decisiveness about promises made and kept. Mainstream media lauded the move as a step in the right direction in keeping with their general tendency—in both the U.S. and Canada—to buttress conservative talking points about the purported lack of campus free speech dating back to the 'culture wars' of the early to mid-1990s (Adams, 2017; Legum & Hellerstein, 2016; Weir, 1995).

Critics argued the policy was based on the false premise that free expression was endangered—essentially a solution in search of a problem (Tabachnick, 2018). Turk (2018) suggested Ford was channeling Donald Trump who had similarly threatened to slash funding to universities and colleges for free speech 'violations.' Ford's professed admiration for Trump may have had something to do with his embrace of the free speech mantra contra the scourge of 'political correctness' (PC). From the outset, Trump positioned himself as a culture warrior; one of the distinguishing characteristics of his campaign was "giving the finger" to PC (Williams, 2016, para. 4) which his sycophants celebrated as 'telling it like it is' (Neiwart, 2017).

Of course, Trump did not invent the anti-PC playbook; rather, he merely capitalized on well-orchestrated, well-financed crusade launched decades ago by a network of rightist organizations (Scatamburlo-D'Annibale, 2019). In short, the American anti-PC/pro-free speech script from which Canadian conservatives have borrowed considerably long pre-dates Trump and the 'alt-right.' The argument developed herein does not concern itself with Ford's (arguably problematic) policy but rather attempts to situate it within the broader contours of 'cultural conservatism' and the right's manufactured free speech 'crisis.'

Cultural Conservatism and the Demonization of Political Correctness

Messer-Davidow (1993) provides a dramatic expose of the American right's concerted attack on higher education vis-à-vis its anti-PC campaign that exploded into mainstream consciousness during the 1990s culture wars but whose seeds had been planted much earlier. Between "1955 and 1980, the Right became a powerful political movement. It had built a coalition of conservative strains (Old Right, neoconservative, New Right, Christian Right, libertarian, free-market and supply side economics, etc.)" (p. 44) which, despite some philosophical differences and priorities, managed to forge a 'fusionist' ideology. Fusionism was the "historical juncture at which right-wing activists and intellectuals . . . recognized their common causes . . . and began to fuse their practical agendas" (Diamond, 1995, p. 29). They subsequently laid the groundwork for a massive infrastructure of foundations, think tanks, institutes, legal centres and campus groups—which grew exponentially throughout the 1980s and 1990s—focused on 'cultural' issues (Messer-Davidow, 1993).

This represented a shift away from a prior preoccupation with economics and was pivotal to a project called 'cultural conservatism' initiated by Paul Weyrich who personified fusionism. A fervent free marketeer and member of the extreme religious right, Weyrich founded the Heritage

Foundation in 1973, helped to start the Moral Majority in 1979 and inspired the formation of the Christian Coalition in 1989. Additionally, he established the Free Congress Foundation (now called the American Opportunity Foundation) that served as ground zero for advancing the *populist* strategy of cultural conservatism (Lapham, 2004).

Recognizing the denouement of the 'red menace,' Weyrich understood the political need to redirect right-wing wrath from a focus on "hyperbolic anti-communism . . . to domestic issues of culture and national identity" (Berlet & Quigley, 1995, p. 30). A 1987 study, *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda*, that Weyrich had commissioned maintained that cultural issues provided "antiliberalism with a more unifying concept than economic conservatism" (Ibid.) and would be more effective in advancing a rightist agenda and free market ideology. Weyrich was a key figure who "brought social and religious conservatives into the pro-corporate fold" by being "particularly adept at capitalizing on white anger over desegregation" (Mayer, 2016, p. 110).

Cultural conservatism was a response to "activist movements built around values, lifestyles, and other non-economic issues" that were creating a disturbing "drift" in social life (Institute for Cultural Conservatism, 1987, p. 1). Among the sources of the malaise were 1960s civil rights and feminist movements and a left intelligentsia allegedly guilty of subverting the Western, Judeo-Christian principles upon which America was built (Berlet and Lyons, 2000; Messer-Davidow, 1993). The FCF's core mission was to educate Americans "about the real nature of 'Political Correctness' which is actually Marxism translated from economic to cultural terms" (http://www.freecongress.org). It vigorously promoted a narrative about the evils of 'cultural Marxism'—a form of PC "on steroids" (Berkowitz, 2003, para. 3) responsible for transforming college campuses into

> small ivy-covered North Koreas, where the student or faculty member who dares to cross any of the lines set up by the gender feminist or the homosexual rights activists, or the local black or Hispanic group, or any of the other sainted 'victims' groups that revolve around, quickly find themselves in judicial trouble (Lind, cited in Neiwart, 2017, p. 224).

Its efforts were backed by four major philanthropic foundations—Bradley, Olin, Scaife and Smith-Richardson—often referred to as the 'four sisters'—which lavishly funded perhaps the most potent "institutionalized apparatus ever assembled in a democracy to promote one belief system"—namely, neoliberalism (Stein cited in Lapham, 2004, p. 3). The 'four sisters' were certainly not alone in bankrolling this apparatus (other major contributors include the Coors and Koch families) but they have, arguably, had the most impact on furthering a corporatist agenda, dismantling many of the democratic gains of the 1960s, and undermining the critical function of higher education (Lauter, 1995; Wilson, 1995); without them, "there would be no operative agenda of cultural conservatism" (Gottfried, cited in Messer-Davidow, 1993, p. 60).

One of the key functions of this apparatus was creating an 'ideas industry' (Smith, 1993) to produce 'knowledge' that could not be generated from within the academy. This ideas industry conflates "'expertise' as pertains to knowledge produced by scholarly methods and 'expertise' as pertains to the aura of authority surrounding those who produce this knowledge." In this sense, it has "constituted an 'academized' aura upon which conservatives have capitalized to advance their political agenda" (Messer-Davidow, 1993, p. 54). The think tanks and institutes which are part of this infrastructure operate in a milieu devoid of scholastic rigour, mechanisms of peer review and

basic rules of ethical conduct; they often offer an "alternative credentialing system for carefully selected young conservatives" (Henson & Philpott, 1992, p. 13) who 'market' their ideas via the powerful public relations arms of these organizations.

One the aims of this industry was to undermine "pluralistic influences in education" (Jones, 1994, p. 386). Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, it produced articles decrying the defiling of the Western canon by a motley crew of feminists, Marxists, multiculturalists and postmodernists published in foundation-sponsored 'journals' such as *New Criterion* and *Academic Questions*. Many were written by non-academics and were part of a larger political and cultural assault from the right (Whitney & Wartella, 1992).

Others were book-length harangues subsidized by the 'four sisters' munificence such as Bloom's (1987) *The Closing of the American Mind* in which he railed against the vagaries of 1960s critical philosophy, identified feminism as an "enemy of the vitality of classic texts" (p. 65) and suggested the "open homosexual presence" on campuses demonstrated the moral paucity of "university life" (Ibid., p. 107). For his efforts, Bloom received more than $3 million from the now-defunct Olin Foundation that—before shuttering its doors in 2005—had funded the right's 'counterintelligentsia' to the tune of almost $400 million (Mayer, 2016).

Kimball's (1990) *Tenured Radicals* (another Olin-sponsored tract), a pastiche of essays previously published in *New Criterion*, similarly argued the 'canon' was under siege by 'special interest' disciplines (i.e. women's studies, 'race' and ethnic studies, etc.) that had "found a welcome roost in the academy" (p. xiii). D'Souza's *Illiberal Education*, the culmination of his Olin-sponsored 'research' at the American Enterprise Institute, attacked frivolous lines of scholarly inquiry that were displacing "the great works of Western civilization" (1991, p. 5). Nearly "every critic of higher education" writing between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s was "supported by a conservative foundation or think tank" (Wilson, 1995, p. 26).

And yet, the right's project of preserving the Western canon was largely ignored by the media; however, once the issue was yoked to 'free speech' it became more 'marketable.' Conservatives "suddenly discovered" the political utility of recasting its narrative "as a threat to freedom of thought and speech;" subsequently the media began to express "a patriotic ire" (Newfield, 1995, p. 118). It is therefore necessary to examine this discursive shift in greater depth.

The Discursive Transformation of Political Correctness

There are a number of differing scholarly accounts about PC's historical origins (cf. Berman, 1992; Perry, 1992) but common to most is that it was an 'in-group' term used among leftists as a form of self-mockery and/or in an ironic sense to poke fun at social movement politics for occasional lapses into overzealous rigidity (Hall, 1994). However, conservatives took control of the terminology and by the time PC was popularized by the media, it had taken on derisive connotations (Suhr & Johnson, 2003). Smith (1995) explores how PC was transformed from a leftist 'in-joke' to an ideological code "specialized to operate in the field of public, text-mediated discourse" (p. 31). As an ideological code, PC was designed by conservatives— for media use— to "achieve desired political ends" (Richer & Weir, 1995, p. 12). Marginalized constituencies previously excluded from "authoritative participation in public discourse," particularly in universities, who began challenging entrenched knowledges were cast as anti-free speech malcontents. PC was reworked to operate as a "category of deviance" thereby reaffirming the

"authority of the established" and discrediting "the voices of those attempting change" (Smith, 1995, p. 31-32).

Once created, ideological codes are taken up as a matter of 'common sense,' are self-reproducing and operate as free-floating forms of control in relations of public discourse. They are often "components of ideological 'master frames,'" operating "as 'outriders' of that frame" and "pretty independently as devices, carrying the effects but not the body of the master frame that governed their design." This represents their "power as discursive devices" and "their utility to the right-wing industries of ideology described by Messer-Davidow and others;" they become an "active currency of ruling operating in the interest" of those who designed them and set them afloat but "their provenance and ideological 'intention' are not apparent in them" (Ibid., pp. 26-27).

This discursive metamorphosis, facilitated by a well-funded infrastructure and a largely unquestioning media, enabled PC to be summoned in ways that obscured the social relations which governed its design as a pejorative term. Additionally, the 'pro versus anti-free speech' motif provided journalists with a convenient frame within which to cast the 'debate' since they must create stories within a "range of known social and cultural identifications . . . intelligible to readers" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 54-55). Dramatic tales about censorship were more comprehensible to a mass audience that likely knew little about complex academic theories, ideas about inclusive curricula, etc. The calculated re-framing catapulted PC into the spotlight in the early 1990s as a number of publications began parroting the right-wing refrain alleging American campuses were teeming with leftist 'thought police' (cf. Adler et al., 1990; Bernstein, 1990; Henry, 1991; Taylor, 1991). These accounts were "almost uniformly critical of the left and accepted the conservatives' attacks without questioning their accuracy or their motives" as journalists "raced to condemn the 'politically correct' mob they had 'discovered' in American universities" (Wilson, 1995, p. 13).

Canadian publications soon jumped on the bandwagon with *Maclean's* magazine, as just one example, devoting a prominent portion of its May 27, 1991 issue to PC. Its coverage consisted of three articles spanning nine pages with the title of the first "The Silencers: A New Wave of Repression Is Sweeping Through the Universities" (Fennell, 1991, pp. 40) setting the tone. The majority of Canadian news media stories essentially reproduced the same "contrastive rhetoric" found in American accounts portraying PC as antithetical to "freedom of speech" (Weir, 1995, p. 78).

Although information about the dubious nature of think-tank 'knowledge' is available to reporters, they generally turn "their backs on it," failing to ask about funding and political agendas (Soley, 1990, p.10). Without this deliberate re-signification and the ideas industry's aggressive PR campaign, the PC 'threat' may have remained confined to the cogitations of canon custodians. Understanding this historical context is necessary since contemporary 'PC as anti-free speech' narratives are rooted in these decades-old controversies (Behrent, 2019). Having established PC as an ideological code, rightists have in their rhetorical arsenal a master trope which enables them to summarily dismiss criticism of regnant social relations and/or negatively reframe legitimate demands for change.

The 'New' Culture Wars and the Weaponization of 'Free Speech'

In North America, headlines about campus culture wars had waned considerably by the late 1990s (Weigel, 2016). Nonetheless, PC "remained a mainstay of conservative politics, an accusation directed at liberals in relation to a broad range of diversity and multicultural initiatives"

(Cossman, 2018, p. 67). In recent years, anti-PC began making a comeback with the publication of high-profile articles describing the resurgence of left-wing ideological repression that was becoming more pervasive due to social media (Chait, 2015). Others targeted so-called PC concepts such as 'trigger warnings' and 'safe spaces' that appeal to millennials attempting to "scrub campuses clean of words, ideas, and subjects that might cause discomfort or give offense" (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015, para.1). The authors of such tracts harkened back to 'cultural Marxism' and were connected to conservative think tanks in the U.S. (Sleeper, 2017; Scatamburlo-D'Annibale, 2019).

In Canada, Jordan Peterson's many devotees credit him for single-handedly resuscitating the culture wars (VandenBeukel, 2016) due in large part to his opposition to Bill C-16, an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on gender identity/expression and his refusal to use gender-neutral pronouns. In *Professor against Political Correctness, Part I*, released on YouTube in September 2016, Peterson launched an attack on the amendment amidst a broader screed against campus PC. Despite his complete lack of "legal analysis or background" (Cossman, 2018, p. 43), Peterson deemed Bill C-16 an unprecedented threat to freedom of expression.

There had been previous opposition to the bill in the House of Commons, largely from conservative politicians long opposed to "the protection of trans rights and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender identity" but they were mainly expressed through "a range of pathologizing discourses" which cast trans people as serious threats "to the safety of women in women-only spaces, especially public bathrooms" and/or "as pedophiles" (Cossman, 2018, p. 42). However, "Peterson's intervention was game-changing" as he shifted the terrain of debate and opponents "quickly jumped onto the freedom-of-expression bandwagon" while most of "the media coverage extolled his position" (Ibid., p. 45). Notwithstanding Peterson's specious claim about Bill C-16, it gained traction because he had reframed the issue. The media then "wasted no time in making the connections between the Peterson controversy and the war on free speech on university campuses" as "[a]rticle after article" deployed "the free speech under attack on campuses angle" (Ibid., p. 72).

Similarly, the media made Lindsay Shepherd a free speech heroine after an incident at Wilfrid Laurier University in 2017 (Wilt, 2017). Shepherd, a graduate teaching assistant, showed a video clip of Peterson denouncing the use of gender-neutral pronouns to first-year communication studies students. At least one student complained to WLU's Rainbow Centre that presenting the content, without providing sufficient context, was inappropriate (Hutchins, 2017). Shepherd was then summoned to a meeting with her supervisor, another faculty member and a representative of the Gendered Violence Prevention and Support Program. The ensuing conversation was, at times, clumsily handled by university personnel; nonetheless, it mainly revolved around Shepherd's choice to include material that had a tenuous connection to the course and purpose of the tutorial (Chaudhury, 2017; Wilt, 2017).

Shepherd surreptitiously audiotaped the meeting in which she was unapologetic about using 'provocative' materials and released it to the media, creating a frenzy among the right-wing punditocracy which portrayed her as another casualty of PC (cf. Blatchford, 2017; Kay, 2017). The overwhelmingly biased coverage prompted one temperate journalist to conclude it was "staggering in what is supposed to be a diverse press" that there "was almost no break in the strident consensus that campuses are places where only Marxist propaganda is acceptable and free speech under perennial siege" (Coren, 2017, para. 4). The nuances of the case, of which there were

many, were jettisoned in favour of simplistic tirades about PC universities. Shepherd is now employed by the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF) which has played a fundamental role in fostering hysteria about campus free speech.

The Right's Information Infrastructure

Launched in 2010, the JCCF describes itself as a "voice of freedom" whose mission is to "defend the constitutional freedoms of Canadians through litigation and education." It envisions a nation where (i) "each and every Canadian is treated equally by governments and by the courts, regardless of race, ancestry, ethnicity, age, gender, beliefs, or other personal characteristics" and (ii) "all Canadians are free to express peacefully their thoughts, opinions and beliefs without fear of persecution or oppression" (www.jccf.ca). This sounds commendable and perhaps even 'neutral.' However, as noted below, the JCCF is firmly entrenched within a conservative labyrinth established four decades ago.

In the early 1980s, a "sustained and concerted effort" was underway to create a "right-wing information infrastructure" in Canada. Similar to what transpired in the U.S., the corporate community "funnelled considerable resources into so-called think tanks" (Taras, 1996, para. 5) such as the Fraser and C.D. Howe institutes as well as other organizations seeking to move public discourse in a neoliberal direction, particularly on economic issues. Fifteen years later, free market perspectives were shaping policy debates "in dramatic ways" (Ibid., para. 4). By the early 2000s, politicians including former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, an "unrepentant fiscal conservative" called upon comrades to "drop their preoccupation with tax cuts and deregulation" and "concentrate on those issues that mattered to what he called 'theo-cons'"—namely cultural conservatives concerned about 'values' (McDonald, 2010, p. 34)—a strategy which mirrored that of Weyrich.[1] Harper's government "blended neo-liberalism" and social conservatism, mixing "a pro-business agenda," with "regressive public policies" that took aim at women's reproductive rights, eliminated "hate speech protections" and utilized "fear mongering and hate" (Perry, Mirrlees & Scrivens, 2019, p. 63). The Harper era also ushered in "a dramatic buildup of new . . . groups consolidating the right-wing infrastructure" each of which play "particular roles" in influencing "the media" as well as "opinion leaders"—including, among others, the JCCF (Dobbin, 2015, pp. 293-294).

In addition to its litigation activities, the JCCF is part of a Canadian ideas industry. While not a think tank, *per se*, it conducts 'research' in the form of its Campus Freedom Index (CFI) published annually since 2011, houses a Campus Free Speech fellow (currently Shepherd) and uses its communications arm to market the CFI and other missives to the media. Despite its claims of non-partisanship, it has exclusively defended those espousing conservative views (North99Staff, 2018[c]; Zamponi, 2017). As well, its funding sources, endorsers, personnel and links to various American organizations unambiguously suggest a right-wing ideological orientation.

The JCCF is funded by 5,000 Canadians who "support its vision" and the generosity of the Aurea, Lotte and John Hecht and Donner Canadian foundations (2018 Annual Report;

[1] Despite the fact that Harper is often 'branded' as a fiscal conservative, his government posted eight consecutive budget deficits while in power

www.jccf.ca). It does not divulge all of its funding sources. Donations are confidential, and donors are only identified with their expressed consent (www.jccf.ca/donor-recognition).

The Aurea Foundation, established in 2006 with a $25 million endowment from the Peter and Melanie Munk Foundation "gives special attention" to "issues related to the political and economic foundations of freedom, the strengthening of the free market system" and the "protection and enhancement of democratic values, human rights and human dignity" (www.munkfoundation.com).[2] According to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), Aurea is involved in the "Advancement of Education" (www.apps.cra-arc.gc.ca). It is also one of the biggest funders sustaining a well-known network of conservative think-tanks (Dobbin, 2015; Semley 2019) as its disclosures to the CRA confirms.

Publicly available data from the CRA reveals that from 2007 to 2014, Aurea contributed $1,722,000 to the Frontier Centre for Public Policy (www.desmogblog.com) that lists the 'culture wars' and defending free speech in Canada as one of its 'research' areas (www.fcpp.org). Additionally, based on the most current CRA data available (July 2013 to June 2018), Aurea gave its major beneficiaries the following: $1,596,211 to the Fraser Institute (FI); $1,005,000 to the MacDonald-Laurier Institute (MDLI); $943,000 to the Montreal Economic Institute (MEI) and $755,000 to the C.D. Howe Institute (CDHI) (www.apps.cra-arc.gc.ca). The Munk family has also made other 'special' donations, including one for $5 million to the FI to launch the Peter Munk Centre for Free Enterprise Education (FI 2016 Annual Report, p. 3).

Aurea has contributed approximately $600,000 to the JCCF since 2011. From 2013 to 2018 it also donated $625,000 to the Canadian Constitution Foundation (CCF) whose mission, to "defend the constitutional rights and freedoms of Canadians in the courts of law and public opinion" (www.theccf.ca), sounds remarkably familiar to that of the JCCF. Another recipient of Aurea's largesse is the Manning Foundation, "by far the most important player in the culture wars" (Dobbin, 2015 p. 294) which was established by Preston Manning, a former leader of the socially conservative Reform Party, who has successfully linked the Christian right with free market ideologues (McDonald, 2010). In 2017, it hosted a 'Censorship on Campus' panel featuring JCCF's President John Carpay and Jordan Peterson, the latter who exhorted attendees "to stop apologizing for being conservative" (Peterson, cited in Gyapong, 2017, para. 23).

Created in 1962, the Lotte and John Hecht Memorial Foundation is committed to "economic education that promotes the principles of a free market" (www.hecht.org). A long-time benefactor of the FI, from 2015 to 2018, it gave the institute $2,974,355 (www.apps.cra-arc.gc.ca) for redirecting "public attention to the role of competitive markets in providing for the well-being of Canadians" (www.hecht.org). It is not clear from available disclosures how much it has contributed to the JCCF in recent years. However, it has a history of supporting efforts to undermine public education, including 'school choice' (privatization) initiatives—which began dribbling across the border in the 1980s (Gutstein, 2004)—that square "neatly with the neoliberal reform agenda" (Chen, 2017, p. 2) and are favoured by the religious right (McDonald, 2010).

[2] The latter commitment seems paradoxical since Barrick Gold, the world's largest gold mining company from which the late Peter Munk amassed his fortune, has been embroiled in controversies about human rights abuses, environmental practices and unsafe working conditions across the globe (Saunders, 2018).

The Donner Canadian Foundation (DCF) established in 1950 by American steel tycoon William Henry Donner was ideologically neutral for more than four decades, contributing to uncontroversial projects including medical research. However, in 1993 it shifted demonstrably to the right after Donner's American heirs decided Canada had become too 'liberal.' The stated goal of its then-president, Devon Cross, was to "create a national network of new conservatives in Canada" (Rau, 1996, p. 11) so he moved to align the Canadian-based operation with that of its U.S. sister organization.

The DCF believed the battle of 'ideas' was key to advancing its political agenda and played a decisive role in financing the right-wing intellectual assault of the 1990s (Taras, 1996) including support for the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship to combat "so-called political correctness at Canadian universities" (Walkom, 1997, para. 12). And, like the Hecht Foundation it was a major backer of the 'school choice' movement (Gutstein, 2004). From 2014-2019, it donated significant amounts to the following: FI ($481,090); MDLI ($865,130); MEI ($628,109) and the CDHI ($158,151) (www.apps.cra-arc.gc.ca; donnerfoundation.org).[3]

The JCCF is linked to Ezra Levant's Rebel Media (RM), a "far-right online media platform" specializing in "racist and xenophobic dialogue" (Perry, Mirrlees & Scrivens, 2019, p. 61). JCCF staff members have been interviewed on RM which has "also used the JCCF to acquire supporters and donors." In turn, RM has "launched fundraising campaigns on behalf of the JCCF numerous times" to support campus anti-abortion groups and lawsuits to "protect 'religious freedoms'" (North99Staff, 2018[a], paras. 2-8). Levant himself is a featured JCCF endorser (https://www.jccf.ca/endorsements).

Other endorsers include representatives from the Institute of Family and Marriage Canada, a Christian think tank and major opponent of women's and LGBTQ rights; the anti-labour Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF)—whose Alberta wing was once led by Carpay; the Institute for Liberal Studies (ILS)—yet another neoliberal think tank; the MEI, the MDLI, the FI, Clive Seligman who is President of the aforementioned Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship and Stephen Harper's former speechwriter Michael Taube (Ibid.).

The Virginia-based Atlas Network (AN), formerly the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, was established in 1982 by Antony Fisher, a "wealthy far-right Briton" who has bankrolled "market-fundamentalist and socially conservative organizations across the globe" (Climenhaga, 2018, para. 9). The JCCF receives an "annual grant" from the network (Semley, 2019, para. 18) and is listed as one of the AN's twelve Canadian 'partners;' others include the CCF, the CTF, the FI, the ILS, the MDLI, the MEI and the Manning Centre (www.atlasnetwork.org/partners/global-directory/canada). The AN's mission to "litter the world with free market think-tanks" is funded by among others, the Bradley and Scaife foundations and the notorious Koch brothers (www.sourcewatch.com). Its largest donor, the John Templeton Foundation, advocates for the "integration of religious beliefs and free market principles" in classrooms (North99Staff, 2018[b], para. 8). The AN is an associate member of the State Policy Network (SPN), a consortium of more than 160 rightist think tanks and tax-exempt organizations in the U.S., Canada and the U.K., including the FI as well as several American groups (i.e.

[3] Based on publicly available CRA documents, it does not appear as though the DCF has contributed to the JCCF in the past five years, although it is still listed as a donor on the latter's website.

American Council of Trustees and Alumni, Goldwater Institute, Students for Liberty, Young America's Foundation) which are all veterans of campus culture wars (www.spn.org).

A former member of the SPN, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) champions the JCCF for having Canadian students 'backs' just as it "provides American students with the resources they need to fight for their rights on campus" (Kruth, 2013, p. 1). It was established in 1999 by Alan Kors, co-author of *The Shadow University: The Betrayal of Liberty on America's Campuses* which claims that universities are "the enemy of a free society" (Kors and Silvergate, 1998, p. 3), with millions in funding from the Adolph Coors, Bradley, Charles Koch and Scaife foundations among others (www.sourcewatch.org). Part of the FIRE's mission is to "defend and sustain individual rights," challenge the "culture of censorship" and the impermissibility of 'hate speech'" (www.thefire.org). In 2015, its current president, Greg Lukianoff, co-authored "The Coddling of the American Mind" (a riff on the title of Bloom's book) which—similar to previous anti-PC chronicles—cherry-picked anecdotes and ridiculed the subjects of its criticism (Weigel 2016). However, the authors distinguished previous iterations of PC from the current student-driven 'movement' (made up of 'snowflakes') that presumes "an extraordinary fragility of the collegiate psyche" (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015, para. 5).

The FIRE has, on rare occasions, taken up cases not involving white, Christian conservatives; however, "under Lukianoff" those examples "have served increasingly as protective coloration for a 'free speech' crusade claiming that it's mainly liberal coddling and progressive cry-bullying that are chilling individual rights" (Sleeper, 2016, p. 10). He has been a "tactically brilliant point man for a larger conservative campus campaign of which the FIRE is decidedly a part by virtue of its funding, many of its personnel, and most importantly its strategy and tactics" (Ibid.). The majority of its free speech interventions have involved campus organizations that use hateful rhetoric directed at minority constituencies (Vogel, 2017). For example, it has partnered with the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a "Christian right powerhouse" incorporated in 1993—with Bradley Foundation funding—to challenge the "homosexual agenda" (Posner, 2018, p. 13) and protect the rights of those who wish to "live out the Gospel by defending religious freedom, the sanctity of life, freedom of speech and marriage and family" (www.adflegal.org). The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a civil rights organization, classified the ADF as an LGTBQ hate group based on its efforts to defend "state-sanctioned sterilization of trans people abroad" and the "recriminalization of homosexuality in the U.S." (www.splccenter.org). The ADF has promoted 'religious freedom' legislation seeking to enshrine the right to discriminate based on sexual orientation, opposed anti-bullying efforts in schools that mention gender identity and insinuated itself into campus politics through its Center for Academic Freedom which focuses on the speech rights of Christians.

These religious undertones also appear to inform the JCCF's activities. Its president, John Carpay, a former member of Alberta's Wildrose Party that "panders to the ideology of religious conservatives and moral absolutes" (Perry, Mirrlees & Scrivens, 2019, pp. 64-65) is a "committed right-wing Christian" who often describes the culture wars in spiritual terms (Coren, 2018, para. 5). At a 2017 event, he declared a "state of war;" unlike previous wars in which the enemy was clearly defined, the current one is "very different" and difficult to "fight because the enemy is within . . . hammering away at the foundations of the free society" (Carpay, cited in Dalliare, 2017, para. 8). These statements echoed the lexicon of the McCarthy era.

Channeling the FCF's rhetoric, Carpay identified the war as one of ideas against the deleterious forces of "neo-Marxism" (aka cultural Marxism) and "Social Justice Warriors" (SJWs)

for whom the "war between oppressors and the oppressed permeates every aspect of economics, society and politics" (Carpay, 2017, para. 3). "Equality-obsessed" SJWs advance "an anti-freedom agenda" such that "the delicate snowflakes who now populate our universities must be provided with 'trigger warnings' about controversial ideas, and spaces that are 'safe' from challenges to existing beliefs" (Ibid., para. 9; para. 7). Elsewhere, Carpay has claimed that "pro-Israel, pro-life, conservative or otherwise right-of-centre" voices challenging "radical feminism, LGBTQ political ideology, or the identity politics of the progressive Left are routinely silenced on campus" (Carpay, 2019, para. 7). SJWs "are quite willing to trample on the fundamental freedoms" of those whom which they disagree, especially their "religious freedom" (Carpay, 2017, para. 8). Such posturing reflects the "religious right's familiar feeling of persecution" and typifies Weyrich's 1980's-era attempt to disguise opposition to racial integration as a "defense of religious liberty" (Morris, 2019, p. 17, 10).

In the parlance of the right, "religious liberty is code for protection of white, Western cultural heritage" (Ibid., pp. 16-17), a leitmotif which animates the United Conservative Party (UCP) to which Carpay now belongs. Like Carpay, the UCP's leader, Jason Kenny, has evoked the bogeyman of 'cultural Marxism' which Mirrlees (2018) argues is an "instrument of intersectional hate" wielded to advance "a white, patriarchal, and Christian vision" in response to a perceived "destabilization of this order" (p. 50) by feminists, pro-choice advocates, gay, lesbian and trans people, multiculturalists, etc. (Ibid., p. 56). The UCP has fielded candidates who have lamented the "demographic replacement" of white people, shared "Muslim migrant rape crisis" conspiracy theories online, advised women to "dress modestly" to avoid unwanted sexual advances and questioned whether there are any "redeeming values" in LGBTQ parades (Mitrovica, 2019, para. 5). In 1994, Carpay penned an editorial chastising then-Premier Ralph Klein's decision not to invoke the 'notwithstanding clause' to block the Supreme Court of Canada ruling requiring Alberta to include protection of homosexuals from discrimination. More recently, he called gay-straight alliances ideological sexual clubs, and at a political convention hosted by RM, he compared gay rights to totalitarianism and equated Pride's rainbow flag to the Nazi swastika (Doherty, 2018).

Two of the JCCF's staff members are graduates of the Oak Brook College of Law (OBCL); another legal assistant is currently enrolled there (www.jccf.ca). Their profiles fail to mention that OBCL, established in 1994, is a non-accredited Christian correspondence/distance learning institution. While authorized "by the State Bar of California to grant the Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree," its graduates "may not qualify" to "take the bar examination or to satisfy the requirements for admission to practice in jurisdictions other than California" (www.obcl.edu). It provides a "legal education consistent with Scriptural truth" and is for "individuals who desire to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ" in the "fields of law and government policy" (www.obcl.edu/history). A "Statement of Faith" claims that "God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and woman who are married to each other;" any "sexual activity outside of marriage, whether "heterosexual, homosexual or personal" is considered to be "sinful and offensive to God" (www.obcl.edu/statement-of-faith). Students are subject to an austere code of conduct, including restrictions on speech.

Another staff lawyer led the charge against the Law Society of Ontario's requirement that attorneys sign a declaration to promote equity, diversity and inclusion as a condition of practicing law (www.jccf.ca). The JCCF's leadership and several of its staff members' backgrounds clearly suggest a conservative orientation and antipathy to the ideas of diversity and inclusivity. A large

portion of its work involves "litigation aimed at rolling back women's rights" and making discrimination against LGBTQ people easier based on religious convictions (North99Staff, 2018[c], para. 18). As of this writing, fourteen of its sixteen 'active' cases are in support of anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ issues. Two others involve cancelled events—one at the University of British Columbia due to security concerns and a screening of the anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant film "Killing Europe" at an Ottawa Public Library (www.jccf.ca).

The JCCF is entitled to advocate on behalf of individuals and groups whose views it shares, and its employees are free to worship as they please. However, it should hardly be considered a neutral arbiter on matters of campus free speech. Its annual CFI purports to offer "data about the state of free speech at 60 Canadian public universities" (www.jccf.ca/2019-campus-freedom-index). The mainstream media generally treat it as an authoritative source, and it is widely cited despite its questionable 'methodology' and highly ideological criteria.

For example, institutions receive one of five letter grades (A, B, C, D or F) based on university and student union policies and practices but neither can earn an "A" if they provide funding or other resources to any campus body engaged in "ideological advocacy (e.g. promotion of vague and ambiguous concepts such as 'diversity' and 'inclusion')" (https://campusfreedomindex.ca/methodology, p.1). Also, universities and student unions must not have any "express or implied 'speech code' that prohibits or restricts speech" considered "'offensive, 'discriminatory,' 'disrespectful,' 'inappropriate,' 'triggering,' a 'micro-aggression,' etc.," and no "so-called 'safe spaces' where speech is restricted" (Ibid.). Hence, a campus that houses an equity office or has policies regarding inclusive language, sexual violence prevention, anti-racism initiatives, etc., would automatically be downgraded. The JCCF's animus toward diversity is further evidenced in its 2019 CFI based on "new research" compiled by Shepherd which "unveils a growing threat to freedom of expression on campuses and increases awareness about the federal government's efforts to fund university initiatives that put free expression at risk" (www.jccf.ca/2019, p. 3). The 'threat' comes from "increasing efforts by universities to promote ideological advocacy under the guise of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) programs" which are eligible for federal grants (Ibid., p. 2).

This framing implies only one 'side' has an agenda while the JCCF is merely a disinterested observer protecting the virtues of free speech against the incursion of ideology. It presents itself as non-ideological in a manner described by Fish (1994) thusly: "[F]irst detach your agenda from its partisan origins, from its history and then present it as a universal imperative, as a call to moral arms so perspicuous that only the irrational . . . could refuse it" (p. 8). One tried and true way of doing this is "to appropriate a vocabulary that is already an honored one and then 'spin' it so that it will generate the conclusions—the marching orders—that are the content of your politics" (Ibid.). The JCCF lays "claim to a certain charged vocabulary" and uses it "in a fit of moral posturing" (Ibid., p. 11) to bludgeon its opponents as in "we're for objectivity and you are playing politics; we're for free speech and you are for censorship and ideological tyranny" (Ibid., p.16). Rightists have unscrupulously adopted this strategy; the "result is to place the opposition in the difficult position of having not only to respond to arguments but to dispute the very vocabulary in which the issues" have been framed—a vocabulary which, "because it occupies the rhetorical high ground, stigmatizes counterarguments" (Ibid.).

Other than its own skewed findings, there is little evidence to support assertions about a campus free speech crisis (Dea, 2018; Moon, 2018; Turk, 2018). A 2019 survey conducted by Maclean's magazine (hardly a bastion of liberalism), found that 70 percent of students believed

freedom of assembly, association and speech were either secure or very secure in Canada (Brownell, 2019). Moreover, while the JCCF characterizes free speech and diversity as oppositional principles, students surveyed indicated that both were important and necessary—95 percent and 92 percent respectively (Ibid.).

The JCCF's strategic appropriation of free expression obscures its actual aim which is to undermine diversity initiatives on campuses and more broadly to vilify progressivism—a point to which I shall return. In this regard, it has taken a page out of the American right's playbook in manufacturing a crisis to further political aims. In the U.S., a similar campaign financed by the right's deep-pocketed funders (Bradley, Scaife and Koch Foundations among them) has made free speech its cornerstone (Moskowitz, 2019) despite empirical data demonstrating free speech is thriving and widely supported by students on American campuses (Beauchamp, 2018; Hanlon, 2018). In addition to exaggerated tales about censorious snowflakes, such efforts have repeatedly tried to confuse academic freedom and free speech—a tactic that the JCCF has borrowed.

A JCCF proposal submitted to Ontario's Conservative Premier Doug Ford in July 2018—one month before he announced his policy—includes language about the "protection of free expression and academic freedom" as follows:

> all common areas of campus shall be deemed public forums where everyone is permitted to exercise their right to freedom of expression *and* [emphasis added] academic freedom. Any person, student or otherwise, who wishes to engage in non-commercial expressive activity . . . shall be permitted to do so freely, subject only to reasonable restrictions on the time, place and manner of the expression . . . that do not discriminate in regard to the content of the expression or proposed expression (JCCF, 2018, pp. 3-4).

This statement conflates free expression and academic freedom and misinterprets the university's mission.

Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom

Freedom of expression "is a *general* right" protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms" whereas "academic freedom is a *special* right of academics" (Turk, 2014, p. 11). Often enshrined in collective agreements, it is a "professional right" and the foundation which enables academics to fulfil their societal obligations as educators and scholars (Ibid.). Academic freedom also includes the right, "without restriction by prescribed doctrine" to teach, conduct research, disseminate and publish the results of intellectual inquiry, engage in service and to express one's opinions about the institution "without fear of reprisal or suppression by the employers, the state, or any other source" (CAUT Policy Statement, 2018, p. 1).

Unlike the broader concept of free expression, academic freedom is based on rigorous standards for enquiry in the interest of advancing knowledge. This involves the thoughtful articulation of ideas, the demonstration of proof based on careful examination of evidence, the distinction between sound and sloppy work and the exercise of critical, reasoned judgement. It is speech that is the product of scholarship rather than soapbox pontification and is quite different from the right to freely express one's ideas, however factual or fallacious they may be (Dea, 2018; Scott, 2017).

Furthermore, academic freedom does not imply—as Shepherd stated in her infamous audiotape—that, "in a university all perspectives are valid" (Shepherd, cited in Hutchins, 2017, para. 61). We can respect the right to free expression without legitimizing the views being propagated. The critical thinking animating the academic enterprise is not an endorsement of the idea that "anything goes" (Scott, 2018, B. 11). It is not about spreading random opinions but rather about the construction and dissemination of knowledge that meets a basic level of intellectual rigour. While the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects 'flat earthers' such ideas need not "be guaranteed a place on campus" (Wells, 2018, para. 15). In conservative formulations, free expression means the entitlement to state one's views however unfounded or ungrounded; such "free speech absolutism" to which the JCCF subscribes "refuses to take quality . . . truth, or any other characteristic into account in its determination that *all* speech must be equally protected" (Wells, 2018, para. 17). The precepts of free expression make no distinction about quality—academic freedom does (Scott, 2017).

Moreover, while students have the right to express opinions they are not shielded by academic freedom as are faculty members who belong to a professional community, entry into which involves lengthy, exacting preparation and acknowledged disciplinary contributions based on peer-review processes. The "institutional mechanisms of the academy are set up . . . to offer distinctions between what counts as knowledge in given fields and what does not;" they do not exist to "affirm the validity of every single idea: in fact, they exist to do something like the opposite" Wells, 2018, para. 15). Academic freedom is not solely contingent upon, nor determined by, principles of free expression but rather by the metrics of scholarly competence, disciplinary associations that "train and certify" that competence and expertise upon which the "advancement of knowledge in all fields" and the university's academic mission depends (Scott, 2017, p. 4).

Additionally, not *everyone* is entitled to 'exercise their right to academic freedom' as the JCCF seems to infer. Academic freedom is not simply a name given to free expression in academic settings (Turk, 2014). Not everyone merits protection under its umbrella including provocateurs whose orations are typically not serious intellectual engagements to advance knowledge but rather attempts to inflame passions. The right has seized on the notion of universities as milieus of unbridled free expression to "reintegrate . . . beliefs that have long been discredited and marginalized" (Zhou, 2017, para. 10). The extent to which this narrative—free speech as the *raison d'etre* of universities—has been widely accepted is a testament to the efficacy of the think tank-media synergy described by Taras (1996) and "was evident in the media's treatment of Shepherd" (Wells, 2018, para. 9). However, free expression—which requires "nothing but a soapbox"—is not the mission of the university; the very existence of the "university's machinery" suggests an "other, more substantive purpose" (Fish, 1994, p. 107).

Nonetheless, conservatives have pursued cynical strategies such as inviting known demagogues to campuses and erecting 'free speech walls'—an effort spearheaded in part by the JCCF (Semley, 2019)—to bait progressive students for no other reason than to generate controversy as an end in itself—a tactic which Carpay tacitly admitted to employing (Ibid.). Shepherd started a free speech club, the Laurier Society for Open Inquiry, which chose its speakers based on whether or not they were polemical and the topics taboo which qualified "any number of loonies" such as "flat earthers, Holocaust deniers and . . . white-supremacy conspiracy theorists" (Uyehara, 2018, para. 22). Shepherd invited Faith Goldy, a propagandist of the "'white genocide' conspiracy theory" to WLU (Ibid.). After an intentionally pulled fire alarm shut down Goldy's talk, she tweeted a thank you to Shepherd calling her a "free speech icon" while Shepherd posted

a YouTube video scolding "pro-censorship" leftists (Ibid., para. 23). The intent of such activities is to provoke the responses they typically generate—anger, disruption, protests, etc., that are irresistible fodder for right-wing media pundits such as Barbara Kay, a member of the JCCF's Board of Directors, who then point fingers at intolerant leftists and wimpy snowflakes while writing elegies for campus free speech. This is a debased form of 'gotcha' politics—it is not about defending free expression but weaponizing it to promote hackneyed yarns about conservatives as a besieged minority whose views are suppressed on campuses. Ironically, rightists who have routinely mocked 'snowflakes' for their victim mentality are now embracing the mantle of victimhood and using it to destigmatize discrimination which is reshaping politics "across the west, with some frightening consequences in the form of the 'alt-right'" (Davies, 2018, para. 18).

The weaponization of free speech is part and parcel of the alt-right's "toolkit of bigotry" with emboldened white nationalists and neofascists emerging from the shadowy depths of online chatrooms, "entering the public sphere" and establishing a "more prominent presence at our universities" which, in effect, promotes the normalization of hate and bigotry (Zine, 2018, p. 27). Free speech is also an "ideal weapon for cultural conservatives" to brandish when "attacking progressive political attitudes they associate with the university" and with which they vehemently disagree (Wells, 2018, para. 25). Their goal, as evidenced by the JCCF's CFI, is the "destruction of liberal values" such as diversity and inclusivity "upon which the university is based" (Turk, 2018, p. 25). In light of the very real threats posed to minority populations by free speech warriors who are mainstreaming hate such developments must be vigorously challenged (Uyehara, 2018). However, we must delve deeper into why the free speech campaign is being underwritten by neoliberal think tanks at this historical juncture.

Concluding Thoughts

To grasp the broader agenda informing recent attacks on the academy, we must revisit the original intent of cultural conservatism which was believed to be a more efficacious *political* strategy than was mere advocacy for right-wing economic policies (i.e. neoliberalism). Weyrich and his ilk never strayed from their devotion to free market fundamentalism but galvanized support for it by using hot-button cultural issues as ideological cover and promoting 'backlash' politics (Frank, 2004). Earlier forms of conservatism emphasized fiscal sobriety while backlash populism focused on social issues with "cultural anger" marshaled (and sometimes manufactured) to "achieve economic ends" (Ibid., p. 5). Promoters of the backlash represent themselves as foes of the 'elite' which is conveniently constructed "not primarily as an economic category but as a cultural stratum" consisting of educated, cosmopolitan, PC types (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012, p. 137).

At the height of the 'old' culture wars, Cockburn (1991) claimed the underlying motive of the anti-PC campaign was to fashion minds "sufficiently deadened to reason and history to allow the capitalist project to reproduce itself from generation to generation" (p. 691). Arguably, there is a similar dynamic currently at play—the manufactured 'crisis' is a *partisan* ploy which "appears to satisfy a political need, at a time when the identity of conservatism is under siege from a range of demographic and economic threats" (Davies, 2018, para. 8). Conservatism has always been an expression of corporate interests—to "try to understand conservatism without taking into account its grounding in business thought," to try to depict it as the "political style of an unusually pious nation" or an "extreme dedication to the principle of freedom . . . is like setting off to war with maps of the wrong country" (Frank, 2008, p. 30). But at a time "when the right's previous

ideological bedrocks are no longer dependable," free speech "now offers conservatives a guiding ideological principle" (Davies, 2018, para. 42). Unable to defend the "moral vision of hard work and enterprise" in light of failed neoliberal policies and glaring economic inequality, "the idea of free speech" is summoned in the name of restoring a bygone era of white, patriarchal, heteronormative hegemony. The decades-old intellectual attraction between neoliberals and cultural conservatives has been further solidified in recent years as the latter appeal to free expression "as some unwieldly synthesis of free markets and cultural traditionalism" (Ibid., para. 44, 28).

Indeed, it is hardly a coincidence that a corporatist network has bankrolled and endorsed organizations such as the JCCF and free speech crusades not only in Canada but across the West. To comprehend contemporary "neoliberalism's many twists and turns" one must consider the ideological trends reflected in materials circulated by the many institutes that constitute its global infrastructure for that is where neoliberalism's "hard turn" toward right-wing populism "becomes apparent" (Cornelissen, 2019, para. 6). Recently, this has included intensified conspiratorial tales about 'cultural Marxism' as a threat to traditional mores and free speech. As the "con of neoliberalism" has been revealed, "ruling elites" have had to make "alliances with right-wing demagogues who use the crude tactics of racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, bigotry and misogyny" to redirect the public's growing frustration "away from the elites and toward the vulnerable" (Hedges, 2018, para. 9).

While many explanations posit right-wing populism as a reaction against neoliberalism, the latter has, in fact, served as the "incubator for a growing authoritarian populism fed largely by economic inequality" (Giroux, 2019, para. 7). Feeling beleaguered, there has been a tendency, especially among white males, to assume identificatory positions which are sometimes extreme. The combined effects of challenges to the traditional authority and historic privilege of this group and economic decline engendered by casino capitalism have led many to assert their shared 'oppression.' Rightists have "craftily channeled" real economic grievances into attacks on "demonized others" and while deteriorating economic realities "do not singularly cause racism," they "have historically shaped receptivity" to "white supremacist ideology" (Perry, Mirrlees and Scrivens, 2019, p. 69).

The free speech campaign is another manifestation of backlash politics providing a unifying narrative that deflects attention away from the true source of economic and social malaise, namely, the cherished free market policies of the (mainly white) economic elite that is financing this crusade. As Evans (2020) notes, the "myth of the free speech crisis cannot be divorced from the wider rise of the global far right." We should therefore be wary of "government intervention to 'protect' free speech" on campuses for this is nothing but "posturing—a way to further the culture war" for what are ultimately political and economic ends (para. 10).

As should be clear, hostility directed toward universities is hardly new; it has been at the core of the right's agenda for many years. To understand the latest offensive, one must acknowledge the power "conservatives attributed to the political nature" of *critical education* and the "significance this view has had in shaping the long-term strategy they put in place . . . to win an ideological war" against progressive intellectuals who have argued for holding "corporate power accountable as a precondition for extending and expanding the promise of an inclusive democracy" (Giroux, 2007, p. 141-142). Despite the ongoing encroachment of market-based prescriptions that threaten its institutional autonomy, the academy is one of the few milieus in which progressive ideas still have some degree of currency. It is this progressivism—based on the

notion that governments have a role to play in limiting the excesses of corporate greed, promoting the common good and advancing the cause of equality—that is the right's true target.

The university has often been a significant battleground against the social ugliness engendered by bigotry in all its forms; a site of movements for social change, mass mobilizations against imperialist wars and, at times, even struggles aimed at the savagery unleashed by neoliberalism's inhumanity and a free market agenda that wreaks havoc with any semblance of democracy. Conservatives fear the power of critical educational discourses that contest glib rationalizations for social and economic inequality and the legitimacy of unbridled corporate rule. It is this very fear which has long inspired their assault on academe (Scatamburlo-D'Annibale, 2011).

At a time when higher education is once again under aggressive siege, progressive educators have a pivotal role to play in beating back the reactionary forces which seek to disembowel the very idea of critical thought. We must expose the right-wing network that is financing the free speech 'crisis' campaign and shatter the façade of impartiality behind which organizations such as the JCCF and others hide. We must counter the narratives of think-tank mandarins and pseudo-intellectuals who cavalierly disregard facts in order to denigrate progressive educational initiatives. We must diligently challenge media portrayals of campus life given the salient role of journalists and pundits who, serving as ideological ventriloquists for the right, have vilified progressives and shaped public discourse in ways that misrepresent the university's scholarly mission. We must contest the debilitating educational policies of populist governments such as the Ford regime in Ontario and the contemptible anti-intellectualism that fuel them. We must speak out forcefully against the palpable growth of neofascism in our midst and the disingenuous machinations of free speech warriors seeking to mainstream hate on our campuses.

And, given the powerful economic forces that are courting right-wing demagogues to shield the failures of neoliberalism from scrutiny and further advance free market fundamentalism, critical educators must vigorously interrogate an ideology that rewards avarice and promotes naked self-interest over compassion, the public good and democracy itself. Harvey (2005) reminds us that neoliberalism is "profoundly suspicious of democracy" (p. 66); it is therefore imperative to refuse the routine conflation of capitalism and democracy for as McChesney (1999) cautions "neoliberalism is the immediate and foremost enemy of genuine participatory democracy . . . across the planet" (p.11).

Above all, critical educators must rescue what Bloch once called the 'principle of hope' from the abyss of cynicism and complacency while rejecting the neoliberal mantra 'there is no alternative.' The principle of hope can help us imagine the 'not yet'—a more humane and just world. The alternative, "hopelessness is itself, in a temporal and factual sense, the most insupportable thing, downright intolerable to human needs" (Bloch, 1995, pp. 4-5) and something that critical educators must passionately oppose.

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