

MARCH 27, 2006

1 COMMENTS:

[Dean Saitta](#) said...

I'm one of Mr. Horowitz's dangerous professors. When Mr. Horowitz began agitating for his particular version of "academic freedom" in Colorado in 2003 I listened carefully to student testimony at legislative hearings and studied their written accounts of alleged professorial bias. I offered comprehensive and respectful analysis to local legislators, columnists, and radio talk show hosts. I agreed to publicly discuss student concerns with SAF's paid operative at my university (an offer that was not accepted). Since 2003 I've held seminars with students on our campus and talked to students on other campuses about their educational experiences—and discovered a very different reality than the one that Mr. Horowitz is selling. I've given salons and talks about academic freedom to local citizens. I've published letters addressing the problematic aspects of Mr. Horowitz's campaign in newspapers in Denver and Philadelphia.

For my efforts I'm now included in a book that promises to reveal "radical academics" who "spew violent anti-Americanism, preach anti-Semitism, and cheer on the killing of American soldiers and civilians". By association I'm a suspected terrorist, racist, murderer, and sexual deviant. I've been smeared by newspaper columnists in the Denver papers, and received hostile emails from citizens in Colorado and beyond. Now we have a Horowitz shill warning parents to consult his book before making a school choice for their kids.

All of this nonsense is provoked by a man whose own views are deeply contradictory. Mr. Horowitz says that he wants professors to be academic and scholarly, yet his book research is superficial and sloppy, and should inspire no confidence that his accounts of rampant student persecution are accurate. He wants professors to stick to their subjects, yet he fails to

realize that disciplinary boundaries have become increasingly permeable to the point where everything happening in intellectual and social life is conceivably relevant to the classroom subject at hand. He stands for eliminating political bias from the classroom, yet he ignores a century of scholarship showing that biases of all kinds inevitably intrude, and that these biases can actually work to education's advantage if teachers and students are aware of them. He claims to be a pro-democracy patriot, but he rejects Jeffersonian ideals of teaching for citizenship in favor of an elitist model of tweedy professors filling up empty-headed students with disinterested knowledge. He wants to promote intellectual curiosity, yet he bailed on his own graduate program because, in his stunningly impoverished view of intellectual life, "everything had been mined...there was nothing to research that was interesting anymore" (Chronicle of Higher Education interview, May 6, 2005). He supposedly is a student advocate, yet he clearly disrespects the ability of students to think for themselves, and he underestimates the resolve of our very best students to battle test their ideas in the classroom. He says he stands for civil discourse, yet his online magazine is an unreadable hate sheet. Clearly, if we want to encourage intellectual curiosity about how the world works and promote inquiry in pursuit of truth, this is not a man from whom we should take much advice.

At his Duke University lecture on March 7, 2006 Mr. Horowitz said he "respects people who show him respect". He might consider that those of us on the other side of the academic freedom issue feel the same way. Instead, his campaign has become one that is reckless and morally-reprehensible. He and his media skills are impugning the character and reputation of anyone who uses the classroom to provoke and foster the free exchange of ideas. Mr. Horowitz claims that his book is not a blacklist, but it is certainly be used as one. Like he also said at Duke, ideas have consequences.

9:13 AM

