

I have a Ph.D. in Women's Studies, but I'm not woke anymore. I write under a pseudonym because, if my colleagues were to find out about my criticisms of this field, I would be unable to find any employment in academia. That someone who critiques the axioms of a field of study feels compelled to write under an assumed name tells you everything you need to know about the authoritarianism underpinning this ideology. I no longer believe that the fundamental ideas of Women's Studies, and of Critical Social Justice more generally, describe reality; they are at best partial explanations—hyperbolic ideology, not fact-based analysis. I have seen this ideology up close and seen how it consumes and even destroys people, while dehumanizing anyone who dissents.

I'm sad to say it, but I believe that Critical Social Justice ideology—if not beaten in the war of ideas—will destroy the liberal foundation of American society. By liberal I mean principles including, but not limited to, constitutional republican government, equality under the law, due process, a commitment to reason and science, individual liberty, and freedom—of speech, of the press, and of religion. Because Critical Social Justice ideology is now the dominant paradigm in American academia, it has flowed into all other major societal institutions, the media, and even corporations. Far from being counter-cultural, Critical Social Justice ideology is now the cultural mainstream. A diverse spectrum of liberals, libertarians, conservatives, and all others who, to put it bluntly, want the American constitution to continue to serve as the basis for our society have to team up to prevent this ideology from destroying our country.

I became “woke” around 2003, so I have nearly two decades of experience with Critical Social Justice ideology. As the oldest daughter in a working-class family with six kids, neither of my parents had a college degree, although my mom had taken some community college classes. My high school teachers emphasized the importance of going to college. While I wasn't sure what opportunities a college education would bring, I decided that it would best to attend, given the urgency with which all the teachers and guidance counselors discussed college as a necessity. I was a good, not great, student, who scored highly very highly on the verbal component of standardized tests. I loved literature and writing, so I figured that I'd get a bachelor's degree in English literature, then maybe find a job as an administrative assistant and write in my free time. For a seventeen year-old girl who wasn't especially ambitious, it seemed like a decent plan. At least it was better, I thought, than continuing to work part-time as a waitress. And through a combination of scholarships and part-time work, I realized that I'd be able to complete a bachelor's degree without incurring any debt.

When I began attending college classes in 2000, I registered for a Western civilization course and fell in love with the Greek and Roman classics, so I continued to take additional courses of this type. The twentieth-century Western civilization course was taught by a very personable and funny women's studies professor. I don't think it is widely understood that first-generation college students, in general, don't know the politics behind who becomes university professors. I naively assumed that professors are among the smartest people in the country, and I had no idea that the professoriate is heavily slanted to the ideological left. I now understand that Critical Social Justice professors are evangelists for their faith and the university is their mission field. Their goal is to take young students—inexperienced, eager to succeed—unmoor them from any faith tradition they might have, even if it's just American civics, and replace that with Critical Social Justice ideology. And, for the most part, these professors succeed. They are, on the whole, likable people—energetic, personable, and caring.

My first encounters with Critical Social Justice came during the feminism unit of this course, which included works by Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Angela Davis, bell hooks, and Shulamith Firestone, among others. I was interested in learning about feminism, but Firestone's argument to eliminate the biological family alarmed me, as I hoped to have both a

career and children someday. Also, I didn't believe Firestone's argument that motherhood is inherently oppressive. From witnessing my mom's own experiences with having six kids, I knew that she wasn't oppressed. It was a choice she freely made because she loved children and felt that taking care of them, in spite of the difficulties, was rewarding. In spite of my reservations about Firestone's book, I became interested in learning more about feminism and began to check out more women's studies books from the library. As a young university student, encountering Critical Social Justice ideas felt intoxicating, like stumbling onto a portal into a new world. I felt like a detective, with my newly developing [critical consciousness](#) understanding society for the first time—all the oppression, the sexism, racism, the evils of capitalism, and so on. It felt righteous, like I was part of a counter-cultural movement, a vanguard helping to bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice.

The women's studies professor, sensing that she had an acolyte, encouraged my interest in becoming more involved in advocacy for women. Over the summer, I worked as an intern at a feminist nonprofit and met a lot of people on the radical left, including anarchists. Around this time, I attended a few protests for various causes, but after a couple of years with this ideology as my guiding framework, I grew exhausted by feeling constant anger. I became tired of focusing on all the injustices of the world, not on what I had to be grateful for. It was a miserable, resentment-based life, and I felt helpless to solve the world's problems.

My foray into radical politics ended around the time I started a master's program in creative writing. I focused on reading literature and my colleagues' works, which were complex and nuanced, not ideologically motivated in the slightest degree. After finishing my master's degree, I taught writing as a college lecturer for a couple of years, then decided to apply for Ph.D. programs in hopes that having a doctorate would increase my pay. One of the most galling forms of hypocrisy I've experienced is that leftist professors claim a commitment to "social justice," yet the academic departments they run employ large numbers of underpaid adjunct instructors who are closed out of the high pay and job security of the tenured radicals.

When I began my Ph.D. program in 2013 at a highly ranked university, I began to see that something about my new colleagues was different from what I remembered about my colleagues just a few years earlier. At first, I chalked this up to the fact that I was a handful of years older than most of the students, many of whom had recently completed their undergraduate degrees. They seemed angry, self-righteous, and determined, lacking the intellectual humility that I had admired so much in the friends I'd made in my master's program. I now realize that these students were "woke." Having spent the past couple of years teaching writing to working-class students, I hadn't been exposed to Critical Social Justice ideology in some time, and I was surprised to see the inroads it had made in the decade since I'd first encountered it.

I realized that Critical Social Justice was no longer a fringe intellectual field of study, but a real force that was reshaping the university. Early on in my program, I recall a panic about racism at the university, and many students issued social media demands of the administration to increase minority enrollment. While I fully support that goal, I feel that such efforts are best advanced through mentoring and guiding promising young students beginning in elementary school, not waiting until they reach adulthood and then attempting to force equal outcomes. Around this time, I became extremely disturbed when, while serving on a committee that gave writing awards, I was attacked by other committee members for judging on merit, for not taking into account skin color or gender.

Yet I don't think I fully understand the authoritarian aspects of woke ideology until after Trump won the 2016 election. In late 2016 and early 2017, I witnessed shocking behavior from my

colleagues, who began attacking Republicans, white people, conservatives, and Christians as oppressors. They attacked free speech, saying that some people did not deserve a platform because they were engaging in "[hate speech](#)." I argued that there isn't a clear definition of what constitutes hate speech; and that the constitution protects all speech, save for incitement to imminent lawless action. For saying this, I was attacked as stupid, a bad person, a "right-winger." Early in Trump's administration, one of my colleagues said that political violence was justified as a response to his "evil" policies. While I'm no fan of Trump, I oppose violence—a basic principle I thought that all Americans shared. It was in this context that I became disillusioned with the ideology in which I had been immersed for years.

I decided to seek out and try to understand other points of view, so I read books by authors to whom I had never been exposed, such as F.A. Hayek, Ronald Bork, Jonathan Haidt, Thomas Sowell, and others. I began to read and listen to conservative, classically liberal, and libertarian thinkers—people whose ideas I had never encountered in all my years of so-called "higher" education. I listened with an open mind, and I didn't see any hatred from these thinkers. On the contrary, I discovered carefully reasoned, evidence-based arguments that had much greater explanatory abilities than anything I'd read in the Critical Social Justice literature.

I realized that Critical Social Justice ideology is not only intellectually vacuous; it is downright dangerous, and that the reason it has captivated so many minds is not because of the strength of its ideas, but because it has succeeded in silencing more reasonable and time-tested principles. If I had encountered a wider variety of ideas in my undergraduate—and especially in my graduate—education, I would have been spared years of being captive to Critical Social Justice ideology; I would likely have changed my field of study to something more practical; I would have matured more quickly in understanding the complex, and sometimes tragic, nature of human behavior; and I would have developed a more rational, sustainable understanding of how to live in the world as a decent person, outside of the narrow framework of being an activist for "[social justice](#)." If Critical Social Justice ideology had been presented in a more intellectually diverse educational landscape, I would have been able to properly assess the strengths and weaknesses of Critical Social Justice arguments. Sadly, American universities are, for the most part, not marketplaces of ideas, but mere echo chambers.

It is an obvious fact that all civilizations must pass on their values to the young; if they do not, or if the young are taught different values, then the civilization cannot sustain itself. It is a great shame that an essential site for the transmission of civilizational values—academia—was lost decades ago. As early as 1951, William F. Buckley observed that Yale University was no longer producing graduates who had a commitment to fundamental American values. The advancement of Critical Social Justice ideology has been well documented at this point, so it is not necessary to trace that history here. Suffice it to say that our universities are so infected with Critical Social Justice ideology that they are probably not salvageable at this point.

Those who are attempting to preserve an existing system—in this case preserving the classical liberal principles of American society—have a natural disadvantage when they encounter people, even a small group, who seek, with fanatical devotion, to dismantle that system and replace it with another social order. Nassim Taleb makes this point well in his observation about minority rule: "It suffices for an intransigent minority...to reach a minutely small level, say three or four percent of the total population, for the entire population to have to submit to their preferences." The good news is that it is still possible at this point that another faction of equally committed people actively resisting Critical Social Justice ideology—people who fervently defend the values upon which America was founded—can sustain the liberal social order.

However, people committed to liberal values have many significant disadvantages in this fight. They are generally older, having come of age at a time before Critical Social Justice ideology was dominant, and when strong liberal norms—specifically values of free speech and liberty—prevailed throughout society, whereas the majority of Millennials and Generation Z are heavily woke. Liberals are committed to Enlightenment values of reasoned debate, pursuit of truth, the scientific method, fact-based analysis, and treating people as individuals, not as groups. In contrast, the woke view these Enlightenment values as a white supremacist project; wokeness advances primarily through underhanded tactics: histrionic open letters that accuse ideological opponents as traumatizing and even threatening the very existence of people of color, cancel culture, flash mobs, protests that sometimes devolve into riots, and so forth. Worse, the entrenchment of Critical Social Justice ideology in academia, mass and social media companies, philanthropic foundations, corporate human resources departments, federal and state administrative bureaucracies, and Silicon Valley—combined with surveillance technology—points toward the emergence of a social credit system similar to what exists now in China. Liberals, in short, are bringing the proverbial knife to a gun fight. But we must fight. There is no other choice.

In closing, I want to offer some thoughts on how to defeat Critical Social Justice ideology. If we want to understand why this ideology is winning over the young, we have to understand its appeal. American culture is becoming increasingly secular, which means that more young people don't have a faith tradition, and social justice ideology is, as many have discussed, filling a [religious](#) void. The woke have a messianic complex, a (if you'll excuse the pun, millenarian) goal to remake society, and view anyone who is opposed to their project not as simply having a different worldview, but as evil. My intuition is that once Critical Social Justice becomes increasingly entrenched as the dominant cultural ideology—especially because of its totalitarian and censorious nature—young people will instinctively begin to rebel and seek out other ideas. This, in fact, seems to be happening in Generation Z already. As a result, there will be a revitalization of classical liberalism, necessitating people who are versed in it to serve as teachers and mentors, but there will be much damage done to our institutions and country in the meantime.

There is so little viewpoint diversity in academia that students don't even realize that what they are being taught is an ideology, not factual analysis. As Niall Ferguson accurately put it, "North American academia is in the grip of a hideous mania, a cross between the early-modern witch craze and Mao's Cultural Revolution, in which implacable zealots conduct grotesque show trials, innocent individuals have their reputations, careers and sanity destroyed, and everyone else cowers, terrified that they will be next to be 'canceled.'" (Source: a blurb from Quillette's new book, [Panics and Persecutions](#)). The American public university system—especially humanities and social sciences—is a cancer on society, as it is teaching students to hate their country and its core values. This is not to say that there shouldn't be academic critiques of the country. On the contrary, critiques help to improve society. But we have reached a point where there are hardly any academics left to transmit the basic principles of the country.

Heterodox Academy is doing great work to highlight the lack of viewpoint diversity in the academy. Their research has shown that professors who lean left outnumber conservative professors by a ratio of nine to one. ([Source](#): "Democratic professors outnumber Republican ones by 9 to 1 ratio, according to new data" | The College Fix). As a result, leftist ideology—most commonly Critical Social Justice—dominates the intellectual culture, and hiring committees carefully select for only one type of diversity among their faculty hires (meaning only valued victim groups), in addition to those who already agree with their ideology. Unless non-woke people structure their application materials and writing samples to appear to follow the Critical Social Justice ideology, I don't see any inroads for non-leftist scholars to find

academic positions. For the few non-leftists in academia who sit on hiring committees, they need to take a stand—as Professor Dorian Abbot at the University of Chicago recently did—for only hiring the most qualified candidates, without regard to their sex, race, color, ethnicity, or any other immutable characteristic.

One of the most urgent needs is the development of a grassroots movement for intellectual diversity on campus, spearheaded by students, alumni, parents, and concerned citizens. I hope that existing conservative, centrist, or libertarian organizations can help to facilitate this movement by providing organizational and logistical support at campuses throughout the country. Everyone should take a close look at their state's public universities' [Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity initiatives](#) to see if intellectual diversity is included. If it is not, then the obvious first step is to advocate for the inclusion of intellectual diversity. Concerned taxpayers, students, parents, and alumni, working with the elected officials in those university districts, if necessary, need to ensure that universities have intellectual diversity in humanities and social sciences course offerings. If intellectual diversity is included in the Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity initiative (in my experience, most of these initiatives include at least a brief reference to intellectual diversity), then work can be done to survey students to see if they feel that intellectual diversity is represented, particularly in their humanities and social sciences courses. Heterodox Academy has published relevant survey data on the dearth of intellectual diversity in these fields.

If America has any chance of continuing the classical liberal values upon which it was founded, then students who have a commitment to these values have to enter the teaching profession—as doctoral students in education, as administrators, and as public school teachers. Critical pedagogy, and more specifically critical race theory, are the dominant discourses controlling all levels in American schools of education, so students need to tread lightly and assent, at least outwardly, to Critical Social Justice ideology. Once in the classroom, however, teachers should reject all pressures to teach Critical Social Justice, and especially critical race theory, because it is an inherently racist ideology and because it instantiates the problem—racism—that it purports to solve. Critical race theory also needs to be resisted because it, as its own proponents assert, “questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.” (Delgado and Stefancic, [Critical Race Theory: An Introduction](#)). Teachers should take a stand for fighting racism within liberalism, not by adopting critical race theory. If there is not already a nonprofit organization devoted to assisting non-woke students to enter the teaching profession—again, at all levels, as professors of education, as administrators, and as public school teachers—then one should be organized immediately. This could also be a special project for existing right- or libertarian-leaning organizations.

Another important project should be the revival of Western civilization and Great Books courses, at all levels of education, but most critically in the universities. In 1964, 15 of the 50 premier universities in America required students to take a survey of Western civilization. All 50 offered the course, and nearly all of them (41) offered it as a way to satisfy some requirement. ([Source](#): New York Post, by Ashley Thorne “The drive to put Western civ back in the college curriculum,” March 29, 2016). But since 1987, when Jesse Jackson led 500 students around Stanford University protesting the requirement that undergraduates take a course in Western Civilization, which they denounced as Eurocentric, white-male indoctrination, most colleges have eliminated Western civ courses for diversity or multiethnic course requirements. An excellent example of a Western civ curriculum can be found in the James Madison program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University, which is dedicated to “exploring enduring questions of American constitutional law and Western political

thought.” Another avenue is to look into funding institutes for education in Western civilization as a new department at extant colleges and universities.

I would love to see crowd-sourced funds used to construct a beautiful classical building adjacent to one of the ugliest college campuses in the country, preferably one composed entirely of postwar Brutalist buildings. I imagine that students whose spirits are continually depressed by attending classes in the midst of such hideous architecture would feel intrigued to enter such a beautiful building. Once inside, they might learn that there is, in fact, such a thing as beauty; that it matters, and that Critical Social Justice ideology can never build anything beautiful; it can never, in fact, build anything at all—it can only destroy. Once inside that building, students might become interested in registering for a course on Western civilization, a course in which all thought is permitted, in which no one is threatened with cancellation: a microcosm of what a university environment used to be. In this way, we might plant and nurture the seed of resistance to the increasing totalitarianism of Critical Social Justice.

In the long term, it is going to be necessary to create more universities devoted to classical education, not indoctrination into Critical Social Justice ideology, as well as more K-12 private and charter schools in the classical tradition because university schools of education have been training “social justice” educators for decades now, so Critical Social Justice ideology is now in the K-12 public schools. At a policy level on this problem, we need avenues for teacher certification outside of the existing teacher colleges, which are wholly committed to critical pedagogy and other failed approaches. Forcing every licensed teacher (usually for state jobs) to undergo ideological training to gain licensure is not only a problem but should be illegal. At the personal level, my advice to everyone with kids who can afford to do so is to pull your kids out of the public schools immediately and enroll them in private schools, or home school. Although home schooling has already begun to [come under attack](#), it is still a viable option—at least for now. In the future, homeschooling will come under increased scrutiny and I believe there will be attempts to render it illegal. I realize that not everyone can afford to home school or send their kids to private schools (many of which are not safe from Critical Social Justice, either). I strongly recommend that all parents emphasize the value of vocational training programs for their children as avenues to career paths that pay well and offer a great deal of autonomy.

My hope is that new immigrants to America will increasingly speak out against Critical Social Justice ideology as an American instantiation of what is called, in other contexts, tribalism—a form of corruption that has damaged many countries. Far from being a bastion of white supremacy, America’s liberal values are what have attracted people from all countries to undergo great hardship to come here, precisely because this is one of the few places in which ordinary people can exercise their talents to achieve a standard of living that is impossible in most of the world. It is my fervent hope that more American college students—especially the “woke” who rail against their own country as evil—would be required to spend a semester abroad in a developing country in order to gain some much-needed perspective on the struggles people face who were not fortunate enough to be born into such an “oppressive” place as America.

Lastly, I have focused mostly on academia and education because this is the sector I know best, but I strongly urge everyone, from all walks of life, to embrace your sense of humor (a quality that is conspicuously absent in woke culture). Wokeness should continue to relentlessly mocked and parodied through meme culture (Andrew Doyle’s Titania McGrath is a great example). Just as important: Be courageous. Stand up for the beliefs that have made America a great country. If you hear people treating others as members of groups, articulate the

importance of treating people as individuals. As Jordan Peterson put it, "The smallest minority is the individual." If you encounter people treating others badly because of their gender or skin color, say that this behavior is morally wrong. If you see people attempting to "cancel" others, articulate why this is a terrible way to treat others. If you witness attacks on freedom of speech and advocacy of censorship, or if you meet people who are in favor of "hate speech" laws, or laws to combat "misinformation" (a code word for non-leftist ideas), articulate why freedom of speech is an absolutely essential and non-negotiable value. If you hear people discussing why they think socialism is great, take a stand for free markets and the prosperity they have produced. If you hear people calling for retributive justice and political violence, push against it and discuss why violence is never acceptable. If you encounter attacks on meritocracy, make a case for why merit is essential to the advancement of individuals and societies. I think a lot of liberals, like me, generally, if not naively, assumed that the liberal values underpinning America would simply continue throughout our lives, but these values are under attack and they need to be vigorously and unapologetically defended. Our civilization is at stake and the hour is late.