



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on June 15, 2020

Professor: Left-wing Campuses Are Stifling Free Speech, Intellectual Mission of Universities

The Black Lives Matter “cancel culture,” which says its critics are “racists” who must be fired, silenced, and hounded from public life, has at least one prominent opponent on the Left: Jonathan Turley, a [law professor](#) at George Washington University, says the campus Left is crushing dissent from ideological orthodoxy and threatening free speech and intellectual inquiry in academia.



Turley has written multiple columns about efforts to erase the careers of dissenters, the latest being neoconservative William Jacobsen, a law professor at Cornell University who runs the [Legal Insurrection blog](#). A movement is afoot to get him fired for anti-BLM commentary.

But Jacobsen isn't the Left's only candidate for removal. So is the editor of an economics journal because he, too, had the temerity to challenge the BLM narrative.

Fire Jacobsen

Though Jacobsen has blogged at Legal Insurrection for years, not until the Floyd riots did anyone come after his job.

Indeed, [he wrote](#), “the website and my political views were the elephant in every room, because the website is widely read, particularly by non-liberal students.” But “not until now, to the best of my knowledge, has there been an effort from inside the Cornell community to get me fired.” Jacobsen's dean has defended him despite opposing his views.

Leftists planned a two-front attack. A group of former students launched an astro-turfed e-mail campaign to get Jacobsen fired, while a group of professors wrote to the *Cornell Sun* and, without naming Jacobsen, averred that criticizing BLM must not be allowed.

The [law professors wrote](#) that “commentators” such as Jacobsen “express rage over the sporadic looting that has taken place amidst the largely peaceful protests, calling for organized manhunts to track down those responsible. Theirs is a form of racism that gives cover to those police who use their batons and tear gas and rubber bullets and fists to silence and maim their critics.”

These commentators are the defenders of institutionalized racism and violence. They are entitled to their viewpoints.... As clinical teachers who have spent our lives promoting social justice, combatting discrimination and teaching tolerance, we cannot allow their hateful vitriol to go unchallenged. We also have a responsibility to our students, many of whom are experiencing trauma and grief that is exacerbated by the callous cruelty of those who demean their struggle.

In other words, shut up or face the mob.



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None of those professors, some of whom were Jacobsen's friends, [Turley wrote](#), "had the common decency to approach me with any concerns. Instead they ran to the *Cornell Sun* while virtue signaling to students behind the scenes that this was a denunciation of me."

Turley Steps In

That's where [Turley stepped in](#) on Jacobsen's behalf.

The letter, he wrote, was the "the antipathy of the intellectual foundations for higher education" because it attacked "those with opposing views personally and viciously. That has become a standard approach to critics on our campuses. Unless you agree with the actions of the movement, you are *per se* racist. It is a mantra that is all too familiar historically: if you are not part of the resistance, you are reactionary ... or, in this period, racist."

The letter "suggests that the presence of conservative (which they seem to view as synonymous with racist) scholars have no place at such schools," Turley wrote.

Remarkably, two of the professors who denounced "informed commentary" teach in the university's First Amendment Clinic.

"So these professors teach free speech and just signed a letter that people who question the BLM movement or denounce the looting are *per se* or at least presumptive racists," [Turley wrote](#). "It is a reflection of how free speech is being redefined to exclude protections with those who hold opposing views."

While Turley thinks Jacobsen insulted the BLM movement, he wrote, "What is disturbing is the effort to silence Jacobson because he holds such opposing views." Disturbing, yes. Unexpected, no.

Conservative and libertarian academics are increasingly being subject to discipline or harassed by their Administrations in the hope of getting them to leave faculties. Moreover, many in the BLM movement use equally inflammatory language but are rarely called out by Administrators, students, or faculty. Why cannot both views be treated as enriching the debate on a campus, allowing sharply different values to be heard in a pluralistic academic environment?

The message for other faculty ... is both clear and intimidating. Disagree with the BLM movement or the protests and you will be labeled a racist. Indeed, the letter ends on a menacing note: "And we will continue to expose and respond to racism masquerading as informed commentary." Thus, if you attempt "informed commentary" on the costs of looting and the need for great law enforcement, you are a *per se* racist.

Turley pointed to the unintentionally amusing case of Mary Lu Bilek, dean at City University of New York, who "showed how far this trend has gone. When conservative law professor Josh Blackman was stopped from speaking about 'the importance of free speech,' Bilek insisted that disrupting the speech on free speech was free speech."

The "rising intolerance" portends not "just the death of free speech but our intellectual mission on university and college campuses," the [highly respected professor wrote](#).

On Thursday, [Turley defended](#) economics professor Harald Uhlig, senior editor of the *Journal of Political Economy*. He too must be fired, the leftists say, because he criticized and ridiculed BLM.

The radical, hate-Trump left has attacked Turley, too.

For opposing the impeachment of President Trump, [Turley suffered](#) the usual ritual denunciation and



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Two Minutes Hates even before his testimony was over. He was, a critic said, “spineless and shameful,” a “lackey for the Trump Administration,” and a “sad excuse of a man” who deserved reprimand.

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