

Speaker 1:

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Steve McGuire:

Welcome to Radio Free Campus. I'm Steve McGuire.

Justin Garrison:

I'm Justin Garrison. This month, we're talking about viewpoint diversity in higher ed with our guest Eric Kaufmann, who we'll talk to in just a moment. Steve and I will also discuss the ongoing battle between President Trump and Harvard University, as well as the prospect of DEI for conservatives. That can't be right.

Steve McGuire:

That's not a thing.

Justin Garrison:

We'll have to check about that in post. Anyway, last but not least, we'll do the segment that everyone has been compelled to adore, the Apparatchik of the Month and our Hero of the People Awards, so let's get right down to it.

Steve, you were recently in the UK, right?

Steve McGuire:

That's right. As we'll discuss with Eric, he has a new center over there and was holding a conference. I'd never been to London before and I was going to the conference, so decided to spend a couple extra days while I was over there. It was pretty great. Asked people on X what I should see and got a lot of recommendations. The top recommendation actually was to see the Churchill War Rooms, which is where he conducted the Second World War. They have a big Churchill Museum in there as well. That was incredible, definitely recommend to anybody who goes over there who has an interest in history in politics that they see that. Another great highlight was I saw a production of Romeo and Juliette at Shakespeare's Globe. That was pretty cool. Then I headed up to the conference. Great trip overall.

Justin Garrison:

When you went to the Globe, did you do the standing seats or did you pay for the suite box of hard wooden benches?

Steve McGuire:

No, I'm too cheap to pay for the good seats. Like an English peasant, I stood in the middle. It reminded me of being at a music concert when I was younger. You're standing there, watching the show. It was pretty neat. They even had a few things that they used to bring the actors into the crowd a few times. It was really interesting to see how they did it. Honestly, I forgot that I was standing. It was a great experience.

Justin Garrison:

That's great. Radio Free Campus, 100% solidarity with all peasants. That's awesome.

Steve McGuire:

That's right, yeah.

Justin Garrison:

Tell us a little bit more about this conference. I know what the title was, you can tell us that obviously. But I don't know much about this program and about what the conference itself was about. How did it go? What did you take in from that?

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, it was really interesting. Obviously, we'll ask Eric about this in a few minutes. But he's set up a new Center for Heterodox Social Science and this was the inaugural conference for this new center that he set up. He had a great range of people there. Basically, most of the presentations were divided into two tracks, one of which he's calling Critical Wokeness Studies, which we'll ask him to explain what that is. Then he had people just presenting on their heterodox social science research, the kind of research that struggles to find a home in the contemporary academy. It was I guess two-and-a-half days of presentations. People from North America, Europe, Australia. It was an interesting conference and a great group of people.

Justin Garrison:

That's wonderful. Why don't we go ahead and get right to this interview? I think you're appropriately placed to do the honors of introducing our audience to our guest.

Steve McGuire:

Today we're excited, as you mentioned, to talk to Eric Kaufmann, who's a professor of politics at the University of Buckingham in the United Kingdom. He's just started this new center for heterodox social science and we'll be asking him about that.

Eric, welcome to Radio Free Campus.

Eric Kaufmann:

Great to be here, Steve.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, it's great to have you with us. It was great to see you in Buckingham a couple of weeks ago. Thanks again for putting on what was truly a great conference.

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah, thanks for coming. I have to say, it exceeded even my highest expectations. The feedback's just been amazing. Yeah, that's been very encouraging. I'm still trying to figure out exactly what that tells us. There seems to be a hunger out there. Yeah, I'm going to hope to be able to develop that in the coming months.

Steve McGuire:

That's good. Yeah, that's great to hear. This of course was the inaugural conference for your new Center of Heterodox Social Science, which you set up just recently. I wanted to open the interview today, we want to ask you generally about challenges to free expression and intellectual diversity in academia, and some broader trends that are feeding into those issues. But I wanted to start out by asking you to give us a quick overview of how you see the problem. I think actually, you have a bit of a personal story here too, in terms of how you came to be at the University of Buckingham and start this center. If you don't mind,

maybe you could tell us a little bit about your own experience and how that fits into some of the broader issues that you see in your own scholarship?

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah. Really, I think the issue we're talking about consists of two aspects. One being what we might call cancellation from above from your institution punishing you, usually at the behest of various activists or administrators. The second is just the peer pressure, political discrimination, ostracism from peers, ideological prejudice and likewise.

In my case, really it was more the former. That a small number of activists were able to put in complaints and get me investigated by the university. I think I had about four different internal investigations. Now they don't tend to go anywhere or result in anything concrete, but it's like the punishment is the process. That's the them.

Now of course, I also had the odd open letter and Twitter mobbing, so I'm a veteran of the great awakening, I guess. It reminds me, at the Stanford Academic Freedom Conference when they said, "Who'd been canceled?" 90% of people in that room raised their hand. I guess I'm at the mid-level. I didn't get pushed out, it wasn't Kathleen Stark level or Carol Hooven. But on the other hand, it was worse than some.

Steve McGuire:

Right.

Eric Kaufmann:

But that wasn't really necessarily enough on its own to drive me out. I think it was also the fact that I thought it was time to put my money where my mouth was. The University of Buckingham, which was founded really by Thatcher and by neoclassical free market economists in the '70s. But really, its potential as a free speech university really hadn't been developed, or had only been very slightly developed. I thought it would be a good place. It was the only institution in the UK out of about 200 where you might be able to set up a free speech oriented counter-cultural social science center. I thought that's what was missing, was the counter-cultural social science. We have now a lot of the schools of civic thought, which are very humanities focused for example. Great books, American Constitution civics. What is missing is really the, well, cancelable or off-pieced social science that will get people very riled up. Those sorts of centers are in limited supply. I thought that was a niche in the market that really needed to happen.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah.

Eric Kaufmann:

That was the origins.

Steve McGuire:

That's great. Like you said, it sounds like a lot of people who were at your conference agree with that assessment. If you're calling it the Center of Heterodox Social Science and you just used the phrase counter-cultural as well, I guess that suggests that there is a reigning orthodoxy maybe in higher ed, or a culture that you're trying to counter in some degree. Can you say a little bit about that? I know you spent a lot of time doing social science, looking at the data, looking at survey results. What do you see there that you think needs to be countered or maybe leave a little bit of room for more heterodox thinkers?

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah. Probably your viewers are familiar just with the raw numbers. In the Ivy League, it's 96:4 Democrat to Republican in terms of political donations. In terms of people who are passionate about politics, you have an incredible skew. Even passively, if we take registration data, there have been papers that have looked at that. It's something like 13 or 14:1 left to right, or Republican to Democrat. Certainly, in the social science and humanities. In some institutions and subjects like anthropology or sociology, it'd be almost totally on the left. Yeah, we have a real monocultural problem politically in particularly research universities, and in particular the politicized subjects. That's social sciences, humanities, perhaps minus to some degree economics, which is a little bit more technical to some degree, and certain branches of philosophy. But basically, in those subjects, you have a very intense political conformity going on.

What that means really is a lot of subjects are never explored or under-explored because they're unfashionable or there's taboos against exploring them. For example, what is the impact of heredity on crime? To what extent is family structure going to explain race gap, for example? These are just very controversial areas which you're dissuaded from studying. You aren't going to get promoted, or published, or hired if you study them. We have a big gap in knowledge production in the social sciences and humanities. We need to fill it somehow and that's one of the major aims of the conference.

There's really two parts. One aim of the conference and the center is really to fill in the blanks, if you like, and rebalance our understanding of society and the social world. Musa al-Gharbi, I saw a talk of his that he showed that really about 85% of sociology research is about inequality. That's just way too much. It's not that I am against research on inequality, but that has to be balanced with research on other things. Sociology of the family, for example, or religion. At the same time, we have the problem of all these gaps, and then we also have the problem of what I will call the absence of research on woke as an ideology or social justice as an ideology.

Looking in the mirrors is really uncomfortable when universities are trying to badge these political ideologies as neutral, natural, universal things that every good person should believe in. We don't have a study of social justice ideology the way we have a study of fascism, nationalism, populism, and even communism. Normally, when we get a new phenomenon or an upsurge like in populism, or globalization, or nationalism, you get an outpouring of conferences, and textbooks, and articles, and courses. That's just not happened with woke, so that needs to happen. The other part of this is really to inaugurate the field of call it critical woke studies. We need to look at this ideology academically.

Steve McGuire:

Great, great. Well, let me let Justin jump in here.

Justin Garrison:

It's nice to meet you, Eric. We're on with Eric Kaufmann, professor of politics at the University of Buckingham and the author of *The Third Awakening*. I wanted to talk a little bit about your book. You had just mentioned the phrase social justice. In popular discourse, when people are thinking about woke ideology, woke phenomena, they're talking about social justice warriors and cultural Marxists, and a variety of other terms like that, to describe the radical left.

One of the things that I thought was really interesting about your book is while you're aware of those folks, you talk about a different part of the liberal movement, what you call Modern Liberals, as a much stronger driver of these changes. I found that a little bit surprising. I wanted to know if you could tell us a little bit more about what these liberal are and how they are driving things in a way that really doesn't seem to get talked about as much?

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah. That's a really good question, Justin, because I think the literature on woke has tended to go with a kind of story about the history of ideas, postmodernism. For example, critical theory developing out of the Frankfurt School, these sorts of stories. Chris Rufo's book *America's Cultural Revolution*, for example, very much focuses on Marcuse and Paulo Freire, and some of these Marxists who, if you like, pull out the cassette tape that says class and stick in the one that says identity. I think that's all right and that's all true. I'm not quibbling with the intellectual history, I'm just quibbling with the idea that that's the main driver of how we got here.

I actually would argue more along the lines of Gad Saad's upcoming book around suicidal empathy. That you take something like empathy for weak or marginalized groups, something like an exaggerated fear or catastrophizing fear of majorities as being prone to fascism, for example. And something like guilt over privilege, white guilt for example. Guilt, empathy, and what I would call fascist scare or catastrophization over the majority. Boiled down to its simplest, majority equals something bad, minority equals something good. These very simple emotional structures have been developed around race, gender, and sexual identities in the course of the last 50, 60 years. I don't think that's a Marxist project necessarily. I think that there are cultural Marxists that have rationalized what I think is a deeper, more emotional movement.

If you look at, for example, affirmative action, if you look at speech codes, if you look at self-esteem, the whole rhetoric around dead white males and Euro-centrism, a lot of this is actually not coming from a Marxist lineage. It's actually much more therapeutic. We have to be super nice to super vulnerable people, and we got to be really wary about those scary oppressors and discriminators or we're going to be back in 1933 Germany. Or women back in the home, and gays in the closet, and all this.

That kind much simpler emotional structure, which I think is possessed to some degree by a very large number of people, let's say in academia, where the median academic is a soft leftist. They would say, "Yeah, we're not diverse enough. We're too male, we're too pale." Now they won't go and say, like Ibram X. Kendi, "We have to have a rigid quota and anything less than a rigid quota means there's a system of discrimination." They won't go to that critical theory Marxist language, but they will, by constantly having this open-ended approach, we have to be more inclusive, more diverse, more equitable, they get to the same place. In practical terms, as the revolutionary.

The evolutionary guilt-ridden, empathetic liberal gets to the same place as the cultural Marxist from a more emotional mission creep perspective. I'm not actually sure. If we think about a slight majority of Seattle citizens endorsing defund the police, do we think it's because they perceived an invisible structure of white supremacy that needed to be overthrown, and that incarceration was part of that structure? Did they have this whole Marxist analysis? Or was it much simpler than that? As, "I feel guilty and I feel sorry for this group," and that's it. I think it was the latter. That's really the point is I just think this creeping, mission creep and the definition of terms, like racism, like discrimination, like white supremacy, that's all been made possible they this therapeutic left liberalism.

Justin Garrison:

In your answer, which I thought was really thoughtful, you used the word guilt a few times. I'm just curious, do you think instead of maybe cultural Marxism as a major driver, there are echoes of cultural Christianity, or cultural religion more broadly? That there are these older understandings of guilt and atonement that are being corrupted or repurposed in a strange way?

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah, that's a good point. I think yes is the answer, the short answer. Nietzsche's critique of what he called slave morality, which of course is way over the top and I don't agree with a lot of it. But yeah, there's no doubt that Christianity, which then influences Christian socialism and utopian socialism, all which Marx, the scientific socialist, had nothing but scorn for. Marx really wasn't very woke and he hated

the idealist. But the reality is that those utopian socialists and Christian socialists really won the day. It's their ethos.

It comes through in the US case, the liberal progressives and the pluralists, in the early and mid-20th Century. Initially, they were feeling sorry for the European immigrant groups as against the rural WASP majority. It's immigration restrictions, and it's prohibition of alcohol, and all these other things. But then, that gets transposed onto race from the '60s onward. Yeah, I think this religious origin is important, this humanitarianism. This idea of we're always on the side of the weak and vulnerable. Now, that comes to coalesce around only certain kinds of weak and vulnerable. Around racial, sexual, and women. Those happen to be dominant in the current order. But I think, yeah, that's a very important root of this, rather than Marxism per se.

Justin Garrison:

Thank you. Yeah, that's a lot to-

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah, I know there's a lot.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, there's a lot there.

Justin Garrison:

The existential foundation of wokeism. Man, that's a whole nother episode.

Eric Kaufmann:

I know.

Steve McGuire:

You could do a whole nother conference on that.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah.

Eric Kaufmann:

It's worth saying that Shelby Steele's book *White Guilt*, I think is a must read for understanding the whole guilt complex. He just talks about the cultural power shifting where Blacks had to be deferential to whites who had the cultural power, and then it flipped. Whites had to be deferential to Blacks who had the cultural power. In fact, all the American institutions had to signal how anti-racist they were in order to retain moral legitimacy. I think that's still one of the best paradigms for understanding. I call it the big bang of our moral universe, that mid-'60s race taboo. Of course, we needed a norm against racism, but to go for a very black-and-white absolutist thing, of course then it's going to be weaponized, and stretched, and expanded.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah. Eric, you recently published an op ed in *The Wall Street Journal*. In there, you were talking about the idea of what you're calling a "post-progressive politics." I did see you present on this as well at the conference.

Eric Kaufmann:

Hopefully not too badly.

Steve McGuire:

It was a great presentation. I'm not sure that everyone in the audience agreed with you. I think you got some pretty good questions afterwards. I have to say too, at the conference, I was struck by others who were from the UK and some of their comments on the situation there compared to the United States. Obviously, the United States, we tend to think the situation's quite bad and we have a long road to go, but it sounds like in the UK it's even worse. There was more than one person who said, either to me in conversation or even publicly on the stage, that your center is really the only one that they have.

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah.

Steve McGuire:

I'm laughing, but that was depressing to hear from the standpoint of people over there. In any event, I'd like to ask you to explain briefly what you mean by this idea that we are entering a post-progressive politics?

Eric Kaufmann:

Well, what I think is that I don't mean to say woke is finished or woke is dying, neither of which I believe. But what I mean to say is that there's a cluster of ideas around equal outcomes and emotional harm protection for minority race, gender, and sexual identity groups. Which has been, I would argue, the dominant set of values in western societies since the '60s actually. I'd go back that far. That the excesses and extremes of that ideology were laid bare in the great awakening and the George Floyd moment, for example. The excesses of Me, Too and cancel culture. I think for some people to rethink ... Trans is another issue which I want to talk about.

As a result of these excesses, I think there's more a questioning. I think the view used to be, "We just can't have enough anti-racism, and anti-sexism, and anti-homophobia. Those are the values, we know they're absolute, 100% truth. All we have to do is push the gas pedal down to the max." I think now, there's some understanding that actually, you can overreach and go wrong by doing that.

Now when I say there's some understanding, amongst who? Okay. Amongst very elite senior liberal people. Like CEOs of corporations, for example, cutting back on DEI. I'm talking about some university presidents and some boards of trustees who are thinking about political neutrality and who are thinking about rolling back DEI a little bit. Perhaps, senior editors of major newspapers, including The New York Times and Washington Post, and various other places. At the top, top level, prestige level of society, I think there is a rethink going on and there's been some movement.

Now when it comes to the average member of the public, I think on the trans issue, there's definitely been in the last two, three years, we've got the data. There's been significant rollback of the trans activist agenda. It's lost 20 points probably in public opinion. Most markedly in young people under 25, it's really lost. There's no question that there have been some defeats. I can't think of any public opinion defeat for the cultural left in the last 60 years. I'm struggling. This is very important because there's this aura of invincibility and inevitability, like "we are the right side of history. History is moving in our direction." I think that confidence has been dented.

You see that a little bit with the weak, the loss of energy perhaps in progressive activism. Certainly, Trump 2024 versus Trump 2016, in terms of the marching and the mass mobilization. We can bracket the

Gaza stuff, we can bracket the No Kings stuff. I think that's quite separate. I think though, just in terms of raw energy in terms of progressive organizing, I think that was depleted to some degree. Yeah, I think ...

Now, against that of course, there are other currents. There's no question the young people are more woke. When they become the median voter, I don't think they're going to be as committed to free speech. I think that's a risk. There's also no question that, on affirmative action, some of the gains that were made during the great awakening by the left seem to have remained in the latest waves of public opinion. It's a mixed picture. It's by no means a victory, total victory. I do think however there are bright spots.

Steve McGuire:

Okay, interesting. Now, we spoke a couple of years ago on ACTA's main podcast Higher Ed Now. I was asking you at that time about an op ed you'd written and some work you were doing about trends in academia specifically, and specifically among faculty. If I recall correctly, you were saying that the data were suggesting that the upcoming generation of academics in some ways looked like it might be even more intolerant or monocultural than the current one. Is that correct, that I'm remembering that correctly? And if so, is that still basically what you're seeing, or do you think there are cracks showing in that as well?

Eric Kaufmann:

I think unfortunately, I haven't seen any data that would contradict that picture. Younger leftists in the population are roughly twice as insurrious or as intolerant as older leftists. That's mirrored in the faculty, where the older faculty are not much different in terms of their political orientations. They're more or less as left-wing as the young, but are considerable more free speech oriented. I'm still very concerned that when the young academics of today start running departments and start running research bodies, look out. I'm not actually more optimistic.

Now, there are a few. Who knows what these numbers mean? It is true that a major survey in 2022 showed that roughly 65%, two-thirds of left-wing academics, which is the vast majority of those sampled, supported mandatory diversity statements. That number in the latest FIRE Faculty survey was around 50% among left-wing academics. It's gone down a little bit. I don't know, we'll have to watch the numbers of successive waves to see whether there's been a shift. It may be that, I think in the US, the fact of Trump, the fact of the bad publicity universities are getting, I do think to some degree, sometimes culture is affected by politics. Sometimes a political challenge to the left's domination of campus can open minds up. Maybe it has led to a rethink to some degree. That's a very hopeful read. I can't yet prove that.

Steve McGuire:

Okay. Well, I guess that leads to the question of what should we do about it? How can we address the monoculture, how can we address the lack of space for free expression and intellectual diversity? I think Justin was going to ask a question about that.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah. Eric, in your book *The Third Awakening*, you offer a 12-point plan for change and it talks about a number of topics. Some of them are things that in ACTA, we're very clear about promoting and have had campaigns for the Chicago principals, Kalven Institution on Neutrality. There was something in your list that I thought was really intriguing and it's not something that is talked about as often. It's this phrase "equivalent action." I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about what that means. Do you still think that's needed in the post-progressive era? How could we implement something like that in higher ed if it's still necessary?

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah. I think it would be a fun idea, I think it would be a good idea. What I mean by equivalent action is if you think about what the Trump Administration's letter to Harvard said, it more or less said, "You've got to get rid of DEI on race and sex, but we kind of want you to do some DEI on conservatism and politics." I just think that's not really a consistent position. Just as the university's existing position, which was that, "We want to go all in on DEI for race and sex and do nothing on political diversity" is also inconsistent.

I had come up with this idea of equivalent action which says you have to match exactly in magnitude anything you do on race and sex, but with action on politics and political beliefs. For example, if you collect data, if you make applicants to a program indicate their race and sex, then you need to make them indicate where they are on a left-right scale or a liberal-conservative scale, or who they voted for, or who they support just to collect that data. If you then want to expand your pipeline and recruit to increase diversity in race or sex means you need to do the same, show the same activity and efforts in recruiting, let's say conservatives or Republicans. That would be what I mean by equivalent action. There would be fines put in place for universities that only did the progressive DEI and not the conservative DEI.

Part of this is to say that I do ... Now, I am a supporter of a merit-based approach. But at the same time, I think just going in on the colorblind stuff isn't necessarily enough because clearly, you can do colorblind and that won't do anything for viewpoint diversity. I think viewpoint diversity is a huge problem in academia. I think it's not unreasonable, for example, if you have an SAT score that's standardized, everyone has to meet, once you have two candidates that have an equivalent score. Or perhaps to start recruit in certain areas or certain places you haven't recruited in before, or offer some kind of extra training or perhaps guidelines to underrepresented groups, that in and of itself I think is not unreasonable. The problem is that universities can't be trusted to actually do this in a fair and proportionate manner.

Whereas I think if we had this equivalent action stipulation, it would act as a check on their desire to implement, for example, very radical quotas, for example on race and sex, because they know they would have to do the same for Republicans. If they want to recruit 13% Black and 50% women, they're going to have to recruit 50% Republicans. I think that would act as a check, an in-built check, and I think it's more consistent. Whereas what we have now is really a battle between two inconsistent philosophies battling it out. I'm just not sure that gets us there.

I also think, by the way, a purely merit-based approach is not going to solve necessarily the viewpoint diversity problem because we simply have a pipeline issue. As long as we've got that pipeline issue that's very skewed, we're never going to get viewpoint diversity in the faculty.

Steve McGuire:

Right.

Justin Garrison:

That's fascinating.

Steve McGuire:

Eric, as a way of bringing the conversation to a close. This has been very interesting, thanks again for speaking with us. I just wanted to throw up a slide that you used in the talk that you gave at the very end of the conference a couple of weeks ago. Where I think you were presenting an ecosystem for heterodox social science. I thought it'd just be interesting to hear you just give us a quick rundown of what you have in mind here and how you think this project that you're building could help to alleviate some of the issues we've been talking about, in terms of free expression and viewpoint diversity on campus.

Eric Kaufmann:

Yeah. I suppose the reality of this slide is that I'm not hugely optimistic that the mainstream system is going to become a tolerant environment anytime soon. I'm not hugely optimistic that that viewpoint diversity is going to come in anytime soon either.

If we're talking about the production of knowledge and pursuit of truth, this is really what the university is supposed to be doing. If we want to rebalance the knowledge about society, we're actually going to have to build a counter-cultural parallel ecosystem in order to produce that knowledge. In order, more importantly, to amplify facts, reality. We know that two-parent families, that makes a big difference in terms of the earnings of the offspring. It makes a big difference in terms of crime. It makes a big difference in many ways. But if that is something that never gets cited or promoted within the academy, it is not going to have the bona fides of top universities behind it when it comes to policy discussions.

Now, the good news is that the vast majority of papers in the social sciences and humanities are cited by almost nobody or by only a handful of people. The vast majority of research is kind of not important. What we need is to get the very small number of dissident research that is trying to ski off the ski hill in, what we'd call in Europe, off-piste, we need that kind of research to be brought into the broader discussion of what is knowledge. We need to actually have greater impact and amplification of that.

What I've got here is I talk about a number of centers. We have non-progressive universities, the University of Austin, for example. Non-progressive centers, these would be the schools of civic together, perhaps my center as well. You have a number of these environments where heterodox ideas can flourish. One of the problems with being a dissident researcher in the mainstream system is you have to remain partially or fully in the closet, or you have to keep your research on the quiet and you can't really amplify it. I think one of my arguments is we are going to need these somewhat ring-fenced "safe spaces." I hate to use that term.

But we know from research that, for example, in the biggest driver of self-censorship is ideological imbalance. Even at the University of Chicago, they have great policies for free speech, but because the student body is so heavily leaning liberal, conservatives are self-censoring. Similarly, with academics when they perceive their median department member to be very much to the left, they self-censor at higher rates. We need to create these environments where people feel free to speak and do the research. The centers and the non-progressives universities I mention act as they're amongst as Heterodox Academy FIRE, Free Speech Union, AFA. These are organizations that do research, that do dissemination, and they're very much a part of this ecosystem. They're going to be needed in order to amplify the small amount of work. Maybe there are 50,000 dissidents and maybe there's a million mainstream social scientists, so we're going to need the dissidents' work amplified through these means.

Think tanks we talked about, IEA's Johns Hopkins link. The University of Buckingham has a link to a free market think tank as well. Think tanks have money, they can sponsor research. Now, they often don't do that longterm patient deep dive into the literature research that academics do, but I think there's a fruitful synergy there.

Then finally, trying to develop alternative sources of funding, and also outlets that aren't gate-kept. Now of course, we know what's happening at the National Science Foundation, whatever. One of the questions that is going to whether these research bodies actually are going to fund viewpoint-diverse research, heterodox research. I did make this suggestion to some people who I thought had the ear of the administration or the Department of Education. I don't know if anything will happen there, but that could be one solution. But in any case, we do need some alternative pots of money to fund research that wouldn't be fund ordinarily because it'll be gate-kept by the panel members at these research foundations.

Then finally, dissident journals. We talked about Representatives of Theory in Society, or Lee Jussim's Journal of Open Inquiry in the Behavioral Sciences. There are a number of different journals, and also some academic presses, that are willing to publish. We then are able to create something that can produce knowledge, get it into the press, get it into the policy sphere. And actually start to tilt with the is knowledge back to the truth, and away from the warped doubt. It's not to say that everything done in

academia is garbage. No. A lot of it is just fine. But certainly, around contentious subjects, the more contentious you are around race, sex, sexual orientation, gender, the less likely you are to be published.

I like Lee Jussim showed this, for example, when it comes to papers on discrimination against women in academia. The one paper that found a result that women were being discriminated against is cited many, many, many times more than the many or several that find discrimination against men, which actually have much larger statistical power, much more rigorous, but get no citations. They don't wind up in the textbooks.

Steve McGuire:

Okay, yeah. Well, I think this slide gives a good overview of how different people and different organizations can try to help with this process of opening up some space for the other kinds of social science, the other perspectives that you've been talking about. Certainly at ACTA, we're happy to help in our own way to do those sorts of things, too.

But yeah, this has been really interesting. Thanks again for joining us on the podcast. We'll have to have you again sometime down the road.

Eric Kaufmann:

Thanks, Steve. It's been a pleasure.

Justin Garrison:

Thank you very much, Eric. Thanks for joining us today.

Eric Kaufmann:

Thanks, Justin. Thanks a lot.

Justin Garrison:

Well, we've just been talking with Eric Kaufmann, professor of politics at University of Buckingham. Fantastic interview about a whole host of topics related to trying to get higher ed to be less bad than what it currently is.

Steve, I know we had talked about this article previously, but it just so happens that a lot of the topics that Eric had brought up also came up in a piece in The Atlantic by Rose Horowitz. The title of this is The Era of DEI for Conservatives Has Begun, which sounds awesome, and terrifying, and paradoxical. A lot of what her article discussed is a lot of what Eric's research has also shown. That the faculty at schools skews overwhelmingly left. Professors are pretty clear and not really all that reserved about actively discriminating against conservative candidates in the job pool. And that this has also caused a significant level of alienation from the broader civil society. This is stuff that we know pretty well from our own work at ACTA.

But it's also talking about these organizations like AEI partnering with Johns Hopkins, or these various centers that have been set up. I think one of these questions in my own mind that I still don't really have a clear answer to is letting things go as they are is a guaranteed way to perpetuate the unsatisfactory nature of our present situation. It does get kind of strange if what you're doing is saying, "Stop hiring these people for identity characteristics, hire those people for identity characteristics."

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, yeah.

Justin Garrison:

I'm not unsympathetic to that problem. You're dealing with such a massive imbalance. I don't think it sounds as obviously hypocritical or stupid.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, although I do think that ... Well, I think that's definitely something we have to avoid at all costs. I don't think we want DEI for conservatives or affirmative action for conservatives. Eric was quite good just now on detailing some of the issues and why this is such a difficult problem to address.

I know at ACTA, what we recommend in our Gold Standard is the University of Chicago's Shils Report, which completes the Chicago Trifecta along with the Chicago Statement and the Kalven Report on Institutional Neutrality. But the basic idea there is that you're hiring based on merit and future promise in terms of scholarship, teaching, and contribution to intellectual community. You do so without regard to politics or ideology.

People often already think every time you discuss the lack of conservatives in higher ed, somebody will say, "Well, that's because conservatives just aren't that smart." Or, "Their ideas are terrible," or whatever. For that reason alone, I think we want to avoid the idea that we're engaging in any kind of affirmative action. But I also think, just as a matter of principle, that's not really the way that we want to go.

To me, what we want to do is restore a system of merit-based hiring, or create one maybe for the first time. Look at people in terms of the quality of their scholarship, the quality of their teaching, that sort of thing. Then maybe there are some other things around that that could be doing. Eric had some interesting points there about maybe analyzing your department and asking, "Well, we have nine people studying inequality, but we don't have anybody studying religion in our sociology program. Well, maybe that's something we need to fix." You hire someone who does sociology of religion. Maybe the person who takes that job votes for the Democrats, maybe that person votes for the Republicans, who knows? But that's a start towards creating a department that is more open to intellectual and viewpoint diversity I think.

It will be a long road for sure.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah.

Steve McGuire:

I think that's generally the kind of approach that we have to take.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah. No, I thought the article overall was pretty fair. Which was surprising, given that it came from The Atlantic. But I think the title is misleading because I've seen the job ads for a lot of these centers at ASU or the various centers that have emerged in Ohio. They're not saying "we're looking for conservative intellectuals." They're not hiring with conservative statements, like an equivalent to a DEI statement. There's a correlation maybe, but not a causation. In other words, maybe conservative intellectuals are more drawn to teaching in a classical liberal environment than people who would want to go into really highly partisan and ideologized sociology departments, to bring it back to Eric.

Steve McGuire:

Sure, yeah. Sure. Yeah, I'm sure there's something to that. I think another thing to point out about a lot of these civic centers that have been created is that they've been created with bipartisan support by their state legislatures in a lot of cases, funded by them. That's one way that shows that they're not conservative or

ideologically-driven in that partisan sense. But you can have an institution or a center within an institution that has a certain mission and you're hiring people who fit pedagogically or in terms of their interests with that broader mission. I think that certainly makes sense. You're not asking people, "Who did you vote for in the last election," or anything like that when you're hiring them. You're saying, "Do you believe in what we're doing here and do you think you'd be a fit for it? Do you care about the kinds of questions that we're asking?"

I could imagine maybe in a political science department, which you and I are both political scientists or political theorists by training. Or maybe a public policy program. Having nobody from one of the major political parties on the faculty might be kind of a problem if you're actually discussing debates about public policy, that sort of thing. You got to think about maybe different departments and different situations, too. On the other hand, if you're hiring someone to teach chemistry, how much could it possibly matter who this person votes for?

Justin Garrison:

Yeah. No, I think that's ... Yeah, that's important and it's super complicated. Because it doesn't strictly matter in a partisan sense when you're thinking about departments of history or literature, but there are ways in which those topics could be taught that I think students would actually like that they just don't get exposed to.

Steve McGuire:

Absolutely.

Justin Garrison:

For ideological reasons, yeah.

Steve McGuire:

Absolutely.

Justin Garrison:

We could talk about that, of course, all day. But there's also just this never-ending saga. When I think of this thing between Harvard and Trump, it reminds me, because I'm not a very smart man because I'm a conservative. But in that Mad Max movie where they go into Thunder Dome and everyone starts chanting, "Two men enter, one man leaves."

Steve McGuire:

Yeah.

Justin Garrison:

This is a really tense situation where I think it's going to be really hard for either side to walk back-

Steve McGuire:

Yeah.

Justin Garrison:

... from the positions that they've taken. But I think one of the nice things about the work that we do at ACTA is, A, we're not thinking about this along partisan lines, we're going to support this or that because

of who they voted for, or whatever. But we also work with different kinds of groups, like alumni, and trustees, and people like that, that give us a better insight into how could you actually take some of the volume down and get real change accomplished. Where could a place like Harvard, especially Harvard, go to get to the place that they might end up being dragged to through the court system anyways?

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, that's a great question. Obviously, the Harvard situation is not good, to say the least. I noticed, by the way, Harvard Magazine just did a big article on it that quotes a bunch of people from Harvard and elsewhere, their views on this matter. The top is a graphic that somebody designed. On one side is Harvard's President Alan Garber and he's got boxing gloves on. I think Harvard's logo is on there, or it's coat of arms, or whatever. Then on the other side is Trump with his boxing gloves. His gloves have American flags on them. I don't know what the artist was trying to say.

Justin Garrison:

Maybe they should have gone with Rocky IV, where it's Rocky versus the Soviet boxer.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah. I don't know if they're trying to suggest they should settle this the old-fashioned way, or something like that.

Justin Garrison:

Why not?

Steve McGuire:

But yeah, more seriously. The reporting that we've seen on the Harvard situation, it seems like it escalated the way that it did partly almost by mistake. That the government sent a letter that maybe wasn't supposed to be sent. Some of the demands in that letter clearly went too far and suggested that the government was demanding things that it's constitutionally prohibited from demanding. Our President Michael Poliakoff just wrote an excellent article on this situation where he talked about being able to hold two thoughts at once. In my words, not his, Harvard to me is just nobody's hero. They have so many problems, they need so much reform.

Just today, there was a report by Aaron Sibarium at the Free Beacon. We'll see how this plays out, but he's gotten a hold of a bunch of documentation that appears to suggest that the Harvard Law Review, which I guess is technically an independent entity from Harvard itself, but nevertheless. Has systematically considered race and other protected characteristics in its editorial process, in terms of how it selects articles and that sort of thing. This is a school that was already hammered by the Supreme Court for a race-based or race-conscious admission. The fact that this would still be going on at an institution or a law review that's attached to Harvard is just so egregious.

But one thing I wanted to highlight with Harvard, and certainly Harvard has a right to push back against the Trump Administration when it's over-reaching and needs to defend itself. At the same time, a lot of people have been saying that Harvard needs to change, even before Trump got elected. ACTA, of course, is one group that's been saying that. But there's been people on-campus as well. There's the Council for Academic Freedom, and then there's an alumni group, the 1636 Forum. There's a similar one at Columbia, Stand Columbia. These are groups of people who are part of the Harvard community, and the Stand Columbia one isn't just alumni, it includes people who are currently on-campus. But they've made list of reforms, many of which are consistent with things that we at ACTA recommend.

Harvard's done a few things in the last year or two, but some of those things have been easier lifts. Clearly, the place needs some significant cultural change. We're not seeing a ton of that yet. On the one hand, while like I said, it's certainly understandable that Harvard is going to defend itself against some of the over-reach. At the same time, I can't get on board with this other alumni group, Crimson Courage I think it's called. They're rah-rah, singing fight songs, talking about defending their alma mater. Sorry, but Harvard is just not that kind of hero even if they might win some of the lawsuits that they're currently involved in.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah. No, I think that makes total sense. I guess maybe a parting message for them would be, Harvard, get your act together. You have nothing to lose except billions of dollars.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah. I think if they implemented a lot more of these reforms, made a more honest effort, they would win a lot of people to their side, too. There's a lot of people out there that want Harvard to reform and want it to be a better institution. Why not do it?

Justin Garrison:

Yeah. I think that's absolutely right. The things that ACTA would want them to do are entirely reasonable, legal, and good things to do.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, that would make it a better place.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah. It takes so much of that argument away from people who may very well want Harvard not to exist or to be really significantly diminished.

Steve McGuire:

That's right. I don't know what percentage of people feel that way, but there certainly is some sentiment to that effect. You know, there's obviously the statistic that people cite quite regularly about the drop in confidence in higher ed. I've seen some other surveys recently that suggest that Harvard polls somewhat decently. It definitely has its critics, don't get me wrong. It's got serious problems. But I think if it were to fix some of those serious problems, public sentiment towards Harvard would be probably pretty good.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah, I totally agree. All right, we won't make our audience wait any longer. We're going to move into the most glorious, excellent component of our episode every month, the Apparatchik of the Month and Hero of the People Awards.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah. Last time, I think I did the Apparatchik of the Month, so this time I'm happy to do the Hero of the People and feature somebody who's really doing some good work in higher ed. The person I want to talk about is the President of Dartmouth College Sian Beilock.

She has actually received praise even from Trump officials in recent weeks. Alumni groups that are interested in free speech on campus, the Alumni Free Speech Alliance, they've been posting some videos showing her saying some things that support free expression and intellectual diversity on campus. I saw

yesterday or the day before, there was an interview with her in the student newspaper, The Dartmouth. One of the questions they asked her was how Dartmouth has so far avoided the ire of the Trump Administration. I got the impression, I don't want to assume that I know what she was thinking, but I got the impression that she didn't quite like the way that that question was framed perhaps. But it is true that, on the list of colleges that are being investigated for anti-Semitism, I think Dartmouth is the only Ivy League college that's not on the that list.

In response to the students, she pointed to some really interesting things. She mentioned that they had gone back to using standardized testing in admissions, which is I think an important step. Obviously, a number of schools have moved away from that, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dartmouth was one of the first elite institutions that had gone away from it to re-institute using them. Introducing again that idea of merit-based admissions by using standardized tests. But then, she also talked about their commitment to free expression. Dartmouth has adopted a policy of, well, we could call it institutional neutrality, they call it institutional restraint. Sometimes there's a debate about whether those are the same thing. But in our view, I think when we analyze what the policy actually says, it seems pretty consistent with the Kalven Report and the idea of institutional neutrality.

One thing she didn't mention in the interview that I think also needs to be pointed out is she didn't really tolerate disruptive protests or an encampment that was violating campus rules. Dartmouth didn't really have serious problems with those things in the way that a lot of other elite campuses did because she basically acted right away. Which is something that ACTA of course recommends, have clear rules and policies. When students violate those policies, let them know that's what they're doing and there's going to be consequences if they don't stop. That's basically what she did so they didn't have these massive problems.

Like I said, they're not being investigated for anti-Semitism on their campus. A lot of people are celebrating Dartmouth right now. I'm not saying that the place doesn't need further reforms or anything, but relative to a lot of the other things that we're seeing in higher ed and especially on our elite college campuses, Dartmouth President Sian Beilock seems to be doing a great job.

Justin Garrison:

Well, I think that's excellent, Steve. I think Dartmouth deserves credit for the steps that they've taken to make meaningful reforms and bring their institution back into alignment with high academic principles. Unfortunately, there's always the other side of the higher ed coin. There's always a Lex Luthor lurking in Superman's shadow. That brings us to the Apparatchik of the Month.

Gather round, young pioneers, and hear a tale of the Dean of the Yale Divinity School. In a story in The College Fix by Ibrahim Garza, it is reported that the Dean of the Yale Divinity School Dr. Gregory Sterling sent an email to, quote, "the entire divinity school." I assume that includes faculty, and the students, and staff. In this email, the Dean sent an opinion piece that he published on MSNBC describing the anti-Christian nature of President Trump's funding cuts for USAID. As the story explains, the email ends with Dean Sterling writing, "I know that you share my concerns."

Now in point of fact, I would bet money that he's almost certainly right about that. Still, sharing an opinion piece about current events and implying that the faculty, and staff, and students surely agree with his perspective on both Christianity and President Trump's actions is exactly the kind of move an administrator would make when he's uninterested in promoting diversity of thing in his school. With that, congratulations, Dean Sterling. Your commitment to an intellectual monoculture has earned you our prestigious Apparatchik of the Month Award. We're going to get you your complimentary Lada VAZ-2101 car soon. We're just waiting for all of the parts and have been since about 1975.

Steve McGuire:

This reminds me too, that Yale did recently adopt a kind of institutional neutrality policy. We should go back and look at that and see how this might fit or not fit with what they said they were going to adhere to.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah. It's one of those stories where it's so stereotypically bad higher ed that we featured it this month.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah. I guess we should say it's not about obviously the substance of the cuts to USAID and whether those were good or bad, but the assumption that everybody would agree with his take on them.

Justin Garrison:

Yeah, that's the problem. It's not his interpretation of Christianity, there are plenty of those. It's not his interpretation of Trump's funding cuts, plenty of people disagree. But particularly in higher ed, if your dean sends you a piece of information that's an opinion on current events and says, "I know you agree with me." You know what to do-

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, that's right.

Justin Garrison:

... regardless of how you actually feel if you want to get a good annual evaluation, or if you're up for T&P soon.

Steve McGuire:

That's right, yeah. It's actually a great illustration-

Justin Garrison:

It's bad management.

Steve McGuire:

Yeah, it's a great illustration of why institutional neutrality is such an important principle.

Well anyways, I think that wraps things up for this episode. Thanks to everyone for listening to Radio Free Campus.

Justin Garrison:

We will see you all next month. Until then, KBO.

Speaker 1:

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