

The Bureaucrat, the Pipe-Dreamer, and the Serial Whistleblower



Tree in Bloom, Frits Van den Berghe, 1930

["Why Are Colleges So Cowardly?"](#), published by "senior writer" Tom Bartlett in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, regards retired psychology professor Jennifer Freyd, who sued the University of Oregon because her salary was less than that of her departmental male colleagues. Rather than a jury trial, the university decided to pay Freyd a \$350,000 settlement in taxpayer money.

A more accurate title for the article would have been: Why are college professors and administrators so cowardly? In essence, an institution could only be cowardly if those who run it and are employed by it are cowardly. It is of course far easier to challenge a faceless institution, than the actual bureaucrats controlling it. Regarding colleges, the administrators who run them and the see-no-evil professors who work at them tend to be academic bureaucrats, concerned far more with their careers, than with truth and the courage to speak it openly. That is the crux, the one that is essentially ignored in Bartlett's article. Why is there no mention at all of those responsible for keeping Freyd's salary below that of her male colleagues? Name the corrupt or the corrupt shall continue unchecked!

The Center for Institutional Courage was created by Freyd, and the university accorded it \$100,000, as part of the settlement. How not to think of the leadership academies formed at different colleges, including the [Leadership Academy](#) at Fitchburg State College (now a university), where I once battled with the corrupt administrator-and-professor-leader bureaucrats ... and won a settlement, though only for one year's salary! Nobody at that college was held accountable or admitted an iota of wrong-doing. How easy it is for corrupt administrators to simply dish out taxpayer money to superficially solve the problems, at least the immediate ones.

Creating a Leadership Academy or Center for Institutional

Courage is, of course, nothing more than a means to virtue-signal and deflect attention away from the corrupt and cowardly. After all, how could a corrupt college president oversee a Leadership Academy or even an eventual Center for Institutional Courage? Bartlett poses a question that further deflects from the crux of the problem: "but what exactly—you might ask—is institutional courage?" As mentioned, institutions are not courageous or cowardly; the humans running them are courageous or cowardly. Freyd joins in the deflection:

Somehow these systems, without individuals necessarily realizing it, develop these ways to preserve the status quo. And I know this has something to do with power because, when you're trying to change the system, you're asking for some shift in power.

Again, to change the system, one needs to change the people who run it, those who place "power," career, or whatever else far above truth and the courage to speak it! Clearly, for a professor or administrator to seek promotion, he or she must turn a blind eye, the very opposite of manifesting courage to speak truth. Would it be at all surprising if Freyd's Center ends up as yet another bureaucracy like the leadership academies? Bureaucrats, who run bureaucracies, are inevitably "cowardly" (and corrupt and lacking transparency), the very definition of "bureaucrats." Even institutions that purportedly stand for freedom like the National Coalition against Censorship, the American Library Association, the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, and the ACLU have become bureaucratic institutions that detest and reject criticism (i.e., freedom of expression and vigorous debate)! As proof of the assertion, over the years, I have tested their waters.

Bartlett and Freyd both seem to favor the complicating of that which is simple. Thoreau had written, "simplify, simplify." In essence, that dictum is the opposite of that which academic bureaucrats demand: "complicate, complicate." It reminds of

Critical Race Theory. The more complicated a subject, the more publications, the more speeches, the more academic positions ... the more money in the pockets of academic bureaucrats.

Bartlett argues, "In order to understand her (Freyd's) idea of institutional courage, you have to understand the flip side: institutional betrayal." And so why not also create a Center to Study Institutional Betrayal? Bartlett states, "Part of Freyd's notion is that people form attachments to institutions and so, when those institutions let them down, it creates a kind of secondary trauma." But what kind of people? Hell, I never formed an attachment to any institution! On the contrary, as a staunch individual, always I ended up forming a detachment from institutions employing me. Are we to think now that Freyd with her \$350,000 check suffers from a "kind of secondary trauma?" Less psychology, not more psychology is needed, though more of course would end up producing more articles, more books, more academic positions, and more money in the pockets of academic bureaucrats.

Bartlett notes, "One of the points she (Freyd) emphasizes repeatedly is the need to, as she puts it, 'cherish the whistleblower.' Too often, she says, the person who has raised a concern is viewed as a threat." Yet the crux is not addressed: how to cherish the whistleblower who points the finger at the chief bureaucrats running the institution? Moreover, what to do about Bartlett's employer, the *Chronicle*, which might decide to simply ignore the whistleblower, as it did with my regard years ago? Is the *Chronicle* open to real hardcore criticism of the *Chronicle* itself? "We welcome your thoughts and questions about this article," it notes. "Please [email the editors](#) or [submit a letter](#) for publication." Well, over the years, I did just that, and it has yet to respond to my criticism. One might pose another question: why are newspapers and journals so cowardly ... when it comes to criticism of journalist bureaucrats? That would be a good subject for Bartlett to examine. What taboos (career-damaging

subjects) does Bartlett himself dare not break? Clearly, it all comes down to the simple notion: thou shalt not criticize the hands that feed. And so, what taboos might Freyd herself have and how might abiding by them affect her “work”? Follow the money!

Bartlett states that Freyd would “like institutions to start by thanking whistleblowers because ‘they’re often the most loyal people.’ She also suggests creating incentives, including financial ones, for employees to come forward with evidence of wrongdoing.” And so Freyd believes that institutions should embrace whistleblowers because they are “often the most loyal people.” Yet how not to disagree! Whistleblowers are loyal to the truth, not to the institution. Is Freyd living on Cloud 9? “The duty of an institution is much like that of a good friend or another supportive person: listen well,” she states. What is needed is reality, not more fantasy and wishful thinking! So much money (\$350,000!) for so much vapidty! “People are very eager to forgive and to love their institutions,” argues Freyd, “and I don’t think it actually takes all that much courage to turn things around.” Are we now back in the hippy 60s?

Sadly, Bartlett does not even attempt to respond to the title of his article, “Why Are Colleges So Cowardly?” Clearly, one might pose the same question, not only regarding professors and administrators, but also regarding “senior writers” for corporate journals of higher education (e.g., the *Chronicle*). The answer to that question, of course, is not at all complicated: career, money, and lack of principles. Team playing and collegiality, not truth telling, constitute the prime modus operandi for higher-education bureaucrats (administrators, professors or journalists), as I’ve personally observed at the handful of institutions that once employed me. Both Bartlett and Freyd would be hard-pressed to find just one ad for a job position in the *Chronicle* requiring truth telling (i.e., bucking the system, making waves in the

department, and going against the collegiality grain). Freyd argues that “rigorous scientific research, wide-reaching education, and data-driven action” will somehow resolve the problem. But bureaucrats studying bureaucrats in the realm of bureaucracy will solve nothing at all.

As a side note, Bartlett evoked the rather strange episode of Freyd having accused her own father of sexual abuse, which provoked both her parents to create the False Memory Syndrome Foundation. With that regard, the story appeared in January in [New York](#) magazine. One might wonder if psychology-professor bureaucrats inevitably possess psychological problems far more severe than the rest of us and just how that might affect their “work.” By the way, I’m the serial whistleblower ...

N.B.: This essay and a cartoon were sent to both Freyd and Bartlett in July 2021. No response was ever received.

To “Senior Writer” Tom Bartlett, the Chronicle of Higher Education, and Jennifer Freyd, Founder of the Center for Institutional Courage:

As you can see, you’ve been satirized in a new P. Maudit cartoon. It is an addendum to the essay sent the other day, the one the Chronicle won’t touch with a proverbial 10-foot pole. Will you respond? Well, you certainly won’t if you are good bureaucrats! To examine my diverse instances of whistleblowing, consult www.theamericandissident.org. The Chronicle, of course, wouldn’t touch any of them with its pole ...

