

I was a liberal NY prof, but when I said the left was going too far, colleagues called me a NAZI & treated me like a RUSSIAN SPY

by Michael Rectenwald



What's wrong with the American left? Suffering from Trump anxiety disorder, acting like cult members, and engaging in a new McCarthyism, the left has lost its collective mind. I saw it coming and left the left in the nick of time.

My break with the left began in the fall of 2016. I was a professor at New York University, a left-liberal, and an active social media participant. My skepticism and resentment

at my political tribe's insistence that I affirm its increasingly crazy claims had been growing steadily to this point.

Much like Jordan Peterson, my tipping point involved [the pronoun wars](#), although, as you'll see, I enjoyed a more satirical approach. When the University of Michigan instituted a policy that offered students a carte blanche pronoun preference opportunity, a clever student offered "His Majesty" as his chosen pronoun, and his blasphemous pronoun choice made the [news](#). The satirical trope hilariously underscored the absurdity of gender and pronoun proliferation, and the institutional lunacy that has attempted to keep pace with it. I posted a link to an article about the spoof on Facebook, without comment. I then proceeded to teach for the rest of the afternoon.

By the time I noticed the pandemonium, it was too late to manage it. A histrionic reaction had ensued. Hundreds upon hundreds of condemnatory threads and sub-threads multiplied beneath the link. Dozens and dozens of Facebook friends had sent private messages, demanding explanations and retractions. I was accused of betrayal, discursive violence, and transphobia.

I soon became defector from the party line and the university would come down on me like a ton of bricks...

The left's psychotic break

Clearly, a collective hysteria has the left in its grip. I am not using a strict definition of the left that includes only the hard-core Antifa members, socialists, and communists, but also refer to many people formerly known as "liberals," who've since become quite illiberal. I also include former moderate centrists, who've become part of the "resistance." As an example of the latter, I point to an acquaintance I hadn't seen in years, someone I'd considered a milquetoast liberal at

most, yet who now sounded like a radical leftist when remarking bitterly: *"I just wish someone would put a bullet through Donald Trump's head!"*

I don't blame such foot soldiers of the resistance for their viciousness. They've been led to believe that they're morally superior to Trump and his followers, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that they harbor such violent fantasies. They are not entirely responsible for their derangement. They are unwitting dupes being whipped into frenzies by the political and media establishments. They've contracted a *"contagious psychosis,"* wherein, as one study puts it, *"certain 'unrealistic' human behavior and thoughts can be transferred from one subject to another, within the intimacy of the family circle or according to an epidemic including numerous protagonists."* Sounds about right.

The American Psychological Association's (APA) Dictionary of Psychology avoids terms like mass psychosis and contagious psychosis, likely for the same reasons that it avoids terms like *"nervous breakdown."* They sound too dramatic and unscientific. But the APA does use the term *"collective hysteria,"* which its dictionary [defines](#) as *"the spontaneous outbreak of atypical thoughts, feelings, or actions in a group or social aggregate. Manifestations may include psychogenic illness, collective hallucinations, and bizarre actions."*

With its parade of successive delusions – from the ["Russian collusion"](#) narrative, to the ["Russian bots"](#) narrative, and the latest, the Ukraine "quid pro quo" narrative – this seems to describe the contemporary left precisely. These narratives have in common a willful fabrication of crime stories believed to be true regardless of the lack of empirical evidence. Those who believe in these narratives merely repeat them ad nauseum in the hope that they'll become true, or at least that they'll be counted as true – which amounts to the same thing for the left, because for the left, belief equals (or is greater than) reality.

As I've suggested, the left's derangement is not limited to electoral politics and the aftermaths. If we consider cultural politics as well, then we must include gender pluralism and transgenderism, the expanding domain of "racism," and other phenomena.

The gender pluralist, transgender movement has resulted in a seemingly endless parade of absurdities, including but not limited to the proliferation of [genders](#) and [pronouns](#) themselves but also the claim that human sex difference is [not an overwhelmingly binary](#) system, and most recently that "[men can have periods too](#)." This last bit of transgender orthodoxy recently bled into mass media advertising, thanks to the feminine (not women's!) underwear company, Thinx, whose new "[MENstruation](#)" ad made news when it was [rejected by CBS](#) (although the network is set to consider an altered version). AdAge had previously [reported](#) that Bravo, E!, Oxygen, BET, MTV, VH1, HGTV, the Food Network, TLC and NBC would air the ad.

Add to these symptoms of mass hysteria the contagious tendency to label anything and everything "racist," including shoes, sweaters, and stuffed animals. Commercial products deemed racist include [the all-white Adidas sneakers](#), the [Adidas "shackle shoes,"](#) [Gucci's "blackface" jumper](#), and [Prada's monkey figure](#) – all decried as racist by the Twitter Red Guards and all subsequently pulled from the market.

Meanwhile, social psychologists and political scientists have considered collective hysteria to be a characteristic of conservatives alone, with one begrudging but important exception. Four years after publishing a paper on "*the relationship between personality traits and political ideologies*," the American Journal of Political Science [admitted](#) that the article contained an ever-so-slight error. When they delivered the results of their study, the authors "exactly reversed" the findings where the left and right were concerned. The periodical's editors have now issued a

correction: it is liberals who exhibit the personality trait of “psychoticism” and not, as stated in the original article, conservatives. I saw this psychoticism first-hand, although I was the one called crazy.

Becoming deplorable

Here’s how the left and I parted ways. After my Facebook condemnation, I created an anonymous Twitter handle, @AntiPCNYUProf, with the name ‘The Deplorable NYU Prof’ and began tweeting criticisms of political correctness and the adoption of “social justice” ideology in the university and beyond. I was soon discovered by a reporter from NYU’s student newspaper and decided to go on the record for my views. In an interview, I criticized the adoption of the new “social justice” creed by NYU and most other North American colleges and universities, including the establishment of “*bias reporting hotlines*” at NYU and at over 230 other institutions, the use of safe spaces, the adoption of trigger warnings, and the now-routine no-platforming of speakers, which made it impossible for alternative perspectives to be heard on most campuses.

Although I was not fired for airing my views, my life on campus was made intolerable. Within two days of my interview’s appearance, I was called into the dean’s office and pressured to go on a paid leave of absence by him and the head of human resources. “*People are concerned about you,*” the dean said. The implication was that I must be crazy for differing with the campus orthodoxy. I was also roundly denounced by an official committee, called the Liberal Studies Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group, who ended their sentencing by declaring: “*The cause of his guilt is the content and structure of his thinking.*” I have since dubbed them “*the Conformity, Inequity and Exclusion Group.*” They demand conformity with their “social justice” creed, treat as less than equal anyone who doesn’t conform, and attempt to exclude dissidents from the university, and by extension, from

academia at large.

When I returned from leave, I was universally shunned by over 100 fellow faculty members, some of whom wouldn't let me on an elevator with them. On the very last day of my first semester back from leave, a group of colleagues issued a series of blistering emails, attacking me for announcing on Twitter the forthcoming publication of my new book. I was called "alt-right," "Nazi," "short-pants White Devil," "fragile white male," and "Satan," among other choice slurs. The emails continued for several days. Meanwhile, I had never once mentioned any individuals or groups by name, either in my initial interview, or in any subsequent media coverage.

My life as a Russian spy

Upon complaining to human resources and the equal opportunity employment officers about the abuse, nothing happened – except that my office was moved to... get this ... the Russian department! I liked to joke that I was treated as if I were a Russian spy, sent to my own personal gulag. I was transferred to a completely isolated office with bare metal shelves containing none of my books, because the university refused to have them moved from my old office.

I sued the university and five of the offending colleagues for defamation. The university's army of lawyers made overcoming their motion to dismiss the suit nearly insurmountable for the small firm who'd agreed to take my case on a contingency basis. The suit expired but I later negotiated a retirement settlement with the university.

Most people who hear my story do not wonder why I broke with the left when I did. They wonder why it took so long. To such people I say, consider the behavior and beliefs of the left and ask yourself how much indoctrination must have been necessary to produce such results. Then consider this: I was subjected to this very indoctrination for many years. My

escape was a minor miracle.

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