

Springtime for Snowflakes

A professor's memoir of the closing of the American mind.

by Marc Tapson in [@antipcnypuf](#) account, and despite being a leftist himself, became the target of shunning and harassment from his colleagues and the NYU administration. But instead of caving in to the campus totalitarians as so many academics do, Rectenwald declared himself done with the Left, and though still not a conservative, began appearing often in right-wing media to defend free speech and academic freedom, and to expose the “bilious animosity and unrestrained cruelty” he endured from his former compatriots.

I previously interviewed Prof. Rectenwald for FrontPage Mag [here](#) back in January. At the close of that interview he mentioned a book he was working on about the experience, and it is now available in [paperback](#) and on [Kindle](#): *Springtime for Snowflakes: Social Justice and its Postmodern Parentage*. Short but dense with insights about postmodern theory, social justice ideology, and academic conformity, the book is a must-read for understanding the intellectual collapse of the American university under the weight of a totalitarian ideology.

Rectenwald begins the book by relating his experience of “becoming deplorable” and being pushed toward political apostasy, which forced him to reexamine the herd with which he had formerly run. “I didn’t leave the left,” he writes. “The left left me” – echoing Ronald Reagan’s famous declaration, “I didn’t leave the Democratic party. The Democratic Party left me.” “In trying to correct me,” Rectenwald writes about his fellow academics, “they did indeed correct me – but not as they’d hoped. They corrected my vision by forcibly dislodging the scales of their ideology from my eyes.” He realized that the “institutions of North American higher education have taken a hairpin turn, and a wrong turn at that. They have

surrendered moral and political authority to some of the most virulent, self-righteous, and authoritarian activists among the contemporary left.”

This wasn't his first exposure to the wrongheaded rigidity of these conformists. A 2015 incident in which Rectenwald argued against the hiring of an unqualified candidate for a full-time writing position at NYU was his rude introduction to the hypocrisy of the left's pro-diversity claims. The candidate in question happened to be a black female, and thus Rectenwald's judgment of her incompetence (“The candidate cannot *write*” he dared to point out to the other hiring committee members) drew vehement fire and he was overruled. Not opposed to the notion of diversity itself, Rectenwald nonetheless felt strongly that “[n]othing is more essentialist or constraining than diversity understood strictly in terms of identity,” and that “[r]esorting to blatant tokenism in hiring and promotion jeopardizes the integrity of higher education and also undermines the objectives that diversity initiatives aim to promote.” Such a commonsense approach was bound to set him in opposition to his peers, as was this heresy: “[I]f we want to foster real diversity in higher education, we had better consider not only diversity of identity but also diversity of thought and perspective” – not exactly a position eagerly embraced in today's institutions of formerly higher learning.

The book is a memoir and thus, of course, details the author's personal intellectual journey, but the heart of *Springtime for Snowflakes*, of course, is, as its subtitle states, an exploration of the roots of the social justice movement in the postmodern theory that migrated from France and took firm hold in academic circles – an influential wave Rectenwald finds analogous to the British pop music invasion of the 1960s. “How did the social justice creed gain dominance in academia? How and why was it made official policy in most colleges and universities in North America? Where did this social justice movement come from and how has it managed to permeate the

broader culture and contend for domination?" These are the questions this succinct book answers with originality and the insights that likely could come only from an insider's perspective.

But *Springtime for Snowflakes* is no mere dry, academic musing on the currents of leftist thought. It is unexpectedly entertaining as well as enlightening – for example, in the chapter on his literary internship with Beat poet Allen Ginsberg. Rectenwald's interaction with Ginsberg's friend, famed *Naked Lunch* novelist William S. Burroughs, Jr., "the most conspicuous casualty of the Beat generation," is riveting. An aspiring poet himself, Rectenwald was dubbed "the glorious mystic from Pittsburgh" by Ginsberg, who was one of the key figures in the counterculture movement that prefigured postmodernism. And yet Rectenwald believes that even the "Howl" poet Ginsberg would be appalled by the social justice left's "censorious, censoring, and prohibitionist proclivities."

The book ends with appendices in which Rectenwald, very active on social media, has collected many of his best Facebook and Twitter entries. A sampling of tweets:

Michael Rectenwald @antipcnypof Mar 17

Close your eyes and imagine a world full of self-replicating little Stalins. Now open your eyes. You live in that world. It's called "social justice" & the little Stalins are SJWs = Stalin, Just Weirder.

Michael Rectenwald @antipcnypof Feb 19

@TuckerCarlson points to the real authoritarian threat today and it's not coming from Trump. It's coming from the very people who call Trump authoritarian. The left is the authoritarian threat today.

Michael Rectenwald @antipcnypof Feb 4

Under the rhetorical veneer of egalitarianism spouted by the left, totalitarian impulses and utterly insane irrationality lurk.

Michael Rectenwald @antipcnypof 16 May 2017

The shaming techniques that the Left engages in – callout culture, self-criticism, privilege checking – all have Maoism as their provenance.

Michael Rectenwald @antipcnypof 15 May 2017

We are now dealing with a lunatic cult of vast proportions. It's like Heaven's Gate, only without the Nikes.

And most succinctly and bluntly, from Facebook on March 6, 2018: "North American higher education is a shit hole."

Indeed, and after reading Michael Rectenwald's *Springtime for Snowflakes* you will have a better grasp of why this is and how it came about. But if more academics find the courage to demonstrate an honest, fiercely independent intellect like the author's, then perhaps higher education in North America could begin to be salvaged.