

Universities have become Cesspools of Political Correctness

Canada is a relatively tolerant and civilized place, but you would not guess that from the publications being put out by the University of Toronto.

by Conrad Black



This column is written for all those who feel oppressed by political correctness in Canada. It is prompted by my wife Barbara giving me the magazines sent to alumni of University College (UC) at the University of Toronto and by the University of Toronto itself, each quarter. I receive a sprinkling of information from the universities where I graduated (Carleton, Laval and McGill) and from some that kindly gave me honorary degrees, but I have never seen anything like this.

The college alumni magazine identifies three contributors of whom one describes herself as “a peace and love hippie with a

dream of doing a meditation retreat at Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village Monastery in southern France," and the second is the former associate director of UC's "centre for sexual diversity studies." The piece of the incoming principal of the college focused on the widespread need for attention to "students struggling with mental health problems" and celebrated his college's "iconicity ... of diversity and inclusion." He also dwelt upon the "uncomfortable iconicity" in referring to a creek that once flowed through the campus but is now entirely subterranean. "We need ... to include Indigenous teachings, learners and scholars in our midst.... The river still cleanses this area and its ancient powers continue to flow despite attempts to submerge its force." The principal of such a well-known university college should have a clearer idea of legitimate subjects of iconization.

There was a tribute to my dear friend of more than 40 years, Supreme Court Justice Rosie Abella, winner of an award named after another old friend, the late Rose Wolfe (a former chancellor of U of T), both delightful women. Rosie referred to her belief as an under-graduate in "the perfectibility of the human condition, in progressive change, in excellence, in the symbiosis of reason and equity." What she really meant and how she has amiably enacted it, is her fervent belief in practically every left-wing cause that does not oppress human rights: redistribution of money from people who had earned it to people who had not, reduction of the influence and status of individuals in favour of institutions purporting faithfully to enhance the welfare of the majority and a river of concessions and preferments to organized labour. By all means give Rosie an award, but not for elegiacal nonsense about the perfectibility of man through democratic Marxism. Next came a piece about a photographer who specialized in portraits of LGBTQ writers who "capture what's essential." (They were good photographs.) Then came the inevitable confession and repentance of Canada's "ugly legacy of occupation and forced assimilation by settlers trying to extinguish the culture,

rights and humanity of Indigenous peoples,” and the obligatory demonization of the residential schools system.



Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Abella, centre, participates in a welcome ceremony in 2019. Chris Helgren/Reuters

Fortified by this bracing sorbet of monochromatic lamentation on the evils of most Canadians and of the country that pays for all this, I prorupted on into the University Magazine. As if in prearranged sequence, it began with, “The white man has stepped everywhere across this land without seeing the people and how they have been injured or incapacitated by his exploits. They have also taken our children and removed them from their communities for generations until they are no longer connected to their family and community.... The white man could not keep to himself, he had to have more land, more gold, more fur.” I have written about the true history of the colonization of North America by technologically superior European states many times; the falsification of history cited above incites the question of who these people imagine are paying to circulate their opinions on glossy magazines to the descendants of the people whose right to be here they are disputing.

The next section was a series of alumni who had been battling various types of oppression. One more time: an apologist for the recent illegal native obstruction of the Coastal GasLink Pipeline explained that, “Canada is actually not Canada because the original nations on this land never gave up the right to govern themselves.” What is required is “a fundamental rethink and reimagining of what Canada is as a country.” There was a historian specializing in African-Canadian studies, with no hint of the fact that virtually all African-Canadians were liberated slaves (including those that Gov. Guy Carleton refused to hand back to Washington , a slaveowner, in 1783), or refugees from slavery, including 40,000 American slaves who fled the U.S. in the 30 years before the Civil War, as well as such American anti-slavery

advocates as John Brown, Harriet Tubman and Josiah Henson, the model for Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous novel.

The people featured are apparently champions of good causes, but the alumna who directs a climate science centre at a Texas University and regularly asks, "Is it too late to save the earth?" before answering that that all depends on how quickly fossil fuels can be discarded (which is not about to happen in Texas), incites some doubt. Instead of activism, the focus in climate matters should be on research, since there is no reliable consensus on whether whatever is happening is outside the normal climate cycle, is or is not anthropogenic, could or could not be beneficial, or what its extent might be. As in other subjects, it is generally wise to know what is happening before militating about what is to be done.



A statue of Sir John A. MacDonald stands at Queen's Park in Toronto. Peter Redman/National Post

The drenchingly predictable article on "fake news" referred to Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election although the authors of the interference remain unknown and the extent of it was insignificant. Naturally there is not a word about the three-year malicious fiction that the current president had colluded with the Russian government to influence the election. The absence of coverage of the greatest constitutional scandal in U.S. history and the closest that country has ever come to a putsch is the most egregious fake news of all.

A chapter on the "Dictionary of Canadian Biography," an admirable work of scholarship, comes perilously close to justifying imputations of racist bigotry to former prime minister John A. Macdonald. He gave Native-Canadians the right to vote and had many allies in the Native community, including Poundmaker and Crowfoot, and the revisionist descriptions of the chief founder of this country as a quasi-genocidist are an abominable injustice that has no place in a respectable

university. The interesting article on the university's dental museum was the only part of either publication that wasn't stiflingly politically correct.

These magazines are for the alumni, and should not focus exclusively on agitators, even for good causes. The publications of a university that celebrates the iconicity of diversity and inclusion should air the inconvenient facts that the Indigenous people did not occupy or govern Canada. Canada's Native policy has failed, but not out of malice or stinginess, and the Natives are not blameless. As for the climate, diversity would require mention of dissenting views, or at least acknowledgement that many countries around the world continue to expand their fossil fuel usage.

Canada is a relatively tolerant and civilized place, but you would not guess that from these offerings. Jordan Peterson is right that anything calling itself "studies" is not a real academic subject. Most of this allegedly iconic activity is not productive work and is really just a pseudo-academic workfare measure to defer unemployment that is hideously expensive, of doubtful utility and encourages its beneficiaries to bite the system that indulges it like an ungrateful viper.

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