

## The Palm Beach Freedom Institute Condemns the War on Campus Free Speech

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The Palm Beach Freedom Institute (PBFi), America's most prominent think tank on Cancel Culture and Woke Culture, condemns the behavior of Stanford Law students who on March 9 shouted down, threatened and abused anti-woke U.S. Circuit Court Judge Kyle Duncan as he tried his hand at freedom of speech on the palm-spangled campus, one of many recent unfortunate incidents that PBFi feels marks a sour moment for law schools such as Stanford, in which 97 of the nation's top 100 law firms employ its law graduates as partners, and where Microsoft, Google, Cisco and many other top firms have employed a graduate as general counsel.

"Few have suffered its depredations more than Judge Duncan and Ilya Shapiro, who at our monthly event gave us an incisive discussion of the sorry state of legal education in our country," said Professor Paul du Quenoy, PBFi's founder and president. "Judge Duncan's mistreatment at Stanford was surreal."

In an all too common occurrence, Judge Duncan's invited lecture was shouted down by a "woke mob" of student protestors. Worse, when Judge Duncan asked Stanford Law administrators to restore order, three remained silent while one, Stanford Law's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Associate Dean Tirien Steinbach, joined the protestors in denouncing Judge Duncan, who continued to be threatened and abused. Two days after his ambushed speech, Stanford President Marc Tessier-Lavigne and Stanford Law School Dean Jenny Martinez apologized to Judge Duncan in a letter, offering their "sincerest apologies" for what Duncan had called "deeply uncivil behavior" by "hypocrites," "idiots" and "bullies."

"What happened was inconsistent with our policies on free speech, and we are very sorry about the experience you had while visiting our campus," the university's president and dean of the law school law wrote. "We are very clear with our students that, given our commitment to free expression, if there are speakers they disagree with, they are welcome to exercise their right to protest but not to disrupt the proceedings."

A PBFi sponsor, Speech First, has opened a petition to demand Dean Steinbach's dismissal for failing to enforce Stanford's own policies on free speech. "The Palm Beach Freedom Institute fully endorses the petition and some behind the scenes work to achieve its worthy goal." du Quenoy added. "We hope more people will add their voice."

A week after the Stanford incident, legal scholar Ilya Shapiro appeared as guest speaker in Palm Beach at a PBFJ event, denouncing Judge Duncan's treatment and the war on campus free speech. In 2022, shortly after taking his seat as senior lecturer and executive director of Georgetown University's Center for the Constitution, Shapiro was suspended - and then quickly reinstated -- for speaking out against a Biden appointee for the Supreme Court. Shapiro quit anyway, and said he has no current plan to return to academia.

“Academia has become an intolerant place for anyone, not just conservatives but anyone who seeks the truth,” Mr. Shapiro told the Palm Beach gathering. “It is one of the most pernicious parts of recent developments in academia where it’s kind of an Orwellian situation, where in the name of diversity, equity and inclusion, bureaucrats enforce an orthodoxy that stifles intellectual diversity.”

Known as one of the nation's brightest legal scholars, Mr. Shapiro, formerly Vice President of the Cato Institute and a Senior Fellow at The Federalist Society, has by his own count been an invited speaker more than a thousand times, and testified before Congress as recently as this week, when he testified before the House Committee on Education's higher education subcommittee on the issue of cancel culture in U.S. colleges and universities, and on what he termed "the alarming state of free speech at our nation’s institutions of higher learning."

"I'm now all too aware of the toxic climate that foments self-censorship as students and professors alike walk on eggshells lest they cross the politically incorrect frontier and have their careers threatened by an illiberal mob," Shapiro told Congress in prepared testimony March 28. "A year ago was the first time I'd ever been protested in more than a thousand speaking events and it's a damning indictment of the state of academia at a time when a toxic cloud has enveloped all of our public discourse."

Shapiro, the author of "Supreme Disorder: Judicial Nominations and the Politics of America's Highest Court (2020)," told Congress that in speaking events since his 2022 suspension at Georgetown, "the vocal minority of students who shut down my event wanted to hear neither my reasoning about President Biden's selection criteria nor my broader analysis of the confirmation battle now that there was an actual nominee. And they did so in the vilest language imaginable, several times getting literally in my face or blocking my access to the lectern."

"This problem isn't limited to ivory towers and leafy quads," Shapiro said. "The trend of canceling speakers rather than challenging them also represents the loss of grace in our culture more broadly, the desire to ascribe malign motives to one's political enemies and unwillingness to think of them as merely wrong, rather than evil."