



A Hat Tip to Those Who Do the Right Thing

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In a dreadful sort of way, there's nothing unusual about this story that caught my eye the other day. An esteemed university—Brown, in this case—is receiving pressure from faculty and students to reject the expansion of a campus research center, called the Political Theory Project (PTP). Naturally, this is due to the center's mission and funding. I'll let readers decide which is more predictable: that the problematic funding is “coke” money (the most objectionable kind. Spelled K-O-C-H) or that the problematic mission is to “investigate the ideas and institutions that make societies free, prosperous and fair.”

The concernee's typical *blah-blah*-on-paper reads, “The Political Theory Project presents itself as representing a seemingly neutral ‘freedom of ideas’ because that sounds better than their actual project of making sure rich people stay rich and most people of color stay poor.” Indubitably. All learned persons know that keeping people of color poor is essential to an economy that makes people rich. One needn't an Ivy League degree to find that the world's richest reside in Africa and Central America—but I digress.

With discussions intended to bring “established researchers with alternative perspectives the opportunity to present their research in direct dialogue” one might see little downside for higher-ed. Recent events include the following: Noam Chomsky and ambassador Dennis Ross (debating America's support for Israel); Michael Eric Dyson and Boyce Watkins (in a congenial rap on the effects of hip-hop lyrics); and Steven Pinker and Paul Krugman (measuring the extent of humanity's progress). These conversations may seem harmless enough, but they supposedly belie PTP's insidious agenda. Right-wing Kochheads from the Federalist Society, Cato Institute, and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni have been given a platform to spew their... *opinions*.

It's secularly sinful. Practically Joe Ro 2.0!

As the menacing wrong-think has yet to attract mob threats, it's mostly slipped under the radar. So much censorship, so little time. Frankly, my own curiosity was piqued by a hunch that I might know one of the culprits. A few clicks proved me right. My former teacher Professor Daniel D'Amico is the Associate Director.

Back in 2011, after having flipped through some capitalist propaganda and an (admittedly fascinating) article titled “I, Pencil,” I wasn't exactly giddy for my first day of Introduction to

Microeconomics. My anticipatory would-be quibbling (tantrums weren't *in* back then) were dashed; less so by the fact that my progressive instincts turned out to be less transgressive than I'd thought, but because the Hayekian came to play ... and for keeps.

For the first five minutes of class, we watched the climax of Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*, for the remaining 45 we clumsily discussed D'Amico's puzzle: "Why did Mookie throw the trash can?" Withholding cheap validation, the professor let us run out the clock trying to articulate what today's matriculates could self-assuredly reduce to an unedifying cliché. We never got an easy answer.

The semester went on, and my fellow classmates were often treated to what has to be among the rarest occurrences in even the most captivating economics courses: uproarious laughter. But occasionally I'd reflect on that unfortunate scene from the first day. After a few years, I came to a less pompous conclusion. Mookie and his compatriots lived in a neighborhood where the only people who owned anything were outsiders. They just didn't like it and acted rashly. Sound and fury, signifying ... only a little.

The capitalist went off to Brown to continue teaching and has published mostly on prison reform. Something tells me he's up to the PTP's advertised objective.

And if diluting Koch is your bag, support here.