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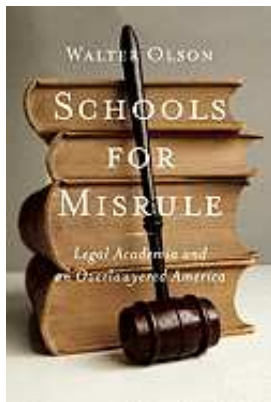
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Shake It Up: Schools For Misrule

What if there were secret breeding grounds for future policy leaders where they were instilled with fundamental beliefs that there are good and evil political ideals, taught that there are truths of right and wrong, and when the minds of these future leaders were so completely brainwashed and controlled as to leave no doubt how they will twist the future to meet the policy vision beat into their brains, set out on the world to do subvert it to their vision?

Walter Olson says there are such places. They're called law school.

In [Schools For Misrule: Legal Academia and an Overlawyered America](#), Walter aims both barrels and pulls the trigger. The book is classic Olson, witty, caustic and facially challenging to the Academy. The poke in the ribs is unmistakable, and [early signs](#) are that [it's going to get a rise](#) out of some of the more intellectually honest lawprofs.



Walter's attack strikes at two levels, the first being the more obvious, and consistent with his work at [Overlawyered](#) and the [Cato Institute](#) (and the Manhattan Institute before it), that law professors tend to be slavishly liberal in their views, and use their position as a platform to manufacture baby liberals to go out in the world as future leaders.

Whether this is a good or bad depends on where you stand. If you prefer those policies objectives, meaning that you're inclined to believe they are good and positive, the right thing for the country, then Walter's first shot may not strike home. After all, the reason some ideals are characterized as "politically correct" is that a lot of people think they are, well, politically correct.

Still, a warning. While the use of law schools as an incubator of liberal politics may not cause you to break out in hives, you may find Walter to be awfully persuasive in challenging simplistic notions of right and wrong, good and evil, that characterize political correctness. If your interest extends beyond people applauding you for agreeing with them, and actually comes anywhere near achieving a better understanding of issues and interests at stake, then Walter's challenge may give you pause to rethink your knee-jerk reactions. He may not turn you into a full-time libertarian, but he will add enormously to your understanding of what's at stake and why the solutions aren't nearly as clear and easy as you thought.

Then there's the second level, the one that grabbed me by the collar and shook me up. I now suffer from Shaken Lawyer Syndrome. If only there was a cause of action.

Bad ideas in the law schools have a way of not remaining abstract. They tend to mature, if that is the right word, into bad real-life proposals. Bad ideas in university French departments are of self-limiting importance, given that people on the outside are likely to go on speaking French in the usual way. Bad law can take away your liberty, your property, or your family.

The fundamental nature of instilling a belief that one political perspective is right and any others are

wrong is to close minds and prevent thought. Law students enter into the deal with the belief that their professors are honest brokers, teaching them what needs to be taught to a budding lawyer (and coincidentally budding future policy leader). They have good reason to trust that these people, attributed with the utmost credibility as being worthy of shaping young minds, will tell them the truth. As if there's a truth to tell.

There's little doubt that Walter is correct in asserting that some of these law students will eventually find themselves in positions of power. Contrary to the great unwashed who see no virtue in knowledge and education when dealing with legislation, a legal education has a critical place in government, not to the exclusion of engineers, nurses and sanitation collectors when it comes to policy choices, but in having the training to appreciate how the deal works.

Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, "both a law school graduate and a law professor," (a [somewhat dubious](#) allegation) are held out as examples to show how our political leaders were reared in "an environment of overwhelming leftism." No mention of how George W. Bush fit his two terms in between them, but the point is that they both, in the eyes of conservatives, are extremists. The point is that they reflect an abundance of influence in government of lawyers, and therefore an abundance of influence in the formation of political thought by the idea-instillers of their youth, lawprofs.

The lack of balance in the education of future leaders is the problem. Whether it's lefty or righty, the problem is that future leaders are indoctrinated rather than taught to expand their views, understand all sides and corners of the issues, not be trapped by political ideology so that they are incapable of considering the many interests, factors, consequences of policies, and how they affect people.

No one point of view owns righteousness, and the failure to recognize this and teach it to those who will someday have their hands on the wheel reflects a massive failure of the legal Academy.

There's a very real question whether the nice men and women who are now entrusted with young minds are capable of doing anything beyond instilling their own political beliefs in their students. Many simply can't see any other points of view, or feel it would be dishonest to teach something they don't believe in (as if their political sensibility is the bar for everyone).

Others are intellectually dishonest, an issue I've discussed with Walter in the past, willing to lie, cheat and steal to pursue an irrational political agenda because of how strongly they personally like the outcome. And they have no qualms manipulating thought to achieve their ends and stifle anyone who might challenge them. It's considered extremely rude in the Academy to call someone intellectually dishonest, so these people play on the politeness (and wimpiness) of others to ram their crap through. And we can anticipate that it will someday become accepted policy when our leaders embrace it as an article of faith taught them in their formative years.

What Walter Olson offers in *Schools for Misrule* is a challenge to the Academy to clean up its act, stop teaching liberalism as the only good policy and keep their mitts off the minds of our future leaders. Will they take the bait? Left to their own devices, not a chance. There's no group more inclined to circle the wagons and whimper to each other that they are the best and brightest, and outsiders are too mean and uncouth to be worthy of their attention.

Which means it's left to the rest of us, lawyers, pundits and those few lawprofs who have the guts to challenge their brethren, even in the typical tepid tones that characterize communications between intellectuals, to hold their feet to the fire. Will they? Will we? If we want better for our future, then we have no choice but to shake it up.

In Walter's honor,

It should be noted that this isn't really a review of Walter's book. That's because I received a pdf file of the book rather than a hard copy for review, hand inscribed with the requisite words, "*To that great humanitarian, Scott, for all he's done to expand my horizons and make my world a better place,*" so I can put it on my library shelf and stare at it with self-serving pleasure. Also, the [Publisher's Weekly](#) review pretty much captures my thoughts on the book itself, and there isn't much point in saying it again. If it's not worth the stamp to Wally, then who am I to disagree?