

WORLD

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Shame on Georgetown

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June 9th, 2022

The irony of the policies that supposedly promote diversity and create an inclusive community is that they have the perverse effect of excluding certain people from the community. Take as Exhibit A [the case of Ilya Shapiro](#), until recently executive director of the Georgetown Center for the Constitution at the Georgetown University Law Center.

Several months ago, during an interim period after Shapiro had been hired by Georgetown but while he was still closing out affairs at his previous position at the Cato Institute, he sent out [a trio of tweets](#). In them, he observed that because President Joe Biden was committed to appointing a black woman to the U.S. Supreme Court, other candidates from other backgrounds would never even be considered, even if they were more qualified. In other words, he made the point that in the pursuit of diversity and inclusion, many qualified candidates were being excluded.

But he did so in an inartful way that some took as demeaning and offensive, and he promptly apologized. But apologies were not enough for the woke crowd at Georgetown, who demanded his head, or at least his job. Georgetown has an entire bureaucracy devoted to inclusion and equity, and an investigation was launched as Shapiro was placed on administrative leave. Of course, it was never clear what exactly there was to investigate: The incident involved only a few hundred characters of tweeting. But the probe lasted from Jan. 31 to June 2, four full months. In the end, it looked to end not with a bang but a whimper: The law school said Shapiro's tweet was not covered by Georgetown's professional conduct policy because he was not yet an employee at the time it was posted. The case was closed on a technicality.

Nevertheless, Georgetown Law Dean William Treanor [opined](#) that Shapiro's tweet was "antithetical" to the university's values, including its commitment to "building a culture of equity and inclusion." Inclusion, that is, of all but Shapiro.

Shapiro had been hired to direct the Center for the Constitution, a rare outpost of conservative and libertarian thinking on the Georgetown faculty, overseen by professor Randy Barnett. Dean Treanor actually deserves credit for facilitating the center's development, a needed source of intellectual diversity on a faculty where fewer than five of the 158 full-time professors identify as conservative or libertarian.

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But the problem for programs like the Center for the Constitution and other academic institutes at other universities is this: The liberals who run universities will permit the one or two conservatives to have their own very small corner of the sandbox only as long as they do not say or do anything particularly conservative. If those professors use conservative logic to reach liberal results, like supporting criminal justice reform or doing dry research on tax policy, they can continue to putter along. But if they speak up and say something conservative on a topic like race, the woke will not tolerate their continued existence. More particularly, student activists will rise up in righteous indignation, regardless of any university free speech policy.

This is the irony of "diversity, equity, and inclusion" policies like bias response teams, which are proliferating on many campuses. In the name of inclusion, they end up excluding students or faculty whose religious or political views are labeled as harmful. For the sake of racial diversity, they destroy any notion of intellectual diversity. In the pursuit of supposedly safe spaces for racial minorities or women, they make for unsafe spaces for anyone who will not toe the new orthodoxy's line.

Shapiro eventually decided that after four months of forced paid leave from Georgetown, he would resign from his new job. If he had stayed, he would have returned to campus as a marked man, walking on eggshells in every lecture and seminar, always on the verge of a second thoughtcrime that would not be excused. He would be neutralized in his job, reduced to a pathetic half-life of saying and doing nothing interesting, knowing that taking a strong stand on anything could cost him everything and perhaps end the center itself as the last refuge for the ideas he believes in. So he quit. He explained why in an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Such a decision could not have been easy but is nevertheless courageous. Shame on Georgetown for not standing up for academic freedom in the first place.