

Universities Encourage Mob Censorship By Blaming The Victims

Canada's university presidents are helping to spread the cancer of mob censorship.

Western University is the latest offender, imposing a \$1,040 security fee on students who are hosting University of Toronto professor Jordan Peterson. Dr. Peterson made national headlines for refusing his university's edict to use gender-neutral pronouns.

Universities point to the violent mobs that gather to silence politically incorrect speech. Universities blame the speakers and their audiences. But blame rightfully lies with criminals who threaten violence, and with mobs that intimidate and shut down the events of those with whom they disagree.

University presidents reinforce the sentiment which says "I can't stand what you're saying, so I will silence you." Rather than teaching students how to think and debate, universities create a daycare where young adults are "safe" from having their beliefs challenged.

It is becoming increasingly popular -- and effective -- to impose security fees on student groups that seek to host a controversial speaker, or to express an unpopular view. For example, free speech has been priced out of existence at the University of Alberta, which charged a student pro-life club security fees of \$17,500 to erect a stationary display on campus for a day or two. Predictably, the event was cancelled.

While it's true that certain

neighbourhoods invite gangs and crime, we don't single out residents of high-crime neighbourhoods for additional police fees. By extorting "security fees" from those who seek only to exercise their legal rights to express their opinions and to listen to others, universities are blaming the victims and encouraging the bullies.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir knew better. When asked to place a curfew on women to help end a series of rapes, she replied: "But it is the men who are attacking the women. If there is to be a curfew, let the men stay at home."

In 1957, U.S. President Eisenhower grasped the difference between the illegal demands of a mob, and the freedom of citizens to exercise their legal rights. He ordered federal troops to escort nine black students into Little Rock Central High in furtherance of the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This court ruling to de-segregate American schools was highly unpopular in the American South. When school started in September, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus sided with the large, jeering and violence-threatening mob surrounding the school, which until then had been attended only by whites. Maintaining his popularity with voters, Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to keep the now-famous "Little Rock Nine" out of Central High.

Rather than pander to the mob, Eisenhower sent federal troops to uphold the rule of law, declaring: "This challenge must be met, and with such measures as will preserve to the people

as a whole their lawfully protected rights, in a climate permitting their free and fair exercise ... the troops are there pursuant to law." To the chagrin of Faubus, federal troops arrived in Little Rock on September 24. The troops protected the black students from the hostile mob, and ensured the Nine's safe entrance into Central High.

University presidents should ponder "the free and fair exercise" of "lawfully protected rights" enjoyed by "the people as a whole." Expressing your opinions on campus and listening to speakers are fundamental legal rights. There is no legal right to silence those you disagree with by disrupting their speaking engagements and shutting down their events.

What if president Eisenhower had demanded that the Arkansas Nine should pay for the costs of the federal troops? What if he had blamed these blacks for "provoking" the hostile mob? Yet Western University president Amit Chakma does exactly this: demanding that the victims of intimidation, who merely seek to exercise their legal right to speak and to listen, must pay for the bad behaviour of an angry mob.

Golda Meir understood the difference between those who engage in misconduct and those who are victimized by it. If Golda Meir were president of Western University, she would say "But it is the mob which attacks free expression. If there is to be a security fee, let the mob pay for it."

Calgary lawyer John Carpay is president of the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF.ca)