

Harvard professors buck trends, blast campus culture

Speak out against diversity, inclusion policies

BY VALERIE RICHARDSON THE [WASHINGTON TIMES](#), DEC. 28, 2023



Going against the “woke” grain isn’t a recipe for job security at Harvard, but some prominent faculty are bucking the tide as they seek to pull the university out of its downward spiral.

As the Ivy League school wrestles with a leadership crisis, a handful of Harvard professors have gone public with their criticisms of a repressive campus culture that prioritizes diversity, equity and inclusion over academic freedom.

Harvard may look like a leftwing monolith from the outside, but in reality “there are many faculty who are concerned about what recent events say about Harvard’s integrity as a place of scholarship,” said Mark Ramseyer, professor at Harvard Law School.

“They’re worried, they’re troubled, they’re concerned,” Mr. Ramseyer told The Washington Times. “Harvard is also divided between those who see the school’s role as understanding the world, and those who see its role as changing the world. Recent events have brought this last tension more closely to the surface.”

Mr. Ramseyer drew attention last week for his stunning critique of Harvard’s slide. He placed the blame squarely on faculty members — himself included — who saw what was happening as an illiberal DEI culture proliferated, but failed to speak up.

“The cancelling, the punishments, the DEI bureaucracy, the DEI statements, the endless list that we could all recite — all this happened on our watch. We saw it happen, but we did nothing,” said Mr. Ramseyer, who joined the law school in 1998, in an email that was posted on X.

“We were too busy. We were scared to speak up,” he said. “We — we on the faculty — let Harvard become what it is. The Harvard that we have is the result of our own collective moral failure.”

Others speaking out include psychology professor Steven Pinker, who unveiled his “fivepoint plan to save Harvard from itself” earlier this month in The Boston Globe, and former Harvard Medical School Dean Jeffrey Flier, who prescribed a similar course of treatment in a Dec. 23 op-ed in Quillette called “The Harvard Double Standard.”

All three academics belong to the Harvard Council on Academic Freedom, an organization of current and former Harvard faculty formed in April whose mission took on new urgency with the rise of campus antisemitism spurred by the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israeli civilians.

Compounding Harvard’s woes was President Claudine Gay’s disastrous appearance at a Dec. 5 House hearing, at which she testified under questioning by Rep. Elise Stefanik that whether calls for “genocide of Jews” would violate Harvard’s conduct code would depend on the context.

Astronomy professor Avi Loeb penned a “heartfelt letter” on Medium to Ms. Gay afterward, explaining that 65 members of his family were killed in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, and that “this is why we Jews are very sensitive to the word genocide.”

“Harvard is my home. I am proud of spending thirty years of my life as an educator and a researcher at Harvard,” Mr. Loeb wrote. “So why am I emotional about your testimony at the US Congress? Because it feels too close to home on all three levels of my identity: as a Jew, an Israeli-born American and a Harvard professor.”

Government professor Danielle Allen, co-chair of Harvard’s 2018 task force on inclusion and belonging, has also taken the university to task. She said in a Washington Post op-ed that the DEI program has “stumbled badly” by, for example, overlooking the task force’s emphasis on academic freedom, religious identity and political diversity.

A handful of Harvard professors have gone public with their criticisms of the university. They find fault with the campus culture. ASSOCIATED PRESS

Both Ms. Allen and Mr. Loeb are members of the academicfreedom council.

The university took another hit to its brand after the Lauder Business School in Vienna, Austria, withdrew earlier this month from Harvard’s Microeconomics of Competitiveness Network over antisemitism concerns.

The English-language business school was founded in 2003 by billionaire Ronald Lauder, who suspended in October his giving to the University of Pennsylvania, his alma mater, over its response to campus antisemitism.

Calls for Ms. Gay to resign are mounting, but Mr. Pinker said “firing the coach” won’t fix the ingrained institutional woes that beset Harvard and other universities.

He called for Harvard to adopt a “clear and conspicuous policy on academic freedom”; a “stated policy of institutional neutrality”; a ban on “vandalism, trespassing and extortion,” including the “heckler’s veto” frequently invoked by students to shut down unpopular speakers; expand viewpoint diversity, and disempower DEI.

“Universities should stanch the flood of DEI officials, expose their policies to the light of day, and repeal the ones that cannot be publicly justified,” said Mr. Pinker.

He also took issue with Harvard wrapping itself in the First Amendment in the face of criticism over anti-Israel and pro-Hamas protests, bringing up its record of punishing speakers with disfavored views.

“Harvard has persecuted scholars who said there are two sexes, or who signed an amicus brief taking the conservative side in a Supreme Court deliberation,” said Mr. Pinker. “It has retracted acceptances from students who were outed by jealous peers for having used racist trash talk on social media when they were teens.

He cited the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression’s free-speech rankings, which placed Harvard 248th out of 248 universities with a lowest-possible score of 0.0.

“Harvard’s subzero FIRE rating reveals many other punishments of politically incorrect peccadillos,” Mr. Pinker said.

Dr. Flier said that some faculty accept the DEI “oppressor/ oppressed dichotomy and decolonization ideology,” but that others, many of them in the sciences and engineering, “ignore these ideas and programs or privately oppose them, and they have been largely invisible to the general public.”

“This all changed after Oct 7, when the concerns of Jewish students about the antisemitism they faced on campus were either ignored by DEI functionaries, or worse, with some stating that Jews and Israelis were identified as among the ‘oppressor class’ and therefore required no DEI attention,” said Dr. Flier, co-chair of the council.

The public criticism by eminent faculty would be notable at any university, but especially at Harvard, which has dealt sharply with those who deviate from the left-wing party line.