



Radical Parents, Despotic Children Sooner or later, Orwellian methods on campus will lead to Orwellian outcomes.

demonstration on the school's campus in Newton, Mass.

Students at Boston College during a Nov. 12 solidarity

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“Liberal Parents, Radical Children,” was the title of a 1975 book by Midge Decter, which tried to make sense of how a generation of munificent parents raised that self-obsessed, politically spastic generation known as the Baby Boomers. The book was a case study in the tragedy of good intentions.

“We proclaimed you sound when you were foolish in order to avoid taking part in the long, slow, slogging effort that is the only route to genuine maturity of mind and feeling,” Miss Decter told the Boomers. “While you were the most indulged generation, you were also in many ways the most abandoned to your own meager devices.”

Meager devices came to mind last week while reading the “[Statement of Solidarity](#)” from Nancy Cantor, chancellor of the Newark, N.J., campus of Rutgers University. Solidarity with whom, or what? Well, Paris, but that was just for starters. Ms. Cantor also made a point of mentioning lives lost to terrorist attacks this year in Beirut and Kenya, and children “lost at sea seeking freedom,” and “lives lost that so mattered in Ferguson and Baltimore and on,” and “students facing racial harassment on campuses from Missouri to Ithaca and on.”

And this: “We see also around us the scarring consequences of decade after decade, group after group, strangers to each other, enemies even within the same land, separated by an architecture of segregation, an economy of inequality, a politics of polarization, a dogma of intolerance.”

It is an astonishing statement. Ms. Cantor, 63, is a [well-known](#) figure in academia, a former president of Syracuse University who won liberal [acclaim](#) by easing admissions standards in the name of diversity and inclusiveness. At publicly funded Rutgers she earns a base [salary](#) of \$385,000, a point worth mentioning given her stated concern for inequality. The Newark Star-Ledger [praised](#) her as a “perfect fit” for the school on account of her “exceptional involvement in minority recruitment and town-gown relations.”

Yet this Stanford Ph.D. (in psychology) appears to be incapable of constructing a grammatical sentence or writing intelligible prose. All the rhetorical goo about the “architecture of segregation” and “dogma of intolerance” rests on deep layers of mental flab. She is a perfect representative of American academia. And American academia is, by and large, idiotic.

That’s why I’m not altogether sorry to see the wave of protests, demands, sit-ins and cave-ins sweeping university campuses from Dartmouth to Princeton to Brandeis to Yale. What destroys also exposes; what they are trashing was already trashy. It’s time for the rest of the country sit up and take notice.

For almost 50 years universities have adopted racist policies in the name of equality, repressive speech codes in the name of tolerance, ideological orthodoxy in the name of intellectual freedom. Sooner or later, Orwellian methods will lead to Orwellian outcomes. Those coddled, bullying undergrads shouting their demands for safer spaces, easier classes, and additional racial set-asides are exactly what the campus faculty and administrators deserve.

In other words, the radical children who grew up to run the universities have duplicated the achievement of their parents, and taken it a step further. In three generations, the campuses have moved from indulgent liberalism to destructive radicalism to the raised-fist racism of the present—with each generation left to its increasingly meager devices. Why should anyone want to see this farce repeated as tragedy 10 or 20 years down the road?

Education entrepreneurs have long been trying to find a new way forward, without much success. For-profit schools could help—if they weren’t the constant target of liberal invective and government investigations. It might help, too, if concerned alumni could apply greater pressure on their alma maters in the face of these campus uprisings. But as the Bass family discovered when they tried to establish a Western Civilization program at Yale some 25 years ago, rich schools can afford to blow off rich alumni.

A better way might be to found great new universities, as John D. Rockefeller did with the University of Chicago or Andrew Carnegie did with the Carnegie Technical Schools (later Carnegie Mellon) in Pittsburgh. Is there an Adelson or a Gates or a Walton University to be started along similar lines, perhaps on the campuses of colleges that have recently closed their doors? It would help, too, if these new schools adopted the model of Hillsdale College in Michigan (where there are no protests) by refusing to accept federal subsidies, thus relieving them of the strictures and mandates by which the government enforces political correctness.

The campus uprisings of 2015 are the latest symptom of the disease of the American academy. Nobody should be surprised by it. Whether the disease of the academy also becomes the disease of the American mind depends on how far we are willing to let this go. Another generation shouldn’t be incubated in idiocy before we try something new.

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