



The Trump Admin's Assault on Academic Freedom Hurts ALL Students

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): One of the things that has happened that I think has not gotten enough attention is being the president of an Ivy League university was previously one of the safest jobs in the world. Just being a university president in general. I remember when I went to NYU Law School and college in George Washington as well, the university president stayed for decades. The president of Princeton was my constitutional law professor at NYU. He was very young, maybe in his early 30s, he stayed there for a few years, went to Princeton, worked his way up, became Princeton president like 1996, Christopher Eisgruber, he's still the president of Princeton. These are jobs that people keep for life. And yet, since October 7th, four different Ivy League American presidents have been forced out of their job all over the same issue, Israel; and allowing bigotry on campus to thrive, antisemitism. Two of them at Columbia, one at Harvard, one at the University of Pennsylvania, and now two at Columbia. The latest Columbia university president was just forced out on Friday, even though she agreed to all the Trump administration's terms, because she reportedly, someone claimed, the Free Press claimed, Bari Weiss's pro-Israel thing claimed that she had said privately: Yes, I'm agreeing to these, but I'm going to slow off them. We're not going to just rush and do these. And the Trump administration went ballistic, Israel supporters went ballistic and forced the second university president of Columbia out in a year and replaced her with somebody who actually has appeared on the stage of AIPAC to vow bipartisan loyalty to Israel to talk about the need to keep bipartisan support and financing of Israel. She's a Jewish woman who has appeared at AIPAC and still there's already a move to get rid of her, too, on the grounds that she's insufficiently pro-Israel. You can be a Jewish woman who goes to AIPAC, gets up on the stage and talks about the importance of keeping bipartisan support for Israel and still be insufficiently pro-Israel to the point where the government won't allow you to assume the presidency of Columbia.

Here from the Wall Street Journal on Friday: *Columbia University President Steps Down Trump Battle*. Quote, "The university's board's co-chair, Claire Shipman, was named acting president. Katerina Armstrong is returning to lead the school's Irving Medical Centre. Armstrong is the second president to exit in seven months as Columbia has navigated a series of crises stemming from pro-Palestinian protests that disrupted campuses last year. Last

week, the school reached an agreement with the administration that included restricting masks, empowering campus police, and appointing a senior vice provost with broad authority to oversee the department of Middle East, South Asian, and African Studies. Over the weekend, Armstrong held closed-door meetings with anxious faculty about the deal". You know why the faculty is anxious? Because in America, the government isn't supposed to dictate the curriculum and the administration and the teaching of what can be done at our elite colleges. That's supposed to be left up to academics, professors. That's what academic freedom means, is the ability to teach and to say and to express to yourself how you want free of government coercion and control. This would be like if the Biden administration came to universities and said: We're going to take away all your funding unless you fire every last conservative. You still have a few conservatives on the campus. They oppose affirmative action. They oppose DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion). We think that's racist. You have to get rid of them. Or who say that there's only two genders, and that's transphobic, and it incites violence against trans people. You have to get rid of them. Do you think conservatives would be supporting that and saying: Oh yeah, that's the role of the government, that is totally fine. Of course not, they would be screaming that Joe Biden is a tyrant, they should be doing the same now that Trump is doing that just in defence of a different group. The article goes on, quote, "Some faculty said they were concerned that Armstrong was playing down what Columbia had agreed to, and presenting one message to the faculty and another to the government. The Trump administration pushed her to clarify her position on Tuesday she issued a statement publicly affirming her commitment to the agreement. On Friday after Armstrong stepped down, the Trump Administration's antisemitism task force said, quote: 'The action taken today by Columbia's trustees, especially in light of this week's concerning revelation, is an important step toward advancing negotiations to step forth in the pre-conditional understanding reached last Friday between the University and the Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism'".

Is going on a crusade to purge bigotry from American campuses using a combination of government coercion and control and expanded hate speech codes, what conservatives wanted? Because I had always understood that conservatives were deeply offended by those sorts of things. And the reason I thought that was because they'd been screening that for as long as I can remember. One of the weird things, really weird things, is that there are a lot of members of the Republican party in Congress who are not Jewish, but who are more fanatical about Israel than almost every Jewish member of Congress. And they love to speak for all Jewish people. They've irrigated to themselves the right to speak, for Jewish people. So here is Congressman Mike Lawler of New York, who is not Jewish, despite how much he loves to purport to speak for Jewish People everywhere. Like kind of the white saviour hero, who comes down and protects all Jews; so grateful to him, so, so grateful. Kind of like a Robin DiAngelo type, but for Jews. And the new president of Columbia, the third one, is Claire Shipman, who, as I said, is a Jewish woman who has actually been at AIPAC. She's married to Obama's former press secretary, Jay Carney, who's served for the last decade as the spokesperson for Amazon. These are not actually far left radicals, these are like corporatist types. Claire Shipman is very much pro-Israel. But here is Mike Lawler on Friday saying she has to go because she's not Jewish enough. He quote-tweeted the New York Post. The New

York post said: "Columbia's new president called Congress's hearings on antisemitism, quote, 'nonsense'". And then Mike Lawler said: "This is a slap in the face to every Jewish student on your campus. Resign now". She's the third president. She barely is in office for like six seconds, and he's saying: You're offensive to all Jewish people, step down. Who is Michael Lawler to speak for all Jewish students? Huge numbers of Jewish students participated in those protests, we had them on our show. In fact, so many Jewish students were participating in the protest that they had a Shabbat dinner every Friday night inside the protest encampment. Here is Claire Shipman, the new president, who Mike Lawler and many others think is insufficiently pro-Israel to lead Columbia. Here she was on the stage at AIPAC with the Democratic Senator Chris Coons, a virulent supporter of Israel, obviously very bipartisan, and they talked about the need to maintain bipartisan support for AIPAC. Here's just a little snippet.

Claire Shipman (CS): Thanks for coming today.

Chris Coons (CC): Great to be with you Claire. Thanks to AIPAC for a great conference and a chance to join you again.

CS: Senator Coons, you just returned from a trip to Israel. We were talking about it backstage. It sounds as though it was fascinating. You had an opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu, visit the Syrian border. What is your candid sense of Israel's security situation coming away from the trip?

GG: The whole thing was all about Israel and how fortunate and grateful you should be that you got to go make pilgrimage to Benjamin Netanyahu, the most important leader in the world who represents the most important country. Here from the Columbia Spectator, the student newspaper at Columbia from yesterday: *Here's what to know about Claire Shipman, Columbia's new acting president*. Quote, "Shipman, an award-winning journalist, served as co-chair of the board of trustees before assuming the presidency. She was married to Jay Carney, who served as the White House press secretary under former President Barack Obama". It's a little background on her. This is not some far left, pro-Hamas radical or whatever they're trying to imply she is to force out the third Columbia president in the last seven months over this one foreign country. Here is Minouche Shafik, who was testifying before the House, and listen to what she had to say about Columbia's administration.

Minouche Shafik (MS): We have had pro-Israeli demonstrations on campus...

GG: I should say this is the first, this was the president at the time that October 7th happened. She made all sorts of statements condemning the protesters. She called NYPD multiple times to have them all arrested. Not enough. She was forced out. But here's what she was saying in April 2024 when she was still the Columbia president.

Minouche Shafik (MS): I have seen, we have had pro-Israeli demonstrations on campus.

Ilhan Omar (IO): No, no, no. Just a protest that was against Muslims?

MS: No, I have not.

IO: Have you seen one against Arabs?

MS: No, I have not.

IO: Have you seen one against Palestinians?

MS: No, I have not.

IO: Have you seen one against Jewish people? Have you seen a protest saying we are against Jewish people?

MS: No. I have seen...

IO: OK, thank you for that clarification.

GG: I mean, think what you want about Ilhan Omar, I really don't care. That was a very clever and effective way of asking this question. Because she did say: Yes, there have been protests against Israel. And there have been protests in favour of Israel. So then Ilhan Omar said: Are there protests against Muslims and Arabs and Palestinians, meaning the pro-Israel protests? And she said: No, those weren't protests against those groups. And then Ilhan Omar said: What about any other protests, including the protests against the Israeli destruction of Gaza? Were those protests against Jews? And she was forced to say no, because of course they weren't. This is the point. Everybody involved in American discourse understands that criticism of Israel is immediately depicted as antisemitic. I mean, you're allowed to criticise Israel as long as you're still pro-Israel. You're allowed to say: Oh, I think Israel should be more aggressive here. Pull back a little here. I think the Netanyahu government is wrong when they're doing... as long as you're pledging your loyalty to Israel, you can criticise them for constructive reasons to help Israel. But you cannot criticise Israel in a way that shows that you're opposed to either what they're doing in wars or the US support for them. That's antisemitic. And that is what is being systematically outlawed by what the Trump administration is doing. I mean, it's just true. I am somebody who has spent nine years, eight years, denouncing what I regarded as baseless or excessive attacks on Donald Trump, attempts to malign him, fabrications of scandal, I don't just go around or flexibly criticising the Trump administration, but when I see, as somebody who really does believe in the Constitution, who really does believe in the value of free speech, and academic freedom, and free discourse, and free protest, and due process, speaking of other issues as well, I'm not going to sit by and watch college campuses have their free speech rights destroyed in service of a foreign government and not say anything. Here's Mike Johnson, the Speaker of the House, who in April of 2024 decided that he wanted to dictate who should be Columbia's president.

Mike Johnson (MJ): Sadly, Columbia's administrators have chosen to let the threats, the fear and the intimidation of the mob rule, to overtake American principles like free speech and the

free exchange of ideas and the free exercise of religion. They have co-opted First Amendment arguments to protect genocide and to elevate the voices of antisemitism.

GG: It's just so ironic, so, so ironic to hear one of the leading lights of the conservative movement go to a college campus and say: We need to stop this kind of speech because it's pro-genocidal or inciting genocide. You just heard the college president say, there's no protest against Jews on campus. There's protests against Israelis on campus, and that's because the protests are filled with Jewish critics of Israel. But that's what liberals have been doing for a decade. They say: Oh, you cannot criticise the trans people because that's inciting genocide. You cannot criticise any dogma designed to help black people get ahead because that is racist and will incite violence against them. It's hate speech, et cetera. You know all the arguments. These are the arguments now being repeated in order to justify a censorship regime, but in defence of a group, that the Republican Party, for whatever reason, and there are a lot of different reasons, financial, cultural, religious, ideological, holds above all the others, holds it sacred.

The same thing is now spreading to Harvard. Here from today, the New York Times: *The Trump administration Will Review Billions in Funding for Harvard*. Now I will get to the point in just a second about why it is that the US government provides research funding to American universities. There's actually a very good reason for it. They're not funding gender studies programmes. These are what fund the leading research institutes in the country, in the world, that produce cures for diseases, scientific advancements, advances in AI and space, and in tech, so I'll get to that in a minute. But here's the Trump administration, they're not threatening to withdraw federal funding for all universities, just the ones that they think are allowing too much anti-Israel speech. Quote, "In a statement on Monday, the administration says it was examining about 256 million dollars in contracts, as well as another 8.7 billion in what it described as, quote, 'multiyear grant commitments'. Quote, 'This administration has proven we will take swift action to hold institutions accountable if they allow antisemitism to fester', a senior official at the General Services" –just let me go back a little bit. Let me just read you this quote, pretend this is coming from the Biden administration. Quote, "This administration, the Biden administration has proved that we will take swift action to hold institutions accountable if they allow racism against black people or transphobia or xenophobia to fester, a senior official at the General Service Administration added". Quote, "'We will not hesitate to act if Harvard fails to do so'. Alan M. Garber, Harvard's president, was not immediately available for comment". I should add that Harvard's current president, and I think it's like six out of the last seven, have been Jewish. Many of their major donors are Jewish. Their faculty is filled with people who are Jewish, who hold all kinds of views about Israel, some vehemently pro-Israel like Alan Dershowitz was all those decades he was at Harvard, some critical of Israel mildly but still supportive of Israel, some vocally, it's a diversity of opinion which is what we're supposed to have. Quote, "But he has previously emphasised the importance of federal money to the university's operation", this is the president of Harvard. Quote, "'We could not carry out our mission the way we do without substantial federal research support, nor could we provide the benefits to the nation that we

do now without that support', Dr. Garber said in a December interview at the Harvard Crimson, the campus newspaper".

Again, this is not studying undergraduate programmes. This is funding the most sophisticated medical centres and hospitals and scientific research into cures. This is why we have these kinds of government funding. In fact, Marc Andreessen, who was one of the people accredited correctly with developing the modern internet in the late 1990s, he is credited with developing the browser Netscape that was then sold to Microsoft. He's now become a very vocal Trump supporter. His firm, Andreessen Horowitz, has people placed all around the Trump administration. He spent time at Mar-a-Lago, a lot of time in the transition. He's a Trump supporter, Marc Andreessen. And he gave an interview to the New York Times columnist Ross Douthat on January 17th, just a few days before the administration was to take office, the Trump administration. And the title was: *How Democrats Drove Silicon Valley Into Trump's Arms*. Marc Andreessen explains the newest faction of conservatism. But one of the things Marc Andreessen pointed out in this interview, was that the reason the United States developed the internet, the reason the United States became a leader of the internet, the reason Silicon Valley exists, it drove so much American wealth, is because the US government funded so many academic research institutions to do research into the internet, into browsing, into all of that. That's why we fund American academic institutions because it produces innovation and benefits that benefit the entire country. Here's what Andreessen said, quote, "Basically I'm a product of the great land grant universities, the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. It was a huge leap to actually leave that state and go to a university that large where I came from. And they had this incredible influx of money at the time from the federal government for supercomputers and what turned out to be the internet". He went on: "Actually, by the way, that was kind of led by Al Gore when he was in the Senate. I always thought he got unfairly treated by how people described this later. But he led the push" – and then Douthat interjects: "Oh, you mean that he took the lead on inventing the internet". That was one of the things, when Al Gore was running for president in 2000, conservatives attacked him for saying, I invented the internet, and here's Andreessen about that: "So the famous quote is, 'I invented the internet.' He actually never said that. I'll defend Al Gore's honour to the death. What he said is, 'I took the lead in the Senate in creating the internet.' What he meant is that he was the tip of the spear for funding four national supercomputing centres. They picked four college campuses, and Illinois was one of them. So the Illinois campus, when I was there, was like living in the future. We had computers, which literally cost up to \$30 million a pop, that basically were representative of what was to come. We just had them a decade before everybody else because of this program".

So if you're going to take the view that the American government should just stop funding universities, you can certainly take that view. The US government is not forced to fund research institutes at universities. But it would cripple innovation in the United States if you did that. But that's not even what's happening here. The Trump administration is not defunding American academic institutions. They're using that funding as leverage to force them to be less permissive about criticism of Israel on their campus. And they're all complying because, as the President of Harvard said, we wouldn't be the leading academic

institute that we were if we lost federal funding. It's not the classroom that makes us the leading institute, it is that we can attract the leaders of each field, knowing that they'll have the opportunity to engage in research that leads to cures, leads to innovations, that then benefits the entire country. The Trump administration is not defunding universities. They're just using it as a leverage to suppress speech they dislike.

Here from the Jewish News Syndicate on March 31, 2025, this happened on Friday night as well: *Head of Harvard's Middle East studies centre told to step down by the end of the year.* Quote, "Rabbi David Wolpe, a former member of Harvard's Antisemitism Advisory Group, said that the change in leadership was, quote, 'good news.'" Just like they're changing the control of Columbia's Middle East study programme, they're doing the same at Harvard now. So that people like Rabbi David Wolpe can step in, just like Benjamin Netanyahu was celebrating, like David Friedman was threatening, to outlaw criticism of Israel. They've always been very concerned that American academic institutions were the epicentre of protests against Israel. And this is not the first time, by the way, that disruptive protests have happened across American college campuses. It's kind of an iconic tradition in American academic life. In part because when you're 18 and 20 and 21, you're looking for your political expression, you're 23, 24, a grad student. You're much more apt to protest than when you have a family and a job. So protesting is a young person's activity in general, so when you congregate a bunch of young people on a college campus, it's likely to lead to protests. I certainly had a lot of protests at the schools I went to. Obviously, it was one of the things that helped stop the Vietnam War. Protests were often violent and disruptive at colleges across the United States in the 60s against the Vietnam war in favour of the civil rights movement, far more so than these protests were. One of the things that scares Israel and its supporters so much was that the epicentre of activism against the apartheid regime in South Africa that helped to bring it down was a protest movement throughout American campuses demanding that their schools divest from South Africa to bring down the apartheid regime. And that's why Israel wants to make it illegal. And in many places in Europe, they've done so and have started to do so in the United States, too, to advocate a boycott of Israel. So they look at the United States, Israel does, and they're like, where do we need to go to stop this growing sentiment against our country? Oh, well, TikTok. Here's TikTok. They allow a lot of Israel criticism. We need to ban that. The ADL (Anti-Defamation League) said, ban that, and that's what caused enough votes from the Democratic Party to finally ban TikTok. Not in fear of China, but a fear that after October 7th, TikTok was allowing too much pro-Palestinian or anti-Israel speech. So they got rid of TikTok. Or at least Trump for now is ignoring it but at some point they're going to force a sale or ban it. And then college campuses are the other place and that's what their target is. It's a foreign country targeting the civil liberties and free speech rights and academic freedom of our country that have long been crucial to our country's prosperity.

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END

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