



FIRE is a nonprofit educational foundation devoted to free speech, individual liberty, religious freedom, the rights of conscience, legal equality, due process, and academic freedom on our nation's campuses.

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Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

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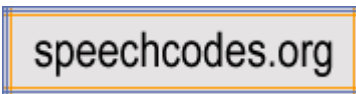
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Read excerpts from *The Shadow University* by Alan Charles Kors & Harvey A. Silverglate.



Read *Thought Reform 101* by Alan Charles Kors.

President of Shaw University Fires a Professor and Evicts a Student for “Disloyalty”

RALEIGH, NC—At Shaw University during fall 2002, Gale Isaacs, long-time professor and chair of the Allied Health Department, was fired for co-authoring a faculty resolution that criticized the University’s president and Board of Trustees. President Talbert O. Shaw personally fired her for “faithlessness [and] disloyalty.” She had worked at the University for nineteen years. Four days later, Shaniqua Bizzell, a student who was preparing to graduate within a month, read aloud and distributed Professor Isaacs’ resolution in the student center. President Shaw summoned her to his office and expelled her without a hearing. Several days later, she received a letter from Vice President for Student Affairs Vaughan Witten that found her guilty of “causing damage to the reputation of those falsely exposed to the scurrilous accusations.” Although the letter rescinded the indefensible expulsion, she was given several days to “move out of housing.” Ms. Bizzell has secured legal counsel and is pursuing a case against Shaw University.

“The message is clear,” said Alan Charles Kors, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE): “Academic freedom does not exist at Shaw University. Contrary to what President Shaw’s behavior implies, the institution was neither named after nor belongs to him.”

On October 24, 2002, an anonymous resolution circulated among Shaw University faculty, lamenting “the present atmosphere of contention and distrust of the Faculty and Staff ... with regard to the Shaw University Board of Trustees, the Academic Administration and the sitting President.” It called for President Shaw to honor his promise to step down at the end of 2002. On November 12, Isaacs admitted to being one of the authors of the letter. She was immediately stripped of her position as department chair. On November 18, she received a letter of termination from President Shaw. The letter stated that her involvement in the resolution “demonstrated faithlessness in and disloyalty to the University and exhibited an unwillingness to work for the common good of the



Read *Memo to Free Speech Advocates University of Wisconsin-Madison* by Harvey A. Silverglate.

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University.” She was banned from campus, given until the end of that day to gather her belongings, and escorted from her office by campus security.

In a letter of January 13, 2003, to President Shaw, FIRE noted that he had seriously damaged liberty on his campus and violated his institution’s own policies, including its guarantee of both academic freedom and “the fullest freedom of political thought and activity.” FIRE wrote, “The right to criticize the administration and the sitting president of a university is well within the customary understanding of what free speech and academic freedom mean in this country.... While some things may be unclear about the outer parameters of free speech, it is uncontested that, **at its core**, free speech exists to allow people to air grievances on matters of public concern and to question the legitimacy and decisions of those in power. Isaacs’s resolution is the very essence of the heart of free speech. To fire her for this is to demonstrate grave hostility to freedom itself.”

On January 15, President Shaw responded that given FIRE’s pledge to “use its full media and legal resources to support Gale Isaacs, we have been advised by our attorneys not to respond to your letter.” Kors said, “On President Shaw’s campus, if you express your opinion about abuses of power—indeed, if you merely express your opinion—you lose your livelihood or you forfeit your education. How can free inquiry last one minute in such an atmosphere?

“FIRE is committed to defending the rights of free expression at Shaw University,” said Kors. “President Shaw has planned to retire soon, but the damage he caused and the chilled climate he created will remain. Vice President Witten—who callously evicted Shaniqua Bizzell for exercising her free speech rights—will remain. Freedom is in great peril at this institution.”

FIRE is a nonprofit educational foundation that unites civil rights and civil liberties leaders, scholars, journalists, and public intellectuals from across the political and ideological spectrum on behalf of individual rights, due process rights, freedom of expression, academic freedom, and rights of conscience on our campuses. FIRE's efforts to preserve liberty at Shaw University and elsewhere can be seen by visiting www.thefire.org.

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