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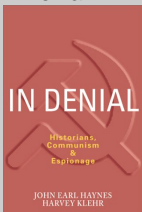
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Reforming Brown

By **Stephen Beale**

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David Horowitz's speech on October 22 revealed just how imperiled academic freedom and intellectual diversity are at Brown. Immediately following the speech, several student groups sponsored meetings ostensibly to continue the discussion. Of particular note was the meeting of Students for Social Justice, in which Associate Provost and Director of Institutional Diversity Brenda Allen repudiated Horowitz and the efforts of the College Republicans in bringing conservative speakers to campus. The ultimate insult came from the Undergraduate Finance Board, which paid Horowitz barely more than a tenth of his regular speaking fee. These circumstances make it eminently clear that President Ruth Simmons must undertake drastic action to ensure that Horowitz's speech is not an isolated incident—a time-out from the ideological insanity that has done so much to damage Brown's academic integrity. The following is an outline of three possible arenas of reform:

1. Rethinking the Third World Center. When Alan Kors and Harvey Silverglate wrote *The Shadow University*, they most certainly had something like the Third World Center at Brown in mind. Founded in 1976, the organization has been at the epicenter of racial tensions at Brown for decades. Originally the center responded to the needs of under-qualified black students admitted under affirmative action policies. In recent years, this program has evolved into the odious Third World Transition Program which sponsors a separate orientation for minority students prior to the regular orientation of all incoming freshmen.

Although critics have condemned this program for what it really is—a form of segregation—proponents continue to defend it as necessary for introducing participants to “the issues they will encounter at Brown as minorities in a predominantly white institution.” (One strains to imagine why—with a black president, and significant percentage of minority students, professors, and administrators—Brown qualifies as a “white institution.”) This program specializes in treating students like victims, spawns separatism, and stresses the formation of a collective racial consciousness at the expense of individual empowerment.

Moreover, the Third World Center has distinguished itself as an incubator for radical ideologies. For instance, the center's Web site proudly declares allegiance to the ideas of Franz Fanon, the prophet of post-colonialism who celebrated violence



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as “cleansing force” that “frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction.” A constant source of division and racial animosity, the Third World Center needs to be transformed into an institution that contributes to the common good of the student body in ways that transcend racial boundaries.

2. Renewing institutional support for intellectual diversity. President Simmons’ administration remains ambivalent about its commitment to a conception of diversity deeper than skin color. This summer Simmons hired a new Associate Provost, Brenda Allen, to serve as the University’s first Director of Institutional Diversity. A major responsibility of her position entails coordinating and clarifying the University’s policies and programs regarding diversity. Thus far Allen’s public statements have only spread confusion and angered skeptics. In an interview with *The Brown Spectator* she professed her faith in intellectual diversity as an educational ideal and made similar comments during Horowitz’s speech. Yet Allen reversed her position when she told a group of students last Thursday that if “anyone left there [the Horowitz speech] feeling they learned something significant about anything, that’s a shame.”

Simmons and Allen should unequivocally endorse the concept of intellectual diversity. Such support should extend beyond mere verbal affirmations. Creating institutional support for an annual conference modeled after Professor John Tomasi’s “Free Your Mind” conference is a good first step. An alternative is creating a University fund for the purpose of bringing conservative speakers to campus.

3. Revising the Principles of the Brown University Community. The “Principles of the Brown University Community” and “Student Rights and Responsibilities” contain language that constitutes a speech code. One of the possible offenses involves “subjecting another person or group to abusive, threatening, intimidating, or harassing actions, including, but not limited to, those based on race, religion, gender, disability, age, economic status, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.” The Office of Student Life’s Web site confirms that this prohibition extends to speech itself: “Brown regards all incidents of racial harassment, whether verbal, written or physical as violations of the [Principles of the Brown University Community].”

In two instances the University has shown its willingness to punish students for “verbal actions.” In 1991, Douglas Hann was expelled after shouting racial epithets another student. Another student was suspended for four years for a similar incident in 1993. In recent years, the infamous “speech codes” at Brown and other universities have generated a lot of negative publicity. In 1998, *The Shadow University* exposed the abuses of such disciplinary systems, decrying an “emerging tyranny over all aspects of student life.”

What makes these cases so disturbing is that they create an atmosphere of intolerance and intimidation in which students who hold views contrary to the prevailing ideology (no doubt disseminated with the help of the Third World Center) keep their thoughts to themselves. This summer, the University adopted some of the recommendations for reform suggested by a 16-member review committee. Yet according to former Brown ACLU President Carl Takei ’02, the changes failed to remove the hate speech code that has fueled such controversy. Further reform is necessary to demonstrate the University’s unconditional commitment to freedom of speech. Until then, the specter of the slippery slope will continue to haunt students who dare to challenge the ideological hegemony of the Left at Brown.

Horowitz's very presence on campus suggests that Brown is ripe for reform. In 2001, when the *Brown Daily Herald* printed a polemical advertisement by Horowitz, the campus erupted in an orgy of radicalism. During the controversy, the College Republicans were conspicuously missing in action. When the opportunity to invite Horowitz materialized, they rescinded their invitation. The leadership convened only one meeting during the whole year—and this was to elect officers for the next year.

Over the course of the past two years, a new generation of students has resurrected the Right. Classical liberals formed the quasi-libertarian Students for Liberty. Likewise, traditional conservatives created a chapter of Young Americans for Freedom. A number of issue-specific groups have also emerged, including Brown Students for Life and Students for Academic Freedom. This nascent conservative community even publishes its own monthly magazine, *The Brown Spectator*. And the College Republicans have reclaimed for themselves their reputation as the flagship conservative organization. In fact, it was the College Republicans who formally hosted David Horowitz when he visited in October. Successful reform critically depends upon the active support of this vibrant community of conservatives.

In the aftermath of the events of 2001, one former *Herald* editor expressed his conviction that “[t]hese strike me as very uncertain times for the University.” Brown's future remains equally uncertain in 2003. Never has the cause of academic freedom been more threatened, yet never have the opportunities been greater.

Stephen Beale is the editor of *The Brown Spectator* and a columnist for *The Brown Daily Herald*.



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