

Our College Cesspools

One of the basic tenets that I learned as a trial lawyer was the importance of going out and getting the facts. A former partner of mine once said to me, "You can't argue with the facts of your own case law." That thought never departed from my view of litigation or my understanding of how the world operates.

With this thought in mind, going out and getting the facts, I did the same thing that Peggy Noonan recently did. I was not aware of her foray to Columbia, but for several weekends I have been in the Philadelphia area, visiting colleges, trying to talk to pro-Hamas students, and spending some time at the campus Chabads.

I talk much less than I normally do, and I listened to the students. What did they have to say? What is motivating them?

The college squatters and those marching in the streets have been immaculately trained not to reveal who they are, not to talk to "outsiders," and to revile the American democracy. On many of the campuses, students are in the minority. I found that those hanging around the tents, and near those locations, do not want to talk to me, because I look like a Jew to them. I remember as a kid being told by prior generations of Jews who had suffered through the Holocaust in Europe and Pogroms in Russia, "Don't look too Jewish." My ancestors died in the gas chambers built by Nazi Germany and their Polish cohorts. They were beaten, raped, and degraded throughout Eastern Europe. It is therefore understandable that Jews even with a dim memory of the past, who had very little relationship with their ancestors, are learning the primordial fear that their ancestors lived with every day.

Why will the squatters, those who support Hamas, and apologists for terror refuse to engage in discourse, speak their views, avoid the press, and shout slogans like they were at a football game? Who are the handlers? Where does all the money come from for the tents and the fancy catered food that arrives in electric cars at campuses throughout America?

We are only beginning to understand how pernicious the invasion of our colleges and universities has been by those who seek our destruction. By "our," I mean all of us. Jews have become so assimilated and so much a part of America that "down with the Jews" also means "down with America." Jews are the canary in the mine. Remember that the canary was used to sense carbon dioxide which could kill the miners. The canary died first.

I was unsuccessful in getting any of the pro-Hamas student protestors to talk with me. I did finally manage to corral a student here and there on campus who was outside of the "encampment," and no longer under the control of their demonic, twisted lieutenants. Most of them, the students that is, were cheery, upbeat, and behaved like they had just come from a great frat party. When it came to discussing history, politics,

or law, I more often than not received a blank gaze. When I talked to them about history, they had never heard of some of the basic facts which represent the underpinnings of the American national motif. They knew even less about Judaism and Israel. Engagement in dialogue was missing.

When I went off to college, my father gave me only one piece of advice: "Learn how to think." My impression of the students who would speak to me, out of the purview of those who control their lives and thoughts, was that thinking was too much trouble. It is much easier to react and respond based upon misinformation and cliched emotion.

I wondered about their parents. I asked some of the students where they were from and what their parents did for a living. Most of the students were from fine homes with professional parents who practice little or no religion. No particular commitment to the American way, or a peaceful world view could be discerned.

Those students who were radicalized were few in number, the loudest and, most importantly, received support from their professors and college administrators. Much of the terror we see on college and university campuses today, based upon my travels, flows from the top down.

What about the Jewish students?

I spent an evening at Chabad on a Friday night around students who were graduating from one of the finest colleges in America. They were surrounded by younger supportive students. Every one of them, speaking openly and freely, with no elder telling them what to say or how to say it, told me that they have been blindsided by what they have seen at the college. Most of the students were from irreligious backgrounds, they knew a little bit about Judaism, maybe went to a Seder once a year. Essentially most were Jews in name only, and were not particularly political. One of them was a math major, studying theoretical mathematics. All the students, however, said the same thing: "I did not distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish friends. I never talked politics with anyone. I don't know much about Israel and I would not consider myself a friend or a foe of the country. I am a minimal Jew, having been born into the tribe so to speak. I was shocked to find that people on campus, a lot of people, would not speak to me, excluded me from their group, and socially isolated me; it was only because I was a Jew." Every student in the room echoed that young woman's sentiment without the slightest degree of prompting.

I came to the realization that what is going on in America today is a coalescence of two forces. College has become an incubator, a cesspool really, of neo Marxist Soviet ideology. Many of the sociopolitical movements that have rocked America in the last 50 years, have been successfully exploited by the enemies of the American democracy.

I spent Saturday late afternoon with one of the college campus Rabbis. It was a most touching and revealing experience. He told me that he had been doing the job on campus of supporting, feeding, and talking to students for 18 years. He said to me: "Make

no mistake about it. In the 18 years that I have been doing this job, I have seen the mental health of our students decline precipitously. Those who say America is in a great mental health crisis are correct.” One of my own children attended one of the colleges that I visited. She is appalled by what is going on at her alma mater, feeling violated and offended by the liberal Quaker institution turning into a pit of suspicion, hatred, and rejection for the “other.”

We are truly living through a kind of war. War is being waged on what remains of American ideology, hope, and resilience. Parents and students have abandoned a spiritual or religious life in favor of a better job, the next more radical social movement, and the benefit of a government that spends itself into oblivion.

No doubt, at some point, there will be a shock to the American system. It may be war, depression, or civil violence, but the shock will come. That is the only conclusion one could reach spending time in the college and university incubator that is producing the next generation of American leaders.

My weekends on the college campuses of North Philadelphia, and the suburbs, was unlike anything I learned in college, but I did learn that the Jewish community and American idealism are in deep distress.

*Clifford A. Rieders, Esquire
Rieders, Travis, Dohrmann, Mowrey
Humphrey & Waters
161 West Third Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 323-8711 (telephone)
(570) 323-4192 (facsimile)*

Cliff Rieders is a Board-Certified Trial Advocate in Williamsport, is Past President of the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association and a past member of the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority. None of the opinions expressed necessarily represent the views of these organizations.