

Liberals Who Hate Free Speech

By now we know about those holier than thou campus mobs who fit into the category of liberals who hate free speech.

Actually, that's a tad over the top, a little unfair. They're not thugs fighting against *all* free speech – only the speech they don't agree with.

They are intolerant only of views they find, well, intolerant. And that, at least as they see it, gives them the right to shout down speakers and demand the dismissal of professors whose views they find morally unacceptable.

These are the same people who are all for allowing Nazis to march through Jewish neighborhoods in the name of free speech – a stance I support too, by the way. But they won't let thoughtful conservatives like Charles Murray or Ben Shapiro or even a firebrand like Ann Coulter speak – because in the view of the sanctimonious left, these are hatemongers who have forfeited their rights to free speech.

And hard left progressives here in the United States don't have a monopoly on this kind of self-righteous thinking. A columnist for the Guardian in London, Nesrine Malik, has come to the conclusion that, "Freedom of speech is no longer a value. It has become a loophole exploited with impunity by trolls, racists and ethnic cleansing advocates."

And here's how Claire Fox, the director of the Academy of Ideas, a libertarian think-tank, in London responded to her fellow Brit in a brilliant 2018 piece in the Economist:

That kind of thinking "tells us far more about the smug, closed-minded certainty of illiberal liberals than those they look down on. In fact, liberals will only become liberal again once they abandon this type of sneering and smearing and recognize that free speech – even for those we despise – is

the core liberal project. Without it, the much feared (often exaggerated) rise of the far-right won't be the biggest threat to our freedoms. Instead, illiberalism, in the name of liberalism, will be the PC midwife of authoritarianism."

Yes, liberals – far too many of them – have forgotten how to be liberal. They have become the despots they supposedly despise. They are the modern day enemies of free speech. Which brings us to a certain liberal anti-free speech mindset at (of all places) CNN.

Not long ago, one of the network's big name correspondents, Christiane Amanpour interviewed former FBI chief James Comey and noted that "Of course, 'lock her up!' was a feature of the 2016 Trump campaign," before asking Comey a question quite remarkable coming from a journalist.

"Do you, in retrospect, wish that people like yourself, the head of the FBI, I mean the people in charge of law and order had shut down that language – that it was dangerous potentially, that it could have created violence, that it's kind of hate speech – should that have been allowed?"

Journalists usually try to hide their liberal biases. Not Christiane. Maybe we can if not excuse, at least understand the hostility of college progressives to the value of free speech; they're sensitive little hothouse flowers after all. But a seasoned journalist asking the former head of the FBI if he regrets not *shutting down* political speech Ms. Amanpour finds offensive – is what really is offensive.

Here's Mr. Comey's response: "That's not a role for government to play."

You'd think a journalist would know that.

"The beauty of this country is people can say what they want even if it's misleading and it's demagoguery," he continued to inform the Ms. Amanpour.

You'd think a journalist would know that too.

Alas, Christiane Amanpour is not the only one at CNN who thinks it might be a good idea to "shut down" *unpopular* speech.

After Donald Trump kicked off his reelection campaign at a rally in Orlando, Don Lemon commented on the speech to fellow CNN anchor Chris Cuomo.

"But think about the despicable people we've had in history," Lemon said. "OK? Now I'm going to use an extreme example. Think about Hitler. Think about any of those people. Would you say that that person is allowed – or let's put it this way? If you could look back on in history would you say well, I'm so glad that that person was allowed a platform so that they could spread their hate and propaganda and lies? Or would [you] say it probably wasn't the right thing to do to spread that because you knew in the moment that that was a bad person. And they were doing bad things. Not only were they hurting people. They were killing people."

Of course, Lemon issued the mandatory *I'm not comparing Donald Trump to Hitler* disclaimer – which is precisely what he was doing. But here's a supposed newsman, an anchor employed by a worldwide news organization, suggesting that CNN should not cover the president of the United States making a speech – because Don Lemon thinks Mr. Trump was spewing hate, not unlike the hate that Hitler spewed many years ago.

Don Lemon is free to respond to the president almost any way he wants. He can point out the statements the president made that weren't true; he can give counter arguments to the statements that were true; he can even mock the president if that's what he wants to do. But none of that is good enough for Don Lemon. He doesn't want to give the president a platform to spread a message Don Lemon doesn't approve of.

It's too bad that this isn't only about Don Lemon or

Christiane Amanpour or the PC cops on college campuses. It's much bigger than a few self-important *sophisticates* who don't understand the real meaning, and value, of free speech in a free country.

The real danger is that there are many more just like them, so-called progressives who would, if they could get away with it, put a stake in the heart of free speech; who would shut down opinions that get in the way of their supposedly noble idea of how things ought to be.

As Claire Fox put it" "Today's so-called progressive liberals are often intolerant, calling for official censure against anyone perceived as uttering non-progressive views."

They are the authoritarians who believe in free speech for me, as the old saying goes, but not for thee. They are smug and intolerant and worst of all, they're proud of it. God help us if they ever amass enough power to make their *virtuous* dreams come true.

President Trump's Secret Weapon

He can't go 10 minutes without saying something – let's be diplomatic here and call it ... *provocative*.

He, of course, is President Trump, who has said some – more diplomacy – *interesting* things of late.

First, there's Mr. Trump's understanding of American history. He said he believes that President Andrew Jackson saw the Civil War coming and was angry about it.

Could be, but Andrew Jackson died 16 years *before* the war started.

Mr. Trump also said that Jackson “Would never have let it happen.”

Could be, again, but Andrew Jackson owned slaves in his native Tennessee and might very well have let it happen. And many historians believe the war was inevitable, given how long bad blood between the North and South had been simmering.

Then there’s North Korea.

President Trump said he would be willing to meet with Kim Jong Un “under the right circumstances” to defuse tensions over North Korea’s nuclear program. “If it would be appropriate for me to meet with him, I would absolutely, I would be honored to do it,” Mr. Trump said.

A meeting is one thing – diplomacy is always a good place to start. But honored to do it?

Honored ... to meet with a despot who threatens the United States every chance he gets? *Honored* ... to meet with a tyrant who doesn’t tolerate anything resembling dissent and isn’t averse to murdering his opponents?

Maybe the president was just being polite. Or maybe he was just shooting from the lip, improvising foreign policy on the fly. Who knows?

So let’s leave North Korea and go to the Philippines – and another authoritarian leader our president would like to sit down with (at the White House).

Maybe President Trump isn’t aware that since Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte took office nearly a year ago, he has overseen a campaign of extrajudicial executions of suspected drug addicts and drug dealers that has claimed more than 7,000 lives.

So, is a sit-down with a despot like Duterte – at the White House no less – a meeting that would give him a patina of legitimacy, good policy? Off the top of my head, I'd say no.

Despite all the needless turmoil he stirs up, President Trump has a secret weapon, unintended allies in unexpected places. They're the Trump-hating progressives on the loony left who are doing their best to make him look good.

If it isn't Stephen Colbert's vulgar rant on national television aimed at the president, or left-wing masked anarchists violently disrupting May Day rallies, or liberal thugs on college campuses shutting down conservative speakers they don't like – when they're not yelling about "inappropriate" Halloween costumes, then it's really important stuff – like accusing the president of bigotry because he calls their progressive heroine Senator Elizabeth Warren ... Pocahontas.

Note to the crazy left: As a general rule, unhinged doesn't play well among moderates who live between the coasts.

But now progressives have taken their anger to a whole new level: Some have actually cancelled their subscriptions to the newspaper they have long accepted as their progressive bible – the New York Times.

What ghastly sin did the Times commit? They hired former Wall Street Journal columnist Bret Stephens, a Pulitzer Prize-winning conservative and a member of the never-Trump club.

If only, in his first column for the Times, Stephens had stuck it to the *despised* Mr. Trump. But he didn't.

Instead, he had the gall to challenge the liberal party line on one of the left's holiest of sacred cows – global warming.

"While the modest (0.85 degrees Celsius, or about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit) warming of the Northern Hemisphere since 1880 is

indisputable,” Stephens wrote, “as is the human influence on that warming, much else that passes as accepted fact is really a matter of probabilities. That’s especially true of the sophisticated but fallible models and simulations by which scientists attempt to peer into the climate future.”

In other words, we can be sure of what’s happening now and what’s already happened but we can’t be certain of what’s going to happen years and years into the future.

Because of his *blasphemy* many Times readers had a meltdown of nuclear proportions. Taking to Twitter they said:

“Bret Stephens first op-ed for the NYT is an abomination”

“It’s really a shame what has happened to this once-great newspaper”

“Democracy dies in the darkness. So, too, the climate. Thanks, Times, for spreading fake opinion”

David French put it elegantly in National Review Online: “The only people who can’t recognize that our nation has a ‘smug liberal’ problem are smug liberals.”

But these smug liberals may wind up being Donald Trump’s ace in the hole, because a lot of Americans – whether they like Donald Trump or not – find left wing smugness far more annoying than the president.

Crazy as it sounds, they may turn out to be Donald Trump’s most potent political allies, as we get closer to 2018.

Stay tuned.