

Left-Wing Fools in the High Church of American Liberalism

Where do we draw the line? If you're a college professor with tenure can you say anything, no matter how hateful, and get away with it? Are there any limits to free speech on campus, especially at a public university where professors have First Amendment rights?

These are questions that come up from time to time, usually after a professor – almost always someone from the so-called progressive left – says or tweets something widely seen as indecent and outrageous.

And so now the questions have come up again, this time the offending boor is a professor of creative writing at Fresno State in California, who just moments after the announcement that Barbara Bush had died took to Twitter to tell the world how happy she was that the “racist ... witch” was dead.

The professor, Randa Jarrar, tweeted that “Barbara Bush was a generous and smart and amazing racist who, along with her husband, raised a war criminal.” And then this, for good measure: “I’m happy the witch is dead. can’t wait for the rest of her family to fall to their demise the way 1.5 million iraqis did.”

When social media lit up with criticism the professor said she was being attacked because she’s “An Arab American Muslim American woman with some clout.” And she laughed off demands that the school fire her, tweeting that, “I work as a tenured professor. I make 100K a year doing that. I will never be fired.”

Her arrogance aside, she appears to be right, at least for now. There is a First Amendment after all, and it protects academic deplorables just as it protects the rest of us.

Fresno State's president Joseph Castro has issued a statement saying that Jarrar's comments were "insensitive, inappropriate and an embarrassment to the university," but "are protected free speech under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution."

Last year, a history lecturer at the same Fresno State was put on leave after tweeting, "To save American democracy, Trump must hang. The sooner and higher the better."

He also called for "the execution of two Republicans for each deported immigrant."

Fresno State, of course, is not alone when it comes to hate-mongers posing as intellectuals.

At Rutgers University in New Jersey a professor took to social media to say that Israeli Jews want to "exterminate" Palestinians but haven't succeeded because so many Jews in Israel ... are gay. And on his Facebook page, he posted images of sinister looking hook-nosed Jews.

But because he's a tenured professor, he kept his job. He did, however, get a slap on the wrist. The school said he could no longer teach required courses, which gave students the right to stay clear of his class.

A professor at the City University of New York went on Twitter to blame "white nuclear families" for racism and white supremacy.

A professor at Drexel University in Philadelphia was put on leave after he tweeted that, "All I Want for Christmas is White Genocide." He says it was a joke. He also tweeted that he was "trying not to vomit" watching someone give up a first class seat for a uniformed soldier.

A professor at Austin Community College in Texas resigned after tweeting about Trump's education secretary,

"I'm not wishing for it ... but I'd be ok if #BetsyDevos was sexually assaulted."

There are more, of course. Many more.

About the Fresno State professor's comments on Mrs. Bush, Sigal Ben-Porath, who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, told the Washington Post that Jarrar's opinion was disrespectful "but it was clearly protected under the First Amendment."

"This is part of what we are expected to do as academics," Ben-Porath said, "... not just work according to dogma, but push the boundaries of what is acceptable that people would say or think or consider. That is what academic freedom is for."

Forgive me for wondering how liberal – *how open-minded*– the progressive left would be if a professor went on a twitter rampage with African Americans or Muslims or Latinos or women in the crosshairs. Would the intellectuals say, "This is part of what we are expected to do as academics" – "That is what academic freedom is for"?

But no matter how satisfying the thought, dismissing professors for expressing ugly views can lead to the dreaded slippery slope. Would *anyone* expressing views seen as deviant be safe? Would that rare bird – a conservative professor in the sociology department – be able to keep his job if he tweeted a few kind words about Donald Trump?

Universities have become the high church of American liberalism – a church where every kind of diversity is worshipped ... except intellectual diversity. Inside that campus bubble left wing churls can masquerade as scholars – and feel not only safe, but also quite comfortable while they make fools of themselves.