

often be best to leave well enough alone prior to maturity, or at least *not* opt for radical solutions. On the other hand, *competent adults* making *informed choices* ought to be free to pursue gender reassignment and, if *medically cleared*, have their gender status officially changed upon *completion* of necessary medical procedures.

Be all of that as it may, postmodern nonsense, coupled with the vitriol directed at him from the left for speaking his mind, convinced Rectenwald that he could no longer be a communist. But to his credit, he is fair minded, rejecting censorship and supporting the rights of SJW ideologues to freely express their views in conjunction with everyone else on campus, but not to bully and shame into silence those with disparate views. In essence, they must not be the sole voice. This might be easier said than done, but it is heartening that others are taking up the torch. He gives shout-outs to Jordan Peterson, Gad Saad, and Bret Weinstein. And there are more, plus organizations like the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship and the National Association of Scholars advocating for the same principles.

Finally, in a society seemingly dominated by postmodernism, political correctness, and SJWs, we, the great unwoke, may be forgiven for occasionally questioning how we can possibly be right when everyone else is so wrong. Thank you, Michael Rectenwald, not only for swimming upstream, but for helping us realize that it is not us, but the politically correct snowflakes and social justice warriors who have jumped from the edge of the abyss. Happy landings, folks. If you are halfway to your “utopian” destination and enjoying the rush, you will doubtless think things are great so far.

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#### UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS: THE BRUCE GILLEY SCANDAL

*Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann*

This article addresses a recent case of academic “scandal.” In 2017 Bruce Gilley, a political scientist, argued in *Third World Quarterly* (TWQ) for the benefits of past coercive colonialism and the probable advantages of future voluntary colonialism.[1] TWQ eventually withdrew Gilley’s article from its hard-copy publication because of concerns for the safety of its editor, who had been subjected to on-line threats to his life. The question this case provokes is whether both academic freedom and the human right to freedom of speech include the right to ask uncomfortable questions and propose unpopular answers.

Gilley presented two arguments; that there were many benefits to colonialism, and that a voluntary re-colonialization in which independent countries accept partial control by foreigners might improve their citizens’ well-being. As benefits

of colonialism, he mentioned among others efficient administration, the building of infrastructure, and provision of health and education services. Gilley also noted that colonialists had put a stop to the slave trade of earlier centuries. ([1], p. 4)

Martin Klein, a professor emeritus at the University of Toronto and a distinguished historian of colonialism in Africa, provided a careful refutation of Gilley's views of the benefits of colonialism. Klein agrees that colonists did stop the slave trade—from which their own nations had earlier benefitted—as well as abolishing internal slavery. But other “benefits” of colonialism served colonial interests. Colonialists provided education only to a small elite of (male) Africans who were groomed for lower-level administrative jobs in the colonial civil service. Hospitals were built and public health measures instituted to ensure that Europeans did not die. Forced labourers built much colonial infrastructure. Very few colonies allowed any political participation by “natives,” to whom Gilley's supposedly “universal” values such as the rule of law did not apply. ([2], p. 39) In general, colonial rule varied according to the needs of the rulers and their commitments to the well-being of the populations they ruled.

Gilley also compared administration, infrastructure, education and health care in now independent countries to their counterparts under colonial rule. He argued that in some cases, a voluntary “re-colonialism,” as he called it, might be a good option for some independent countries. Using Guinea-Bissau as an example, he suggested building a city on an outlying island to be run by foreigners, along the lines of Singapore or Hong Kong. Other aspects of this so-called voluntary “re-colonization” included co-operation with international organizations such as the World Bank. ([1], pp. 8, 11) Gilley, a former journalist, admits that he has an eye for provocative headlines. ([3], p. 8) To call long-established patterns of international co-operation a form of “colonialism” seems unnecessarily provocative.

TWQ reviewed Gilley's article twice. He first submitted it for a special issue, but after the issue's two editors read it, they declined to send it out for further review. The TWQ Editor, Pakistan-born Shahid Qadir, then sent it out for anonymous double blind review by two scholars, for a “viewpoints” article in a regular issue. One recommended against publishing, the other for. Qadir then decided to publish and the article appeared on-line.

Before the article could appear in print, fifteen members of the TWQ editorial board resigned in protest. They maintained that the Editor had violated the peer review process. They also wrote that “We all subscribe to the principle of freedom of speech and the value of provocation in order to generate critical debate. However, this cannot be done by means of a piece that fails to meet academic standards of rigour and balance by ignoring all manner of violence, exploitation and harm perpetrated in the name of colonialism...and that causes offense and hurt and thereby clearly violates that very principle of free speech.”[4] Several hundred scholars then signed a petition for the article's removal, and several thousand members of the public did the same.

The public petition was drafted by Jenny Heijun Wills, an associate professor of English and Director of the Critical Race Network at the University of Winnipeg. She claimed that Gilley's "ideas are not simply abstract provocations, but have real, material consequences for those who Prof Gilley seeks to dominate and objectify." [5] Gilley did not, of course, seek to dominate or objectify anyone: he made his proposals for voluntary "re-colonization," however misguided they might have been, out of concern for people suffering from blatant misrule in postcolonial societies.

On-line harassment of the TWQ was intense. Some people to whom Gilley referred as "Indian anti-colonial fanatics" apparently made anonymous death threats against Qadir. [6] It is possible for an academic to ignore on-line critical comments, but not always—if ever—to ignore actual threats of violence. Faced with such threats and concerned for Qadir's safety, Gilley agreed to withdraw the article before it could be published in hard copy. After initially offering an apology, he retracted it as having been issued under pressure, and he did not retract the contents of the article. Neither the TWQ Editor, nor the publisher, Taylor and Francis, apologized.

Quite probably, the scholars who resigned from TWQ's editorial board actually read Gilley's article. It was their right to resign. Possibly, although unlikely, all the scholars who signed petitions against publication also read the article. It is unlikely that more than a few of the public mobbers actually read it.

Some scholars now seem to think that rather than provide a written refutation of an article with which they profoundly disagree, they should collectively and loudly denounce its publication. By contrast, Martin Klein lamented withdrawal of the article. Klein argued that Gilley did the scholarly community a service by raising questions about colonialism that were "crucial parts of the divide between academic and public discourse. Many of the students who enter our classes do so with ideas similar to Gilley's. So too do many opinion leaders..." ([2] p. 39) The distinguished leftist scholar and critic, Noam Chomsky, also called for rebuttal of Gilley's views, but not for a retraction of the article. [7]

One African commentator defended Gilley, maintaining that "many Nigerians see the colonial era as something of a golden age." [8] A Kenyan researcher argued that TWQ should reinstate the article, arguing "It is extreme anti-colonial sentiment that is a threat to world peace, not the pro-colonial views that have been expressed by pro-Western thinkers in the Third World who identify with the Western human rights tradition." [9]

Before writing his article defending colonialism, Gilley had published an earlier piece on the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. Long known as a hero of the anti-colonial movement, late in his life Achebe began to reminisce about the beneficial aspects of colonialism, which he himself had experienced as a student at Government College in Umuahia. [10] Yet this article garnered no protests, outraged or otherwise. [11]

Nor did public mobbing cause withdrawal of arguments similar to Gilley's made

by other scholars. The historian Niall Ferguson, for example, published a provocatively titled book, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, in 2011, arguing that the West developed “six powerful new concepts” that the rest of the world lacked: these were competition, science, property, medicine, consumption, and work. Acknowledging the many horrific evils of colonialism in Africa, Ferguson nevertheless described how colonialists conducted medical research and improved the health of their subjects. He further argued that the Protestant work ethic was an important contributor to development in countries such as China. ([12], pp. 168-75 & 277-88). Yet Ferguson was not mobbed into withdrawing his book.

Similarly, many scholars have presented arguments analogous to Gilley’s on why post-colonial states such as Guinea-Bissau have failed. To succeed in protecting their citizens’ human rights, I have argued, societies require market economies with strong protection of property rights; rule of law; strong administrative and political institutions; a political culture of human rights; and a strong civil society. ([13], pp. 49-66) Other scholars stress the importance of developing efficient, trustworthy institutions that can facilitate economic innovation and growth. They also stress democratic accountability, a free press, and the rule of law.[14, 15]

Perhaps the reason why the scholars cited above were not mobbed, by either other scholars or the concerned public, was that they wrote books that took too long to read. Or perhaps their arguments were simply not brought to public attention. All of them published since 2010, so presumably could have been condemned on social media.

Gilley himself argued that “such virtual flash mobs are becoming part of the discursive landscape of contemporary society.” ([16], p.4) In the past, governments or religious officials who did not like ideas their opponents spread committed libricide, trying to kill ideas by burning books and libraries. Such tactics are still popular in the present: for example, China employed them during the Cultural Revolution and in its repression of Tibet.[17]

Nowadays, libricide is not necessary to commit ideacide; instead, mobs can use social media to condemn ideas, and spread false summaries of what scholars say. An additional advantage of social media is that people who use it can be anonymous: thus, there is little if any potential cost to them of threatening violence against those with whom they disagree. These advantages pertain to anyone disagreeing with anything: some professors who opposed Gilley’s views were also subject to on-line harassment. ([3], p. 3)

Many of the opinion pieces defending Gilley were published in journals or newspapers considered to be connected to the political right. Yet freedom of speech is a fundamental human right for all to protect themselves against abuses of power by the state, by businesses, by social institutions, and indeed by other individuals. Freedom of speech is a profoundly subversive concept.

In order to protect freedom of speech, it is often necessary to protect its exercise

by people with whom one profoundly disagrees. That is what Chomsky and Klein did in their defense of Gilley's right to publish his views on colonialism. To argue that speech that is "hurtful" violates the principles of free speech, as did the 15 scholars who resigned from the TWG editorial board, is to stretch the principle of prohibition of hate speech far beyond its original purpose.

It is dangerous to claim hurt or harm when all one is confronting is an idea. It is one thing to oppose actual hate speech with its advocacy of violence: it is another to claim that unpopular ideas promote hatred when there is no evidence whatsoever that they do. Indeed, it was the anti-Gilley mobbers who promoted violence, not Gilley, who merely proposed two politically unpopular ideas about the nature of colonial and post-colonial rule.

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#### RESPECT AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

*Sinclair A. MacRae*

How should concerns about respecting people figure into determinations of the proper limits of academic freedom and scholarship, and freedom of expression more generally? At my own institution and in the wider world I have observed a number of aggrieved parties attempt to stifle academic freedom in the interests of promoting respect or as a means of ending or preventing disrespect. What are we to make of such efforts? Considering how widespread and deep our respect for the value of respect is, it might seem that such demands have some merit.

Since my opening question is too broad to fully address here, I will narrow my focus to one aspect of this topic – how confusion over different senses of the words “respect” and “disrespect” lead many people to overstate the case for not disrespecting people at the expense of both academic freedom and freedom of expression more generally. I will argue that before we can fairly compare the disvalue of disrespecting someone against the value of tolerating academic work or expressive acts more generally that manifest such disrespect, we must first be clear on exactly what is at issue. Since disrespectful acts can be located along a spectrum from the trivial to the offensive to the harmful, such balancing efforts depend upon first accurately identifying and assessing the nature and seriousness of the disrespect in question. Generally opposing disrespect and endorsing respect is not enough; when we are tasked with weighing competing claims we must make more careful and fine-grained judgments.

A quick check of the news provides us with plenty of illustrations of the ways in which we employ the concepts of “respect” and “disrespect”: