

# The Cult of Woke: 30 Years of Inaction (Indifference?) by “Establishment Conservatives”



By Steven Yates

It is common knowledge that the [Cult of Woke](#) has conquered academia except for STEM subjects. Its minions are hard at work finding “evidence” of “systemic racism” in those. The Cult of Woke has also conquered mainstream media, Big Tech, and large portions of the business world generally. Its minions believe they’ll have one of their own in the White House soon (I’m thinking more of Kamala Harris than Joe Biden who is too white and too male, and [in the early stages of dementia](#)).

Trump isn’t doing much to stop the Cult’s advances. But at this point, what *can* he do? These people are good at mass mobilization, intimidation, and force. Only retaliatory force will stop them at this point. I can’t blame Trump for not wanting, say, to invoke the Insurrection Act to stop the [canceling](#) of history. To the Cult of Woke, Trump epitomizes racism and fascism. He’d be playing right into their hands. Maybe he will invoke it if he wins a second term and the Cult sets about canceling him.

If “Establishment conservatives” – most of whom aren’t conservative at all as I understand that term ([here](#) and [here](#)) – ever wonder how on Earth we got into this mess, all they have to do is look in the mirror. This is assuming [they haven’t gone over to the other side!](#) “Establishment

conservatives" include anti-Trumpists like George Will, Max Boot, Erick Erickson, Jennifer Rubin, Joe Scarborough, and other well-connected and well-heeled types you'll find on the pages of the *Washington Post* and other Establishment rags, or on mainstream TV networks.

One might add Mitt Romney, Mitch McConnell, Newt Gingrich and Lindsey Graham as Establishment Republicans who have never displayed any stable core values, which is why the Republican Party fell so easily to Trump.

Just over 30 years ago, I began sounding warnings that the then-almost-unknown [cultural Marxist](#) left was *dangerous*.

Come back with me to the 1980s. At first glance, it was an era of conservatism resurgent! Ronald Reagan, Mr. Conservative himself, was in the White House. After the disastrous Carter years, it was Morning In America. Tom Cruise was riding high in *Top Gun*. College kids had cut their hair and were dressing for success. Images of draft card burners had long since been replaced by those of lean men and women working out in fitness centers. Plenty of other signs abounded of a nation seemingly back on track. Even popular music was "nicer," on the surface at least.

The cultural left hadn't gone anywhere, though. Like a wild beast, it had been laying low, gathering strength, and was ready to burst forth again. An article in a 1989 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, academia's Establishment weekly, laid this out. The author was one William Damon, a leftist professor come of age in the late 1960s. I don't have the exact quote that leaped out at me. Nothing was online then, and my photocopy disappeared eons ago. What Professor Damon said went something like: "Everyone thought that with Vietnam over, we [leftists] had disappeared. No, we stepped into academic positions. Now we have tenure, and the business of reshaping the universities has begun in earnest."

I already knew of leftist academics' reactions to those who challenged their core beliefs. A couple of years prior, radical feminists disrupted a presentation on "Feminism Against the Family" by philosopher Christina Hoff Sommers at a national meeting. The incident got some attention. It dawned on me: academic philosophy had a problem. A radical feminist problem.

Actually, it was a liberal arts problem generally, and hardly limited to *my* discipline. And it wasn't just feminists. There were multiculturalists, postmodernists, the earliest critical race theorists, queer-theorists, "intersectionalists," and others. Borrowing from trendy French thought, they advanced an ideology of race / gender-derived determinism that would have jolted a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who spoke of judging people by the "content of their character." And they were very aggressive about it. The mostly white, mostly male academy came across, even then, as scared out of its collective wits by these people.

Having investigated the subject, I fingered affirmative action as a source of how women in particular who still acted like obnoxious student revolutionaries could get hired and tenured at major universities. I noted how white women defending hard-left ideologies were its primary beneficiaries, in academia at least. The percentage of black professors had barely budged, despite almost 20 years of preferential policies.

I wrote letters to the editor noting these things. Even then, writing such letters elicited thinly-veiled threats. A black professor (who claimed to be at Harvard, no less!) told me in an angry, handwritten scrawl that arrived in my mailbox one day that he could bench press 300 pounds and would happily take on (then-VP) Dan Quayle, David Duke, or me. *What?!* How else was I to interpret that?

Beginning around 1990, numerous articles and books had appeared on [political correctness](#), "tenured radicals," and the

then-rising obsession with race and sex on campus. Authors included Roger Kimball, Dinesh D'Souza, Charles Sykes, others. Horror stories of disrupted classes and "canceled" professors were circulating.

In 1994, I joined those authors. Then I learned the ugly truth: *you can't stand for truth and reason against this tide without the protections afforded by academic tenure, which I did not have.* I found myself unemployed in 1995, my career badly damaged if not ruined, and facing a downward spiral into poverty if I didn't "reinvent myself" in a hurry.

I did, for a time, obtaining a two-year public health degree and working on projects applying systems thinking to primary prevention, also serving as technical writer for a health consulting firm. (Those *weren't* wasted years. I learned a lot. Some of what I learned was permanent, and compelled me to revisit some of my first premises. But that is a story for another day.)

What I'd realized, to my dismay: unlike leftists, conservative intellectuals are unwilling or unable to act on behalf of their own, especially in terms of supporting their own financially. I don't know if this is built into their thinking, which stresses full self-responsibility, or not. What I know: I'd spent years writing on the side for conservative and libertarian publications, while appealing to conservative foundations and institutes for research support.

I'd been invited to affiliate with one and was able to obtain a small grant. They put me to work on one of their projects. With my own projects, I was on my own. This continued to be true on into the new millennium. A few conservatives and libertarians had talked about "parallel institutions." An obvious solution? But none of us had any money! We knew no one with the deep pockets of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, or Soros's Open Society Institute. Without support, we weren't going to make it happen!

One of my predictions from around 1990 when the term first started appearing was that if political correctness was not opposed, it would both enlarge itself to encompass more and more groups of "victims," and spread from colleges and universities through their law schools and journalism schools to every institution in the country.

By the late 1990s, this was happening. PC had spread to the military (via the women-in-combat movement). It had infiltrated mainstream journalism in spades. It was on television sitcoms where it reached into Americans' family rooms nightly. Politicians were increasingly afraid to stand up to it. Republicans in particular were scared to death of being called racists. Responding to the charge was already a closed circle. To *deny* you're a racist is only to *confirm* your racism.

Political correctness then took over medium-sized business. We South Carolinians could only watch as a man who [insisted in flying the Confederate flag above his restaurants](#) following its removal from the state's Statehouse Dome (July 1, 2000) found his 40-year-old business destroyed in a matter of weeks by a massive boycott led by the NAACP. A libelous, front-page hit job had appeared in the city newspaper characterizing him as believing in slavery (he did not). Intimidated grocery chains throughout the Southeast refused to carry his frozen foods and unique barbecue sauce, his primary source of revenue.

Mr. Bessinger (who passed away in 2014) was canceled, and I had a lesson in how so-called "free markets" could destroy culture depending on the beliefs of its movers and shakers.

I wrote extensively about this at the time. All but one of those articles has been taken down.

Fast forward to the decade just finished. The country as a whole had shifted leftward, especially big cities, setting the

stage for the present divisions. With over two decades of cultural leftism in the universities, cultural leftism in the media, and cultural leftism dominating Big Tech, *how could it do otherwise?*

I'd recovered an academic career – sort of – the decade before but abandoned it to move overseas because, looking ahead, even then I saw a U.S. in decline. That was 2012, the year Republicans lost an election they could have won. Establishment Republicans, it was then clear, were gifted at one thing: *shooting themselves in both feet.*

In 2014, following the Ferguson, Mo. incident in which a black male was shot to death by a white cop (arguably in self-defense), campuses exploded.

We saw [videos](#) of black students screaming – literally *screaming* – at administrators about how mistreated they were. This happened at places like Yale, which tells me they needed a reality check. *When you are at Yale you are privileged no matter your race.*

Goes without saying, no reality check ever came.

At the University of Missouri it became clear: merely *reporting* political correctness could lead to overt threats from the [leftist mob](#) (students *and faculty*) that had taken over that campus.

Where *were* any Establishment conservatives?

I didn't mean showmen like Ben Shapiro and Milo whatever-his-name-is. I mean *people with both decision-making capability, resources, and the stones to stand up to this.*

If anyone knows, please tell me! ([Neocons, it should go without saying, are not conservatives](#)).

Then came the Trump era, which I saw as *solid proof* that mainstream Republicanism had collapsed. No one—*no one!*—should

have been able to do what Donald Trump did, gaining a major party's nomination without previous political experience, on the strength of his command of media and an undeniable appeal to fed-up crowds, and winning the White House.

This is true even if Hillary Clinton had pulled one of the dumbest stunts in the history of American politics, calling an entire voting bloc "[baskets of deplorables](#)." But this was the direction the left was going: from merely *delegitimizing* the views of those across the aisle to, again, *canceling them altogether*.

Once in office, Trump couldn't quell the rising cultural Marxist tide from [Black Lives Matter](#) and Antifa. Trump's "fine people on both sides" remark regarding Charlottesville (2017) was misrepresented by a corporate media that to this day continues to misrepresent what happened, [ignoring the role leftists played in inciting violence](#).

I'm not sure when I first heard the word *woke* applied to cultural Marxism and identity politics. The usage left me scratching my head at first.

Then I reread George Orwell's *1984* and recalled the linguistic reversals of a would-be Ministry of Truth. *Freedom Is Slavery. War is Peace. Ignorance is Strength.*

To be *woke* is to be *totally asleep in cultural victimization*, but *awakened* to the sense of cultural empowerment able to *destroy* targeted victimizers, along with their histories. Cancel culture was born. *Let's fulfill our empowerment by canceling history!*

Down came one statue and monument after another, not all of them Confederate! Down came names off university buildings.

Orwell, from *1984*: "Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed,

every date has been altered. And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.”

This could be the Cult of Woke’s mission statement!

And now we find ourselves in the situation I described a couple of weeks ago.

*Under no circumstances* will the culturally empowered Wokesters *voluntarily* recognize the legitimacy of a second Trump term. It is clear, they will explode if Trump can claim, in January, to have won. Especially if he again wins in the Electoral College!

And should Biden-Harris win, it will be open season on what is left of a cultural heritage and history deemed mired in “systemic racism.” Cancellation may include violent attacks on known Trump backers (possibly white people generally) [a few of whom have already received mailed threats.](#)

As I sit, writing this days before the election, I’ve no idea which it will be. I know I don’t trust polls that put Biden in the lead; but neither am I confident Trump can pull this off. I saw the first debate and thought it was a disaster, but that’s just me, hoping Trump would talk to the American people and present a Constitutionally-grounded vision for the next four years, something that would inspire the American people as *better and more honest* than the Cult of Woke. He did not.

Neither has any Establishment “conservative.” I fear *real* conservatives (like myself) have been completely sidelined! We’re no nearer the table than are Libertarians!

Be this as it may, if Trump *does* win he’d better be ready to do more than he’s *been* doing. Because the Cult of Woke is almost certain to take to the streets, and the George Floyd riots may be just a taste of what’s to come! These people are

the [direct ideological descendants](#) of those who overwhelmed France in 1789 and Russia in 1917.

Trump had better grow the stones necessary to invoke the Insurrection Act, if that's what it takes to stop a [planned color revolution in America](#). And then hope his status as Commander-in-Chief is sufficient. *The military might not back him.* Its top brass doesn't exactly love him. They may refuse to carry out his orders because they, too, fear being called racists or white supremacists.

In which case Trump is finished, and so is America.

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