



The Ultimate Book Ban - Burying Books Reflecting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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When the Florida Governor first launched his war against academic freedom targeting the liberal, creative New College as the low-lying fruit to set an example for Florida's public colleges, there were eerie similarities to the fascist takeover of the liberal, intellectual Frankfurt University in 1933. That coup would rapidly expand to control all of Germany's institutions of higher learning.

At Frankfurt University, the takeover happened at one faculty meeting when the newly appointed Nazi commissar took charge, making swift programmatic changes and purges of Jewish faculty amid threats. At New College it happened with the behind the scenes ousting of existing Trustees and appointing extremist replacements followed by the January 31, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting during which the then President was replaced by an interim, and then permanent, President.

Shortly after Hitler took power, there were infamous public book burnings followed by a rapid cultural descent into fascism. It's well known that books by Jewish authors were destroyed. What many aren't familiar with were the other books targeted for burning — research on sexuality. The library of Magnus Hirschfield's Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin was

destroyed. It was the pioneer institute for gender affirming care and all its books of research were burned and lost for all time.

And now this at New College. Thousands of volumes of books were thrown in dumpsters that were trucked away including books by many black authors like Alice Walker and Noble. One discarded ethnology recorded the little-known history of Florida's Black Seminoles. Erasing black history and gender studies have been culture war priorities for DeSantis, Corcoran, and New College's Board of Trustees. Many of the removed books were from the axed Gender Studies program, a key part of the DeSantis war against Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Other to be landfilled books included a discarded Hebrew volume, and Catherine Whitney's *Nine and Counting: The Women of the Senate*.

One New College Board of Trustee is with the Claremont Institute which is on the Project 2025 Advisory board. His associates from the Claremont Institute certainly don't want women in the Senate, nor in positions of authority, nor virtually anywhere in the workforce. In a piece that reads like a manifesto, last year entitled "Education: How to Destroy and Reconquer" by Arthur Milikh, the Executive Director of the Claremont Institute Center for the American Way of Life, made it clear that they want women home having babies and while in school "every female" should learn "to milk a cow."

But perhaps the starkest reminder of the moral bankruptcy and pernicious disregard for justice and academic freedom by the Governor's hand-picked Board of Trustees, was emblemized by the disposal of the volume entitled *Encyclopedia of Ethics* edited by Lawrence C. and Charlotte B. Becker.

Caught exposed by the mass book dumping, an official-sounding alibi was needed. New College is now attributing the multi-thousand volume book purge to "weeding" of damaged and other materials. While there is normal weeding of books from a library college, the size and scope of this disposal were not normal. There was a euphemistic

characterization that “books associated with the discontinued Gender Studies program were removed” because the room housing them was being “repurposed.” This was sanitizing the complete purge of a whole area of study that didn’t fit New College’s new ultra conservative agenda. Many of the books in that repository were donated and not paid for with public funds. Other books were part of the library’s collection and New College claimed they were not allowed to donate or transfer them because their purchase involved state funds. That proved erroneous: Florida statute Title XVIII Chapter 273.055 (3) reads: “Custodians may dispose of property certified as surplus by (b) Selling or donating the property to any private nonprofit agency;”

Despite the New College cover story, the Governor’s spokespeople on social media gave the lie when gleeful over the mass book trashing. In fact, another New College Board of Trustee brazenly boasted “We abolished the gender studies program. Now we’re throwing out the trash.”

A full independent investigation and release of all related public records is immediately warranted. This chilling assault on academic freedom should be met with the removal of the current New College President and its Board of Trustees.

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