

Are 'Antifascists' Employing a Crude Form of Terrorism?

Days before its April 29 parade, Organizers of the 82nd Avenue of Roses Parade in Portland received an anonymous message. [Via the Oregonian](#):

"You have seen how much power we have downtown and that the police cannot stop us from shutting down roads so please consider your decision wisely," the anonymous email said, telling organizers they could cancel the Republican group's registration or else face action from protesters. "This is non-negotiable."

The letter, the paper reports, was precipitated by the presence of the Multnomah County Republican Party in the parade, which "drew ire from some of the city's left-leaning protest groups"—despite the fact that the group participated in previous years.

How did parade organizers respond? They canceled the event, lest a riot ensue.

These tactics are familiar to anyone who's been paying attention to U.S. campuses. As NYU psychologist Jonathan Haidt [explained](#) in an April 26 article for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, intimidation is the new normal on college campuses.

"Any campus speaker who arouses a protest is at risk of a beating," said Haidt. "Can this really be the future of American colleges?"

The answer appears to be yes.

Haidt [explains](#) that these agitators—who sometimes call themselves "[antifascists](#)"—justify their actions by presenting

themselves as victims:

“A common feature of recent [campus shout-downs](#) is the argument that the speaker ‘dehumanizes’ members of marginalized groups or ‘denies their right to exist.’ No quotations or citations are given for such strong assertions; these are rhetorical moves made to strengthen the case against the speaker.”

Thus far, universities have mostly indulged the escapades of these bad-behaving students. Why? Perhaps it’s because there is a deep-rooted tradition of protesting in America’s history. Perhaps it’s because college officials are sympathetic to the students’ ends (keeping dissenting voices off campus).

Whatever the case, by indulging the student agitators who employ threats, intimidation, and violence, college leaders are tacitly affirming their tactics. This is dangerous.

Haidt, for one, believes our university system may be at a crossroads.

“This year may become a turning point in the annals of higher education. It may be remembered as the year that political violence and police escorts became ordinary parts of campus life. Or it may be remembered as the year when professors, students, and administrators finally found the moral courage to stand up against intimidation, even when it is aimed at people whose ideas they dislike.”

It’s troubling that universities have not taken a stronger stance against these tactics. More troubling is that—as the cancelation of the parade in Portland demonstrates—we could soon see these methods proliferate beyond the campus since they have proven so effective.

That would be bad. What has largely been overlooked is that these tactics are a crude form of terrorism.

If you Google “terrorism” this is the definition you will find: **Ter·ror·ism** (noun) *the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.*

People have a right to peaceably assemble and protest. But when people use threats, intimidation, and violence against civilians to achieve political aims, they are employing tactics that go beyond civil disobedience.

Take the recent episode in Portland. A clear threat (disruption and potential violence) was issued designed to achieve a specific political result (ostracization of a political group). It worked.

?We tend to not recognize the actual nature of these acts because they are done so openly and brazenly. It’s a brilliant and age-old ruse. In G.K. Chesterton’s wonderful novel [The Man Who Was Thursday](#), the president of the Central Anarchist Council shrewdly observed the safest place for a terrorist to hide.

“You want a safe disguise, do you? . . . A dress in which no one would ever look for a bomb? Why, then, dress up as an anarchist, you fool!”

This is not to imply that all protesters are terrorists or that the FBI should send agents to Berkeley. But we need to be honest about the brutish tactics being employed and recognize that they are designed to achieve political goals. It’s a dangerous path, as anyone familiar with Germany’s [Spartacist Uprising](#) knows.

The most frustrating part is that colleges have no problem flexing their muscles and cracking down on offending students... when it’s a couple of kids [handing out copies of the U.S. Constitution](#). But when mobs of students [wearing masks](#) organize to infringe on the rights of others, college leaders

inexplicably go into a shell.

It doesn't have to be this way. College administrators could send a strong message by promptly expelling a few ringleaders caught engaging in intimidating or violent behavior. It doesn't belong on campus and should not be tolerated.

They have the ability. Do they have the will?

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