

Here's where Laurier can stick their apology to Lindsay Shepherd

Rambukkana's 'open letter' is all I expected of a man who would invoke the spectre of Hitler to try to shut down an underling — craven, dissembling, revisionist



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Wilfrid Laurier University teaching assistant Lindsay Shepherd is undoubtedly a better human being than I am — and at 22, probably a more mature one — and may well accept the raft of apologies now coming her way, but I would tell them all to blow the mea culpas out their various bums.

Shepherd is the 22-year-old graduate student at the school who was recently subjected to a struggle-session-like interrogation by three administrators, declared to be “transphobic” and then sanctioned for having shown a class a short video snippet, from TVO’s The Agenda, which featured the controversial University of Toronto psychology professor Dr. Jordan Peterson talking about the faddish new un-pronouns such as “zie” and “zher.”

Shepherd’s supervising professor, Nathan Rambukkana, even told Shepherd that by showing the video clip neutrally, without the now-requisite denunciation of Peterson, it was basically akin to “neutrally playing a speech by Hitler ...”

Rambukkana was joined by Herbert Pimlott, her program co-ordinator and a fellow, and this is clear from the recording, monumentally pleased with his own work and his own fine self, and Adria Joel, acting manager of the “Gendered

Violence Prevention and Support” program, who had little to say but, I assume, was there to look injured on behalf of those who might have been or might ever be injured by gendered violence.

Rambukkana was the lead bully but, as someone who covers the criminal courts, where they are used to parsing out responsibility, the other two could have been found guilty of the same assault on Shepherd, just as parties to a murder can be convicted though they may not have pulled the trigger.

To her enormous credit, Shepherd didn't cave.

She stood up for herself and, far more important, stood up for free speech; she dismissed the notion that students could be harmed by mere exposure to an idea, however controversial, and while she teared up once or twice, she didn't back down.



Lindsay Shepherd @NewWorldHominin

Moral of the story: A university must be repeatedly publicly shamed, internationally, in order to apologize (oh, but keep the task force & investigation). Even then, ambiguous about free speech. Also, make sure to secretly record all meetings or they won't take you seriously.

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Rambukkana and Laurier President and Vice-Chancellor Deborah

MacLatchy both apologized Tuesday after the recording Shepherd made of the nasty business got an ever-wider airing in the press and it became evident, even to these academics, that the session had been a bullying one and that Shepherd had been appallingly treated.

(I heard the full tape before I wrote about this on Nov. 10 but, at that time, Shepherd didn't want the fact that she'd recorded the proceedings to become public. Thank God she did; when things weren't so clear, the university's first instinct was to hide behind "privacy issues".)

In MacLatchy's statement, she apologized to Shepherd but noted that she remains "troubled by the way faculty, staff and students involved in this situation have been targeted with extreme vitriol."

In other words, MacLatchy was as concerned with those reacting harshly to the news of Shepherd's treatment as she was with the treatment itself and the propriety of how three of her people had ganged up on a TA.

Thank heavens, as MacLatchy said, that "supports are in place at the university to support them through this situation."

Earlier, MacLatchy had announced she was "striking a task force" to examine how to protect free speech at Laurier; Tuesday, she announced that the university has "engaged an independent party" to assess the facts. Which is it, or is it both?

As for Rambukkana's "open letter" to Shepherd, it is all I expected of a man who would invoke the spectre of Hitler to try to shut down an underling in a private meeting — craven, dissembling, revisionist.

Why, he began, he wanted to write to say sorry earlier, but couldn't due to "confidentiality concerns," including Shepherd's "privacy as a grad student ..."
She waived that when she first went public with what had happened.

He said as Shepherd's supervisor and the course director, "I didn't do enough to try to support" her in the meeting.

In truth, he did nothing to support her, lifted not a pinkie, not once.

He was sorry for implying "that Dr. Peterson is like Hitler, which is untrue and was never my intention." Really? Sure sounded like his intention. After the requisite Peterson denunciations ("I disagree strongly with many of Dr. Peterson's academic positions and actions ..."), he agreed it was a "tired analogy" that did him a disservice.

Why, and this is the best part, Rambukkana said, all this has even made him question his social justice approach, his "us versus them" way of thinking.

You know, he wrote rather wonderingly, and here he couldn't resist patting himself on the back for his professed belief in "reaching across the aisle to former alt-right figures as possible unexpected allies," perhaps he should "think of the goal as more than simply advancing social justice, but social betterment and progress as a whole."

Rambukkana hopes, he said, to participate in MacLatchy's task force; I just bet he does. "I hope perhaps you might consider doing the same," he told Shepherd, "so we could work together ..."

You see? You see what a fine little fellow he is? How sporting? He's "reaching out," so they can "move forward together."

It is to gag.

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