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FAIR Montclair / Center for Social Justice

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Greetings,

On behalf of the Montclair Chapter of the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR), we are writing to you as teachers and supervisors for Montclair's Center for Social Justice. As you may know, social justice identity politics has become the object of criticism for what many see as an inordinate focus on identity and oppression that, while based to some extent on fact, can also serve as a distorting lens when society is viewed only through this ideology. In addition, social justice politics also has been criticized for intolerance toward differing viewpoints and groups it categorizes as "oppressors" or "privileged." The District website describes CSJ as providing a "theoretical framework for understanding different forms of oppression and a method to explore how specific forms of oppression affect your own life." Based on this description, it seems likely that CSJ may approach pedagogy from the same ideological standpoint that has been the focus of recent criticism.

At FAIR, we believe in treating people as individuals and focusing on our common humanity, rather than treating people primarily as members of a group based on identity characteristics. We also believe in a liberal education that encourages robust debate, presents alternative viewpoints, strives for political neutrality, and is based on fact not ideology. In this spirit, we are providing links below to recent criticism of identitarian "oppressor/oppressed" ideology and, in particular, its failure to condemn anti-semitic harassment on college campuses. In addition, we have attached a list of books concerning tolerance and critiques of social justice identitarian ideology. Consistent with the District's Policy 2240 on teaching controversial issues, we ask that you take these materials into consideration.

<https://x.com/billackman/status/1733985787455168906?s=46&t=UEmKi-768WRgjOFQYmt3qw>

https://open.substack.com/pub/bariweiss/p/end-dei-woke-capture?r=c1os0&utm_medium=ios&utm_campaign=post

<https://x.com/thefp/status/1722671188718039407?s=46&t=UEmKi-768WRgjOFQYmt3qw>

<https://x.com/fareedzakaria/status/1733927077085143263?s=46&t=UEmKi-768WRgjOFQYmt3qw>

<https://jilv.org/resources/>

We also invite you to explore FAIR's Substack for pro-human publications and critiques of critical social justice ideology: https://news.fairforall.org/?utm_source=navbar&utm_medium=web. We also invite you to review our project FAIR in Education for pro-human curricula and other materials at: <https://www.fairforall.org/fair-in-education/>

 **FAIR Book List on Social Justice Identity Politics.pdf**
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Political Repression, Freedom of Conscience & Free Speech

Apology and Crito, Plato (360 B.C.E.). An account of the trial and execution of Socrates, who was condemned to death for corrupting the youth of Athens and worshipping false gods rather than the state religion.

Truth and Politics, Hannah Arendt (1967). An essay by a famed political philosopher on the antithesis of truth and politics, asserting that factual truths become distorted or deemed mere opinions when they challenge convenient political narratives.

Living in Truth, Vaclav Havel (1990). How the political apparatus of communist Czechoslovakia exerted an omnipresent pressure on culture that turned ordinary citizens into dissidents.

The Crucible, Arthur Miller (1953). A dramatized story of the Salem witch trials that took place in the Massachusetts Bay Colony from 1692-1693, the play is an allegory for the McCarthyism of the 1950s when the U.S. persecuted people accused of being communists.

Infidel, Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2007). A champion of free speech fought for the rights of Muslim women and the reform of Islam as a member of the Dutch Parliament, facing constant threats and demonization by reactionary Islamists and politicians.

Free Speech on Campus, Erwin Chermersky & Howard Gillman (2017). Arguing that universities must provide an inclusive and non-discriminatory learning environment but can never restrict the expression of ideas.

Hate: Why We Should Restrict It With Free Speech, Not Censorship, Nadine Strossen (2018). The former president of the American Civil Liberties Union argues that suppressing hate speech usually violates the First Amendment, and free speech is more effective than censorship in promoting the values of equality, dignity, diversity and inclusivity.

A Heretic's Manifesto: Essays on the Unsayable, Brendan O'Neill (2023). A collection of essays makes the case for heresy in the face of elites that have adopted risible orthodoxies yet cow critics with the threat of shaming, cancellation, and even arrest.

The Canceling of the American Mind, Greg Lukianoff and Rikki Schott (2023). In an effort to restore the culture of free speech, the founder of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) provides the first book to codify cancel culture and survey its effects through hard data and research, as well as new examples showing how both the left and the right silence critics.

Critiques of Social Justice Ideology

Taboo: 10 Facts You Can't Talk About, Wilfred Reilly (2020). An Associate Professor at Kentucky State University uses empirical data to debunk what he says is the false narrative of continuing racism and sexism in the United States.

Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything About Race, Gender and Identity, Helen Pluckrose & James Lindsay (2020). How activist Critical Social Justice scholarship does more harm than good by positing an inconsistent ethics and authoritarian orthodoxy.

The New Puritans: How the Religion of Social Justice Captured the Western World, Andrew Doyle (2022). A broadside against “woke” cancel culture and the moral certainties it shares with religious fundamentalism.

We Have Never Been Woke: Social Justice Discourse, Inequality and the Rise of a New Elite, Musa al-Gharbi (2023). A Columbia University sociologist argues that a new elite class of “symbolic capitalists” are the primary producers and consumers of content on antiracism, sexism, transphobia, and xenophobia but, despite their expressed commitments to egalitarianism, they are among the primary beneficiaries of the very inequalities they condemn, and expropriate blame to others who often benefit far less from the system than they do.

Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews, David L. Bernstein (2022). In a defense of liberal values, Bernstein argues that “Wokeism” shuts down discourse and leads to antisemitism.

The Authoritarian Moment: How the Left Weaponized America's Institutions Against Dissent, Ben Shapiro (2021). A conservative polemicist argues that the authoritarian left is ascendant in nearly every area of American life, and has used its power to silence opposition, demand submission, and enforce conformity to their values.

The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity, Douglas Murray (2019). A neoconservative writer and commentator investigates the dangers of “woke” culture and the rise of identity politics, with interludes on the Marxist foundations of “wokeness.”

The War on the West, Douglas Murray (2022). A neoconservative writer and commentator argues that many well-meaning people have been fooled by hypocritical and inconsistent rhetoric to support the current vogue of celebrating non-Western cultures and disparaging Western ones.

The Diversity Delusion: How Race and Gender Pandering Corrupt the University and Undermine Our Culture, Heather MacDonald (2018). MacDonald argues that toxic ideas first spread in higher education have undermined our humanistic values, fueled intolerance, and widened divisions in our culture.

Left is Not Woke, Susan Neiman (2023): An American moral philosopher argues that the woke left risks becoming what they despise because their intellectual roots conflict with ideas that have guided the left for more than 200 years: a commitment to universalism, a distinction between justice and power, and a belief in the possibility of progress.

America's Cultural Revolution: How the Radical Left Conquered Everything, Christopher F. Rufo (July 2023). Drawing parallels to the Chinese Cultural Revolution in which technocrats tried to impose cultural change from above and sent opponents to be "re-educated," Rufo's Amazon best-seller explains the history of how left-wing intellectuals and activists systematically took control of America's institutions and answers questions such as "Why is race the main thing America's rich, white elite wants to talk about?" and "Why is every major corporation bending the knee to a far-left agenda?"

Race Marxism, James Lindsay (2022). The founder of New Discourses traces the intellectual roots of Critical Race Theory to argue that, rightly understood, it is a reinvention of Marxism that substitutes race as the central construct for understanding inequality in place of economic class.

How Elites Ate the Social Justice Movement, Fredrik DeBoer (2023). A self-described Marxist argues that hidden beneath the rhetoric of the oppressed and the symbolism of the downtrodden lies the inconvenient fact that those doing the organizing, messaging, protesting, and campaigning are predominantly drawn from this country's more upwardly mobile educated classes for whom poses are more important than policies. DeBoer lays out an alternative vision for how society's winners can contribute to social justice movements without taking them over, in order to achieve tangible results.

The Parasitic Mind: How Infectious Ideas are Killing Common Sense, Gad Saad (2021). Canadian professor and host of popular youtube show "The Saad Truth" argues that the West's commitment to freedom, reason, and true liberalism has never been more seriously threatened than it is today by the stifling forces of political correctness.

Social Justice Fallacies, Thomas Sowell (2023). A professor at Stanford's Hoover Institution argues that those engaged in the quest for social justice adhere to a utopian view of the human condition and many propositions they take to be true simply cannot stand up to documented facts, which are often the opposite of what is widely believed.

The Identity Trap: A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time, Yascha Mounk (2023). A Johns Hopkins University professor and founder of *Persuasion* offers a balanced and nuanced account of how a new set of ideas about race, gender and sexual orientation came to be extremely influential in mainstream institutions, and argues that it would be a mistake to give up on a more universalist humanism.

Mao's America: A Survivor's Warning, Xi Van Fleet (2023). A survivor of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution in China sees parallels in the American cultural revolution being undertaken by an illiberal progressive left.

Racial Politics

Maverick: A Biography of Thomas Sowell, Jason L. Riley (2021). A Black orphan from the Jim Crow South, Thomas Sowell is a Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution whose libertarian and conservative opinions on economics, education and race have enraged the civil rights establishment and much of the mainstream media.

The New York Times' 1619 Project and the Racialist Falsification of History (2021). A collection of essays, lectures and interviews of renowned scholars refute key claims and expose historical inaccuracies of the New York Times' 1619 Project.

The 1619 Project: A Critique, Phillip W. Mangess (2020). A series of essays document the historical inaccuracies and argumentative fallacies of the New York Times's best-selling 1619 Project.

The Lure of Disempowerment: Reclaiming Agency in the Age of CRT, Erec Smith & Matthew Abraham (2022). Arguing that the tendency in "anti-racist" activism to embrace victimhood and label opposing views as inherently racist leads to a disempowering mindset.

Black Victim to Black Victor: Identifying the Ideologies, Behavioral Patterns, and Culture Norms That Encourage a Victimhood Complex, Adam B. Coleman (2021). Author and founder of Wrong Speak Publishing argues that Black Americans are constantly lied to about the source of their community's issues in an effort to profit off their pain and make sure they never leave the mindset of the victim.

Race Crazy: BLM, 1619, and the Progressive Movement, Charles Love (2021). After decades of progress healing real-world prejudices and anger, we suddenly live in an America where we're expected to view every single thing through the lens of race, and embrace a radical and dangerous political agenda which, if enacted, would mean the end of the American experiment as we know it.

Red, White and Black: Rescuing American History from Revisionists and Race Hustlers, Robert L. Woodson (2021). In the rush to redefine the place of black Americans in contemporary society, many radical activists and academics have mounted a campaign to destroy traditional American history and replace it with a false politicized version that is belied by the story of how black Americans have lived the grand American experience and are woven into the united whole that makes this nation unique in history.

Letters in Black and White: A New Correspondence on Race in America, Jennifer Richmond, Winkfield Twyman Jr. (2023). Two Americans—a black man and a white woman—rediscovered the art of letter writing in a correspondence about race in the United States that offers a model not only for having needed but difficult conversations but also for a better way forward that is critical of both the ideological battles that fuel media programming and entrench political rivalries and the noble-sounding social and cultural projects that fail time and again to offer meaningful solutions.

The End of Race Politics: Arguments for a Colorblind America, Coleman Hughes (2024). Montclair native and podcaster Coleman Hughes makes the case for a colorblind approach to politics and culture, warning that the so-called “anti-racist” movement is driving us, ironically, to a new kind of racism.

Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (And Everything Else), Olufemi O. Taiwo (2022). Seeking to move beyond a binary of “class” vs. “race,” Taiwo argues that the global Black radical tradition can be stripped of its political substance and liberatory potential by becoming the victim of elite capture—deployed by political, social, and economic elites in the service of their own interests.

Identity Politics and Tribalism: The New Culture Wars, Nikos Sotirakopoulos (2021). A senior lecturer at York St. John University argues that tribalism is the thread that links together the various expressions of group and identity conflicts in today’s West: from Left to Right, from Social Justice Warriors to Trumpites, from feminism to the manosphere, and from critical race theorists to white nationalists.

American Awakening: Identity Politics and Other Afflictions of Our Time, Joshua Mitchell (2020). A professor of political theory at Georgetown University argues that identity politics is an anti-egalitarian spiritual eugenics demanding that pure and innocent groups ascend, and the stained transgressor groups be purged, and that seeks to turn American politics into a religious venue in which the sacrificial scapegoat is the white, heterosexual, man.

Civility and Civic Discourse

How to Have Impossible Conversations, Peter Boghassian, James Lindsay (2019). A practical guide to conducting reasonable conversations with people of differing political opinions to foster a climate of civility.

Why Not Moderation? Letters to Young Radicals, Aurelian Craiutu (2023). A professor at Indiana University argues that moderation is not for lukewarm and indecisive minds, but a complex virtue with a distinct political tradition that is necessary for life in a liberal society.

The Constitution of Knowledge, Jonathan Rauch (2021). Analyzing trends in American disinformation and conspiracy, Rauch posits a defined understanding of truth and free inquiry, with discussion of how and why they should be defended.

I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times, Monica Guzman (2022). A journalist shows why curiosity is our best policy and shares practical tips from the trenches of the social, political, and cultural divides.

How Minds Change: The Surprising Science of Belief, Opinion, and Persuasion, David McRaney (2022). An expert in self-delusion and psychology explores the science of how people change their minds, exploring the limits of reasoning, the power of groupthink, and the effects of deep canvassing in an eye-opening journey among cult members, conspiracy theorists, and political activists.

The Illusion of Division, Monica Harris (2022). Activist, author and Executive Director of The Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism argues that manufactured divisions keep us from seeing the root causes of systemic problems that are overwhelming us, and the key to pulling our country out of crisis is appreciating our shared challenges and interests.