Dear Colleagues,

Back in Summer 2021, my former Portland State colleague, Dr. Peter Boghossian and I teamed up with his fellow hoax paper author Dr. James Lindsay to develop a cheat sheet to help policy-makers hack their way through the dense undergrowth of social justice rhetoric used to bludgeon our republic into ever more anti-human efforts at top-down social planning. At the time, we had no idea of the demand. But as noted in the Fall, 2021 Trail Notes, the downloads of the cheat sheet, which now top 100,000, crashed our website.

In March this year, a copy of the cheat sheet was placed on the desks of every member of the South Dakota legislature on the day the representatives met to debate a law banning gender and race stereotyping in education (a.k.a. “Critical Race Theory”). One “indigenous” representative who clearly profits from social justice rhetoric, Peri Pourier, was alarmed enough to alert her followers about the transgression.

Now, one delightful ambiguity of Twitter is that when someone “likes” a posting that disapproves of some item, it’s not clear whether the fans like the disapproval or like the item. Either way, Pourier’s tweet garnered 1,192 “likes” within a day.

One assumes from the tone of comments that most of her followers “liked” her disapproval. One constituent called the cheat sheet “threatening” and “a safety concern.”

Another constituent followed a more common approach: any group that opposes race hustling and stereotyping by rent-seeking activists must be descended from the Klan.
Now having your Oregon Association of Scholars likened to the Klan is indeed a grave aspersion. For one, they did not have a website. Secondly, their newsletter was not as nice as ours. Speaking of which, this edition features photographs of the Pendleton Round-Up between 1910 and 1920 to remind us of this wild western feature of Oregon history.

It may be that our republic is moving in the direction of “two solitudes”, to borrow a term once used to describe English and French Canada, or into a sort of Belgian model with two deeply divided and unreconcilable parts existing side by side. Choose California/New York or Texas/Florida and stay out of each other’s business, seems to be the model. In November, just after our Fall newsletter went to press, we issued a point-by-point rebuttal of Portland State University president Stephen Percy’s declaration that he was forming steering committee to oversee a “collective approach” to climate science questions on campus. Now, when the head of a university starts talking about exploring scientific questions with “a collective approach,” freedom-loving people should be nervous. Does Percy worry that “the scientific approach” has not yielded a consensus, indeed that the science remains Unsettled, to use the title of President Obama’s former climate director Steven Koonin’s bestselling book of 2021?

Our rebuttal was done in a side-by-side format, which speaks to the idea of two solitudes. On one side, climate hysteria, collective mobilization, group thinking, coercive measures, and virtue-signaling. On the other, sober assessment, cost-benefit analysis, innovation and technological change, and a defense of freedoms. Yours truly was not included in the “steering committee” despite having conducted highly-cited research on climate change and policy. Perhaps the president was worried that I might steer the university back to its supposed principles of science, open inquiry, and individual conscience.

In the same vein, Portland State’s collectivization czar Percy in January issued a Plan for Equity and Racial Justice. Our response issue brief was a hit with readers. In addition to pointing out the obvious – “By enforcing a new ideological conformity and institutionalizing race-based discrimination, the plan represents an alarming case of organizational capture by contemporary identity politics” – we pointed out one new innovation: the planned creation of an Official Campus-Speak that will be used to harmonize all campus thinking on
contentious issues of public affairs. In the words of the plan: “This campus-level shared language will help ensure equity is truly at the center of our campus priorities.” As we wrote in response: “The Oregon Association of Scholars is not aware of any previous race and ideological plan in higher education in the United States that has gone so far as to envisage a whole new language in which the race-ideologues will be expected to engage in approved speech-acts.” Yikes!

Another late-breaking item came just after the Fall newsletter was issued. Common Reading at the University of Oregon has become little more than brute indoctrination as we noted in an issue brief of September. Almost the moment we closed the Fall newsletter, the University of Oregon issued its reading “guide” for the mandatory 2021-22 reading, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. In retrospect, we pulled too many punches in our denunciation of the brainwashing that the poohbahs of Eugene have imposed on all University of Oregon undergraduates. The “guide” is such a gross attempt at political conformity that one wonders if it is a hoax document. It begins with a long discussion of how to avoid “Eurocentric sensibilities” such as by using the indigenous word “Mother Earth” rather than the European word “nature.” The guide promises to direct students on how to get woke on “genocidal boarding schools, the manifestations of historical colonization at UO and what this implies for the present, land restoration and how students can engage in and support moves toward repair and reciprocity, and the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism as represented in the Line 3 pipeline as well as other issues and projects impacting the Pacific Northwest.” The “ongoing practices of settler colonialism” include “the Smokey the Bear campaign that contributed to fire suppression and interruption of cultural fire practices.” Students are encouraged to write about an indigenous cultural practice. But beware: “This option is not an invitation for cultural appropriation...These traditions are ‘closed’ practice, meaning that they are reserved exclusively for the Indigenous peoples they come from unless express permission is received from tribal elders.” In addition, the book will help “facilitate discussions surrounding racial inequality in America, to expose students to the injustices around them.” Finally, the guide urges students to develop personal relationships with legumes and bean plants.

In April, we issued our seventh issue brief entitled Oregon’s Failing Public Universities. As the state education establishment has focused on its “equity lens” approach to all
matters educational, the quality of education in Oregon has predictably plummeted, from the K-12 to the college levels. The issue brief cites recent work by the Texas Public Policy Foundation showing that Oregon ranks 45th out of 50 states in the earnings that its university graduates attain relative to the debt levels they take on. Coupled with our earlier brief that found similar dismal performance using another metric of university value-added to students, it confirms our long-standing belief that the equity agenda has particularly noxious effects for first-generation, poor, and other disadvantaged students for whom education was supposed to be a ladder of mobility.

In May, Johns Hopkins University Press published a book on free speech in academia entitled *It’s Not Free Speech*. The major theme is that there should be no free speech in academia for professors whose research falls afoul of modern hard left identity politics. Co-authored by two humanities professors (cue firehouse alarms!) Michael Bérubé of Penn State University and Jennifer Ruth of Portland State, the book targets yours truly as one of the “white supremacists” in academia who needs to be driven out. By now of course, that slight has become something of a complement. One response by NAS member Stanley Ridgely to the “useful idiot” Ruth, who heads PSU’s faculty union “academic freedom” practice: “I don’t begrudge Ruth’s pursuit of her ‘film studies’ enthusiasms and wish her well in her tenured comfort. But she has no brief whatever to speak to ‘academic freedom’ while she shills for the odious ideologues who represent the greatest threat to university academic freedom in the modern era.”

A newsletter would not be complete without some light comedy. In March, Linfield University English professor Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt -- who calls herself an "award winning transnational, anti-racist, and justice oriented feminist scholar...who critiques institutional racism, toxic climates and forms of racial trauma stemming from being in academia" -- became obnoxious on campus and was called to order by the university. She had posted a mock response on social media about the university’s business school: “I was a good humanitarian when I was an English major. Then when I studied business, I lost my soul and became a crook and learned how to steal from the 99% and enrich the pockets of the 1%.” Funny to say, Dutt-Ballerstadt rallied “far right” free speech advocates like the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (The FIRE) to her defense and Linfield eventually backed down. Just remember: It’s not free speech!
Another item from the Oregon campus follies department: On a beautiful spring day in May, while walking to class, I bumped into the former Portland State philosophy professor Peter Boghossian conducting one of his “street epistemology” events in the Urban Plaza. Since Boghossian’s famous resignation from PSU in 2021, he has of course gone on to bigger and better things, gaining a much bigger impact in defending liberal values against the Woke Left. On this day, his event was deliciously interrupted by students and faculty of the PSU School of Social Work who, after yelling from their rooftop rampart like knights in Monty Python and the Holy Grail (“I don’t wanna talk to you no more, you empty headed animal food trough wiper! I fart in your general direction! Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries! Now go away or I shall taunt you a second time!”), disgorged at street level en masse to assail Boghossian for “causing harm” with his thought experiment on gender. Pete’s film crew was on hand and I am happy to report that the encounter has been viewed 2.6 million times, yes million, since its release on Tik Tok. By the time you read this it will be well over 3 million. Now, the Portland State School of Social Work certainly does yeoman’s social work. Its video affirming that School members “take social justice and equity very serious [sic.] at all levels” has been viewed almost 4,000 times. But nothing can compare to this debutante moment when its national and international profile has soared. Congratulations to the School of Social Work!

Affiliates of the NAS are thriving and our affiliate heads are meeting once a month to brainstorm. You will see more affiliate items in the weekly NAS newsletter. OAS membership meanwhile keeps growing along with the national numbers. We don’t expect to be a mass membership organization in Oregon, but our stature as the local representative of the NAS is our main claim to importance here. Before your membership lapses, please make sure to renew it. As ever,

Thanks for all you do!
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