

Andy Ngo Learns a Lesson About Free Speech

by Hugh Fitzgerald



From [National Review](#) comes this story, disturbingly similar to many others, about the death of freedom of speech on college campuses: “Fired for Reporting the Truth,” by Andy Ngo, May 12, 2017. The crime for which the author was fired from his job on the campus newspaper at Portland State University was simply that he tweeted, without comment, a video of what was said at a public interfaith panel discussion by a Muslim participant, who presumably knew what he was saying was being recorded and did not object. The student editors at the campus newspaper, the Vanguard, were another matter.

Last month, I attended an interfaith panel discussion, “Unpacking Misconceptions,” at Portland State University, where I’m a political-science graduate student. I ended up being fired as the multimedia editor of our student

newspaper, the Vanguard, for tweeting about what was said there.

Much of the discussion was uncontroversial. The students on the panel mainly shared complaints of what they perceived as misconceptions about their religions. A Hindu student lampooned author Reza Aslan for his depiction of Hinduism on CNN's Believer, which showed a minority sect's practice of eating human flesh. A Jewish student said most Jews don't have payot, the side curls worn by some Orthodox Jewish men. An atheist student spoke on behalf of a secular-humanist worldview and challenged the audience to think about how we as a society can develop our own moral framework without religion.

At one point, a woman in the audience asked the Muslim student if [a specific verse](#) in the Koran actually permitted the killing of non-Muslims. "I can confidently tell you, when the Koran says an innocent life, it means an innocent life, regardless of the faith, the race, like, whatever you can think about as a characteristic," he began.

This is taqiyya, for in Islam no infidel is an "innocent," given his rejection of the message of Muhammad, and anyone who proves to be an obstacle to the spread of Islam, for example, by refusing either to convert or to willingly submit to being subjugated as a dhimmi, or anyone who helps to cause "fitna" or to "spread corruption in the land" is not an innocent and should be killed. And notice that while the question from the woman in the audience is about 5:32, which appears to denounce killing, the Muslim student never mentions in his answer its all-important qualifier, 5:33, that describes those who deserve to be killed.

At this point, I took out my mobile phone and began recording as he continued:

"And some, this, that you're referring to, killing non-

Muslims, that [to be a non-believer] is only considered a crime when the country's law, the country is based on Koranic law – that means there is no other law than the Koran. In that case, you're given the liberty to leave the country, you can go in a different country, I'm not gonna sugarcoat it. So you can go in a different country, but in a Muslim country, in a country based on the Koranic laws, disbelieving, or being an infidel, is not allowed so you will be given the choice [to leave]."

This is somewhat confused. Is he talking about all non-Muslims, or only about apostates from Islam? If it is the first, he avoids explaining that non-Muslims, or at least Christians and Jews, as *ahl al-kitab*, or People of the Book, can live and practice their faith, but they must submit to all of the onerous requirements imposed on them as dhimmis, and need not "go in a different country." Perhaps the student is thinking of those who, like Hindus or Buddhists or atheists, do not have the option of becoming dhimmis under Islamic law, and so will, according to Islamic law, have only "the chance to leave" or to be killed. Or what is most likely, in using the word "non-Muslims," he meant to refer only to the apostates who "disbelieve" and become Infidels. And if a Muslim "changes his religion," as a famous hadith in Bukhari says, the penalty is clearly death..

Although I was not there officially as a reporter to cover the event, I shared a 40-second snippet of the video on my personal Twitter account, with a message that conveyed my understanding of the speaker's meaning – namely, that non-Muslims

He ought to have written "apostates."

would be killed or banished in a state governed by Koranic law.

That accurately conveys what the Muslim student said. But to repeat, what he said did not make clear whether or not he meant to speak only about apostates from Islam and not Infidels, or whether he may have meant both. I believe, from the context, that he meant to speak only of apostates, as does Andy Ngo, but Ngo uses the word “non-Muslims” in one place (see the paragraph above), and “apostates” in his tweet below:

At [@Portland_State](#) interfaith panel today, the Muslim student speaker said that apostates will be killed or banished in an Islamic state. pic.twitter.com/YpsVSB1w9P

– Andy C. Ngo (@MrAndyNgo) [April 27, 2017](#)

I later posted a longer version of the video in a follow-up tweet to provide more context:

.[@Portland_State](#) Here is full clip that I recorded. An audience member asked about Quran 5:51 & “infidels.” He [the Muslim student] summarizes Quran 5:32 just before video starts pic.twitter.com/7FMgsPbFR6

– Andy C. Ngo (@MrAndyNgo) [April 27, 2017](#)

This longer video includes a response by someone in the audience who disagreed with the Muslim speaker’s contention that “Infidels” would have to leave the countries where Islamic law is strictly enforced. He says that it was “perfectly okay for non-Muslims to live in Muslim lands.” (Again, he may have deliberately elided the difference between apostates and non-Muslims.) This audience member cited the continued existence of religious minority communities in the Middle East as apparent proof of Islamic tolerance. He says nothing about the treatment of non-Muslims in Muslim lands, but only that they continue to subsist in such places, which to him apparently means they are accepted in the Western sense.

That student is wrong about the present, and he is wrong about the past. Islam today is not exactly a picture of “tolerance” when churches are blown up, and Christians attacked and killed with impunity, in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and even “moderate” Indonesia, or forbidden outright to live permanently in a country, as is the case with Saudi Arabia (though as temporary guest workers Infidels may be allowed). That’s the present.

As to the past, it was not “tolerance,” but the “intolerance” of Muslim overlords over many centuries that led so many non-Muslims, desirous of avoiding the harsh demands of dhimmitude, to convert to Islam. Of course, Hindus and Buddhists had it even worse than Christians and Jews: they did not have the option, under Islamic law, to become dhimmis. (It is true that some Muslim rulers, desirous of obtaining the Jizyah on which the Muslim State depended, held back from killing the Hindu goose that could lay the dhimmi egg, and treated Hindus, intermittently, as “dhimmis,” even though they were not, according to Islamic law, entitled to such a designation). And some did convert to avoid even the dhimmi status – which is what explains the Muslim population in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh today. This audience member is undoubtedly unaware of the studies of Indian historians, such as K. S. Lal, who estimated that up to 70 to 80 million Hindus were killed by Muslims during their rule. More recently, several hundred thousand Hindus were driven out of Muslim-majority Kashmir, with many killed among those who could not escape.

One wonders how that audience member, whom Andy Ngo usefully recorded, thinks largely Christian North Africa and the Middle East became overwhelmingly Muslim, and why, for the same reason, so much of the formerly Hindu subcontinent (now divided among Pakistan, India, Bangladesh) became Muslim. Does he think it was the obvious superiority of Islam as a faith,

the sheer self-evident wonderfulness of its texts and teachings, that led to such mass conversions? Can he possibly be unaware of how difficult life has always been for non-Muslims under Muslim rule, and why so many would, over time, decide to convert? That apologist for Islam appears not to know how non-Muslims have been treated in Muslim lands over 1400 years. He points to the fact that some Christians are still living in the Middle East as proof of Muslim tolerance, when the real question he ought to be asking is why so few Christians are now living in the Middle East and North Africa, in lands once overwhelmingly Christian. He ought to be asked to explain the steady decrease in the percentage of Christians in the population, wherever the Muslim Arabs conquered, so that where once Christians were an overwhelming majority in the Middle East, they have become, everywhere but in Egypt and Lebanon, almost too few even to discern.

Now comes the main lesson of this disturbing incident for Andy Ngo, and for us: a lesson on the present state of the freedom of speech on campus:

Four days later, [after Andy Ngo had tweeted] the editor-in-chief of my school newspaper called me into a meeting. The paper's managing editor was also present. They asked me about a Breitbart piece describing the event. It was the first time I'd seen the piece, which included my tweets and a tweet from one of the panelists.

My editor, whom I deeply respected at the time, called me "predatory" and "reckless," telling me I had put the life and well-being [!] of the Muslim student and his family at risk. She said that my tweets implied the student advocated the killing of atheists.

Ngo's tweets implied nothing of the sort. And the Muslim student neither endorsed nor deplored, but merely accurately described, the punishment that applied to apostates according

to the Sharia.

Another person in the meeting said I should have taken into account the plight of victimized groups in the “current political climate.”

What does this mean? As a reporter, should Andy Ngo not report on Muslim punishment of apostates or treatment of Infidels because these would make Islam look bad? Is what he reported accurate? Is what the Muslim student described as the punishment for apostates a maligning of Islam, or is it true? Is Andy Ngo permitted to ply his trade as a reporter, or must he instead become a member in good standing of the largest self-appointed public relations firm in the world, the one made up of fearful and ignorant Infidels who are apologists for the world's Muslims? And why did that other person in the meeting with editors claim that Muslims are a “victimized” group? Is it because CAIR, and a hundred examples of fake “anti-Muslim hate crimes,” have made the gullible think so? Looking around the world today. Isn't it Christians who are the most “victimized,” and by Muslims? And in this country, antisemitic hate crimes far outnumber those against Muslims though, given CAIR's relentless claims about Muslim victims of “hate crimes,” one would hardly realize this.

“The editor claimed I had ‘violated the paper's ethical standards’ by not ‘minimizing harm’ toward the speaker.” When did that become the reporter's task?

If a Nazi or KKK spokesman had made a speech on campus, would the editors of the student paper have kept out of its reporting any mention of what the Nazi said about Jews, or the KKK about blacks, lest that spokesman might become the target of those offended? Would there be an attempt to “minimize harm” to such a speaker by not reporting everything he said? Of course not. Their speeches would be splashed all over the campus newspaper.

The Muslim student spoke in public and was well aware that his appearance would be recorded and reported. He was prepared for that; he did not request that he not be filmed or his words not be taken down. It was not he, but the campus newspaper's staff, who called Andy Ngo to count. Why did the editor think Ngo had put the student speaker's "life and well-being" (!) at risk? The Muslim speaker did not "advocate the killing of atheists"; nor did Andy Ngo imply that he did. But apparently the editor of the paper who fired Andy Ngo believes that Muslims are so violent and vindictive that they might even kill one of their own for speaking the truth about Islamic doctrine. Her solution to this was to punish accurate reporting of a Muslim student's discussion of Islam, lest Islam be made to look bad, and other Muslims as a result become murderous. So if you can't say something good about Islam, whether you are Muslim or non-Muslim, don't say anything at all. And if you do say something bad about Islam, we will simply refuse to report it. Truth is no defense. It all makes sense, in our topsy-turvy world.

Why would non-Muslims want to harm the speaker? He was reporting Islamic doctrine, not endorsing it. As for Muslims – why would they want to harm the Muslim student, for describing, not denouncing, what he believed to be the punishment meted out to apostates according to the Sharia? It's the American editors who don't want certain truths told about Islam, for fear that those truths will make Islam look bad. And that would never do.

Ngo was judged "toxic" because of his supposed connection to unnamed "conservative media." Ngo's was only an "indirect affiliation" – i.e., he had never submitted anything to the apparently intolerable "conservative media" directly, had not been employed by them, had not been published by them, did not receive any payment from them, but some of those "conservative" outlets, *horribile dictu*, retweeted some of his tweets. And that makes Ngo "toxic" – that is, if you believe,

as the student editor did, that all “conservative media” are toxic by definition. Which is just the way those who rule the ideological roost see things.

This is the state of the freedom of speech on campuses today. If a Muslim, or for that matter a non-Muslim, dares to truthfully describe any aspect of Islam that is less than flattering to the faith, and if some student reporter reports – also truthfully – on what that Muslim or non-Muslim has said, he will be chastised, punished, and may even, as Andy Ngo discovered to his surprise and chagrin, lose his job. His not to reason why; he should have gotten with the program ages ago: make Islam look good, or at least, don’t ever make it look bad.

If you want to find out what Islam is all about, what the texts – Qur’an, hadith, and sira – teach the Believers, the last place to look, at least for now, until the Great Awakening arrives (it can’t come fast enough) is the American university.

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