

Are 65% of the 79% of the 20% of Columbia faculty morons?

By Lev Tsitrin

I admit that the question of “to be, or not to be” rolls easier from off one’s tongue – yet the question posed by the title is, I would argue, as existentially vital as that which was posed by Hamlet.

Let me explain. [As reported](#), Columbia Faculty of Arts and Sciences that comprises 20% of university’s full-time faculty decided to vote on the performance of Columbia President Minouche Shafik regarding “the April 18 and April 30 police sweeps of the “Gaza Solidarity Encampment” and occupied Hamilton Hall ... and the disciplinary proceedings that followed.” With a 79% turnout (i.e. 709 voters), 65% percent voted in favor of the no-confidence resolution in her leadership.

As interpreted by Professor David Lurie who organized the vote, President Shafik’s asking the police to clear occupied spaces was tantamount to “the series of mistakes and miscalculations and overreaches and violations of norms of governance and of standards of administrative behavior.”

Which sounds as if, in the view of Professor Lurie and his 461 academic fellow-travelers, loudly camping on lawns and occupying buildings is a proper academic behavior. Apparently, in their view, this is how one advances a discovery – not by writing papers, not by calmly and dispassionately discussing them in colloquiums, taking objections in stride as contributing to the ultimate elucidation of the truth (i.e. the way the discussion of the resolution itself was done, according to Dean Hungerford: “[it was] robust and civil ... reflect[ing] a range of views [with] collegiality and

professionalism”) – but by taking over the lawns and the building and, with noisy self-righteousness, megaphoning one’s views to those who are trying to focus on their study and research.



But if the faculty does not understand the process by which the existing knowledge is transferred, and the new knowledge is generated – or even does not see transmission and generation of knowledge as a university’s function, perceiving university instead as a stage for political action done by empty-headed loud-mouths – than what is the point of attending Columbia? Or as Hamlet would have put it, “to go to Columbia, or not to go to Columbia, this is the question.”

And unlike the answer to the “to be or not to be” question (Hamlet quickly figuring that “not to be” is not an option), “not to go to Columbia” sounds far more sensible than going to Columbia – if all there is to going to Columbia is getting one’s head filled with garbage by professors who have no clue of the basics of education. Why go for an intellectual self-murder?

But let’s not conclude on this, pessimistic, note. For one, there could have been two different reasons for voting “yes” on the non-confidence resolution: some professors may have done so because President Shafik did not act sooner. Those votes would be a vote against the protestors, not in their support. If half of the “yes” votes were motivated by a “no” to protestors, than the overall vote was, by a two-thirds majority, condemnatory of pro-Hamas, anti-Israel protests. Of course, that’s not perfect – one wants 100% of faculty to oppose Hamas (and to know what education is for, for that matter) – but still, this is not as bad as the press leads us to believe: even among those professors who did voted for the

resolution, not everyone was a moron – though sad to say, 231 Columbia professors were.

Besides, the vote of 79% of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences who represent 20% of the overall university faculty may not adequately represent the views of the remaining 80% who did not find it necessary to vote, likely being quite in agreement with the need to free Columbia from the brutal occupation by anti-Israel, antisemitic, loudmouthed pinheads.

So may be, not all is lost at Columbia? Clearly, the vote indicate that not every Columbia professor is a moron. Still, just 50% of the 65% of the 79% of the 20% of Columbia faculty being morons makes for a sad statistics.