

Losing My Funding, Another Form of Censorship



by Phyllis Chesler

I'm really shocked. Unexpectedly, and without warning, I just lost 40% of my funding. This means that I may have to close up shop. My funder, someone who has stood by me for 14 years, did not send her annual check. I kept emailing. Finally, she texted that she'd decided that my work to help save Afghan women was no longer one of her priorities. "I do not want any more of them here," she wrote.

“Them.” “Here.”

Granted, immigration is a controversial issue—but my funder knows that I was [among the handful](#) who wrestled with the dangers of the West’s opening our doors to unredeemable misogynists and potentially radicalized Islamists. While I condemned the atrocious way in which the Biden administration [chose to leave Afghanistan](#), I also [knew](#) that despite all the [blood and treasure](#) we spent in that country, there was no way we could ever change the hearts and minds of those who live in rural Afghanistan, control the poppy crop, or are members of the Taliban.

But these particular Afghan women? On our watch, they became women’s rights activists, judges, doctors, lawyers, journalists, poets, scientists, social workers, small business owners. They are most likely to assimilate, they are our daughters now. We—Western feminists, Western governments—are at least morally responsible for them.

But that’s not the only reason my funder decided not to send her precious check my way. Her decision came only days after I’d published a [pro-abortion piece](#), a piece which was read at a 2022 demonstration outside St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. Although I remained a steadfast supporter of a woman’s right to an abortion, I had not written about this for a long time. Come the 21st century, I was drawn to other burning issues such as Islamist terrorism, rising Jew hatred, the endangered lives of tribal women, persecuted minorities in Muslim countries, and the degradation and disappearance of both feminist knowledge and intellectual diversity in the West.

Why do I think that my abortion piece was a turning point? Once, on a visit to my home, my funder quietly left a book behind. The book was a rather shocking anti-abortion screed. I was meant to find it. Carefully, kindly, we never discussed it. But I knew that she regularly attended conferences at

which anti-abortion speakers were featured and I silently blessed her for her tolerance for another feminist viewpoint.

Here's the necessary perspective. No funder is obliged to fund or to continue funding anyone. However, advance notice is always appreciated. And, while my pro-abortion views may have played a part in this de-funding, in terms of this particular issue, I'm among the very lucky.

Gynecologists have been defamed and death threatened; [violence](#) against [abortion](#) clinics in America have, so far, resulted in 11 deaths. Clinics and their patients have been physically harassed by aggressive activists and [via lawsuits](#). Recently, small clinics across America have lost even their [most minimal funding](#) and have only been able to serve a small part of those who need their help. Even feminists learned to speak carefully about the raging war over control of women's bodies. Increasingly, they were for "reproductive freedom," or for "choice," not *for* "abortions," which should be legally [available and rare](#).

On other fronts, professors, graduate students, activists, and authors, have lost their good reputations as well as tenure, funding, colleagues, students, and publishers and all for holding the "wrong" views on [gender](#); [Islam/Islamophobia](#); [Israel](#); [racism](#); [Palestine](#); [prostitution](#); and on the Mother of All [Issues](#), that of [transgender rights](#).

I've written [many hundreds of articles](#) about just such cases over the last twenty years. My voice has kept the issue of censorship alive and has strengthened those who might otherwise remain invisible both to themselves and others.

I've never been properly funded—but that's my fault, too. I've never taken the time out to write grants or socialize with philanthropists and heads of foundations. Even if I had, my views were never the feminist flavor of the month—and also, I kept moving from subject to subject. I pioneered subjects but

did not remain there to specialize in them.

The truth is, I did not want to stop my research, writing, and activism in order to raise monies. (A cash prize would have been nice but that was not to be). Time was all I had and it was precious to me. I lived from university paycheck to paycheck and on book advances, which never, ever, even covered the costs of writing a book.

Still, compared to most other radical feminists, I was among the fortunate few. No matter how hard I was challenged, I at least *had* a university position. So many other valiant, visionary, and determined feminists had no jobs and no job security; had neither capital nor funding, and ran out of steam within a decade or two. Feminist bookstores and publishing houses were shuttered, restaurants, bars, and women's centers also were. Whether we were published or self-published, we never received significant advances or royalties, our work went out of print, was increasingly forgotten, and was not taught in Women's Studies or elsewhere. There were exceptions—but that's what they were, exceptions to a rule.

I was not a gender-neutral liberal feminist. I was a radical and at a time when the Western university had not yet been taken down by postmodern academics. Radical feminists were feared and hated. We were not promoted. We had to fight for tenure and promotion—at least, I did. In order to survive, we had to be leftists, pro-“sex work,” and primarily anti-racist. I had [politically incorrect views](#) about—well, about everything: Male violence towards women, prostitution, pornography, motherhood, custody battles, surrogacy, anti-Semitism, Islam, Islamic gender and religious apartheid, Jihad, honor killing, gender identity, the trans issue—just on and on.

People think that writers and thinkers simply live on air and in romantic garrets, that what we do cannot or should not cost

real money. That is not true. Even without taking a salary (I don't), work such as mine requires a webmaster, a website, a research assistant, an IT team, hardware and software upgrades, office expenses, subscriptions to newspapers and magazines—even rent—and this all costs more than a proverbial pretty penny. I've subsidized 60% of my own work but doing so has worn me right down to the ground.

Now, no outside funding=being potentially silenced. It's another form of censorship.

Increasingly, more and more of us are being silenced on both sides of the aisle. What is acceptable to say depends entirely upon the company you keep. There are certain subjects that one cannot safely discuss with many conservatives: Abortion is among them, but so is lesbianism, border control, and Donald Trump. There are also subjects that one dare not discuss in most left-liberal company: Israel, the scientific basis of gender, Donald Trump, and God, in no particular order. One can discuss all these subjects anywhere as long as one has the "accepted" point of view; but not otherwise.

Ironically, my funder also said that she was now more interested in funding issues having to do with school curriculum, CRT, and intersectionality. I immediately sent her 50 articles that I'd published in 2021 and early 2022 on these very subjects. She said she'd go back and look at her accounts but that she was probably out of discretionary funds.

Oh, how I need a Lorenzo de' Medici, someone who appreciates another Renaissance spirit and wants to keep it around. But, until that day comes along—I must, most humbly, turn to you, my readers and colleagues, for this essential support.

To donate to Phyllis Chesler's GoFundMe campaign, [click here](#).