

The Cornell Campaign Against Law School Professor William Jacobson

by Gary Fouse



Cornell University Law School Professor William Jacobson, who runs a conservative blog called *Legal Insurrection*, has been going through Hell the past year or so due to his conservative views and recent criticism of Black Lives Matter. Students, faculty and administration have been loudly protesting Jacobson's views and trying to end his academic career at Cornell. He has recently been [interviewed](#) regarding his experiences. I have previously written in Jacobson's defense as well as that of other professors in other universities who are having similar difficulties for exercising their free speech rights.

Jacobson's story has caused me to reflect on my own experiences while teaching English as a second language (ESL)

part-time at the University of California at Irvine (UCI) Extension from 1998-2016 while running my own conservative blog, *Fousesquawk*.

I should begin by emphasizing that it was my practice never to opine about political or other controversial issues in the classroom. I considered that it was my job to teach students to improve their English skills, not what to think about the world. However, beginning around 2006-2007, I did become active on other parts of the campus when I became aware of anti-Semitic and/or anti-American events taking place on campus. I am speaking primarily of the annual week of bashing Israel that comes every May to UCI courtesy of the Muslim Student Union and Students for Justice in Palestine. It was around that time that I started my blog in order to publicize these issues on campus. Thus, I began attending these events, listening, videotaping (over the objections of the speakers and those hosting the event-it was my legal right to do so), never disrupting, but asking pointed questions during the q and a.

It became my position-and still is- that the University of California system, as well as universities across the nation, are tolerating (anti-Semitic) intolerance in the very name of tolerance. They are simply afraid to confront the main purveyors of anti-Semitism on campus (pro-Palestinian forces) because they are predominantly Muslim. I thus became an open critic of the UCI administration as well as the chancellors of other campuses and the various presidents of the UC system.

Interestingly, and quite in contrast to the experiences of Professor Jacobson and many others, I never suffered any blowback from the University itself nor the UCI Extension, for whom I worked. In contrast to most humanities departments, the teacher corps in ESL was largely made up of people with foreign living experience, people who were bi-lingual, and often married to foreign spouses-as well as having a variety of political views. The common practice in our office was not

to discuss politics (I did violate that occasionally), but the point is that my co-workers and supervisors knew my views, but we all got along very well. The University administration knew very well who I was because I wrote them several letters when I thought they were allowing anti-Semitism to rear its ugly head on campus. Yet, they never tried to silence me or threaten my job. Keep in mind that as a part-timer, I worked on a quarterly contract. I had no tenure, no employment rights. They didn't need to fire me. All they had to do was not give me a class to teach the next quarter, and I would have been gone. Of course, being a retired government employee with a pension and health benefits, it would not have caused me any great stress.

The point I am making here is that the University of California and UC Irvine respected my right of free speech. When I needed to communicate with university administrators, I did so in a professional and polite manner. There was no personal acrimony. I did have a couple of unpleasant exchanges with two UCI professors, with whom I was on opposite sides of the fence, as well as professors from other campuses and speakers who came to speak at UCI. But that's what you sign up for when you choose to become an activist and speak out at so many of these ugly events that take place on campuses.

In the end, my age and declining energy told me it was time to pack it in with my teaching career. I also wanted to leave on my own terms and not as a result of some unfortunate occurrence on campus related to my activism. In the end, I chose to stop teaching, but I remained on great terms with those with whom and for whom I worked in the UCI Extension. UCI is in many respects, a great university, but it has similar problems as other great universities. At the risk of digressing, one of the saving graces of UCI is that it has a relatively small Humanities department. It's law school, on the other hand, is little more than a training ground for liberal activists.

It is unfortunate that other teachers like Professor Jacobson have not been as lucky as I was. It is a disgrace that his own colleagues have turned against him simply because they don't share his views. This is not what a university is supposed to be. Cornell is a prestigious university, part of the Ivy League. Yet, that school suffers from several problems, not just the Jacobson issue. Anti-Semitism is one of those issues at Cornell. When you look at other Ivy League institutions like Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, etc., you see the same problems.

It is a great experience working on a university campus, but there are many problems in the academic culture. It is a culture dominated by extreme leftist thinkers, people who all too often, do not respect the free speech rights of others. It is a culture that needs to change, but it is going to take a long time to change the culture that has been building up since the 1960s when I was in college. It will take a long time to change the leftist domination in academia, but at least universities could follow the example of UC Irvine and not try to hound teachers who don't follow the herd.