

The Silence of the Professors

by Janice Fiamengo



Recently there appeared a rousing “[op-ed](#) in the Toronto Sun against vaccine passports).

Forte’s online statement calls on university personnel across the country, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, to refuse to comply with their universities’ recent mandate that all students, staff, and instructors provide proof of vaccination in order to work on campus. At present, a [Canadian universities](#) have implemented vaccine policies, while those that haven’t are [currently experiencing increasing COVID-19 cases](#)) and the mandate is in direct violation of various employment and human rights laws (as well as of the [research ethics](#), this indifference to informed consent is deeply unsettling.

Forte explains, further, that the vaccine mandate is discriminatory, irrationally punitive (in that the unvaccinated pose [Dr. Bryam Bridle](#) and University of Saskatchewan [diversity and social justice studies](#)), defend the marginalized, and “[“dissident” academic](#) has been for many years that intellectuals should question *everything*, “especially widely accepted views and values, everything that has become ‘normality.’” Academics frequently defend the significance of their work by claiming to analyze, investigate, and illuminate how [dominant narratives come to be seen as the only possible truth](#).

Students looking at the [affirms](#), “hunger to tackle big problems, to disrupt, and to shape transformative solutions” with “an urgent sense of purpose.”

Yet for over a year and a half, with no concerted opposition

from these same “bold” academics, a relatively innocuous virus, not lethal to the vast majority of the working-age population—and posing almost zero threat to people under 30—has been made the rationale for the suspension of Canadians’ rights in the form of widespread (and unevenly applied) lockdowns, restrictions on gatherings, business closures, church closures, denial of the right to peaceful protest, and ever-changing limitations on personal liberty, often brutally enforced through fines and arrests, all of them of [fear-mongering, social division, and scapegoating](#)—would seem an ideal occasion for academic analyses from a variety of social, cultural, religious, legal, medical, and scientific angles, as well as for robust criticism and active resistance.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the largest national body of Canadian academics, has not encouraged its members to resist. CAUT claims to represent 72,000 members as “[endorsed](#)” “mandatory campus vaccination policies.” Such policies are justified, according to CAUT Executive Director Peter Robinson, so long as “human rights accommodations are followed; if the unvaccinated are accommodated through masking, physical distancing, or working or studying from home; and if all legal privacy issues are fully respected.” The position is almost laughably incoherent. Vaccines would not be in fact “mandatory” if unvaccinated persons could freely operate on campus merely by following masking and social distancing guidelines (and, notably, universities’ published vaccine policies do not allow for regular exceptions).

How “working or studying from home” can possibly be accommodated at a time when the whole point of mandatory vaccines is to enable a return to on-campus instruction is not explained in the director’s statement; nor how “legal privacy issues” can be respected at a time when proof of vaccination is mandatory.

Is there no CAUT member with medical, ethical, philosophical,

legal, or employment-related concerns about the vaccine mandate? None, it seems, who is given a voice through CAUT. CAUT has also singly failed to support or even express dismay over university professors harassed or disciplined as a result of their expressed opposition to vaccines, including Francis Christian, professor of surgery, who was [short- to medium-term efficacy and necessity](#), making it far from clear that thousands of young people should be forced into a mass vaccination experiment. In this unprecedented situation, university professors' claims to stand against state and corporate hegemony, in solidarity with the marginalized, ring hollow indeed.

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