

ILLIBERAL EDUCATION

The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus

Dinesh D'Souza



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For Laura A. Ingraham

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The Victim's Revolution on Campus

There are few places as serene and opulent as an American university campus. The students move in small groups, heading for class, the library, or the dining hall, greeting their friends and apparently conscious of being part of a community. At the major universities, gigantic auditoriums, dormitories, and gymnasiums sprawl across the landscape, advertising a tremendous investment of resources. At the prestige schools, such as those of the Ivy League, impressive domes and arches give off a distinct aroma of old money and tradition. Across the lawns the scholars come and go, talking of Proust and Michelangelo. Tributes to the largesse of democratic capitalism, American universities are nevertheless intellectual and social enclaves, by design somewhat aloof from the pressures of the "real world."

For the last decade or so, the larger society has not heard much from the university, certainly little of the truculence and disruption that seemed a campus staple in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The reason for the taciturn university atmosphere of the eighties, commentators generally agree, is that the current generation of young people lacks social consciousness, and cares mainly about careers and making money. Yet in the past few years, the American campus appears to be stirring again. University outsiders have been shocked to hear of a proliferation of bigotry on campus; at the University of Michigan, for example, someone put up posters which said, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste—especially on a nigger." Typically these ugly incidents are accompanied by noisy protests and seizures of administration buildings by minority activists, who denounce the university as "institutionally racist." Both bewildered and horrified, the university leadership adopts a series of measures to detoxify the atmosphere, ranging from pledges to reform the "white male curriculum" to censorship of offensive speech.

Both university insiders as well as informed off-campus observers