



“NO OTHER SIDE, TO OUR PRIDE”

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On Monday, March 14th, people arriving to hear the presentation to the School Board at the Becker High School Performing Arts Center were greeted by a lobby filled with chanting, protesting students. Their central chant, “No other side, To our pride!” summed up the entire evening.

That slogan captured the emotional outrage percolating in Becker for weeks, outrage baked into a major article in the nearby local daily, *The St. Cloud Times* and picked up by other media outlets around the state and country. Headlines in numerous publications said a ‘hate group’ was being allowed to speak to the school board. It was the talk of the town having been repeated hundreds of times on social media postings. The young people’s emotions had been whipped into a frenzy.

Two local residents, Betsy Armstrong and Chris Klippen, both accomplished attorneys and former Becker school board members, along with myself representing the Child Protection League (CPL), gave a public presentation to the school board that was continually drowned out by chants, yells, slurs, and catcalls from protesters. The adults in charge didn’t clear the theater. They did not control the mob.

Our presentation offered balance and counterpoints to an 80-minute presentation OutFront MN had given to the Becker School Board several months earlier. OutFront MN is a politically charged gender activist group which considers itself the arbiter of what is true about gender fluidity and gender identity policies. Many school boards across the state use them as a final authority, and no supplemental information is ever provided.

The young people’s drumbeat chant demanded complete censorship of all information other than what OutFront MN had provided. No other information should be allowed to challenge the “truth” that gender is a continuum of identities unrelated to biological birth; that gender and sex are separate; that people can cross over from one gender to the other, or people are neither gender, both genders, or can change genders on any given day. Their perceived gender is based upon personal feelings.

Their demand is that we must all affirm the shifting feelings of others and also affirm that this gender continuum is true. Thus, scientifically based information to the contrary must be shouted down. Not only are challengers not to be allowed to challenge and questioners not allowed to question, but challengers and questioners must also be labeled haters. To the enforcers of their “truth,” any challenge to their new social concept of human sexual identity is hate.

The Becker school district is in crisis. And it's not only Becker.

When education is no longer a pursuit of truth, a pursuit of knowledge, and a pursuit of information, it ceases to be education. It is something else entirely. It's indoctrination.

Students are literally being taught to close their ears, their eyes, and their minds to information that doesn't conform to their already accepted conclusions. Instead, they are taught to denigrate, intimidate, and agitate. This is a public mockery of education. March 14th was an unfortunate display of this crisis in education.

Critical thinking requires information. Without information, students lack the tools to *think* and to draw their own conclusions. They become highly vulnerable to manipulation by adults and easily caught up in mob mentalities.

The media closed itself to information as well. Not once did CPL receive a single phone call or email asking for any background information. Nobody inquired to substantiate facts or accusations. Instead, everyone ran with a ten-year-old fake news story from *Rolling Stone* magazine and the "hate" label of a long-discredited leftist activist attack group, the Southern Poverty Law Center. The SPLC traffics in labeling any person or group who disagrees with them as haters.

Closing off information and free and open expression of differences leaves only power. The loudest and the strongest get to decide what's true and what we get to hear. Censoring the "other side" denies everyone access to the information they may need to discern reality.

The Thought Police are ruling our young people, locking them into a prison of permissible thoughts. They are teaching them to refuse to listen, to investigate, and to question. They are teaching them to mindlessly follow. They are shackling the brains of our youth.

It's time to unlock the prison doors. Liberate our kids. Stamp out the Thought Police.

Let our children think!