

## The Neurodiversity Case for Free Speech

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Imagine a young Isaac Newton time-travelling from 1670s England to teach Harvard undergrads in 2017. After the time-jump, Newton still has an obsessive, paranoid personality, with Asperger's syndrome, a bad stutter, unstable moods, and episodes of psychotic mania and depression. But now he's subject to Harvard's speech codes that prohibit any "disrespect for the dignity of others"; any violations will get him in trouble with Harvard's Inquisition (the 'Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion').

Newton also wants to publish *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, to explain the laws of motion governing the universe. But his literary agent explains that he can't get a decent book deal until Newton builds his 'author platform' to include at least 20k Twitter followers – without provoking any backlash for airing his eccentric views on ancient Greek alchemy, Biblical cryptography, fiat currency, Jewish mysticism, or how to predict the exact date of the Apocalypse.

Newton wouldn't last long as a 'public intellectual' in modern American culture. Sooner or later, he would say 'offensive' things that get reported to Harvard and that get picked up by mainstream media as moral-outrage clickbait. His eccentric, ornery awkwardness would lead to swift expulsion from academia, social media, and publishing. Result? On the upside, he'd drive some traffic through Huffpost, BuzzFeed, and Jezebel, and people would have a fresh controversy to virtue-signal about on Facebook. On the downside, we wouldn't have Newton's Laws of Motion.

Let's take a step back from this alt-history nightmare and consider the general problem of 'neurodiversity' and free speech. In this article, I'll explore the science of neurodiversity, and how campus speech codes and restrictive speech norms impose impossible expectations on the social sensitivity, cultural awareness, verbal precision, and self-control of many neurodivergent people.

I'll focus on how campus speech codes impose discriminatory chilling effects on academic neurodiversity, partly because I'm a nerdy academic who loathes speech codes. But it's not just personal. Ever since the Middle Ages, universities have nurtured people with unusual brains and minds. Historically, academia was a haven for neurodiversity of all sorts. Eccentrics have been hanging out in Cambridge since 1209 and in Harvard since 1636. For centuries, these eccentricity-havens have been our time-traveling bridges from the ancient history of Western civilization to the far future of science, technology, and moral progress. Now thousands of our havens are under threat, and that's sad and wrong, and we need to fix it.

This article is a bit long, because the argument is new (as far as I know), and it requires a bit of background. But I hope you'll stick with me, because I think the issue is neglected and important. (A note on terminology: universities are commonly assumed to be 'neurohomogenous', where everyone is 'neurotypical', but in fact they are 'neurodiverse' and include many 'neurodivergent' people, who cluster into 'neurominorities' sharing certain

conditions, and who may become 'Neurodiversity Movement' activists to advocate for their rights. People with Asperger's syndrome sometimes call themselves 'aspies'. The 'neurodiversity' term came originally from the Autism Rights Movement, but now includes many variations in brain function apart from the autism spectrum.)

### **From eccentricity to neurodiversity**

Censorship kills creativity, truth, and progress in obvious ways. Without the free exchange of ideas, people can't share risky new ideas (creativity), test them against other people's logic and facts (truth), or compile them into civilizational advances (progress).

But censorship also kills rational culture in a less obvious way: it silences the eccentric. It discriminates against neurominorities. It imposes a chilling effect on unusual brains that house unusual minds. It marginalizes people who may have great ideas, but who also happen to have mental disorders, personality quirks, eccentric beliefs, or unusual communication styles that make it hard for them to understand and follow the current speech norms that govern what is 'acceptable'. Harvard's speech codes and Twitter's trolls may not prohibit anything in the *Principia* itself, but they drive away the kinds of eccentric people who write such books because of all the other 'offensive' things they sometimes do and say.

Eccentricity is a precious resource, easily wasted. In his book *On Liberty* (1859): John Stuart Mill warned that 'the tyranny of the majority' tends to marginalize the insights of the eccentric:

'The amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage which it contained. That so few now dare to be eccentric, marks the chief danger of the time.' (Chapter 3, paragraph 13).

Nowadays, the tyranny of the neurotypical oppressing the neurodivergent may be the chief danger of our time.

### **The neurotypicality assumption behind speech codes**

Campus speech codes may have been well-intentioned at first. They tried to make universities more welcoming to racial and sexual minorities by forcing everyone to speak as inoffensively as possible. But a side-effect of trying to increase demographic diversity was to reduce neurodiversity, by stigmatizing anyone whose brain can't color inside the lines of 'appropriate speech'. The more 'respectful' campuses became to the neurotypical, the more alienating they became to the neurodivergent.

Here's the problem. America's informal 'speech norms', which govern what we're allowed to say and what we're not, were created and imposed by 'normal' brains, for 'normal' brains to obey and enforce. Formal speech codes at American universities were also written by and for the 'neurotypical'. They assume that everyone on campus is equally capable, 100% of the time, of:

- Using their verbal intelligence and cultural background to understand speech codes that are intentionally vague, over-broad, and euphemistic, to discern who's actually allowed to say what, in which contexts, using which words;

- Understand what's inside the current Overton window of 'acceptable ideas', including the current social norms about what is 'respectful' versus what is 'offensive', 'inappropriate', 'sexist', 'racist', 'Islamophobic', or 'transphobic';
- Use 'Theory of Mind' to predict with 100% accuracy which speech acts might be offensive to someone of a different sex, age, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, or political outlook;
- Inhibit 'inappropriate' speech with 100% reliability in all social contexts that might be reported or recorded by others;
- Predict with 100% accuracy what's likely to trigger outrage by peers, student activists, social media, or mainstream media – any of which might create 'adverse publicity' for the university and a speech code inquisition, without due process or right of appeal, for the speaker.

Speech codes assume a false model of human nature – that everyone has the same kind of brain that yields a narrow, 'normal' set of personality traits, cognitive and verbal abilities, moral temperaments, communication styles, and capacities for self-inhibition. This neurotypicality assumption is scientifically wrong, because different people inherit different sets of genes that influence how their brains grow and function, and every mental trait shows substantial heritability.

These heritable mental traits run deep: they are stable across adolescence and adulthood, and they span everything from social intelligence to political attitudes. They also predict many aspects of human communication – probably including the ability to understand and follow formal speech codes and informal speech norms. The neurodivergent are often just 'born that way'.

### **Why speech codes stigmatize the most creative thinkers**

When universities impose speech codes, they impose impossible behavioral standards on people who aren't neurotypical, such as those with Asperger's, bipolar, Tourette's, or dozens of other personality quirks or mental 'disorders'. Historically, neurodiversity was stigmatized with extreme prejudice, but recently the Autism Rights Movement, the National Alliance for Mental Illness, and other advocacy groups have fought for more acceptance. Neurodiversity is even celebrated in recent books such as *Thinking in Pictures* by Temple Grandin (on Asperger's syndrome), *A Beautiful Mind* by Sylvia Nasar (on schizophrenia), *The Wisdom of Psychopaths* by Kevin Dutton (on Dark Triad traits), and *Quiet* by Susan Cain (on introversion).

Most of the real geniuses I've known are not neurotypical. Especially in evolutionary game theory. They would have a lot of trouble comprehending or following typical university speech codes.

I suspect this would have been true for most of the brilliant thinkers who built civilization over the last several millennia. Consider just a few geniuses who seem, given biographical records, to have been on the autism/Asperger's spectrum: Béla Bartók, Jeremy Bentham, Lewis Carroll, Marie Curie, Charles Darwin, Emily Dickinson, Albert Einstein, Sir Ronald Fisher, Sir Francis Galton, Glenn Gould, Patricia Highsmith, Alfred Hitchcock, Alfred Kinsey, Stanley Kubrick, Barbara McClintock, Gregor Mendel, Bertrand Russell, Nikola Tesla, Mark Twain, Alan Turing, H. G. Wells, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. (Aspies like me enjoy making lists.) Moreover, the world's richest tech billionaires often show some Asperger-like traits: think Paul Allen, Bill Gates, Elon

Musk, Larry Page, Peter Thiel, and Mark Zuckerberg. And in movies and TV, outspoken, insensitive aspies are no longer just 'mad scientist' side-kicks, but heroic protagonists such as Tony Stark, Sherlock Holmes, Gregory House, Lisbeth Salander, and Dr. Strange.

On the upside, the civilizational contributions from the neurodivergent have been formidable – and often decisive in science and technology. On the downside, Asperger's traits seem common among academics who have suffered the worst public outrages against things they've said and done, that weren't intended to be offensive at all.

### **The varieties of neurodiversity**

Restrictive speech norms are a problem for people on the autism spectrum, which includes about 1% of the general public, but which is a much higher proportion of academics in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM fields) – like Sheldon Cooper, a Caltech physicist on the TV show 'The Big Bang Theory'.

Apart from the autism spectrum, a much larger proportion of students, staff, and faculty at any university have other neurological disorders, mental illnesses, or personality quirks that make it hard to avoid 'offensive' speech all of the time – even if they're 'high functioning' and have no trouble doing their academic work. For example, speech codes make no allowance for these conditions:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (3%) imposes high impulsivity and a tendency to blurt out inappropriate comments;
- Tourette syndrome (1%) can include irresistible compulsions to say obscene or derogatory things;
- Social (pragmatic) communication disorder (a newly recognized disorder, prevalence unknown) impairs abilities to use language 'appropriately', to match communication styles to different contexts and listeners, and to read between the lines given subtle or ambiguous language;
- PTSD (8% prevalence) increases sensitivity to reminders of past trauma ('triggers'), which can provoke reactive anger, verbal aggression, and offensive speech;
- Bipolar disorder (4%) can trigger manic phases in which beliefs become more eccentric, and speech and sexual behavior become less inhibited;
- Schizophrenia spectrum disorders (5% prevalence) often lead to unusual communication styles, social awkwardness, and eccentric views that fall outside the Overton window;
- Paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal ('Cluster A') personality disorders (4% prevalence) involve social awkwardness, eccentric behaviors, and odd speech patterns, which can come across as insensitive or offensive;
- Histrionic, narcissistic, borderline, and antisocial ('Cluster B') personality disorders (2% prevalence) involve impulsivity, attention-seeking, emotional instability and/or lack of empathy, which result in speech and behavior that often violates social norms.

Some of the prevalence estimates are imprecise, and many people have more than one of these disorders. But together, mental disorders like these affect at least 20% of students, staff, and faculty. That's higher than the percentage of American college students who are Hispanic (17%), Black (14%), LGBTQ+ (7%), or undocumented immigrants (5%).

And for many of these mental disorders, symptom severity peaks at the ages of typical college students: universities are demanding that the neurodivergent inhibit their speech most carefully when they are least able to do so.

Apart from diagnosable mental disorders such as Asperger's, a substantial minority of people on any campus are on the extremes of the Big Five personality traits, which all have implications for speech code behavior. Low Conscientiousness predicts impulsive, reckless, or short-sighted speech and behavior – i.e. being more likely to violate speech codes. Low Agreeableness predicts being ornery, offensive, and disagreeable – i.e. violating speech codes. High Openness predicts adopting unusual beliefs and eccentric behaviors – i.e. violating speech codes. High Extraversion predicts being hyper-social, hyper-sexual, and hyper-verbal – i.e. especially violating codes about sexual behavior and speech.

Since the Big Five traits all show substantial heritability, any speech code that can't realistically be followed by people who score at an extreme on these Big Five traits, is basically punishing them for the genes they happened to inherit.

Beyond mental disorders and personality quirks, many people on campuses at any given time are in states of 'transient neurodiversity' – altered psychological states due to low blood sugar, life stressors, medication side-effects, or 'smart drugs' such as caffeine, Ritalin, Adderall, or Modafinil. Also, sleep disorders affect over 20% of people, and the resulting sleep deprivation reduces inhibition. These kinds of transient neurodiversity can also interfere with social sensitivity, Theory of Mind, and verbal inhibition, so can reduce the ability to comply with speech codes. Unless universities want to outlaw fatigue, hunger, heartbreak, meds and coffee it's hard to maintain the delusion that everyone's speech will be 100% inoffensive 100% of the time.

### **How neurodiversity makes it hard to understand speech codes**

Since speech codes are written by the neurotypical for the neurotypical, the neurodivergent often find them literally incomprehensible, and it's impossible to follow a rule that doesn't make sense. For example, a typical set of 'respectful campus', 'sexual misconduct', and 'anti-harassment' policies prohibits:

- 'unwelcome verbal behavior'
- 'unwelcome jokes about a protected characteristic'
- 'hate or bias acts that violate our sense of community'
- 'sexist comments'
- 'degrading pictorial material'
- 'displaying objectionable objects'
- 'negative posters about a protected characteristic'

These quotes are from my university's recent policies, but they're pretty standard. I don't understand what any of these phrases actually allow or prohibit, and I worked on free speech issues in our Faculty Senate for two years, and in our Sexual Misconduct Policy Committee for one year, so I've puzzled over them for some time.

Lacking good Theory of Mind, how could a person with Asperger's anticipate which speech acts would be 'unwelcome' to a stranger, or might be considered 'sexist' or 'sexually suggestive'? Lacking a good understanding of social norms, how could they anticipate what counts as a 'hate

act that violates our sense of community', or what counts as an 'objectionable object'? Lacking a good understanding of current civil rights legalese, how could any 18-year-old Freshman – neurotypical or not – understand what a 'protected characteristic' is?

The language of campus speech codes is designed to give the illusion of precision, while remaining so vague that they can be enforced however administrators want to enforce them, whenever personal complaints, student protests, lawsuits, or adverse publicity make it expedient to punish someone for being 'offensive'. So, students, staff, and faculty are expected to be able to 'read between the lines' of speech codes to understand what is actually forbidden versus what is actually permitted.

But people differ in their ability to understand spoken and written language, including the dry intricacies of administrative policies, the ever-changing euphemisms of PC culture, and the double standards of Leftist identity politics. Deciphering speech codes requires high levels of verbal, social, and emotional intelligence to discern the real meaning behind vague euphemisms and social justice shibboleths, and the neurodivergent may not have the kinds of brains that can make those kinds of inferences.

Speech codes are also intentionally vague so that anyone who's upset by someone else's speech can make a complaint, with the subjective feelings of the listener as the arbiter of whether an offense has occurred. In most campus speech codes, there is no 'reasonable person' standard for what speech counts as offensive. This means that even if an aspie or schizotypal person develops an accurate mental model of how an average person would respond to a possible speech act, they can't rely on that. They're expected to make their speech inoffensive to the most sensitive person they might ever encounter on campus.

The result is the 'coddling culture' in which administrators prioritize the alleged vulnerabilities of listeners over the communication rights of speakers. In fact, the only lip service given to neurodiversity in campus speech codes is in the (false) assumption that 'trigger warnings' and prohibitions against 'microaggressions' will be useful in protecting listeners with PTSD or high neuroticism.

Administrators assume that the most vulnerable 'snowflakes' are always listeners, and never speakers. They even fail to understand that when someone with PTSD is 'triggered' by a situation, they might say something in response that someone else finds 'offensive'.

### **Systematizing versus empathizing**

Autism spectrum disorders are central to the tension between campus censorship and neurodiversity. This is because there's a trade-off between 'systematizing' and 'empathizing'. Systematizing is the drive to construct and analyze abstract systems of rules, evidence, and procedures; it's stronger in males, in people with autism/Asperger's, and in STEM fields. Empathizing is the ability to understand other people's thoughts and feelings, and to respond with 'appropriate' emotions and speech acts; it's stronger in females, in people with schizophrenia spectrum disorders, and in the arts and humanities. Conservative satirists often mock 'social justice warriors' for their 'autistic screeching', but Leftist student protesters are more likely to be high empathizers from the arts, humanities, and social sciences, than high systematizers from the hard sciences or engineering.

Consider the Empathy Quotient (EQ) scale, developed by autism researcher Simon Baron-Cohen to measure empathizing versus systematizing.

Positively-scored items that predict higher empathy include:

- 'I am good at predicting how someone will feel.'
- 'I find it easy to put myself in somebody else's shoes.'
- 'I can tune into how someone else feels rapidly and intuitively.'
- 'I can usually appreciate the other person's viewpoint, even if I don't agree with it.'

Negatively-scored items that predict lower empathy include:

- 'I often find it difficult to judge if something is rude or polite.'
- 'It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much.'
- 'I can't always see why someone should have felt offended by a remark.'
- 'Other people often say that I am insensitive, though I don't always see why.'

Reading these items, it seems like a higher EQ score would strongly predict ability to follow campus speech codes that prohibit causing offense to others. People on the autism spectrum, such as those with Asperger's, score much lower on the EQ scale. (Full disclosure: I score 14 out of 80.) Thus, aspies simply don't have brains that can anticipate what might be considered offensive, disrespectful, unwanted, or outrageous by others – regardless of what campus speech codes expect of us. From a high systematizer's perspective, most 'respectful campus' speech codes are basically demands that they should turn into a high empathizer through sheer force of will.

Men also score lower on the EQ scale than women, and Asperger's is 11 times more common in men, so speech codes also impose 'disparate impact' on males, a form of sex discrimination that is illegal under federal law.

The ways that speech codes discriminate against systematizers is exacerbated by their vagueness, overbreadth, unsystematic structure, double standards, and logical inconsistencies – which drive systematizers nuts. For example, most speech codes prohibit any insults based on a person's sex, race, religion, or political attitudes. But aspie students often notice that these codes are applied very selectively: it's OK to insult 'toxic masculinity' and 'patriarchy', but not to question the 'wage gap' or 'rape culture'; it's OK to insult 'white privilege' and the 'Alt-Right' but not 'affirmative action' or 'Black Lives Matter'; it's OK to insult pro-life Catholics but not pro-sharia Muslims. The concept of 'unwelcome' jokes or 'unwelcome' sexual comments seems like a time-travel paradox to aspies – how can you judge what speech act is 'unwelcome' until after you get the feedback about whether it was welcome?

Even worse, most campus speech codes are associated with social justice theories of gender feminism, critical race theory, and social constructivism, which reject the best-established scientific findings about sex differences, race differences, and behavior genetics. Requiring aspies to buy into speech codes based on blatant falsehoods violates our deepest systematizer values of logic, rationality, and realism.

To test my intuitions about these issues, I ran an informal poll of my Twitter followers, asking 'Which condition would make it hardest to follow a college speech code that prohibits all 'offensive' or 'disrespectful' statements?'. There were 655 votes across four response options: 54% for 'Asperger's', 19% for 'Schizophrenia', 14% for 'Bipolar', and 13% for 'ADHD'. The results of this one-item survey, from a small sample of my eccentric followers, should not be

taken seriously as any kind of scientific research. They simply show I'm not the only person who thinks that Asperger's would make it hard to follow campus speech codes.

[I re-ran this Twitter poll on June 26, 2019, and the results were very similar.]

In fact, to many STEM students and faculty, empathizers seem to have forged campus speech codes into weapons for aspie-shaming. In a world where nerds like Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk are the most powerful innovators, speech codes seem like the revenge of the anti-nerds. How speech codes impose disparate impact on neurominorities

When a policy is formally neutral, but it adversely affects one legally protected group of people more than other people, that's called 'disparate impact', and it's illegal. People with diagnosed mental disorders qualify as 'disabled' people under the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other federal laws, so any speech code at a public university that imposes disparate impact on neurominorities is illegal.

What is the disparate impact here? Given restrictive speech codes and speech norms, neurodivergent people know that at any time, they might say something 'offensive' that could lead to expulsion, firing, or denial of tenure. They live in fear. They feel a chilling effect on their speech and behavior. They learn to self-censor.

Consider how speech codes can feel wretchedly discriminatory to neurominorities:

- Imagine you're a grad student in the social sciences and you hear about peers getting into trouble making off-the-cuff remarks when teaching controversial classes, such as Human Sexuality, American History, or Social Psychology. You are deterred from teaching, and drift away into private industry.
- Imagine you are a man with Asperger's syndrome doing a science Ph.D. and you see social justice activists destroying nerdy male scientists for their non-PC views, trivial mistakes, or fictional offenses, as in the cases of Matt Taylor or Tim Hunt. You realize you'll probably make some similar misjudgment sooner or later if you stay in academia, so you leave for a Bay Area tech start-up that's more forgiving of social gaffes.
- Imagine you're an anthropology professor with Asperger's, so you can't anticipate whether people will find your jokes hilarious or offensive until you tell them. But you get better student course evaluations when you try to be funny. Now your university imposes a new speech code that says, basically, 'Don't say anything that people might find offensive'. You need good course evaluations for promotion and tenure, but your brain can't anticipate your students' reactions to your quirky sense of humor.
- Imagine you're an undergrad, but you have bipolar disorder, so sometimes you get into manic states, when you become more outspoken in classes about your non-PC views on sexual politics.
- Imagine you're a university system administrator with Tourette syndrome, so that sometimes in meetings with other IT staff, you can't help but blurt out words that some consider racially or sexually offensive.

In response to these chilling effects, neurodivergent academics may withdraw from the social and intellectual life of the university. They may avoid lab group meetings, post-colloquium dinners, faculty parties, and conferences, where any tipsy comment, if overheard by anyone with a propensity for moralistic outrage, could threaten their reputation and career. I've seen this social withdrawal happen more and more over the last couple of decades. Nerdy, eccentric, and



awkward academics who would have been outspoken, hilarious, and joyful in the 1980s are now cautious, somber, and frightened.

This withdrawal from the university's 'life of the mind' is especially heart-breaking to the neurodivergent, who often can't stand small talk, and whose only real social connections come through vigorous debate about dangerous ideas with their intellectual equals. Speech codes don't just censor their words; they also decimate their relationships, collaborations, and social networks.

Chilling effects on speech can turn an aspie's social life into a frozen wasteland. The resulting alienation can exacerbate many mental disorders, leading to a downward spiral of self-censorship, loneliness, despair, and failure. Consider political science professor Will Moore: he had high-functioning autism, and was so tired of accidentally offending colleagues that he killed himself this April; his suicide note is worth reading. If being driven to suicide isn't disparate impact, what is?

There's an analogy here between neurodiversity and ideological diversity. Campus speech codes have marginalized both over the last couple of decades. American universities are now dominated by progressive Leftists, registered Democrats, and social justice activists. They are hostile and discriminatory against students, staff, and faculty who are centrist, libertarian, conservative and/or religious. There are real career costs to holding certain political views in academia – even if those views are shared by most Americans.

This problem of ideological diversity is already being addressed by great organizations such as the Heterodox Academy and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, by online magazines such as Quillette, and by free speech advocates such as Alice Dreger, Jonathan Haidt, Sam Harris, Laura Kipnis, Scott Lilienfeld, Greg Lukianoff, Camille Paglia, Jordan Peterson, Steven Pinker, and Bret Weinstein. By contrast, the neurodiversity problem has not been discussed much, although it might be easier to solve through anti-discrimination lawsuits. In principle, speech codes discriminating against certain ideologies is a form of disparate impact, but at the moment, being a Republican or a Neoreactionary is not a 'protected class' under federal anti-discrimination law, whereas having a disability such as a mental disorder is.

### **Conclusion: What to do about neurodiversity and free speech**

Campus speech codes discriminate against neurominorities. They impose unrealistic demands, fears, and stigma on the large proportion of students, staff, and faculty who have common mental disorders, or extremes on the Big Five personality traits, or transient disinhibition due to sleep deprivation or smart drugs. As a practical matter, it is virtually impossible for someone with Asperger's, bipolar, ADHD, low Agreeableness, low Conscientiousness, extreme fatigue, or Modafinil mania to understand what kinds of speech acts are considered acceptable, and to inhibit the production of such speech 100% of the time, in 100% of educational and social situations.

In a future article, I'll outline a legal strategy to use the ADA to eliminate campus speech codes that discriminate against neurominorities.

For the moment, just consider this: every campus speech code and restrictive speech norm is a Sword of Damocles dangling above the head of every academic whose brain works a little differently. We feel the sharpness and the weight every day. After every class, meeting, blog,

and tweet, we brace for the moral outrage, public shaming, witch hunts, and inquisitions that seem to hit our colleagues so unpredictably and unfairly. Like visitors from a past century or a foreign culture, we don't understand which concepts are admissible in your Overton window, or which words are acceptable to your ears. We don't understand your verbal and moral taboos. We can't make sense of your double standards and logical inconsistencies. We don't respect your assumption that empathizing should always take precedence over systematizing. Yet we know you have the power to hurt us for things we can't help. So, we suffer relentless anxiety about our words, our thoughts, our social relationships, our reputations, and our careers.

That era is over. Neurodiversity is finding its voice and its confidence. People with mental disorders and eccentric personalities have rights too, and we will not be intimidated by your stigma and shaming. We will demand our rights under the ADA through the Department of Education, the Department of Justice, and in federal district courts. We will educate administrators about the discriminatory side-effects of their bad policies. We will shatter your Swords of Damocles and raise our freak flags to fly over campuses around the world.

For centuries, academia has been a haven for neurodiversity – a true 'safe space' for eccentric thought and language, for thinking the unthinkable and saying the unsayable. We will make it that haven again, and there is nothing that university administrators can do to stop us. Everything is on our side: behavioral science, intellectual history, federal law, public opinion, and liberal academia's own most sacred values of diversity and inclusivity. Neurodiversity is here to stay, and we will not be silenced any longer.

If the neurodivergent stand up for our free speech rights, campus speech codes will go extinct very quickly. In the future, they will be considered a weird historical curiosity of runaway virtue-signaling in early 21st-century American academia. The freedom to think eccentric thoughts and say eccentric things must be protected again. The freedom to be eccentric must be restored. Newton must be welcomed back to academia.