

# Preface

Most people assume universities simply reflect our culture. In reality, they have spent decades reshaping it, as successive generations of left-leaning academics transformed the institutions that train Britain's professional and governing classes.

I spent forty-seven years inside this system, from a working-class upbringing in East London to senior positions at leading universities. That experience allows me to describe not just what has happened, but how it happened and why. By the usual academic measures, I had a successful career: major research grants, dozens of PhD students supervised, many books and papers published, and keynote lectures delivered around the world.

However, despite benefiting from the system, I grew concerned that modern academia was becoming dominated by ideological conformity, closed professional networks, metrics, and funding incentives, while teaching and genuine intellectual inquiry were increasingly undervalued. The boundaries were political as well as professional. Stay within them and your career progressed. Step outside, and the change was immediate.

For much of my career I shared the broadly left-leaning outlook common in universities. I saw it as a belief in a strong social safety net, equality of opportunity, and liberal democratic values. Gradually, however, the common outlook evolved into something else: what I describe in this book as "far-left". Influenced by cultural Marxism, critical race theory, and identity politics, an increasingly dominant academic worldview came to interpret society primarily through the lens of power, oppression, privilege, and group identity. What had once been a broadly liberal culture became progressively less tolerant of dissent and competing perspectives.

There was only one 'acceptable' position on a range of key issues: "climate change was an existential threat that could only be solved by life-changing global interventions"; "Brexit was a catastrophic threat to the UK's economy and international relations"; "Trump was a depraved tyrant"; "mass migration from third world countries to Europe was both necessary and benevolent", and "human beings come not in two sexes but in a potentially limitless number of genders". Even mild scepticism of any of these dominant views raised eyebrows. When Brexit passed and Trump was elected, the reaction inside academia was not reflection but disbelief and disdain. Voters were dismissed as ignorant or misled rather than prompting any serious question about whether universities themselves had become detached from wider society.

As this worldview became more influential, it increasingly shaped hiring, funding, promotion, peer review, and institutional culture. Research that aligned with prevailing assumptions encountered few obstacles, while work that challenged them often struggled to gain traction. You quickly learned which questions were safe to ask and which were not.

I stayed quiet for years. I had students, research teams, and leadership responsibilities, and I hoped the excesses would correct themselves. Then came 2020, when the Covid period revealed how fragile the commitment to open inquiry had become. Models were treated as prophecy, dissent was marginalised or ridiculed, and under the banner of “The Science”, legitimate questions were often dismissed as irresponsible. When I publicly questioned distorted risk assessments and the politicisation of public health, the response was immediate. Invitations dried up, colleagues disowned me, and within months I went from respected professor to academic pariah.

Decades of grants, publications, and leadership counted for nothing once I stepped outside the accepted boundaries. Academic freedom, it turned out, extended only as far as ideological compliance.

I retired in 2022. By then the choice had become simple: silence or honesty.

Increasing and obsessive EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) bureaucracies, activist scholarship, and the marginalisation of dissent are symptoms of this deeper capture. Graduates carry these assumptions into government, media, law, finance, and education, where they become embedded in institutional practice. Financial incentives reinforce the pattern: funding follows fashion, peer review protects prevailing views, and standards have gradually eroded. Universities have also become dependent on organisations and foreign funding sources whose interests do not always align with open inquiry.

Universities have become engines of ideological reproduction, increasingly insulated from scrutiny and detached from the society they are meant to serve.

This book examines how this transformation happened, how it operates in practice, and its consequences for open inquiry, free speech, and liberal democratic values, including academia’s growing tolerance of antisemitism disguised as anti-Zionism.

Universities will not regain public trust without serious reform. That is the case this book makes.