

# Class of 2018:

Congratulations on this truly momentous day!

Take a moment to reflect on the fact that you have arrived at this milestone in no small part because during your time at Harvard, you enjoyed the freedom to decide who your friends are and how you spend time with them. Freedom of association is one of the indispensable liberties guaranteed to everyone in any free society. But your graduating class is a special one, because it may be the last to enjoy these freedoms at Harvard.

The classes that follow you will not be attending the same Harvard.

That's because the university's leadership, led by departing president Drew Gilpin Faust, has decided that single-gender sororities, fraternities, and final clubs must be stamped out because they are "discriminatory." (Notably, Faust attended and served as a trustee of the proudly single-sex Bryn Mawr College).

This fall, Harvard freshmen and sophomores suspected of being members of these suddenly unsavory organizations will be brought to trial before a closed-door tribunal. In order to avoid punishment, students brought before the Ad Board will be required to affirm that they are not now, and have not recently been, members of single-gender social organizations. Students found "guilty," or thought to be lying, will take their place on a new Harvard blacklist. Campus leadership positions, Harvard postgraduate fellowships, and even prestigious programs like the Rhodes and Marshall scholarships, will all be denied to them, regardless of their merit or skill.

Harvard alumni who were once members of these groups may wonder if Harvard administrators now truly consider the sort of people who would join single-gender groups to be so loathsome that they should be denied the full benefits of a Harvard education.

The answer is yes.

You didn't ask for this. In a November 2016 referendum, Harvard students like you voted nearly 2:1 against the proposed sanctions. Hundreds of Harvard women marched to protest the impending loss of their safe spaces as part of the "Hear Her Harvard" campaign. Harvard faculty introduced three separate motions that would have counteracted the new rules. Harvard psychology professor Steven Pinker dubbed the policy "a terrible recommendation ... at odds with the ideals of a university." Those who care about Harvard have fought to convince administrators — through dialogue, letter-writing campaigns, and even withheld monetary donations —

that this decision runs contrary to the Enlightenment ideals the university promises to uphold.

But administrators weren't listening.

They forced through the new policy anyway and, in the process, have arrogated to themselves the power to control the private, off-campus lives of their students and to punish those who conduct their personal lives in ways disfavored by Harvard administrators.

This is not the first time Harvard has conducted such a campaign against members of its own community. In the 1920s, Harvard's "Secret Court" systematically rooted out alleged gay men and their associates. One student expelled by the court took his own life. In the 1960s, Harvard helped institutions like the FBI and the House Un-American Activities Committee persecute professors and graduate students like Wendell Furry, Robert Bellah, Sigmund Diamond, and Leon Kamin, who were accused of associating with Communists.

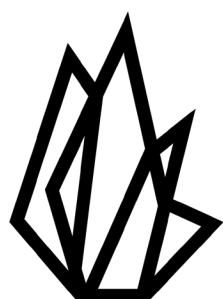
Punishing students for their legal, personal associations was wrong then, and it is wrong now. It is poisonous to a university and to a liberal democracy. The right of freedom of association exists to defend the rights of the unpopular. Once eroded for the unpopular, it is devalued for all.

You should be proud to have attended Harvard, which, for better or worse, sets an example for all other universities. Indeed, since Harvard first proposed these sanctions, similar efforts have surfaced at other institutions.

Is eliminating freedom of association really an area where Harvard should take the lead?

If not, we ask that you continue to support those who dissent against this policy, and voice your own opposition. Those who fought for their rights at Harvard — the marchers of Hear Her Harvard, the bold faculty members, the students who voted for and defended the rights of people they might not even agree with — please know that you have our gratitude here at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, and that we will continue the fight.

Injustice thrives in the silence of good men and women. But Harvard's unjust twentieth century blacklists did not long survive. With your support, and your refusal to be silent, we can dare to hope that we can make the latest outbreak of McCarthyism at Harvard its very last.



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