

Fish Out of Water

By Jamie Glazov

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Frontpage Interview's guest today is Abby Nye, a graduate from Butler University in 2006 as a Physician Assistant. She is the author of *Fish Out of Water: Surviving and Thriving as a Christian on a Secular Campus*.



FP: Abby Nye, welcome to Frontpage Interview.

Nye: Thank you, it's a pleasure to have this opportunity.

FP: Tell us what inspired you to write *Fish Out of Water*.

Nye: I went to college thinking I was prepared to face a secular environment having been well grounded academically and well-schooled in various philosophical thoughts and ideologies. I was wrong. I was ill prepared to face the hostility and mocking of liberal professors often directed toward Conservative and Christian thought. I wrote this book in hopes that other students could be better prepared.

FP: Can you give us two or three stories about leftist profs and indoctrination, unfair grading and what you have seen, or know of, that has gone on in the classroom?

Nye: I've had professors say Jesus was a homosexual, the god of Islam is the same god of Christianity, and sneer at the Bible calling it a book of myth - "that book with the talking snake and magic fruit." These statements were made in core content classes required by all students.

Early in my freshman year we were told to analyze an essay by Nicholas Maxwell titled "Cutting God in Half." The article purported that if God exists, he cannot be all loving and all knowing. We were told to write using our own worldview. I wrote from a Christian worldview and the professor returned my paper with 33 hand written comments on it such as, "What is good?" "What is faith?" I made an appointment with my professor and the head of the English department to discuss the paper. I asked point blank if I was going to be graded down for writing from a Christian perspective even though that is what the instructions called for. The head of the department looked me straight in the eyes and said "You cannot use the Bible in academic circles because it is regarded as a book of myth." End of discussion. That obviously presents quite a problem for Christian students who are told to write an opinion paper using their worldview.

One of my friends was in a required English class where the professor had them begin each class session with a chant. When she asked what the chant was the professor said it was a chant to Buddha. My friend refused to chant so the professor lectured the class on intolerant students that would not participate. Can you imagine what would happen if a professor opened a class demanding the students sing the Doxology?

One day in philosophy class, my professor was upset at the looming war with Iraq, and apparently frustrated that the Resolution for Peace she had attached her name to in the student newspaper, along with a number of other faculty members, wasn't going to stop the tanks from rolling, she again began Bush-whacking. After a brief rant, she became side tracked on a tangent. She started talking, to herself more than to the class, in a soft voice about creationists. "Most Christians don't believe in creationism and most large churches don't teach creationism," she said. She continued on, saying, "People who actually believe in creationism are quaint . . . they're like Amish."

FP: Explain a bit what insult professors engage in when they say the god of Islam is the same god of Christianity.

Nye: First off, I find it offensive when professors claim to be an authority on Christianity when they haven't even read the Bible. If they would take the time to read the Bible they would see that it is pretty obvious that Allah of Islam is not the same God of Christianity. The message of Christianity is that mankind is sinful and God is holy, and this holy God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God and have eternal life in Heaven. That profound message is nowhere to be found in the Koran. And if the god of Islam were the same god of Christianity, wouldn't they be telling the same story?

FP: It is hard to imagine professors ridiculing Islam the way they ridicule Christianity. Imagine professors in university saying the things you remember them saying about Jesus and the Bible about Muhammad and the Koran? It is simply unimaginable.

Why do you think there is such a double standard?

I remember when I was in grad studies, during Easter, a certain grad student announced aloud that he was going to have a "crucifixion party". Others laughed and he was

very proud of himself. Obscured about Christianity out of his mouth in the university setting. He was vehemently anti-religious and anti-American. Many students and professors heard his comments and either laughed or did nothing about it.

Yet, not surprisingly of course, Islam and Muhammad were never the subject of this individual's ridicule. And everyone knows that if they had been (which they never would) he would have suffered serious consequences, not just from Muslims, but from the university administration.

Can you comment on this hypocrisy?

Nye: In terms of the professors who engage in this behavior are, first and foremost, chicken. They know that Christians are a safe target. By and large, we take that "love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you (Matt 5:44)" seriously. On the other hand, they know Muslims offer a quite different response.

In terms of the hypocrisy, it doesn't make sense to me. They don't even try to hide it. For example, all students at Butler were required to take a course on Islam. We were required to purchase the Koran and handle it with respect. If we were carrying a stack of books the Koran had to be on top. One day, my professor even had us act out the five pillars of Islam in class. If you ask me, that's going too far. It'd be equivalent to having a required course on the Bible (which, like you said, would never happen) and partaking in communion or baptism during class. I doubt there were any Muslims in my class, but if there were I can't help but think they would have been offended.

FP: Why do you think there is such little tolerance on campus?

Nye: The tolerance touted on campus is actually a sort of neo-fascism. The only ideas truly tolerated are the ideas espoused and embraced by liberals. New liberals (most of the time) only tolerate those who think like them. They also claim Christians are intolerant, but if they are truly tolerant, shouldn't they tolerate even those they consider intolerant? G. K. Chesterton once said "Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions."

I agree.

FP: Explain your interpretation and personal understanding of the Chesterton quote.

Nye: Today's "tolerance" makes the assumption that we all hold different beliefs but those different beliefs are all equal. That appalls me. If I'm going to take the time to believe in something, have a conviction, live it out, and stand up for what I believe in, what good is it if I don't even *believe* that my beliefs are *true*? And if my beliefs are true, why would I even consider a conflicting belief to be on the same level? I wouldn't! What good is a conviction if you don't believe it to your core and reject anything that is in opposition to it? Yet, this is what the new tolerance is about. A man without convictions would have an easier time saying that all beliefs are equal.

FP: So what suggestions do you have for Christian students to deal with hostile professors?

Nye: Start with courage. Get off the sidelines, jump in, and play ball. Stay cool. The minute you succumb to anger, the discussion is over and you lose. Focus on principles, not people. Isolate the principle and follow it to its logical end. Point out that ideas have consequences. Dismantle the "judging" charge as soon as it arises. Make it clear that we are all judgmental. Each one of us makes judgments each and every day, both positive and negative judgments. Whether a book is good or a movie is flat. Try to use a civil tone (even if they don't – *especially* if they don't). The goal is not to obliterate people in a war of words – the goal is to win a few more people over to your way of thinking.

Finally, be sure to smile. Why? Because you're right.

FP: Butler University is the school where David Horowitz got the pie thrown at him.

What exactly does this say about the Left on campus and its position on free speech? What does it say about a school that touts a "conservative" reputation?

Nye: It goes to show how real the hostility is on campus. Anyone who holds a different viewpoint would be intimidated to speak up because the other side no longer engages in a civil discourse. Free speech still exists, but it might have consequences (i.e. a pie in the face).

This also goes to show that schools, and their political climates, change. Butler may have been more of a conservative school a decade ago but truly isn't anymore. Unfortunately, parents and alumni don't always have a clear picture of what really goes on behind closed doors so a school's reputation is often outdated. I wrote "Fish Out of Water" in hopes of giving prospective students (and their parents) an honest glimpse into secular campus life that will help them decide if they have what it takes to wade through the muck and the mire, or if it's too far out of their comfort zone.

FP: Abby Nye, thank you for joining Frontpage Interview.

Nye: Thank you. It was a pleasure.

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