

FIRE the ACLU

June 9, 2022

The American Civil Liberties Union used to be about civil liberties — a staunch defender of freedom of speech for all, including speech that it regarded as detestable.

Now the ACLU is a changeling monster, with many at the organization arguing to ignore threats to what they regard as the wrong kind of speech. The erstwhile bastion of civil rights has even come out against restoring due process for the accused on our nation's campuses.

Among longtime ACLU supporters discouraged by the retreat is David Goldberger. This lawyer believes

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that it has become “more important for ACLU staff to identify with clients and progressive causes than to stand on principle. Liberals are leaving the First Amendment behind.”

Or: progressives are no longer even a little bit “liberal.”

Fortunately, taking up the discarded banner is the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression,



until recently called the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. The new name signifies an expanded mission.

FIRE will — we are assured — still combat threats to freedom of speech at colleges and universities, where it has been doing excellent work for years.

“To say the least, we have not solved the campus free-speech problem,” says FIRE president Greg Lukianoff. “But we started to realize if we wanted to save free speech on campus we have to start earlier and we have to do things not on campus.”

Freedom of speech is for everybody. In its heyday, the ACLU defended people of all walks of life, and offended tyrants everywhere. Now that progressives generally and Democrats specifically have gone pro-censorship, FIRE is taking up the cause of civil libertarianism.

Someone needed to.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.