TAKING ISSUE WITH VIEW ON LIBERALS VS. CONSERVATIVES

CATHERINE CALDWELL-Harris' article "How a Liberal Learned to Respect Conservative Thinking (and Accept the Fact That, Yes, the Right Is Happier Than the Left)" (Fall 2013) did nothing to diminish the sense that liberals' view of conservatives portrays us as anthropological oddities and curiosities like cargo cults. Also, by the way, conservative values do not include not caring about global warming, the exploitation and vilification of immigrants, holding men and women to different standards of sexual behavior, and dismissing those living in poverty. Her offhand inclusion of that statement as fact is insulting and incorrect. Conservative values include a belief in the founding principles of our republic, faith that the Constitution rightly limits the power of federal government, and that a free market is the foundation for prosperity.

You can argue that the flip side of a belief in self-determination and self-reliance creates unfair outcomes for some, but any reasonable examination of societies where the governing class and bureaucrats control the means of production to theoretically ensure equal outcomes, as opposed to equal opportunity, doesn't build much of a case for individual growth. But to offhandedly dismiss conservatives as uncaring and scientifically challenged just continues the divide.

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I ENJOYED READING Catherine Caldwell-Harris' article. I strongly disagree, however, with her understanding of what American conservatives truly believe. She defined American conservatives as group-thinkers who value tradition and conformity over individuality and self-expression. On the contrary, I think she has confused the right with the left.

Conservatives take great pride in individuality, which goes hand in hand with free market and small government thinking, and challenging the collective. Hence the historical animosity between American conservatives and communist and socialist societies. The right is also happier than the left because conservatives tend to be more laid-back and tolerant of other people's individuality and differing opinions. In contrast to conservatives, liberals are the ones who often get bent out of shape if a core liberal value is challenged. Liberals are the ones who believe that the social good should trump the individual and that liberal views of social justice are more important than individual liberty.

I think Caldwell-Harris needs to rethink her understanding of American conservatism and liberalism.

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MIXED FEELINGS ON SILBER

I, TOO, WRITE TO THANK you for your recent profile of the late John Silber ("BU President Emeritus John R. Silber Dies at 86," Winter–Spring 2013), which made for fascinating reading. My feelings about him are mixed, which was reflected in the tone of the many letters you received. On one hand, he was a brilliant mind, true scholar, and visionary leader, who—through force of sheer will—dragged a mid-level, backwater university into the nation's top 50. Thanks to his drive, the value of my diplomas is greater than when I graduated.

Given this, you'd think I'd view the man with unvarnished admiration, but this is not the case. His disdain for the students, his ruthless treatment of many members of the faculty, and the general lack of personal skills have left many potential donors still smarting from his remarks decades later.

The fact is that I've yet to write a substantial check to Boston University, nor

is BU included in my estate arrangements. When will I be ready to donate and put the Silber years behind me? I've absolutely no idea. Give me another 30 years, and then, maybe.

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