

CIA vetoes Chelsea Manning's Harvard fellowship

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Harvard University's decision to revoke whistleblower Chelsea Manning's visiting fellowship at the Kennedy School of Government under pressure from the Central Intelligence Agency is a contemptible act of political cowardice.

Just four months ago, Manning was released from Ft. Leavenworth prison after serving seven years for the "crime" of revealing a government cover-up of US war crimes, including the murder and torture of Iraqi civilians.

For uncovering facts the world would have otherwise never learned about, the Obama administration tried Manning under the Espionage Act and subjected her to what the UN called "cruel and unusual punishment" in violation of international law and the US Constitution. Since her release, Manning has given several interviews with the press and spoken at public forums, shedding crucial light on her time in captivity, her political motivations for blowing the whistle on the crimes of US imperialism, and her fight on behalf of equal rights for transgender people.

On Wednesday, Harvard announced several additional fellows for its 2017–18 program, including Manning, Clinton campaign manager Robert Mook and former Trump administration Press Secretary Sean Spicer.

Within 48 hours, Manning's fellowship was vetoed by the Central Intelligence Agency and revoked by Harvard.

On Thursday morning, barely a day after Harvard's initial announcement, former CIA acting director Mike Morell resigned from his Kennedy School fellowship in protest, writing to Kennedy School Dean Douglas Elmendorf, "I cannot be part of an organization" that "honors a convicted felon," adding, "I have an obligation to my conscience."

At 6:00 p.m. Thursday, current CIA Director Michael Pompeo refused to show up for a talk he was scheduled to give at the Kennedy School. He then published a letter to Elmendorf that reads: "After much deliberation in the

wake of Harvard's announcement of American traitor Chelsea Manning as a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Politics, my conscience and duty to the men and women of the Central Intelligence Agency will not permit me to betray their trust by appearing to support Harvard's decision with my appearance at tonight's event."

Both men refer to their wounded consciences, but neither should blush.

Morell is a vocal defender of the CIA's torture tactics and attacked the 2014 Senate report detailing the agency's methods as "deeply flawed" in his memoir. He later refused to answer whether "rectal rehydration" tactics used by the CIA constitute torture. He is also an advocate for escalating CIA drone strikes.

Pompeo, a former congressman, was referred to as "the congressman from Koch" for his subservience to the billionaire Koch brothers in his home district of Wichita, Kansas, where Koch Industries is based. Pompeo called for whistleblower Edward Snowden to "be given a death sentence" and said Muslim religious leaders were "complicit" in terrorist attacks like the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing.

Under what legal or political authority are the current and former CIA directors intervening? Why should Harvard University care what Morell and Pompeo have to say about what takes place on campus? An honest college dean would have replied by telling them they have no business interfering in the affairs of a major American university.

But hours after Pompeo's letter, Elmendorf revoked Manning's fellowship. Without referencing Morell's or Pompeo's comments and without acknowledging any outside pressure, Elmendorf published a statement just after midnight explaining that Manning's conduct does not "fulfill the values of public service to which we aspire."

It would take a multi-volume tome to list the

assassinations, murders, death squads, drug deals, coups and other crimes committed by the CIA, alternately known as Murder, Inc., in its 69-year history. Now the agency exercises such influence that its leadership apparently dictates the policies of the most prestigious universities in the US and makes their deans shake in their boots. The power of the military-intelligence agencies is reflected in the groveling and nervous tone of Elmendorf's letter:

"We did not intend to honor [Manning] in any way or to endorse any of her words or deeds... I see more clearly now that many people view a Visiting Fellow title as an honorific... In retrospect, though, I think my assessment... for Chelsea Manning was wrong."

The degree to which universities have grown dependent on funding and institutional support from the military-intelligence apparatus is among the more sordid effects of the "war on terror." Concerned over the prospect of losing part of their \$36 billion endowment, Harvard's administrators no doubt panicked over threats from donors from the military, financial and political establishment to whom recognition of Manning is dangerous and unacceptable.

In an earlier period, the relationship between the CIA and domestic institutions would not have been so shameless. It was a major national scandal when *New York Times* reporter Neil Sheehan revealed on February 14, 1967 that the CIA was secretly financing the National Student Association, a liberal organization with chapters at campuses across the country.

The *Guardian* reports that Manning hung up the phone when Elmendorf called to justify his decision. According to a source who was with Manning at the time of the conversation, Elmendorf "sounded audibly nervous." When Manning's team asked him to explain why the university would continue to honor Spicer and former Trump campaign chairman Corey Lewandowski (also a 2017–18 Harvard visiting fellow), Elmendorf replied that in contrast to Manning, Spicer and Lewandowski "brought something to the table."

Manning publicly denounced Harvard's decision, tweeting: "This is what a military/police/intelligence state looks like, the CIA determines what is and is not taught at Harvard."

This is not a mere figure of speech. The Kennedy School, in particular, is a platform for the training and development of senior military and intelligence personnel.

One program, the "National Security Fellows," for example, serves to train "US military officers who are

eligible for senior development education and equivalent civilian officials from the broader Intelligence Community," according to Harvard's website.

The military, not the university, determines enrollment: "Selection for this program is handled internally by the respective military services and federal government agencies."

The "Intelligence and Defense" project "links defense and intelligence agencies with Belfer [a division of the Kennedy School] researchers, faculty, and Kennedy School students, to facilitate better policy-making in the field and enrich the education of fellows and students about defense and intelligence." Classes for these programs and others like them are taught by a host of current and former generals, spies, prosecutors and diplomats. Some course listings include the warning: "The seminar is off the record and nothing said can be published or recorded without the speaker's consent."

Harvard receives roughly \$53 million per year in funding from the Defense Department. In 2015, VICE News ranked it the "most militarized" school among the elite group of schools referred to as the "Ivy League." It is currently running an art and history exhibit titled "To Serve Better Thy Country: Four Centuries of Harvard and the Military."

The transformation of the university into a think tank for American imperialism is taking place in the face of opposition from the bulk of the school's student body, the overwhelming majority of whom will be disgusted with Harvard's acquiescence to CIA bullying. Anti-war sentiment is traditionally so firmly rooted in the student body that the administration was able to re-open a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) recruitment office only in 2012, forty years after students banned the military from the campus during the Vietnam War.

After a quarter century of war, there is hardly a decision made in any of the official institutions of bourgeois power—the political parties, the corporate-controlled press and television outlets, the trade unions, corporations like Google and Amazon, the universities—where the military and intelligence agencies do not have the final say.



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