

Letter from Barrett faculty concerning the TW Lewis Center event “Health, Wealth, and Happiness”

February 1, 2023

Dear Dean Williams,

We, the undersigned Barrett faculty, write to condemn the “Health, Wealth, and Happiness” event the TW Lewis Center for Personal Development is scheduled to host on February 8th, 2023, and to express a vote of no confidence in the leadership of the Lewis Center. We do not take this position lightly, as all of us believe Barrett should be a place where our students encounter a broad diversity of voices and viewpoints. This event marks the culmination of a long history of choices made by the leadership of the Lewis Center, the sum of which demonstrate a vision for the center that runs contrary to the core values of the Barrett community.

While we applaud and support the work our faculty colleagues have performed in developing the Lewis Center’s academic curriculum (often in spite of the Lewis Center leadership’s efforts to curtail their academic freedom), our concerns about the intellectual value of Lewis Center’s public programming are long standing. We have objected to speakers brought to campus to promote topics ranging from demonstrably fraudulent “[speed reading](#)” methods to anti-scientific claims about affective medicine that do not reflect the commitment to critical thinking central to Barrett’s education mission. Our concerns with the appearance of Robert Kiyosaki, [whose key claims in his bestselling book have been widely debunked](#) and [whose public speaking engagements on wealth generation have been exposed as sales schemes](#), at the 2/8 event are in this vein.

Our objections to two of the scheduled speakers at the “Health, Wealth and Happiness” event, however, exceed those previous worries by an order of magnitude. Dennis Prager and Charlie Kirk are purveyors of hate who have publicly attacked women, people of color, the LGBTQ community, as well as the institutions of our democracy, including our public institutions of higher education. By platforming and legitimating their extreme anti-intellectual and anti-democratic views, Barrett will not be furthering the cause of democratic exchange at ASU, but undermining it in ways that could further marginalize the most vulnerable members of our community.

While their national media profiles are familiar to most, beneath our signatures we have compiled some of Prager and Kirk’s most recent bigoted and anti-democratic public positions. Rather than rehearse those positions at length, we would like to pose several questions regarding the choice to host these speakers:

- How are Barrett faculty meant to impress upon our students the value of an honors education when Barrett is promoting an event by the authors of [If You Want to Be Rich and Happy, Don’t Go To School](#) and [The College Scam](#), who are [advertising this event](#), ostensibly focused on personal development, as a chance for them to further their anti-intellectual agenda?
- What kind of impression does it give our BIPOC students and potential students to see that during Black History Month Barrett is hosting two white nationalist provocateurs who have [decried the social prohibition on using the n-word](#) and [called for the cancellation of Black History Month](#)?
- How are Barrett faculty to provide a welcoming community for our LGBTQ students when we are hosting

speakers who regularly employ [anti-trans slurs](#) on air and have suggested that gay people are [incapable of thinking “as a person”](#)?

- How can Barrett claim to prepare students for democratic citizenship when we are inviting speakers who regularly attack our democracy, [promoting “the big lie”](#) about the 2020 election, and, in the case of Kirk, [pleading the fifth](#) when questioned by congress about his role organizing the January Sixth Insurrection?

We hope to hear from you soon regarding this urgently important matter. Our collective efforts to promote Barrett as a home for inclusive excellence demand that we distance ourselves from the hate that these provocateurs hope to legitimate by attaching themselves to Barrett’s name.

Sincerely,

Abby Loebenberg

Abby Wheatley

Adam Rigoni

Alex Young

April Miller

Benjamin Fong

Christiane Fontinha de Alcantara

Dagmar Van Engen

David Agruss

Don Fette

Elizabeth Meloy

Gabriella Soto

Georgette Briggs

Irina Levin

Jacque Scott

Jennifer Brian

John Lynch

Joseph Foy

Joseph O'Neil

Laura Jakubczak

Laurie Stoff

Lisa Barca

Mathew Sandoval

Matthew Voorhees

Michael Ostling

Mina Suk

Nilanjana Bhattacharjya

Peter Schmidt

Phillip Cortes

Rachel Fedock

Rebecca Soares

Robert Mack

Sarah Graff

Taylor Hines

Resources and Links

[Dennis Prager](#):

On racial justice:

- [“If you see the entire video \[George Floyd\] is sort of hysterical from the beginning of his encounter with the police who were completely decent with him. He says he can't breathe, he can't breathe before they touch him.”](#)
- [“BLM is a despicable, fascist group...It's the most racist organization in the country outside of the Ku Klux Klan.”](#)
- [“The left has made it impossible to say the N-word any longer. That's disgusting, it's a farce. It's the only word that you can't say in the English language.”](#)

On the LGBTQ Community:

- [YouTube removed anti-trans PragerU videos for violating hate speech policies](#)
- [“We have standards in the U.S. military. You shouldn't be serving there as a transgender person”](#)

On women's rights:

- [“Along with wanting a man, the vast majority of women wanted to marry... Yet, the Left has successfully undone that part of women's nature, too.”](#)

On democracy:

- [“January 6 is a smokescreen like the Nazis used the Reichstag fire. That's all it is.”](#)
- [“It's a republic if you can keep it. I'm not sure that we can keep it. And yes, so there might be secession. It's very sad if it would happen but, personally, I would live in a state governed by Judeo-Christian values versus one governed by left-wing values. And in a hundred years, let's see who prospers.”](#)
- [“There is no doubt in my mind there was cheating \[in the 2020 election\]. I have no proof”](#)

On public health:

- [“The more young people that get COVID the better it is for them and society”](#)
- [“Your doctor knows nothing about COVID... If your doctor thinks ivermectin is dangerous, change your doctor”](#)
- [Heterosexual AIDS Is An “Entirely Manufactured” Myth](#)

[Charlie Kirk](#):

On racial justice:

- [“I don't believe Black History Month is worth the kind of full month that it is, at all”](#)
- [“\[T\]here is a deliberate and venomous anti-white campaign in our country”](#)
- [“British colonialism was the most benign global empire ever.”](#)

On the LGBTQ Community:

- [“Monogamous heterosexual marriage should be a prerequisite to adoption”](#)
- [“\[T\]hey want a drag queen to get attacked and they want to make a huge amount of hay of it and they want to create summer 2020 again off of a drag queen or a trans person or something like this.”](#)
- [“The transgender movement is an introductory phase to get you to strip yourself of your humanity to mesh with machines”](#)

On women's rights:

- [Turning Point USA conference for young women leaders suggests their role is to get married and have babies](#)

On democracy:

- [“I think that there needs to be a new \[2022\] election \[in Arizona\].”](#)
- [“There is no separation of church and state. It's a fabrication. It's a fiction.”](#)
- [Charlie Kirk Pleads the 5th When Asked His Age by January 6th Committee](#)

On public health:

- [Charlie Kirk's pro-Trump youth group stokes vaccine resistance as covid surges again](#)

On higher education in America:

- [Meet Charlie Kirk, The “Boy Wonder” Trump Ally Behind A Poorly Sourced McCarthy-Like Watchlist Of Professors](#)