



COLLEGE MADE ME CONSERVATIVE

JAY STEPHENS

Have you ever heard the old saying that a conservative is just a liberal who got mugged?

Well, I got mugged – to the tune of \$60,000 a year. It’s called “tuition.”

Like everyone who cons themselves into attending a liberal arts college, I was captivated by the idea of changing the world. I would immerse myself in a diverse pool of academic thought, theory, and action.

Well...it didn’t quite work out that way.

Over the course of four years, I was transformed from a plucky, free-thinking free spirit into a cranky, get-off-my-lawn conservative.

The process started not long after I arrived at my elite East Coast school. I thought I was there to expand my knowledge of the world; to debate the great ideas. I soon realized, however, that my professors had something else in mind.

Invariably each class followed the same monotonous ritual: identify a problem – say, racism; blow it up beyond all proportion; blame the problem on the white majority culture; and then offer an unworkable solution – usually involving the government.

Everywhere I turned, I saw political correctness. At first, I just rolled with it. Then, I got annoyed. Then, it started to tick me off.

I was being brainwashed. Indoctrinated.

And I was paying for the privilege – with borrowed money!

Almost every speaker who came to campus was a leftist journalist, a leftist activist, or a leftist professor from another leftist school.

The ones who weren’t leftists were just weird. One time, I attended a film lecture given by a very skilled paraplegic adult film star who showed us some of her “art.” Another time, I went to a performance given by a woman who engaged in auto-eroticism behind a curtain.

I couldn’t deal with it – the PC culture, the mono thinking, the weirdness. I needed some way to cope. So, I got high – almost every day.

Parenthetically, most of the worst stoners I knew are now working in finance or politics. In fact, this is what made me first realize that I was a fan of limited government. I do not trust these goofs to make policy. Their power must be constrained.

This brings me to another black hole in the college experience: useless majors – the only thing more pervasive than marijuana and irresponsible future leaders. I’m not being judgmental here: I have a degree in film and media studies and political science. Why did I choose them? Because they’re subjects I like talking about. Practical, right?

But I was not alone. Most of my peers also chose to spend their student loan money on subjects better learned on YouTube or Turner Classic Movies.

By the time graduation approached, none of us had developed any actual job skills.

And people want to raise taxes to pay for free college for everyone? Are you kidding me? No. Just...no. I’d only give a free education to a smart kid who promised to get a degree in whatever the exact opposite of my degree is.

And that degree didn’t come cheap.

I took on tens of thousands of dollars of debt, but never spent a minute learning how to manage it. No such classes were offered. I might have actually learned something useful if they had been.

I didn’t learn about taxes either, other than that the rich didn’t pay their “fair share.”

It was only after college, when I was lucky enough to get my first job, that I discovered the truth: the government takes away a lot of your money. Frankly, it’s shocking. And that’s not even counting the mandatory \$400 a month deduction for my student loans. I’ll probably have that albatross around my neck for the rest of my life.

Really, I can’t believe my peers and I spent so much time shaming conservatives for wanting to lower taxes.

A past version of myself would call this desire to keep what I earn “selfish.” The current, cheerfully realistic version of me knows this: I can spend my money much better than the politically-correct stoners who are running the government can.

So, I guess – in a roundabout way – I did get something of value out of my expensive liberal arts education after all:

Common sense.

I’m Jay Stephens for Prager University.