Twitter Thread by Lara Schwartz



Lara Schwartz
@Lara_Schwartz



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I'm supposed to be preparing for a teaching conference but and I'm struggling with the impossible position teachers face in this perilous time.

Asymmetrical polarization is too kind a term for what we're experiencing.

"Fuckers" was also too kind, but pearls were clutched.

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The relationship between education and government of and by the people is self evident. Education- like roads and libraries, is a public good. But education is, as I've written before, incompatible with ideologies built on lies.
https://t.co/3slfgZs1N1

3/
Trumpism and education are incompatible. This isn't a partisan statement. There are Republicans, like @RepKinzinger , who reject the dishonesty at the very foundation of Trump's bid to reverse our election.

But where education concerns truth, Trumpism is built on lying.

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There's a vast, well-funded network of organizations dedicated to souring public support for higher education. They have been enormously successful.
https://t.co/ETuO9vC894

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Education is popular and incompatible with the fossil fuel industry's goals. But trashing education itself isn't a winning message. Most parents want their kids to have access to the economic mobility that higher education has historically offered (before the debt crisis).

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So the attack on education- which was always an attack on truth- wrapped itself in the most sacred of American values: free speech and the free exchange of ideas.

I'm a civil rights lawyer turned prof who both cherishes our 1st Amendment and calls bullshit on this narrative.

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I've been so frustrated that the narrative about speech on campus consistently confuses the burdens of free speech (Nazis and Klansman littering the public square with their lies) with its benefits: reasoned inquiry and debate in pursuit of the public interest.

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This is important. When a eugenics sympathizer speaks on campus, the FALSE current narrative says "this is what college is all about."

College is not all about being insulted by crackpot liars.

The crackpot liar's presence is an unfortunate by-product of our freedom.

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The crackpot liar gets to speak because the 1st Amendment deplores censorship- not because he has anything to contribute.

When the crackpot lying racist comes to *your* campus, you can say "behold, our blessed freedom. This is a learning experience!" or "freedom has a cost."

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Crackpot lying racists are part of the *cost* of our system of free speech, a cost paid primarily by our Black, brown, disabled, non-Christian, LGBTQ, immigrant students and community members.

With rights come responsibilities. Schools have obligations to these students.

11/
We must speak truth.
We must teach truth seeking.
We must call out lies where we see them.
We must speak with factual and moral clarity.

And in this era of asymmetrical polarization, that truth-telling will disproportionately offend students who embrace Trumpism.

12/
We should care for these students. Treat them as the human beings they are. Educate them well.

But we cannot embrace the lies. And if it hurts to be informed their idea doesn't meet with neutral and reasonable academic standards?

That's actually what college *is* about.//