
From: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2023 5:20 PM
To: DAVID LOWE
Subject: Re: Grayzone

This is how the NED changes under the new "CEO."
Sent from my iPhone

On May 30, 2023, at 4:15 PM, DAVID LOWE <[REDACTED]> wrote:

I don't know if Mike has told you his position at NED is very fragile, particularly with his boss (Aun). She gave him a highly negative performance review, which he says included a number of falsehoods.

On Tue, May 30, 2023, 3:53 PM Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

To both of you confidentially, I forwarded to Ken the email with the link to the interview and the other link to Mike's "rebuttal" memo, just to let him know what was happening. I haven't heard back and also regret that I got involved even to that minimal extent since this is a sensitive and potentially damaging matter that Ken probably feels should have been handled internally, without criticism of the disastrous screwup getting out.

Mike, I don't want you to get into any trouble, and since the VP for PA is obviously clueless, and since Damon hired her and seems to be supporting her, she might try to retaliate in some way and your letting David and me know about this could be considered an indiscretion. So please stay in touch with both of us on this and other matters- I like to know what's going on - but let's do that very confidentially.

That suggests that maybe the three of us should get together for dinner sometime- preferably not downtown. I'm not getting paranoid, but I sense that this incident exposes some problems beneath the polished surface and I want to be very careful.

Carl

Sent from my iPhone

On May 30, 2023, at 3:15 PM, DAVID LOWE <[REDACTED]> wrote:

If she was hired to get NED more publicity, she succeeded.

<https://thegrayzone.com/>

From: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, June 2, 2023 6:20 AM
To: Carl Gershman
Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

Your guess is as good as mine. Not sure if he was there.

-----Original Message-----

From: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 7:10 PM
To: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

External Email: Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good for Brian. And Chris?

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 3:17 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

Brian did so - enthusiastically. He too had forewarned her - explicitly against speaking to Blumenthal.
Your guess is as good as mine.

-----Original Message-----

From: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 5:54 PM
To: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

External Email: Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I'd like to hear about it. But I assume that she has Damon's full support? Why didn't Brian or Chris support your view at the Leadership meeting?

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 2:45 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

Long story - let's just say I'm clinging on.

-----Original Message-----

From: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 5:44 PM
To: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>

Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

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Please clarify - are you leaving or being fired?

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 2:40 PM

To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>

Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

I don't know, but I can't believe he would. BTW, apparently my intervention went down like a lead balloon at Leadership. Ah, well, I'm on my way out anyway.....

-----Original Message-----

From: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 5:18 PM

To: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>

Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

External Email: Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Did Damon give his approval for her to talk to them?

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2023 5:48 AM

To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> 'DAVID LOWE' <[REDACTED]>

Subject: RE: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

Amateur hour - hugely embarrassing! "I don't know... I don't know... I don't know... I don't know... I don't know..."

I specifically counselled against her talking to these people.

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Allen

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2023 8:33 AM

To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> 'DAVID LOWE' <[REDACTED]>

Subject: FW: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

Subject: The Grayzone debates National Endowment for Democracy VP on group's CIA ties

As discussed WTF!!

<https://youtu.be/khv7dYG15Fs>

Sent from my iPhone

From: marc plattner <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, June 4, 2023 3:13 PM
To: Carl Gershman
Subject: Re: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

Carl,

I had not heard anything about this interview. It certainly was "unfortunate," to say the least.

By the way, I did raise with Damon the question of a plaque on your portrait identifying you as the subject and Adel as the artist. Here was his response:

Yes, we are putting up art around the offices and will have signage for everything explaining the art and the artist. So that will come for the Carl portrait. We've also had a few folks raise the issue of placement with us preferring that we feature our partners rather than ourselves – that's the emphasis of the other art we are hanging (all from partners) and the naming of rooms. I think we can navigate the placement with nice clear signage.

I just saw your later message about the Goldwin Smith controversy at Cornell. I also was unaware of this, but I can't get past the paywall to read the article in the Forward.

I was sorry but not surprised to learn that you won't be able to come to Estoril. You will be missed. I have agreed to substitute for you on the opening panel, and have begun working on my paper.

I hope Laurie is holding up as well as can be expected. Please give her my love.

Best,

Marc

On Sunday, June 4, 2023 at 01:00:31 PM EDT, Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Am I correct that you're not aware of this?

From: Michael Allen
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 9:17 AM
To: Damon Wilson <[REDACTED]> Leslie Aun <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Brian Joseph <[REDACTED]> Kirsten Madison <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

Dear Colleagues,

As discussed with Leslie and other colleagues at this week's Comms team meeting, NED ought to consider a response to [this unfortunate interview](#), even if only for purposes of damage limitation.

Among the lessons I took from working with Nike, Gap, World Bank, etc., on high-profile "sweatshop" issues is that it doesn't pay to engage the most extreme, ideologically-motivated critics (as I strongly cautioned below). But if you do and in so far as they threaten to set the agenda or 'define' the organization, it's imperative to respond, not least because even the most absurd allegations can impact staff morale and influence the attitudes of other key stakeholders (not least on the Hill), including setting the tone for more respectable journalists.

In this case, it may not need be a public statement, which could only exacerbate matters, but we should at least prepare a rebuttal for internal use with NED staff and other key stakeholders. The video has already gone viral – it consistently shows up in my social media feeds – so we can assume that a great many of our partners, grantees and staff have seen it. It is also well-known that Gray Zone is close to – if not covertly funded by – the Kremlin, and the CCP, as well as acting as a shill for Assad and other bad actors so we can be sure they will use the interview to vilify NED and, more importantly, to undermine the safety, security and integrity of our partners and grantees in the field.

At the very least, we should:

- prepare a set of talking points that refute the CIA canard and the other claims made in the video to be shared with NED staff, partners and grantees;
- arrange a staff training session for NED staff on How We Talk About NED that would also comprise a 'script' of key rebuttal points (the attached, prepared a few weeks ago, may be a start).

We can't deny that it is both damaging and embarrassing to have voluntarily initiated – wittingly or otherwise – a conversation with some of NED's most notorious detractors, legitimizing their specious arguments and compromising a reputation assiduously cultivated and protected for the last 40 years. It may be a self-inflicted wound, but it's one that can't be ignored and requires an energetic response. I'm glad to provide whatever assistance may be helpful.

Best,

Mike



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Michael Allen

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From: Michael Allen

Sent: Tuesday, April 25, 2023 8:37 AM

To: Leslie Aun <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Franklin Bonner <[REDACTED]> Christine Bednarz <[REDACTED]>

Subject: RE: Talking Points

As discussed, the NED has never directly addressed or sought to rebut the specious claims about being a CIA front or successor largely because

a) a response would only lend credibility to such specious claims b) they've invariably come from the extremes of the political spectrum and/or c) we let our transparent operational autonomy make the case.

To respond publicly to the NED=CIA BS would be a huge mistake, but as agreed the attached talking points may help inform any conversations with responsible mainstream journalists, responses to grantee (or prospective grantee) concerns, etc.

Do let me know if you have any comments or need any more details.



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From: Carl Gershman <IMCEAEX-_O=FIRST+20ORGANIZATION_OU=EXCHANGE+20ADMINISTRATIVE+20GROUP+28FYDIBOHF23SPDLT+29_CN=RECIPIENTS_CN=000300005B9BFE42@sct-15-20-4755-11-msonline-outlook-f13ea.templateTenant>
Sent: Sunday, June 4, 2023 6:16 PM
To: Laurie Gershman
Subject: RE: FW: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

I'm not at all upset, but screw him anyway.

From: Laurie Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, June 4, 2023 5:01 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: FW: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

Not worth getting upset about.

On Sun, Jun 4, 2023 at 4:33 PM Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Screw Ken.

From: marc plattner <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, June 4, 2023 3:13 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

Carl,

I had not heard anything about this interview. It certainly was "unfortunate," to say the least.

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Best,

Mike



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To: Leslie Aun <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Franklin Bonner <[REDACTED]> Christine Bednarz <[REDACTED]>

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THE GRAYZONE

From: Carl Gershman <IMCEAEX-_O=FIRST+20ORGANIZATION_OU=EXCHANGE+20ADMINISTRATIVE+20GROUP+28FYDIBOHF23SPDLT+29_CN=RECIPIENTS_CN=000300005B9BFE42@sct-15-20-4755-11-msonline-outlook-f13ea.templateTenant>
Sent: Monday, June 12, 2023 1:54 AM
To: Daniel Silverberg
Subject: RE: FW: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

And she's a VP – head now of NED's public affairs. Horrible.

From: Daniel Silverberg <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, June 12, 2023 12:36 AM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: FW: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

I finally listened to this. It's insulting to have someone with so little experience having the chutzpah to think this would be a good idea

On Sat, Jun 3, 2023 at 2:11 PM Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Fyi.

From: Michael Allen <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 9:34 AM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> 'DAVID LOWE' <[REDACTED]>
Subject: FW: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

Just FYI in confidence – after discussion with those suggested.

From: Michael Allen
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 9:17 AM
To: Damon Wilson <[REDACTED]> Leslie Aun <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Brian Joseph <[REDACTED]> Kirsten Madison <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Damage limitation: The Grayzone & NED VP on group's CIA ties

Dear Colleagues,

As discussed with Leslie and other colleagues at this week's Comms team meeting, NED ought to consider a response to [this unfortunate interview](#), even if only for purposes of damage limitation.

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Best,

Mike



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From: Michael Allen

Sent: Tuesday, April 25, 2023 8:37 AM

To: Leslie Aun <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Franklin Bonner <[REDACTED]> Christine Bednarz <[REDACTED]>

Subject: RE: Talking Points

As discussed, the NED has never directly addressed or sought to rebut the specious claims about being a CIA front or successor largely because

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From: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2023 12:57 AM
To: Carl Gershman
Subject: Max Blumenthal and Russia

Max Blumenthal  Russia

Inbox

Search for all messages with label Inbox
Remove label Inbox from this conversation



Laurie Gershman [REDACTED]

to me

From Anne A retweet

I see Max Blumenthal, editor of the totally independent and unbiased The Grayzone, is going to appear at a UN meeting on behalf of Russia.

Quote Tweet

Security Council Report

@SCRtweets



Jun 28

Tomorrow afternoon (29 June), the #UNSC is expected to hold a meeting on Western arms supplies to #Ukraine, at #Russia's request. @INakamitsu, @MaxBlumenthal, and @BowesChay are expected to brief.



ReplyForward

From: Carl Gershman <IMCEAEX-_o=First+20Organization_ou=Exchange+20Administrative+20Group+28FYDIBOHF23SPDLT+29_cn=Recipients_cn=000300005B9BFE42@sct-15-20-4755-11-msonline-outlook-f13ea.templateTenant>
Sent: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 9:17 PM
To: RCN
Subject: RE: Terminated

Interesting that Damon was a factor. I'm very disappointed, but not surprised.

I didn't know that you were in the union. Solidarity forever.

From: [REDACTED] <allenm@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 6:27 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Terminated

I honestly didn't adopt that attitude - as Brian could attest - but simply proposed some measures of remediation. Definitely an instance of "Shoot the Messenger" - Bednarz who sacked me was complicit in the Grayzone fiasco - but more complicated and relates to DW being hugely embarrassed by the whole business.

In the meantime, the union will try to negotiate a severance package. Failing that, there are legal paths I can (reluctantly) pursue which could become damagingly public. You know how committed I have been to NED and the wider cause so I really, really hope it doesn't come to that.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 12, 2023, at 17:54, Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

They resented your "I told you so" attitude and wanted to handle it in a nuanced way?

From: [REDACTED] <allenm@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 5:53 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Terminated

Yes. Long story. All goes back to the Grayzone affair.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 12, 2023, at 17:50, Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Was it unfriendly, and if so, why?

From: [REDACTED] <[allenm@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:allenm@[REDACTED])>
Sent: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 5:49 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Terminated

Apparently not.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 12, 2023, at 17:21, Carl Gershman
<[REDACTED]> wrote:

Will you be continuing to work on the Kemble Fellows program?

From: [REDACTED] <[allenm@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:allenm@[REDACTED])>
Sent: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 4:02 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> DAVID LOWE
<[REDACTED]>
Subject: Terminated

Just met with HR and the union. I'm terminated with immediate effect.

Onwards and upwards...

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 10, 2023, at 16:28, Carl Gershman
<[REDACTED]> wrote:

Other vacuous phrases as well – “the tragedy unfolding in Israel and Palestine,” “let’s give each other some grace,” and not a word about Iran, where the Women, Life, Freedom movement is resisting the regime that funded and orchestrated all of this.

From: DAVID LOWE <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 4:16 PM
To: [allenm@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:allenm@[REDACTED])
Cc: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Re: The NED Family and the Conflict in Israel and Palestine

As much as I "get" the fact that this is not a response that, say, the AJC or my synagogue would offer, this strikes me as a statement that has been painfully worked out so as not to offend anyone. Yes, he's concerned about the safety of his constituents, but where is his outrage over what happened? And I find his use of the term "conflict" rather ridiculous given the circumstances.

On Tue, Oct 10, 2023 at 3:12 PM <[allenm@](#)> wrote:

From: "Michael Allen" <>
To: "Michael Allen" <[allenm@](#)>
Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 10:04:26 AM
Subject: FW: The NED Family and the Conflict in Israel and Palestine

From: Damon Wilson <>
Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 10:02 AM
Subject: The NED Family and the Conflict in Israel and Palestine

Dear NED team members,

Sadly, this weekend, many in our NED community have been impacted directly as a result of the tragedy unfolding in Israel and Palestine. I know this is a difficult time for many colleagues, family, and friends.

In the wake of the horrific attack on Israel and continuing violence, NED staff reached out to our eight discretionary partners in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as all four core institutes. We continue to monitor their safety and security closely and to offer support as possible.

The terrorist attacks by Hamas and Islamic Jihad not only threaten Israel's security, but undermine the work of our Palestinian partners who advocate for democracy and accountability. In the coming days, as the conflict grows, their work will become increasingly more difficult and dangerous – and even more crucial, as they promote a peaceful, democratic existence.

For many of us, this conflict is personal and may impact you, your loved ones, and your friends and colleagues. Some of you have told me about your relatives called into service in Israel. Others have shared their concern for the safety of family in Gaza. In these challenging times, and in the tough days ahead, please know that your NED family is here to support you. Let's give each other some grace.

This is a dark time for those working for a more peaceful, democratic future in the region

– and why our steadfast support is so important.

Sincerely,

Damon

Damon M. Wilson

President & CEO

**1201 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 1100,
Washington, DC 20004**

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |

Executive Assistant: Agnesa Ljamadjema

[REDACTED]

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From: Carl Gershman <IMCEAEX-_o=First+20Organization_ou=Exchange+20Administrative+20Group+28FYDIBOHF23SPDLT+29_cn=Recipients_cn=000300005B9BFE42@sct-15-20-4755-11-msonline-outlook-f13ea.templateTenant>
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 1:14 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: NED termination

Mike,

Any progress on a settlement? Or is NED holding firm?

Carl

From: [REDACTED] <allenm@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 11:19 AM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: NED termination

Thanks, Carl

Since I sent the note, the union has told me they're meeting HR this morning to discuss the terms of a possible settlement. Probably makes sense to see what transpires before talking, but otherwise you can call me anytime on 202 468 8558.

On Feb 13, 2024, at 01:39, Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Mike,

I'm happy to talk about this. Let me know when you'd like to talk.

Carl

From: [REDACTED] <allenm@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2024 5:14 PM
To: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]> ML Caravatti <[REDACTED]> DAVID LOWE <[REDACTED]>
Subject: NED termination

Friends,

I welcome your advice.

My union rep confirms that NED has rejected the request for a review of my termination filed through the formal grievance procedure under NED's collective bargaining agreement.

The decision confirms that my termination stands and that I have been dismissed for "insubordination" without any compensation after 18 years of service.

I have also been denied access to any files and emails, including a significant cache of materials essential to the Lasky biography for which David and I have just received a contract from Stanford University Press. I have even been denied to write the standard neutral message to contacts - "I am no longer with the NED and be contacted at..."

My termination is technically due to "insubordination" to my line manager, comms director Christine Bednarz, for refusing to tag photos in NED's database on the grounds that a) it's outside my job description, b) a task more befitting an intern and c) the latest in a pattern of willfully demeaning demands.

Yet I can demonstrate through emails and other materials in my possession (including legally recorded telephone conversations - yes, I saw it coming) that my termination was prompted by

a) being "canceled" due to my outspoken criticisms of and resistance to DEI orthodoxy;

b) and a related campaign of harassment and marginalization prompted by the Grayzone affair, arguably the biggest PR fiasco in NED's history.

Cancellation

During the NED's first compulsory DEI training (conducted by an external provider), I asked why social class was not being considered alongside ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.; questioned the term "microaggression"; and observed that social justice movements have historically sought equality of opportunity, not equity of outcomes. I raised other questions at a DEI training on the 1619 Project, not least that it was an ideological, not historical project. After each session (and a couple more) certain colleagues - including my line manager - suggested that such interventions were "not helpful" and, in essence, reflected my white male privilege.

In the run up to my termination, Ms. Bednarz suggested that my UK-Israel lapel pin was "inappropriate" in light of "recent events"; observed that I was the only white, straight male on the comms team and twice the age of other team members; and asked why I didn't cite my pronouns on my NED business card and email address.

In short, it was consistently made clear to me that I was not a good fit - ideologically - with her comms team.

Grayzone fiasco

NED leadership spent considerable time and expense to headhunt a new "world class" VP for strategic communications. Upon her appointment, Leslie Aun was presented at a staff meeting by way of a celebrity-style interview with NED's President, highlighting her exceptional qualifications and experience (yet she confided to a NED comms staff retreat that she had never before heard of the Endowment despite being DC born and bred and involved in foreign affairs).

I was the only NED staffer to vocally and consistently warn NED leadership, verbally and in writing, that the new “world class” comms director was not only insisting that we publicly address claims that NED was associated with the CIA, but also planning to “engage” some of NED’s most toxic critics.

Ms. Bednarz was actively complicit in this fiasco, cheerleading Ms. Aun’s plans to address these critics as an example of the “new” NED’s professionalism and positivity in contrast to what she has consistently dismissed as the “old” NED’s amateurism and timidity.

As Ms. Aun’s disastrous interview with Grayzone’s Max Blumenthal went viral, I expressed my indignation and consternation that same morning in a NED comms team meeting to the evident discomfort of Ms. Aun and Ms. Bednarz. Later in the day, after proposing a course of remediation in an email to NED’s leadership, I was told to report to NED’s COO to explain MY actions.

It is from this precise moment that I can demonstrate the start of a clear campaign of harassment, marginalization and victimization by Ms. Bednarz (nor have I since had any personal communication from NED’s President).

Furthermore, in order to settle Ms. Aun’s entirely spurious claim that her dismissal was due to sex discrimination, a current NED board member has revealed that management released confidential information of an “embarrassingly intimate” nature from my HR records in a stark violation of my privacy rights.

Course of action

I have received legal advice that I may have grounds for claiming age discrimination. But a second source of legal counsel advises that legal action is likely to be more successful on grounds of harassment and political victimization, evident in Ms Bednarz’s adverse reaction to my critical comments within NED’s compulsory DEI trainings and her censorship of Digest blog posts.

Her interventions increased notably but not exclusively following the Oct 7 Hamas atrocities, including her veto of an entirely neutral obituary of Israeli political scientist and JOD contributor Shlomo Avineri which she deemed “partisan” and “inflammatory” (at the same time, NED partners - including a member of the World Movement’s Steering Committee - were posting aggressively anti-Israel screeds on social media, orchestrating online petitions against “genocidal” Israel; several NED staffers promoted and attended the pro-Palestinian march organized by ANSWER, a pro-North Korean sect; and the NED President’s Facebook page still highlighted Black Lives Matter, several weeks after the group enthusiastically celebrated the Hamas massacres).

There is much more I could disclose, including my resistance to Bednarz’s attempts to manage the Penn Kemble Forum despite her demonstrable ignorance of proposed themes and speakers.

Even though I have refrained from publicizing what has happened and denied the “moved on” email message, I am being approached by contacts, including former NED colleagues, Digest readers, and PKF alumni expressing a mixture of incredulity and indignation.

While I deeply resent the way I’ve been treated after what most would consider a demonstrable record of commitment to the Endowment, I am reluctant to pursue legal action a) for the likely damage to NED’s reputation from the required disclosures and b) because I would much rather focus on the Lasky biography.

I am also reluctant to tell my side of the story through the many mailing lists of key decision-makers and opinion-formers that I have built and retained over the years (including every member of every cohort of the PKF).

But I am also disinclined to accept that the one who vocally warned NED leadership - verbally and in writing - of the coming PR debacle was ultimately dismissed while those directly responsible either evaded responsibility, were generously compensated or promoted to a position from which they were able to terminate my employment.

I believe a modest and equitable settlement would be as follows:

a payment of 12 months salary or compensation equivalent to the sum paid to Ms. Aun (subject to legal disclosure) to settle spurious claims of sex discrimination

the release of or temporary access to my NED files and emails concerning the Lasky biography

the right to post a neutral "moved on" email message.

In return, I would concede

a non-disclosure agreement, including an undertaking not to inform or alert any contacts on the extensive mailing lists at my disposal;

an undertaking not to pursue a planned libel action against Ms. Bednarz

I know that you share these concerns and welcome your advice or the opportunity to discuss further.

Warm regards,

Mike

On Dec 13, 2023, at 18:49, [REDACTED] <[allenm@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:allenm@[REDACTED])> wrote:

Thanks, Carl - I really appreciate the sentiment and the offer, and think that either option would be worthwhile.

I'm fairly free - obviously! - anytime up until next Weds evening when I leave for Europe. So happy to slot in with whatever is convenient for you guys.

On Dec 13, 2023, at 18:28, ML Caravatti <[REDACTED]> wrote:

I'm re-sending this to everyone because it went to Mike's NED address that he no longer has access to, so please update.

Best, Mal

Begin forwarded message:

From: Carl Gershman <[REDACTED]>
Date: December 13, 2023 at 2:32:53 PM EST
To: "Michael Allen" ([REDACTED])
<[REDACTED]>
Cc: DAVID LOWE <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Follow-up

Mike,

I just talked to Mal, who of course is very upset about what happened to you. She's also worried about the Kemble Program, though it's not clear how your leaving will affect that. Is it worth the four of us having a Zoom conversation to review what's happened, where we are now, and whether there's anything useful that can be done? We could also arrange just to have lunch with each other sometime over the holidays. Let me know what you think.

Carl

Ref: RebuttalMA

There are several good reasons why NED has never publicly responded to allegations that it is associated with the CIA, primarily because even to engage with such absurd assertions can only legitimize them.

However robust, convincing and credible our arguments, they will never persuade or silence NED's detractors, skeptics, critics and outright opponents. To the contrary, any public rebuttals will only revive and fuel their claims.

But it may be helpful to have a number of talking points to:

- inform conversations with legitimate queries from journalists or researchers
- share with grantees and prospective partners concerned that these allegations compromise their reputation

In that respect, we should emphasize the following:

NED's funding and operations are open, transparent and subject to scrutiny from Congress, the GAO, independent media, etc.

Unlike certain QUANGOs, government has no right to appoint members to NED's board, which remains entirely independent

NED's autonomy, pluralist structure and bipartisan political composition ensure that it cannot be instrumentalized by a government agency or any other party.

The notion that any external agency can manipulate an entity that comprises a political spectrum ranging from the Republican Party to the AFL-CIO, the most progressive mainstream group in US politics, is risible.

There is voluminous literature and commentary on our field and no reputable scholars, journalists or other analysts of democracy assistance or US foreign policy have ever endorsed such assertions, including those otherwise critical of or hostile to the NED. Similarly, no serious scholars, journalists or other analysts of the CIA have made such a connection.

Independent academic analysis of NED's founding (by a Left-leaning scholar) also punctures the myth. CIA involvement was not only "unacceptable to Congress", but was "ruled out" by Reagan administration officials. As the Church Committee "placed sharp limits" on CIA covert ops, limited government capacity opened up space for *non-state* initiatives.¹

¹ *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy under the Reagan Administration* - Robert Pee (Routledge, 2015), p.113, 23.

“The creation of the Endowment *did not amount to a resurrection of previous CIA capabilities* disguised by more appealing rhetoric” and “brought Congress into a more open process.. [than] under the previous model of covert funding channeled through the CIA.”²

Stanford University Professor Michael McFaul, the Obama Administration’s Ambassador to Russia, also [affirms NED’s independence](#):

One of the greatest myths about U.S. democracy efforts is that a senior White House official carefully choreographs the efforts of the National Endowment for Democracy or Freedom House. While they are perhaps supportive philosophically, policymakers at the White House and the State Department have had almost nothing to do with the design or implementation of American democracy assistance programs. In some countries, they clash with one another. I witnessed this as the National Democratic Institute's representative in Moscow during the last days of the Soviet Union: "They" -- the U.S. policymakers -- supported Mikhail Gorbachev; "we" worked with Democratic Russia, Gorbachev's opponents. The same divide is present in many countries today.

Similarly, WikiLeaks has posted almost half a million documents, including a trove of some 250,000 classified diplomatic cables between the U.S. State Department and its embassies and consulates around the world. None of them provide any evidence of a CIA-NED connection. Indeed, most mentions of the NED affirm its independence from government, including a cable from the U.S. Ambassador to Egypt on funding for civil society which recommends that “[T]he money should go to [an outside, professional organization](#) such as the National Endowment for Democracy.”

The NED’s “demand-driven” approach – responding to the expressed needs of local actors – is antithetical to any attempt to orchestrate covert political activity along the lines of the CIA’s former controversial interventions in Italy, Guatemala, Iran, Cuba, Chile, etc. As a Moroccan grantee [affirmed](#), NED partners are “the ones to identify our purposes and objectives, and ... methods of work.”

The CIA had covertly financed civil society groups, notably labor unions, but such funding had been banned by the Johnson administration. That was one of many reasons why Congress insisted on de-linking NED from government – including the CIA – precisely so that it could not be used for covert or partisan operations. Senator Paul Tsongas (D-MA), for instance, expressed concern about possible CIA involvement and worried the program would serve as a cover for covert operations. The Senate even adopted an amendment by the Senator William Proxmire (D-WI), which barred the NED from employing former intelligence agents.

The NED’s founders also rightly intuited that overt initiatives would

- prove more durable
- not be vulnerable to ‘exposure’
- be operationally flexible

² Pee, p.146. My emphasis.

- enjoy credibility with potential partners

The NED was inspired by and modelled on the German stiftungen (party foundations) that had proved to be so effective in aiding the democratic transitions in Spain and Portugal and which were openly-funded by government, but operationally autonomous.

THE GRAYZONE