



July 30, 2018

William J. Antholis
Director
The Miller Center

Dear Bill,

We regretfully submit this letter of resignation from the Miller Center. We do so as a result of your decision to offer a “senior fellowship” to Mr. Marc Short, who has been serving as the White House director of legislative affairs and senior adviser to President Donald Trump.

Your decision was made without adequate faculty discussion, deliberation, and a vote. The practice of faculty governance did not prevail. Had we been consulted, we would have argued that the appointment of Mr. Short violates the values of the Center.

The Miller Center describes itself as a “*nonpartisan affiliate of the University of Virginia that specializes in presidential scholarship, public policy, and political history and strives to apply the lessons of history and civil discourse to the nation's most pressing contemporary governance challenges.*”

The appointment of Mr. Short runs counter to the Center’s fundamental values of non-partisanship, transparency, openness, a passion for truth and objectivity, and civility.

Mr. Short has been a partisan activist during his entire professional career. He has associated himself with people and institutions who disregard, circumvent, and even violate the norms and laws that are fundamental to civil discourse and democratic politics. He began his career working for the Senate campaign of Oliver North, a man who had been engaged in illegal covert actions and who directly and knowingly contravened congressional legislation. Mr. Short worked for years for the Koch Brothers Freedom Partners fund, an organization that prides itself on the surreptitious funneling of big donor money into the political arena, thereby violating the transparency on which a democratic polity must rest.

In his recent work in the White House Mr. Short has associated himself with ongoing attacks on a free media. He has associated himself with rhetoric and policies that have empowered and emboldened white supremacists and that have led to spectacular increases in racist and misogynistic talk and behavior. He has been a visible and active spokesman for an administration that has attacked our law enforcement agencies, that has tried to disenfranchise millions of

voters, and that has separated immigrant asylum-seeking mothers from their children. By associating himself with an administration that shows no respect for truth, he has contributed to the erosion of civil discourse and democratic norms that are essential to democratic governance and that are central to the mission of the Miller Center.

It seems especially egregious to appoint Mr. Short as we approach the one-year anniversary of the neo-Nazi riots of August 11-12 2017. These riots took place in our community and at our university. In the wake of those tragic events, President Trump failed to repudiate the alt-right and its street thugs. Until his appointment to a fellowship at UVA, Mr. Short did not distance himself from President Trump's remarks about August 11-12. By not speaking out at the time, by not emphasizing the threats to human decency posed by the public display of Nazi symbols and racist diatribes in our own neighborhood, Mr. Short was complicit in the erosion of our civic discourse and showed an appalling indifference to the civility of our own city and university.

We firmly believe that Mr. Short has a right and should be given an opportunity to present his views at the Miller Center. The Miller Center has welcomed, and should always welcome, people of diverse political views. We ourselves have brought many Republican and Democratic policymakers as well as many distinguished conservative and liberal scholars to the events we have coordinated at the Miller Center. But it violates the practices of the Miller Center to hire such a notoriously partisan political appointee as a paid distinguished fellow, and to do so without any open discussion – prior to his appointment – with the faculty and staff. This seems all the more true because Mr. Short will be joining the powerful Washington lobbying firm, Guidepost Strategies, an explicitly partisan organization.

Democracy in the United States today is in peril. As teachers, we have often told our students that the defense of democracy and its basic ideals – respect for truth, inquiry, reason, decency, civility, and humanity – requires constant vigilance and active engagement. We must not normalize or rationalize hateful, cruel and demeaning behavior. We should not reward and honor those who defend such behavior. When we see things we believe to be wrong, we must speak out and take a stand. We do so now by tendering our resignations from the Miller Center.

Sincerely,

William I. Hitchcock
William W. Corcoran Professor of History

Melvyn P. Leffler
Edward Stettinius Professor of History

cc: Jim Ryan, President
Alice Handy, Chair of Miller Center Governing Council