



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Crises on Campus: A Christian Student Solution – Part 1

Guest(s): Morton Blackwell

Air Date: August 13, 2026

Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome once again to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're taking you back to a conversation Dr. Dobson recorded with a longtime friend, Morton Blackwell. The two first met during the Reagan administration more than 40 years ago when Morton was serving as a special assistant to the president. After his years in the White House, Morton Blackwell felt a deep burden for the next generation. He saw how our nation's colleges and universities were working to reshape the hearts and minds of young people, and he decided to do something about it. So he founded the Leadership Institute, an organization that has since grown to have influence in every state in the union. In part one of the conversation Dr. Dobson had with Morton Blackwell, Morton will share real examples of Christian and conservative values coming under fire on today's campuses and ways that you can fight back. Let's join Dr. Dobson and Morton Blackwell right now on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We're going to be discussing some really important topics today with a man that I've known for a long, long time. I have great respect for him. His name is Morton Blackwell, and I want to tell you where we met. I had started an organization which had a radio program, and several years later, I was not happy with something that Ronald Reagan was doing. I don't know what it was. I don't remember, but it had something to do with children and with something going on in Congress. And I had the audacity to write the White House and ask if I could talk to President Reagan about it. And you know that they did not allow that, but they said, we have somebody here as an assistant to the president, and you can talk to him if you would like, and it was you. And I came to the White House, and you and I sat and talked for about 45 minutes. Well, you were very gracious to me and very young. I was only 41, 42 years of age, and you gave me the time of day and listened to my concerns, and I went away feeling satisfied that things were in good shape.

Morton Blackwell: Later on, I recall that I was helpful with you and Mrs. Dobson on the National Day of Prayer. We had a meeting in the White House to which you were invited where we had 125 different religious organizational leaders, including yourself.

Dr. James Dobson: I do remember that. I went on to work with him for four or five years, not long after I met with you, I got an invitation to come spend a morning with him and sat by him in the cabinet room and he turned to me and asked if I would make some recommendations to him for how to strengthen the family. And I made four recommendations that day. Jimmy Baker called and asked if I'd put them in writing. And all four of them became executive orders by the president.

Morton Blackwell: Wonderful.

Dr. James Dobson: Of course, Clinton deleted them all, so they're gone too. But I want to ask you, if you were at the White House on the last morning, that Ronald Reagan addressed his staff and said goodbye to him?

Morton Blackwell: No, I wasn't. I was there for the first three years of the Reagan administration, and I was a special assistant to the president with responsibility to represent the president with several categories and groups, including all the religious leaders, all the conservative leaders, and all the armed services veterans' leaders. I was there, and then after that after three years, I left to go off and form and build my own organization, the Leadership Institute, which I've been doing ever since, but that was the end of January of 1984.

Dr. James Dobson: And the rest is history because the Leadership Institute has gone on to have great influence throughout the country. It's in every state, isn't it, at this time?

Morton Blackwell: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. That's what I want to talk to you about because it deals with the sons and daughters of the people who are listening to us. You've been very concerned since that time about the fact that there was an effort to twist and warp and make very, very liberal the hearts and minds of students who were going to large universities and the most influential colleges in the country. Was that what led you to start this? A concern for the moral character and understanding of right and wrong by students?

Morton Blackwell: There's no question that that was a major motivating force behind what I did then and what I've done through my life. There was also, motivating me strongly, the dangers that civilization faced from communism and you remember those days every two or three years another country turned communist and so that was one of the things that motivated me and a lot of other people including President Ronald Reagan.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes, and we all know the results of that battle.

Morton Blackwell: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Because more than anybody else, he helped overcome it, didn't he?

Morton Blackwell: He sure did.

Dr. James Dobson: But the Institute took hold in those days.

Morton Blackwell: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And you showed me the last time we talked a graph that showed the number of students that you have dealt with through the years. So what is that number now?

Morton Blackwell: Well, the Leadership Institute offers 47 different types of in-person training, and we have trained, since I founded the organization, 197,000 people, over 12,000 people last year.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't that incredible? And the Lord has blessed it.

Morton Blackwell: Yes, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: I have a note here. that I think came from you, but it's about the University of Tennessee.

Morton Blackwell: Oh, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me read this. These are, I think, your words, and then I want you to elaborate on it, okay?

Morton Blackwell: All right, sure.

Dr. James Dobson: "The University of Tennessee have hired someone to be the vice chancellor of diversity and inclusion." There's the clue to what they wanted him to do. And if you know anything about diversity and inclusion, you know. It's not something we're likely to feel good about. "And he was the person they hired to set out to corrupt the students and the university. The vice chancellor went around pressuring the staff not to hold Christmas parties and to be sure not to play games like Secret Santa that would be seen as endorsing religion. He brought graphic sex week events to the campus, which promoted a culture of promiscuity and included sessions taught by women from pornographic films to coerce students to get on board with political correctness. He said the students should not assume someone's gender by their appearance and to be prepared to use ridiculous pronouns like X-E and X-E-M and X-Y-R and variations of male and female and men and women." That was going on. Now, you took that on.

Morton Blackwell: Absolutely. We have a website, a campus news website at the Leadership Institute. It's called campusreform.org, and we expose every day on that website leftist abuses and bias. And we ran that story. It ran nationally. It has a wide audience, including a lot of people in Tennessee. And they saw it, and they started putting pressure on the state legislature for this absurd counterculture program and the state legislature took care of it. They defunded this. They cut out over \$400,000 that had been allocated for this diversity and inclusion program, and they put most of it into a scholarship program for engineering

students, but they took a little bit of it out, the state legislature took a little bit of that money to purchase bumper stickers to put on the cars of campus police, and the bumper stickers read, "In God We Trust." And that was a result of...

Morton Blackwell: That's a result of exposing things. So much of what the left does, they get away with because they have a captive audience on campus. But when it is exposed to the public, it is so outrageous that it cannot be defended and often can't be sustained.

Dr. James Dobson: Describe for us what happens with parents that have a conservative philosophy and live by it, and most of them being conservative Christians, I would think. They bring their kids up to understand right and wrong, and then send them off to these secular universities, usually state universities are the large, most prestigious of schools, and they arrive there for orientation, which I understand you have called disorientation. What happens to those bright-eyed kids who were smart enough to get into these schools? What takes place there?

Morton Blackwell: Well, it's horrifying. When our son, many years ago, went to Virginia Tech University, my wife and I took him down there, and there was orientation for the students, and simultaneously there was orientation for the parents. At the end of the day, we met with our son, and he was just horrified that any expression supporting traditional values was object of immediate attack, and it was clear that if you wanted to fit in on that campus, you had to abandon traditional morality.

Dr. James Dobson: And they made fun of them and put all kind of pressure on them.

Morton Blackwell: Students have, I think, the most highly developed herd instinct of any segment of the society. If they sense that their peers are doing something or have some opinion or behavior or practice, they feel a compulsion to fit in. Younger kids don't have that, and when you get older, you don't have such a compulsion. But kids of student age, late high school and college students, feel an instinctive urge to fit in with the other students. I mean, if a kid comes in and says to his parents, I need to have \$200 for a new pair of tennis shoes, and the parents said, no, you can get a perfectly good pair of tennis shoes for \$40 or \$50, and they'll say, oh, I just have to have this expensive pair because everybody else is wearing them.

Dr. James Dobson: Any deviation from the group think.

Morton Blackwell: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a serious breach of etiquette.

Morton Blackwell: And that is what the school administrations that are controlled by left understand. And so they set up an environment where the thing to do is to abandon the principles and morality that people were taught at home and taught at church.

Dr. James Dobson: Why would a university want to support something called Sex Week? I mean why would they want to deliberately distort and twist and undermine the value system that was taught to these young people at home?

Morton Blackwell: Well, I think that a lot of those people genuinely hate our society and culture. And things that you and I consider the most valuable and important and worthwhile aspects of our culture, they hate. And they want to figure out ways and means to undermine those things. So they dislike the morality. Many of them seriously dislike and are ashamed of and want to fundamentally change our country.

Dr. James Dobson: And this was really what you saw when you started the Leadership Institute. You were worried about that, among other things.

Morton Blackwell: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us what's going on on the campuses today. It's far worse than it was then. And what took place at the University of Tennessee is repeated all over the country.

Morton Blackwell: Time and time again. However, when public attention is called to it and the pressure comes, and if it's a private school, the alumni are the donors. If it's a public school, alumni, donors, and state legislators get upset about it. We've had in the last six or seven years, we've had 130 victories that are similar to that which I've told you. Now, that doesn't solve the problem on every campus, but when you said earlier that things are worse now in some ways in the past couple of years, it got to the point where the left made an announcement or made announcements that they were going to prevent any conservative speaker from appearing publicly on the college campus. And they were prepared to disrupt. They were prepared for violence. They were prepared to destroy property. They were prepared to beat up people. And they did it really starting in the fall of 2016, this group Antifa deliberately announced that they're going to stop conservatives from speaking.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that the one that took place at Berkeley?

Morton Blackwell: Yes. Well, Antifa is bigger than that. They're around the country. So what we do, what the Leadership Institute does, is maintain contact with students that we know, students we have trained on campuses across the country, and we constantly encourage them to keep their eyes open for rotten things that happen, leftist abuses and bias on their campus. And then they report to us. We had 92 students across the country who had been trained to be what we called campus correspondents. And they call in material stories and factual things. And we wind up having those stories appear well done on campusreform.org, our campus website, and it gets picked up. News media cover it. In April, Fox News alone ran stories from campus reform 29 times on that cable news network. And we had coverage elsewhere.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. So you fight it with publicity. Do you also fight it legally?

Morton Blackwell: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you been in the courts to defend freedom of speech?

Morton Blackwell: We have been. I invited the representatives for 15 conservative and pro-freedom national groups that have campus chapters to come to a meeting at the Leadership Institute that I hosted. And my organization has good relationships with these people because they send their membership and their staff to us to be trained. And we frequently provide them with brand new chapters because I send field reps out on college campuses to find conservative thinking students and encourage them to start groups. So I called them in and said, things have changed. Number one, the left has made this announcement that they're going to shut down all conservative speakers on college campuses across the country to the extent that they can. And the public is already outraged with their announcement and the violence that they have already perpetrated on campus.

The other thing that has changed is that the Leadership Institute's field work and the field work of these groups, and we had 12 national groups represented there, your own groups, have started new clubs. And here's some good news. There are today literally thousands more conservative and pro-liberty student clubs on college campuses than there were just a few years ago. Leadership Institute has currently 1,990 of these groups that are in an informal network with us. Many of those groups are affiliated with other groups, such as the Federalist Society or the Intercollegiate Studies Institute or Young Americans for Liberty or Students for Life. Amazing that there are that many. Everybody has heard of the Federalist Society, which is the conservative law student operation. But there are also local clubs called the Benjamin Rush Institute. And Benjamin Rush was the founding father of the country who was a doctor. And the Benjamin Rush group is conservative medical students. They're going to medical school. So I said, with those changes that we now have, I suggest that in the school let us be prepared and let's dramatically increase the number of public programs presented on college campuses. Let's go to these thousands of clubs that we have and urge them to put on a speaker, which they can do if they are a recognized student group. And even if we do nothing more than have many, many more speeches on campus, that in itself will be desirable because students will hear conservative principals spoken on campus that they've never heard on campus before.

Dr. James Dobson: Our listeners are going to begin to understand why I respect you so highly and why I invited you to come and be with us today because I've seen through the years the impact that you've had on the college campuses and elsewhere, even those younger than college age. And I shudder to think where we would be if you had not been doing what you're doing.

Dr. Morton Blackwell: Well, let me tell you what my second point was to this group that met February 5th of last year. The second thing is, let us be prepared. When we bring a conservative speaker on campus, let us have several of our students with these smartphones that can take video, and let's be prepared when the left starts breaking the law. When they beat up people, where they destroy property, where they shout down speakers. Let us be prepared with this evidence and hold these people accountable literally to make them pay. And so I had there in the room at the time with these representatives of these dozen national groups, I had representation of the Alliance Defending Freedom and FIRE, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, which also defends students whose rights are being abused. And I said, these people are here and they are ready to provide free legal representation to student victims of this leftist abuses on these campuses. And we did in-person training. I did four nationwide webinars teaching people who were putting on programs for the first time how to put on a public program and how to raise funds to bring a speaker to campus, et cetera. And so in the school year that is now completing, we've had 2,300-plus campus speakers. who have come on campus, and the word spread because there's no way for us to do this program secretly. These national organizations communicated to their local club members, and we publicized the training programs that the Leadership Institute was going to be doing. So the left knew it, and maybe that is why there were only 45 occasions in this school year when the left came and disrupted, tried to shut down public programs.

There are currently pending 11 lawsuits with free representation for the conservative victims of these students. There have been two law cases that have been decided, and one of them gave an \$11,000 award to the victims. The other one was a \$55,000 award to the student victims. And there are 11 other pending suits now. The left hates this. There have been repeated arguments. in the Chronicle of Higher Education, which the academics all read. There's a lot of email activity among the left, and one leftist was warning leftist professors, "Be careful what you say in class, because what you say at 3 o'clock, the Leadership Institute's campus reform will get on Fox News by 8 p.m."

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I knew this conversation was going to go by in a hurry, because it's one that lights a lot of fires. And you've done such great work through the years. And for you to take the time to come and be our guest, I appreciate it. And I think that those who heard you articulate these things today are going to want to support it. Now, I've got other things I want to ask you. And I would like you to stay for another day and we will get into those things. Would you be willing to be with us?

Morton Blackwell: I'd be honored. It would be a great pleasure.

Dr. James Dobson: God's blessings to you.

Morton Blackwell: Thank you.

Well, the fight for the next generation's hearts and minds isn't fought in Washington. It's fought right on the college campuses where our sons and daughters are searching for truth.

Roger Marsh:

You've been listening to James Dobson's Family Talk and a compelling discussion Dr. Dobson had with Morton Blackwell of the Leadership Institute. If you'd like to hear today's program again or to share it with a friend, just go to jdfi.org. Now, today's Family Talk broadcast was made possible by listeners just like you. People who believe that families are worth defending and these conversations are worth having. When you donate to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, you help preserve and promote God's design for the family. And you help introduce men and women and children to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You help stand up for the sanctity of human life and religious freedom all across our nation. And that is a mission that we believe is worth investing in. And that's why we invite you to partner with us today. You can give a gift over the phone when you call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. You can also make your contribution through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. Or if you prefer, you can give a secure donation online at jdfi.org.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time for part two of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Morton Blackwell of the Leadership Institute. They'll continue their conversation about crises on campus, a Christian student solution. That's coming up next time right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.