

10

The Road to the Nobel Prize Can Be Arduous

By J. Morris Hicks

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. –Nelson Mandela

Before Nelson Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 and elected president of South Africa in 1994, he served twenty-seven years of a life sentence in prison for conspiracy to overthrow the state. At the time of his death at the age of 95 in 2013, he was one of the best-loved and most respected individuals who ever lived.



Although Dr. T. Colin Campbell has never spent a single night in jail, you could say that he has served for the last thirty years in what might be called a *scientific prison*. That unjust sentence was his reward for publishing dozens of peer-reviewed papers that challenged the nutritional quality of animal-based foods—that were produced by industries that contribute huge sums of money to colleges of agriculture like the one at Cornell University.

As with Nelson Mandela being freed from prison and later becoming president of his country, in addition to receiving many of the world’s top honors—perhaps a similar level of long overdue recognition awaits Colin Campbell. I am one of a large group of individuals who believe that his unmatched body of work in cancer research is deserving of similar international recognition. Specifically, we feel that his breakthrough work is worthy of consideration by the Nobel Committee when choosing recipients of their annual prize for *outstanding discoveries in the fields of life sciences or medicine*. And since Nobel prizes are not awarded posthumously, we need to help Colin get out of that *scientific prison* sooner rather than later.

From “Downsizing the Cancer Industry” by J. Morris Hicks and John Kelly, MD

Mandela was 75 years old when he won the Nobel Prize and Colin Campbell is a very healthy 82 as of this writing, so there is still time to sufficiently restore and polish his former sterling image in the world of science. To be sure, early in his career, he was a scientific superstar, who once had a sparkling reputation that began to fade over three decades ago--right about the time he started to boldly share his conclusions about animal protein within the peer-reviewed world of science. As Colin told me recently:

The evidence for me was abundantly convincing in 1983 that animal protein plays a major role in the growth of cancer in animals, and most-likely in humans. -T. Colin Campbell

What Happened to Colin Campbell’s Career at Cornell?

Noticing last summer that he had begun speaking in public about the way Cornell University had been undermining his career in recent decades, I asked him if he would be amenable to my describing some of his many academic ordeals in this book. So I write this chapter with his permission and active participation in helping to ensure that everything that you read here is factual.

My story on this topic began in November of 2009, when I first observed an example of the administrative mistreatment that Colin had been enduring for two decades. That evening, I attended what would become the final lecture he would ever deliver on the Cornell campus--to a packed house at Savage Hall, where he had spent most of his career.

The audience that evening was comprised of students, faculty and a few individuals from the public. Prominent in his final lecture was the amazing story cited earlier about how he had been able to turn cancer “on and off” in laboratory rats in his own Cornell lab—simply by adjusting the concentration of casein (the protein in cow’s milk) up or down in their diet.

The crowd reaction that evening was greatly mixed—ranging from enthusiastic and engaging questions from students to shameful statements of condemnation from faculty members who publicly insulted him for having the audacity to present such abominable “phony science” in front of the undergraduates who were present in the lecture hall that evening. I was stunned. To me, it was like a bishop had just slapped the face of the pope.

Later that evening, at dinner with Colin and Karen Campbell, it was surprising to see that Colin was as relaxed and as jovial as ever—with no apparent hangover from the vile comments made to his face that evening. Both he and Karen commented that this very same kind of public ridicule had been happening at Cornell for twenty years and that they were sadly quite accustomed to it. Let’s take a look at how Colin’s spectacular career had led him to this point.

From the Dairy Farm to an Indictment of Cow’s Milk

After growing up on a dairy farm in northern Virginia, Colin chose to pursue a career in veterinary medicine and headed off to Penn State, where he received his pre-vet bachelor’s degree in 1956. After spending a year in veterinarian school at the University

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of Georgia, he received a telegram from a famous Cornell professor offering him a full scholarship to study nutritional science at Cornell. He accepted that generous offer and went on to earn his masters and PhD degrees there in nutritional biochemistry in 1958 and 1961 respectively.

Fourteen years later, after career stints at M.I.T. and Virginia Tech, Colin was destined to return to Cornell--to a full, tenured professorship at age 40 (A rarity at such a young age) at the university’s Division of Nutritional Sciences. After being interviewed by the department head, two deans and the president of the university, Colin was overjoyed with their resulting offer. Later, he described the Cornell opportunity in one of his books--with an emphasis on the sacred subject of academic freedom:

They granted me a position that provided an almost unparalleled opportunity to reach for the skies. Mere words cannot adequately express my gratitude for their expressions of support; the exemplary personal philosophies of these gentlemen gives meaning to the idea of academic freedom, a concept that needs all the support it can get in these challenging times.

Over the next twenty years at Cornell, he made good on the decision by those four gentlemen to offer him that full, tenured professorship. Quite simply, he became the best producing scientist in the top nutritional science program at one of the most respected universities in the world.

He consistently generated more research funding than anyone else in that large department and conducted and published the results of more peer-reviewed studies (over 300) during the course of his career – than any other professor. Largely due to his work, the Cornell Division of Nutritional Sciences was consistently ranked #1 in the nation. Nowadays, with the division being managed by those who are subservient to the dairy and genetics industry, its national ranking has dropped to #20 in the latest poll.

During his first twenty years at Ithaca, while actively securing funding and publishing scientific studies, he remained in very high esteem at Cornell – as long as he didn’t make too many statements that implicated the mighty dairy and beef industries and their implicit role in promoting chronic disease. He knew at the time that the president and other senior officials at Cornell didn’t want to hear any incriminating news about the industries that were providing hefty research funding for their university.

That doesn’t sound like academic freedom to me, and it certainly didn’t sound like academic freedom to Colin--during what should have been the most exhilarating years of his time at Cornell. From 1975 forward, here are a few of his career highlights, beginning with the massive China-Cornell Oxford Project that was described in the New York Times as the “grand prix of epidemiology:

China-Cornell-Oxford Project
On Nutrition, Environment and Health at Cornell University

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- Organized and directed the largest single study of diet, health, and disease in the history of the world, the China-Cornell-Oxford Project.
- Received over seventy grant years of peer reviewed research funding, mostly from the National Institutes of Health.
- Served on the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs.
- Awarded the coveted Jacob Gould Schurman Endowed Chair in 1985, the only professor in the division of nutritional sciences so honored.
- Finally, from the legendary and greatly admired Cornell president at the occasion of his own farewell address (to 8,000 people) in 1995, Dr. Frank Rhodes cited Colin’s massive China Project as “one of the greatest embodiments of Cornell excellence to take place during his twenty-two years at the helm of this great institution.”

At about the time of that address in 1995, Colin was beginning to feel the academic freedom issues that he had dreaded since he began challenging the meat and dairy industries and was beginning to suffer some of the administration-driven indignities that accompanied those issues. Here is a sampling of nine official university actions against him, in no particular order:

1. Abrupt cancellation of his very popular and officially approved “vegetarian” nutrition course, with no input from Colin and without even the courtesy of a phone call. (This highly popular course was taught from 1994 to 2003; when it was removed from the catalog, nearly 5,000 students petitioned to have it restored).
2. Refusal to show him a letter sent by the director of his department to another department on campus prohibiting them from offering the cancelled course as well.
3. Not providing him with an office in Savage Hall where he had spent the bulk of his career.
4. Removing his photo from the wall of distinguished professors who had served in the Division of Nutritional Sciences.
5. Refusal to allow the film crew of *Forks Over Knives* to shoot background footage at Cornell’s experimental farm facilities where he had previously done research--simply because he was personally involved.
6. Being informed, through a fellow professor, of the words of a former senior staffer of the communications department “that never again were they to give him ink.”
7. Sending by the director of his department to the Dean of Faculty office two letters, both including trumped-up allegations about his being responsible for unfounded indiscretions of others--along with spreading a personally vicious rumor told on campus about his own indiscretions in federal offices in Washington.
8. Very late cancellation of an already scheduled hall for a lecture he was to be delivering with an internationally distinguished colleague; then being told that he would “never again” get such a hall.
9. Removal of all details about his splendid career from the Cornell website; only a tiny picture, title and contact information remain.

This is definitely not the kind of treatment that one of the greatest nutritional scientists in the world and the Jacob Gould Schurman Professor Emeritus at Cornell should be getting at the institution where he earned his Masters and PhD and spent the majority of his career. But it gets worse.

The Straw that Broke the Camel’s Back

After joining the board of the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies in 2012, I began working closely with Colin on a number of issues. One of the more significant examples occurred during the summer of 2014. In early June, Colin called to tell me about the latest, and most egregious violation of academic freedom that he had suffered to date at Cornell.



He then proceeded to tell me about an impending *Cornell Chronicle* (campus newspaper) article (praising the success of his eCornell plant-based course) that was being suppressed by the office of the president, David Skorton. Apparently, he killed the article, stating that the university could not endorse the scientific findings it cited--not that anyone had requested such an endorsement. That *never-published* article began as follows:

By far, the No. 1 eCornell online program is Plant-Based Nutrition. The three-course series, for which medical professionals can earn continuing education credits, explains the science behind decades of research that shows that diets high in animal protein are a considerable risk factor for developing heart disease, cancer, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

That science builds on the lifetime of research (more than 250 peer-review papers) by Professor Emeritus T. Colin Campbell, M.S. '57, Ph.D. '62, Cornell's Jacob Gould Schurman Professor Emeritus of Nutritional Biochemistry. Since "retiring" in 2001, Campbell has devoted his efforts to advancing and disseminating the findings of those Cornell studies.

Compared to numerous examples of abridgement of Colin’s faculty rights and privileges over the years, this act to censure the press at a land grant university was particularly disturbing. I remember asking Colin that morning, “Are you ready to fight? Are you ready to seek legal counsel to contest this blatant breach of the First Amendment?”

He said that he was and that he would begin contacting lawyers. About a week later, I called and asked if he’d found an attorney willing to take his case. Since he had not, I asked if he would like for me to make a few calls. And that’s how our legal adventure began with the most prominent First Amendment attorney in the United States--a name that is known well by every member of Congress. I am talking about Mr. Floyd Abrams, a partner with the New York firm of Cahill, Gordon and Reindel, LLP and a fellow graduate of Cornell University.

Fighting for Academic Freedom at Cornell

After doing an online search for attorneys specializing in First Amendment work, I discovered a number of firms and reached out with letters to several of them. My letter to Mr. Floyd Abrams of Cahill, Gordon and Reindel was emailed to his office in New York on June 27, 2014. It began as follows:

Dear Mr. Abrams,

Just this morning, I found your law firm on the U.S. News Best Lawyers list for First Amendment work. As a board member of the non-profit organization listed below, I am writing to request an initial meeting with you to discuss an academic freedom issue involving our Chairman, Dr. T. Colin Campbell. He wants to understand all of his options, including possible litigation.

Like you, Colin studied at Cornell, earning his MS there in 1958 and his PhD in 1961 and he has been a full, tenured professor there since 1975. He is currently the Jacob Gould Schurman Professor Emeritus of Nutritional Biochemistry and you will notice that his current page on the Cornell website has no content relative to his long and distinguished career there. I see that you earned your BS at Cornell in 1956, the same year that Colin earned his BS at Penn State. So you two guys are probably close to the same age.

*I have known Colin for about ten years and, since 2012, have been a member of his board that oversees the non-profit Center for Nutrition Studies that bears his name. The author of the million-seller *The China Study* and several more recent books, Dr. Campbell has already had a profoundly positive impact throughout the entire world. So positive in fact, that I predict that someday he will win the Nobel Prize.*

That’s the good news. The bad news relates to Cornell University itself and is a topic that we would like to review with you in private.

Sincerely, J. Morris (Jim) Hicks

After receiving my letter, Mr. Abrams placed a phone call to me about a week later and agreed to meet with me and Colin in his New York City office on July 31, 2014. It turned out to be a wonderful meeting as Mr. Abrams listened carefully, took lots of notes and asked some great questions. Although he didn’t seem inclined to want to litigate the case, he promised that he would get back to us with some recommendations—which he did in this September 19 letter:

Advisory Letter from Attorney Floyd Abrams

Dear Dr. Campbell:

I’ve given a great deal of thought to your situation--plight might be a better word--and have discussed it with a number of my colleagues. Your work is not only of the highest significance but

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from what you've told me, it certainly appears that you've been treated in a manner that is not only unfair but at odds with generally held notions of academic freedom. The unavailability of classrooms to you to lecture in and the other limitations on your ability to fully use university facilities are unacceptable responses to the views you have expressed and if you can demonstrate that they do, in fact, result from the expression of those views, you should be able to persuade an independent decision-maker that you have been badly mistreated.

That said, I do not believe a courtroom is an appropriate forum for your claims. Cornell, as I have said, is not judged by strict First Amendment standards. You have little, if any damages, as measured in purely legal terms. And proof that the university is acting out of the motives you suggest is, at best, difficult to establish.

That is why I suggest to you that you take two courses of action. The first is to write to the president or provost of the university, setting forth in detail your grievances and asking either or both of them to treat you in all respects as other members of the Cornell faculty are treated. The second, as I mentioned in our meeting (but only after you file a formal complaint with the university, as I suggest above, and either hear back from them or hear nothing) is to contact the American Association of University Professors to seek their assistance. That organization exists to deal with situations such as you describe and universities are generally loathe to ignore its remonstrations.

I know that this is not the response you sought but it does reflect my best judgment about how best to deal with the situation in which you find yourself. Your work is of enormous consequence and I wish you well.

With admiration and best regards, Floyd Abrams

Academic Freedom Letter to the President of Cornell

Over the next few weeks, we followed Mr. Abrams' advice and prepared a lengthy letter containing about 2,000 words--explaining all of the academic freedom issues to Cornell's president, David Skorton. The letter was dated 10-13-14 and included a formal request for four specific action items:

1. Publish the Cornell Chronicle article (enclosed) that was written by them and advocated for publication. I also ask that your office write the specifics behind denying publication of this article.
2. Affirm my right to schedule halls for lectures per their availability.
3. Make available the previously written letter from Director of Nutritional Sciences, Professor Patrick Stover, wherein he denied another campus department from offering the course that I had taught and that was approved
4. Prepare a policy document (perhaps from existing documents) that clearly specifies what the concept of academic freedom means to our institution, its faculty, its students and its patrons and what it does not mean. This should also speak to the option of department chairs to arbitrarily cancel courses previously approved by department and college procedures as well as to the line of authority for determining which information the University Communications Department chooses to publish. I also suggest that the Faculty Senate review and

approve this document.

Colin hand-delivered a carefully worded, very thoughtful, three-page letter to President Skorton at his Cornell office on 10-13-14. Hoping at least to have a chance to discuss all of the issues in person, Colin was rightfully disappointed when he received a curt reply of less than 100 words fifteen days later.

In that very short note, he failed to even acknowledge the four specific requests near the end of Colin’s letter. He also deferred the *Cornell Chronicle* issue to others and added, “As to the additional points you raise, as I understand it, you have had ample opportunity to vet those concerns through appropriate channels at Cornell. Based on information shared in your letter, it appears that you have a wide and enthusiastic audience for your research. I wish you continued success.”



Cornell University

That was it. No offer to meet and discuss. No apology. Nothing. This bureaucratic-sounding, meaningless response from President Skorton was disappointing to be sure, but not that surprising. It is the kind of reaction that Colin Campbell had come to expect from the academic system in general--after thirty years of challenging that *system*. His challenges were never in an attempt to incur damage but rather a sincere effort to preserve the precious academic freedom that is necessary for individual scientists to find and publicize the truth that the public deserves to hear.

Healthcare--A “Sick and Morbid System”

As I write this today on the 4th of July, 2016, I just received an email from Colin in response to a message that I sent him yesterday regarding my disappointment with VP Biden and his refusal to meet with John Kelly during his visit to Ireland a few weeks earlier. Dr. Kelly had truly felt that the vice president would’ve taken time to meet with him—given how personally important the topic of cancer is to the Biden family. Colin’s response was right to the point, “It is a very sick, morbid system that few people really know.” His comment reminded me of his candid description of that *system* in his 2005 bestseller, *The China Study* (co-authored with son Thomas M. Campbell, MD):

I have come to the conclusion that when it comes to health, government is not for the people; it is for the food industry and the pharmaceutical industry at the expense of the people. It is a systemic problem where industry, academia and government combine to determine the health of this country...The entire system – government, science, medicine, industry and media – promotes profits over health, technology over food and confusion over clarity. Most, but not all, of the confusion about nutrition is created in legal, fully disclosed ways and is disseminated by unsuspecting, well-intentioned people, whether researchers, politicians or journalists. The most damaging aspect of the system is not sensational, nor is it likely to create much of a stir upon its discovery. It is a silent enemy that few people see and understand.

Those words reveal exactly why we were all so optimistic about the “moonshot” initiative, announced by the Obama administration in January of 2016. It was authorized, and was to be led, by two highly regarded, successful and charismatic career government leaders who would never have to run for public office again. Further, I know for a fact that President Obama knows a lot more about the relationship between food, disease and sustainability than most people realize—probably more than any American president in history.

And, of course we all know about the tragedies that VP Biden has endured in his life, particularly the loss of his son Beau to cancer in 2015. So when the *moonshot* was announced a year later, we all thought that it just might be that “perfect storm” confluence of events and circumstances that would be necessary for two powerful leaders to cast aside the political and economic shackles of the *cancer system* and truly delve into the nutritional science that revealed such exciting prospects for the cure—the findings from Colin Campbell’s Cornell labs three decades ago.

But it appears that what we thought was a golden opportunity will end up leading us nowhere. From a Biden interview with NPR in June of 2016, he talks about the “same old, same old” ways of fighting cancer that guarantee the continuation of the *very sick and morbid system* described by Dr. Campbell.

On the topic of colon cancer, VP Biden apparently thinks that the colon cancer gene discovery he mentions here qualifies as “exciting” news. He states in the NPR interview:

I do know that there is the overwhelming prospect that in the next year, two, three, four, five, you're going to see significant breakthroughs for certain types of cancers as well as significant breakthroughs in terms of how to turn cancer into a chronic disease as opposed to a life-threatening disease. You've seen it already. For example, they've determined out in Utah at I believe...I think it was Huntsman, where they've detected a gene that relates to colon cancer. And so your probability of getting colon cancer [is] exponentially higher if you have this particular gene. Once you're tested and identified that you have that, then you have more frequent colonoscopies. You increase exponentially the likelihood you're not going to die from cancer.

That phrase about having “more frequent” colonoscopies reminds me of the role of our “disease care” system in the United States. It is a very profitable system that doesn’t want you to die and doesn’t want you to get well. It just wants you to keep coming back for treatment of your chronic disease—a treatment regimen that never ends until you die. Meanwhile, back to Cornell.

Pressing Forward After Another Rejection from Cornell

After receiving the rejection letter from Cornell President Skorton, we continued to follow the advice of attorney Floyd Abrams as we brought all of the same academic freedom issues to the attention of the American Association of University Professors. But those efforts have also failed to produce any meaningful results.

When David Skorton moved on to Smithsonian in 2015, Cornell University named its

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13th president, Elizabeth Garrett--the first woman to serve in that capacity. Noting her stellar legal background, Colin and I thought that she of all people would take a particularly strong interest in his *academic freedom* issue at Cornell.

She took office in July of 2015 and received a copy of the Skorton letter from Colin a few months later. Although she responded in a more eloquent and thoughtful manner than Skorton, it was clear that she had no intention of addressing or attempting to resolve the continual academic freedom issue that Colin had reported.

Sadly, a few months later, President Garrett became the first Cornell president to die in office, of colon cancer, in March of 2016 – at the age of 52. It’s ironic that she died from a disease that broad dissemination, and further study, of Campbell’s scientific work at Cornell thirty years ago could possibly have prevented – a process that neither she nor Skorton had any interest in pursuing or even discussing.

A Shrine to the Dairy Industry

Shortly after President Garrett took office, the new home of the Cornell University Department of Food Science was celebrated in a special dedication ceremony in October. With some 200 honorees, faculty and stakeholders at the ceremony, Kathryn J. Boor, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), said the “refurbished facilities will pay dividends for generations as Cornell continues its role as a global leader in food safety and innovation.”

Almost like a shrine to the dairy industry, the group was served milk and ice cream in the new 124-seat PepsiCo Auditorium of the newly renovated Stocking Hall that houses the department. Ironically, capping off this \$105 million project is a gigantic milk bottle sculpture at the main entrance.



Glorifying Cow’s Milk (source of casein)
“Possibly the most relevant carcinogen ever identified”
--T. Colin Campbell, PhD, Cornell University

Making a Case for that Nobel Prize

How many more people have to suffer and die from this horrible disease before a courageous leader in government or academia steps forward to publicly defend the First Amendment? Perhaps the distinguished scholars in Sweden who choose the annual winner of the *Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine* can help move that process along – by raising the public awareness regarding the global significance of T. Colin Campbell’s cancer research.

Consider these facts about the Nobel Prize in the *physiology or medicine* category:

- A total of 106 Nobel prizes in this category have been awarded since 1901.
- The last three recipients, all in 2015, included one scientist from Ireland (also named Campbell), one from Japan and one from China. They were 85, 81 and 85 years old respectively.
- The oldest recipient ever, at 87, was an American, Peyton Rous, when he was awarded the medicine prize for his discovery of tumor-inducing viruses.

As alluded to earlier, the clock is ticking for Colin Campbell, who will turn 83 on March 14, 2017. That means that if he’s not awarded the prize, until the autumn of 2021, he would likely become the oldest recipient ever--should he receive the prize in 2022 or after.

An exceptionally modest man, I can assure you that Colin doesn’t seek the award for personal glory; he just knows, as I do, that this kind of recognition could possibly bring the notoriety and global awareness necessary to jolt the fields of academia and medicine into action—in a manner that could benefit all future generations on Earth. What possible scientific discovery could be more important than that? And; therefore, what scientist is more worthy of receiving the Nobel Prize?

A Final Word--On the topic of Courage in Science

In closing, I would like to quote a few words from one of most accomplished and respected scientists in history – Albert Einstein. A man who is famous for many quotes, I particularly like how this one pulls no punches. Sadly, it describes the norm in nutritional science today--with the emphasis on maintaining the status quo—a practice that is certainly the very antithesis of T. Colin Campbell.

He who joyfully marches to music in rank and file has already earned my contempt. He has been given a large brain by mistake, since for him the spinal cord would suffice. –Albert Einstein

Never choosing to be a part of the *norm* or interested in maintaining the *status quo*—Colin has courageously and consistently challenged that *vast interconnected health system* for the last forty years. Because of his exceptional courage and integrity, he willingly sacrificed his career and reputation so that the world could eventually learn the complete truth about food. No doubt if the great Dr. Albert Einstein were alive today, he would be cheering Colin’s courage from the sidelines.

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An Added Bonus of Incalculable Value

Perhaps not realizing it at the time, Dr. Campbell’s scientific research also provided a nutritional foundation for a pragmatic pathway leading to the sustainability of our ecosystem, our civilization and our future as a species – a pathway that must begin with radically changing what we eat. Hopefully, the Nobel committee will seriously consider T. Colin Campbell’s exceptional courage, sacrifices and world-changing scientific findings when they choose their next few prize recipients in the category of *physiology or medicine*.

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”

--Winston Churchill