

# For Missouri professor, the law bites back

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Missouri media professor blocks journalists

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**Editor's Note:** Marc J. Randazza is a Las Vegas-based First Amendment attorney and managing partner of the Randazza Legal Group. Randazza's scholarly writing can be found [here](#). The opinions expressed in this commentary are his.

*CNN* —

When you seek to cast aside other people's rights, in the name of your own personal agenda, you never know when you might want those rights intact for yourself. On Monday, Melissa Click learned that lesson, as prosecutors charged her with assault.

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Click is the communication professor who grabbed a videographer's camera and said in a confrontation with a reporter covering a public protest at the University of Missouri: "Hey, who wants to help me get this reporter out of here. I need some muscle over here."

But, using authority and/or intimidation against First Amendment rights is like summoning Beetlejuice – he just might show up, but he won't be easy to control.

When her conduct went public, Click doubled down in an “apology,” but one in which she ultimately blamed the victim.

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“I regret the language and strategies I used, and sincerely apologize to the MU campus community, and journalists at large, for my behavior, and also for the way my actions have shifted attention away from the students’ campaign for justice. My actions were shaped by exasperation with a few spirited reporters.”

She did not sincerely apologize for wishing to use censorship, violence, or excessive authority to shut down someone’s First Amendment rights. She blamed others. If only they had not exercised their rights, her statement, suggested, she would not have been provoked into a “distraction.”

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Click kept her teaching job, despite reasonable calls for her to be fired. And now, someone has decided that something had to be done about her.

Just like Beetlejuice, the “muscle” arrived. Now she is being criminally prosecuted for third-degree assault, a misdemeanor. She raised the stakes on foolishness, behaving like an over-privileged brat, thinking that the gun would never point the other way. After all, she was championing “social justice,” and as we have seen in the past, champions of this brand of leftist thought believe that their ends justify any means. Click decided that she was there to champion her political brand, and if it meant threatening a journalist, then that was the politically correct thing to do.

She was no longer an educator; she was a thug, calling for violence to suppress legitimate reporting. And how strange it is that the academic left was so quiet. When Donald Trump throws protesters or journalists out of his rallies, he gets (well deserved) scorn for it. After all, he is on the “other team.” But, when someone like Click calls for violence against a journalist to stop him from reporting, we hear crickets from “my side” of the political divide.



A generation ago, a communication professor with a courtesy title in the journalism school would never have dreamed of doing such a thing. When I studied journalism, ironically at Click's alma mater, the University of Massachusetts, the journalism school was where the light of the First Amendment shined brightest. But, the winds of political correctness were blowing a chill across that campus, and many others.

Now, Click needs muscle, but that muscle is coming in the form of a lawyer – a lawyer who will defend her rights, even though she sought to deprive others of their own.

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I wish I could say: "It serves her right." She deserved strong repercussions, but a criminal prosecution takes it too far. While her actions were reprehensible for an educator, in the grand scheme of things, nobody is ever actually prosecuted for such trifles. Let's face it, how many videos can you find on YouTube of a cop or a security guard doing the same thing to a reporter? Unfortunately, Click's brand of "rights for me, but not for thee" is exactly what she is facing now.



The prosecution, like Click's behavior, is politically motivated. She isn't being prosecuted because of what she did, she's being prosecuted because of what she represents. Now we have one disproportionate response met with another. We have a situation where disrespect for basic liberties, once unleashed, is out of control.

The correct response to excess is not more excess. What Click did might be technically illegal, but it does not warrant this selective prosecution. Click should be marched off of campus and into the unemployment line, but not into a jail cell.

But perhaps this cautionary tale will remind the "social justice" crowd that calling in "muscle" or trying to shut down others' First Amendment rights in authoritarian ways is like calling in Beetlejuice. We should all remember to tread lightly on the rights of people we don't like, because we might want to use those rights ourselves.

**Note:** *An earlier version referred to Melissa Click as a journalism professor; in fact she is a communication professor who had a courtesy title with the journalism school but had not taught in it, according to Dean David Kurpius. She has since resigned that courtesy title.*