

Toby Young quotes on breasts, eugenics and working-class people

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Toby Young's appointment to the board of the new university watchdog, the Office for Students, has sparked controversy since it was announced on 1 January. The free-schools advocate has claimed the backlash is politically motivated by leftwingers.



The foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, described Young, appointed by Johnson's brother Jo, as the "ideal man for the job", and the appointment has been defended by other leading Conservatives, including Priti Patel who said he was "an experienced and valued voice in education".

Opponents of the appointment have asked whether comments made by the former journalist – about inclusivity in education, working class students at Oxford, and the breasts of TV personalities and MPs – are compatible with the standards expected of public office.

The Department for Education application guidelines for the role state that post-holders are expected to uphold "the seven principles of public life", including selflessness, integrity, accountability and leadership.

By Wednesday, Young had deleted all but about 8,500 of the 56,000 tweets he had sent since joining Twitter in January 2009. Here are the quotes and tweets at the heart of the storm.

On 'inclusivity' in schools, wheelchair ramps and troglodytes

In 2012 Young wrote in a column for Spectator magazine:



Inclusive. It's one of those ghastly, politically correct words that have survived the demise of New Labour. Schools have got to be 'inclusive' these days. That means wheelchair ramps, the complete works of Alice Walker in the school library (though no Mark Twain) and a Special Educational Needs Department that can cope with everything from dyslexia to Münchausen syndrome by proxy. If [then education secretary, Michael] Gove is serious about wanting to bring back O-levels, the government will have to repeal the Equalities Act because any exam that isn't 'accessible' to a functionally illiterate troglodyte with a mental age of six will be judged to be 'elitist' and therefore forbidden by Harman's Law.

On eugenics and selective breeding for high IQ

In a 2015 essay for the Australian publication *The Quadrant*, entitled The fall of the meritocracy, under a section headed "Progressive eugenics", Young proposed that poorer people should be helped to choose which embryos were allowed to develop, based on intelligence.



My proposal is this: once this technology [*genetically engineered intelligence*] becomes available, why not offer it free of charge to parents on low incomes with below-average IQs? Provided there is sufficient take-up, it could help to address the problem of flat-lining inter-generational social mobility and serve as a counterweight to the tendency for the meritocratic elite to become a hereditary elite. It might make all the difference when it comes to the long-term sustainability of advanced meritocratic societies.

In November 2017, Young claimed he had been "no platformed" and "censored" by Teach First, which removed a blogpost of his from their site in which he expressed similar ideas.

On teachers having an easy job

Interviewed on camera in 2013, Young said:



Teachers complain a lot about how tough their job is. But, you know, the day begins in most schools at nine o'clock, ends at 3.30pm. They have six weeks' holiday during the summer, two weeks' holiday at Easter and at Christmas. Yes, they don't just work when they're at school, but even so, compared to a lot of other jobs, it's not that tough.



Teacher Toolkit (@TeacherToolkit)

Everytime #TobyYoung trends, my Fairy Godmother says to me "you must tweet that video."

So, here you go folks.

January 1, 2018

On 'universally unattractive' working-class students at Oxford

In a 1988 book *The Oxford Myth*, Young wrote about working class students, or "stains", arriving at Oxford.



It was as if all the meritocratic fantasies of every 1960s educationalist had come true and all Harold Wilson's children had been let in at the gate ... Small, vaguely deformed undergraduates would scuttle across the quad as if carrying mobile homes on their backs. Replete with acne and anoraks, they would peer up through thick pebble-glasses, pausing only to blow their noses.

On TV presenter Claudia Winkleman

In 2009, while watching the Comic Relief charity appeal on television, Young posted to Twitter: "What happened to [Claudia] Winkleman's breasts? Put on some weight, girlie."



Toby Young
@tobygmister



What happened to Winkleman's breasts Put on some weight, girlie. [#comicrelief](#)

10:17 PM - 13 Mar 2009

On visible cleavage behind Ed Miliband in the House of Commons

During PMQs, Young tweeted: "Serious cleavage behind Ed Miliband's head. Anyone know who it belongs to?"

He was later questioned about this on BBC Newsnight in a segment where he was opposing the Labour MP Stella Creasy on the campaign against cyber-bullying.

"It wasn't my proudest moment," said Young of the tweet. "I asked who a particular MP who one couldn't see the head of, but was sitting behind Ed Miliband and wearing an extremely low-cut dress ... I committed the sin of noticing it and apparently this constitutes harassment in some people's views."

On Padma Lakshmi

Young sent several tweets about the breasts of the US television host Padma Lakshmi, with whom he appeared on the US reality show Top Chef.



Toby Young
@toby_young

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Do Padma's breasts look bigger than normal? I think they do. #tcparty

3:02 AM - 10 Dec 2009

He also claimed in one tweet, now deleted, that a photoshoot with Lakshmi looked the way it did because he had his “dick up her arse”.

Young has described the tweets, posted between 2009 and 2012, as “sophomoric and politically incorrect”.

On sexual harassment in the workplace

In December 2016, Young wrote for the Spectator that “companies need to get prepared for young employees who will take offence at anything”. He gave an example from his own working history:



After I’d made a couple more of these unsuccessful attempts at flirtatious banter, someone left a copy of Condé Nast’s ‘Sexual Harassment Policy’ on my desk. ‘It has long been the policy of Condé Nast to maintain a professional working environment for all its employees, free of any form of discrimination or harassment,’ it said. The next bit was underlined in red felt-tip pen: ‘A joke considered amusing by one may be offensive to another.’ I found out just how true those words were when I hired a strippergram to surprise a male colleague on his birthday on what turned out to be Take Our Daughters to Work Day.