

## Victimhood

*Letter to the editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 06.15.23*

Why is John Hood's May 25 column, "Who are you calling an extremist?" so defensive? Hood is president of the John William Pope Foundation, funded by the NC family business empire of former state legislator Art Pope. In his earlier column "Foundation and Empire," Hood says he and Pope have been "friends and colleagues" with "similar views on most issues" for decades. He applauds Pope's funding of what Hood calls "right-of-center organizations, including the John Locke Foundation (JLF)," where Hood is a director. JLF, writes Hood, "would not exist" without Pope.

Unsurprisingly, Hood defends what he calls "the pervasive influence of a large, politically connected foundation, created by a North Carolina family successful in business and run by a former state legislator." Hood helped Pope found JLF, the Civitas Institute and the Carolina Journal to realize Pope's idea of building a right-wing echo chamber to help Republicans gain political power in NC.

Pope helped draw Republicans' gerrymandered maps that created Republicans' supermajority. Courts said they targeted Black voters with "surgical precision." Hood's approach to gerrymandering has, in practice, been strictly partisan. When NC's Supreme Court tossed Democrats' maps in 2002, he cheered. When it disallowed Republicans' 2022 gerrymander, he called the ruling unconstitutional. When the court's new Republican majority reinstated Republicans' gerrymandered maps this year, Hood praised it for ruling that NC's constitutional guarantee of "free elections" does not allow courts to ensure that those elections are also "fair."

Republicans used the veto-proof supermajority Hood helped get them to deny women the freedom to control their own bodies, deny parents' the freedom to help their own children with gender-affirming care, and deny everyone the freedom to live their lives free from gun violence.

North Carolinians are less free because of Hood's "Foundation" and Pope's "Empire," but Hood feels sorry for himself! Getting called an extremist by people he helped deprive of freedom clearly struck a nerve. But being held accountable for what you did doesn't make you a victim, Hood.

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