

CINCINNATI REPUBLIC

No Merit in Numbers

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A rebellion of sorts seems to be afoot. A growing portion of the population — for one reason or another — appears to be displeased with the bedrock of American Society. More and more individuals have expressed their desire to curtail the First Amendment. Specifically, the section that allows us to state our opinions without fear of governmental recourse. The opposition to freedom of speech from the left has been well-documented and apparent for quite some time. California's governor, Jerry Brown, recently signed into law a bill that makes it a jailable for a healthcare worker to willfully call a patient something other than their preferred pronoun. The California State Legislature takes an Orwellian approach in writing thought-crime into the state penal code. Calling someone by their biological gender pronoun, even at their displeasure, should not result in jail-time, no matter what your opinion on gender-fluidity may be. Any reasonable person would recognize this. After all, it is speech that is being prosecuted in this instance, and the Supreme Court has ruled overwhelmingly in favor of a liberal (in the actual sense of the term) First Amendment. Yet, California continues to live in a world absent of any reason or logic.

Perhaps the greatest assault on the freedom of speech has occurred not in state assemblies, but in college classrooms. A recent Brookings Institution study found that a plurality of students believe that “hate speech” is not protected by the First Amendment. In the recent case *Matal v. Tam*, the Supreme Court affirmed 8-0 — this includes every left-leaning justice — that “hate speech” is free speech. Ironically, the school most known for its students holding this kind of opinion is the supposed bastion of free speech, UC Berkeley. Thanks to the efforts of Antifa and other anti-free speech groups, Berkeley recently had to shell out over \$600,000 in security costs when Ben Shapiro came to speak. The immense expense should not be attributed to Shapiro for having the wherewithal to give his opinion, but to the hundreds of ignominious Neanderthals that cannot bear to hear an opinion with which they disagree. Charles Murray recently received a less-than-cordial welcome from University of Michigan students who do not like the conclusions his research has drawn.

For seven years now, much of the leftist ire has been directed towards a resounding victory for the freedom of speech in the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision. While many would have you believe money to be the focal point of controversy, but in actuality, it was speech. Leftists objected to a third-party organization (Citizens United) releasing a movie in which they make a political statement criticizing carpet-bagging former First Lady, Hillary Clinton, right before her

first failed bid for president. The crusade from the left against the First Amendment has been raging for quite some time. But that is not the only origin of anti-First Amendment sympathies. More recently, our Commander-in-Chief unveiled his true feelings for freedom of speech via Twitter.

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On October 11th Donald Trump tweeted, “With all of the Fake News coming out of NBC and the Networks, at what point is it appropriate to challenge their License? Bad for country!” Perhaps to the dismay of the President, their “license” is the First Amendment. Networks can publish and broadcast what they please, provided it does not constitute slander or libel (which have a very high burden of proof). They enjoy the same free speech rights that allows Donald Trump to tweet until the cows come home — and there is nothing illegal about either. Revoking “licenses” — which do not exist — would be governmental regulation of speech, something “conservatives” have adamantly opposed in the past. But now, many have had a change of heart. Leading sycophant of the Donald Trump fan club, Bill Mitchell, stated on Twitter “Vanity Fair, WAPO, NYTimes, CNN, NBC – they all just make stuff up and report it as news. Yes, they should have their licenses evaluated.” Bill seems to find no issue with condemning the anti-free speech sentiments on campuses, but in the same breath gesticulates his “free speech for me, but not for thee” mentality.

The larger point is not solely in defense of our collective freedom of speech (which deserves an entire series itself), but that because so many in our country believe that freedom of speech should be curtailed, it gives them license to act on that desire. It’s a dangerous form of “might equals right,” a sentiment held by collectivists of all stripes. A poll conducted by the Cato Institute and YouGov — the entirety of which will be released later this month — found that a whopping 40% of the population believes “hate speech” and other offensive viewpoints should be silenced by the government. Obviously this opinion is not unique to one “side.” Those on both the left and right hold this immensely un-American belief.

As I have written in the past, there is good reason our Founding Fathers opted for a system resistant to populist resolve. An incredibly successful tool in this regard has been the Bill of Rights, with its protections of our innate rights from the very government our Constitution establishes. Historically, democratic (in the governmental sense of the word) rule has often resulted in tyranny of the majority. Look no further than Revolutionary France, where individual rights were trampled because a majority wished it so. The entire debate surrounding freedom of speech has shifted from one of blind universal application, to one of “whose views should be deemed acceptable.” A sign of intellectual weakness is that, rather than confront views with which you disagree in open-debate on their merits, you instead opt for coerced silencing of such views. Disgusting viewpoints cannot be legislated out of existence, and it is that attempted suppression that gives those pariahs the support they so adamantly desire.