



Conservative student voices are being misrepresented rather than dismissed

Enrique Castro

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Freedom of speech is a contentious issue, and it will always be. There is a power that lies in words, and speech is often seen as a dangerous weapon that has been used to diminish others.

One should rarely give thought to the standing they hold in the minds of others. If conducting oneself with virtue and holding one's attitudes in temperament is all that really matters, then what care should there be for what other's think?

In a survey done by the CATO Institute in July 2020 shows that 62 percent of all Americans agree that "the political climate prevents [them] from saying things [they] believe because others might find them offensive."

Reading deeper into the research shows that political groups feel limited in voicing their views. The only group to stand out in this study is strong liberals, a majority of whom feel that they can express their views without needing to hold back. The survey by CATO reveals a divide among liberal centrists and strong liberals more so than it supports the idea that conservatives are being suppressed.

While conservative viewpoints are not popular in academic environments, this doesn't make universities hotbeds of censorship. Our perspectives on places of higher learning should be scrutinized on a case-by-case basis, as a generalization is a weak foundation to build a university upon. Viewing these institutions from a generalized assumption can lead to misconceptions that damage the objective lens we use to look at political issues.

Universities, such as New Mexico State University and Louisiana State University, have dismissed staff for their outspoken views on politically divisive topics. A university that wishes to avoid being seen as politically divisive, and thereby remove staff members that refuse to temper their views by appearing in think tanks and the like, would be a reasonable measure.

The reports by ABC, which describe the harassment of vocal conservatives, on the University of California at Berkley and the University of Texas at Austin come from 2019 in February and June respectively. No one should be subject to public assault, and for students to be threatened with doing it is unacceptable. However, such reports cannot be used to accurately portray the political climate of today and are more reflections of the rising tensions among supporters and opponents of the Trump administration over a year ago. The report by ABC from February 2019, at the University of California states that the individual who was assaulted was not an enrolled

student. The individual assaulted was an outspoken conservative on their way to give a speech on campus.

The ability to discuss political answers to social issues is vital to the success of America's efforts to achieve a common good for all citizens. However, one shouldn't think that conservative perspectives are being dismissed. Rather the true nature of the situation is more nuanced.

Animosity towards conservative individuals is the result of the perspective that all republicans are Trump supporters as the administration has proven itself to further divisiveness with diminishing rhetoric employed by the executive office. In truth, the CATO survey shows that most change in "self-censorship" has come from liberals, not conservatives, between 2017 and 2020.

Perhaps a way to mend relations would be to establish that not every conservative is a Trump supporter. The Lincoln Project, a small group of conservatives, is a prime example of republicans who denounce the Trump administration and desire a return to the core principals of the Republican Party. It acknowledges that the current Republican party is one that endears itself to white supremacists such as David Duke.

The current Republican Party, under President Trump, is a party that disregarded the consul General James N. Mattis as Secretary of Defense, which he was supremely qualified to execute the duties of the office being a man who respects the graveness of war. It is a party that no longer represents the interest of the common good for all and plays upon racial and religious lines to a degree that causes citizens to feel their lives legitimately threatened by conservative policies.