

Articles on

Flunking Free Speech 101

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Some colleges flunking First Amendment 101

The principle is simple: Leave others alone to pursue whatever might be their own aspirations, as long as they do not impede the rights and safety of others. It is the personification of America's Bill of Rights. It applies to wherever and whenever we Americans assemble.

This idea of freedom sometimes conflicts with America's political process. It has happened throughout our history. It is happening today.

I wrote earlier in The Press about the suppression of free speech on college campuses and other places (See Coeur d'Alene Press, May 17 and May 19, 2017, pages A5 in both pieces). Yes, college campuses, the supposed bastions of free speech and unbridled debate. Here is a quote from The Week magazine (Sept. 8, 2017):

"A 'social justice' newspaper posted at the University of Colorado calls for a nationwide ban on veterans as students, claiming the military is a 'white supremacist organization.' The authors assert that veterans have been 'permanently tainted' by military culture, causing many students to be 'frightened' by their presence."

The article also states, "Veterans should be restricted to trade schools, the letter says, so colleges will feel 'safe.'"

I ask my high school English teacher to forgive the use of an exclamation point: Trade schools!

The letter is an example of what I call The Ignorant Therefore



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Doctrinaire Syndrome. Anyone worth an ounce of mental salt knows the U.S. military was one of the first American institutions to promote racial equality.

I have difficulty understanding the intellectual vacuity of the people who wrote this article. Veterans are well-known for their offering stability to our society and to our communities — and that is not an alternative fact.

Trade schools? We veterans have all successfully graduated from a trade school. It is called basic training. It is a school I venture to guess some of the people at the

University of Colorado would flunk.

Their statement about trade schools is a cogent example of the importance of the right of free speech. Their assertion is repugnant; insulting and demeaning to veterans. Yet I defend the right of these people to make these remarks. Once we Americans begin deciding what can or cannot be spoken (that does not endanger anyone), we might just as well throw in the towel of the First Amendment, the very bedrock of this country.

In addition to my previous discussions about students suppressing the right of speech to lecturers and invited guest speakers at colleges and other institutions, consider these insults to the First Amendment. These events occurred at Reed College, a noted liberal college located in Portland, Ore.:

Example one: A Humanities 101 lecturer was denied her right to discuss the subject when demonstrators emerged and said, "We're protesting [this meeting] because it's Eurocentric."

Example two: An assistant professor asked students not to protest during her lecture, as she suffered from acute

anxiety. (She may be in the wrong profession.) After her speech, the students called her a "race traitor" for failing to oppose a humanities class. She was "anti-black" because she wore a T-shirt that was labeled "Poetry is Lit." [Writer: if you can explain this complaint to me, please send a letter to the editor]. She was called a "gaslighter" because she made "disadvantaged students doubt their own feelings of oppression." [Writer: once again, I ask for some guidance on what this accusation means.]

In part 2 of this article, I provide other examples and offer additional thoughts about the subject of free speech.

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Because of his last name, Uyless Black has been described by assorted bigots as a "person of color" and other mocking comments. When he hears them directly, his response to his insulters is, "Black is beautiful in more ways than one." Or offering some variety, "Here's to Black power." He lives in Hayden with his wife, Holly, and his "dog of no color," French Poodle, Milli.

One way to slow attack on free speech rights

Second of two parts

The director of "Boys Don't Cry," a movie about transgender people, was giving a talk about the movie to a group of people. She was shouted down for, among other reasons, having Hillary Swank, a non-trans actor, play the lead in the movie.

That is why Ms. Swank is called an actor in the first place. She plays roles outside her persona.

I had the same problem with the lead actor in the chain saw massacre movie, as he was not an actual chain saw killer. Perhaps the film's producers had trouble in their casting efforts in finding a crazed murderer to play the leading role.

Here's another (real) example: Paul Simon was criticized for writing songs about Africans, because he was not an African.

On and on speech political correctness goes, meandering through the lanes of intellectual lassitude and pathetic intolerance.

A Two-Way Street

Many of the articles appearing recently about Charlottesville and the suppression of free speech there and on college campuses claim much of this suppression is coming from intolerant conservatives. In the first article of this series, I cited examples of these incidences coming from liberals.

Eddie S. Glaude Jr., writing in Time magazine (Oct. 9, 2017, page 25) states, "The defense of free speech seems to be highly selective, but the idea of universities and colleges as hotbeds



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of intolerant liberals is just plain wrong."

Who would argue with Mr. Glaude when he uses the term "hotbeds?" I make no assertion that these schools are hotbeds of

anything. But I do believe they are becoming places that increasingly silence speakers with whom they disagree.

A Slippery Slope

In the first piece to this article, I wrote about my revulsion to a paper stating that U.S. military veterans should not attend conventional colleges, but should be required to attend trades schools. Yet I defended the rights of the article's authors to state their opinion.

I do not mean this next statement as one of disparagement, but one of fact: We Americans are an insular people. The wide expanse of the oceans separating us from other places has kept us somewhat ignorant of the fact that many parts of the world do not tolerate any form of free speech that even hints at criticism of the government.

As repugnant as some of the utterings are that come from humans, each of us should thank our founders and their writing of the Bill of Rights. When you have resided in a country that tortures and even kills people for offering an off-beat opinion, you likely understand how

fortunate we American citizens are.

It can become a slippery slope. Once we cannot say a "Negro;" then we cannot say a "black person;" then we cannot say a "person of color." The term "~~American African~~ Americans" seems to be acceptable at the present time. But everyone on Earth is African something-or-another as the human race originated in Africa.

Where Does It End?

I am an ardent supporter of the black people of America. I make no apologies for my stands on their behalf. But I do not even know what phrase or word to use when I write about them. I am coming to the point where I fear my writings will be called racist, when I am the very opposite.

The political correctness banality becomes absurd. We can no longer say "mailman." We say "mailperson." No, that will not do. "Mail" could be confused with "male," so we may have to resort to "person person."

Will Uyless Black be required to change his last name because he is not... Well, I am hesitant to use a word of any sort.

The last few statements have tried to make light of a very serious topic. With this in mind, I propose a solution: Never push anyone off their platform of free speech. While they are speaking, it is their platform, not the platform of you or me. If we do not like what the speaker says, we start our own platform and do our talking there, while expecting our opponents will honor our platform as we have honored theirs.

Pollyanish? Given human nature, yes. Worth a shot? It is better than what we are now doing: We are forgetting that the freedom of speech means little if we do not have the liberty to listen.

Here is an alternative solution: The next time someone infringes on a lecture at a school, the students should unite and say to the protesters:

"We are suing you for denying us our tuition-purchased education. The lecturer is suing you for denying her the Constitutional rights of free speech. Now, get out of the classroom and let us students try to learn something. This is not your platform. Find your own."

In litigious America, these students and teachers would have lawyers coming out of the woodwork to take up their case.

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