

Safe spaces contradict goal of college

"Safe spaces," where students are protected from opposing view points, are harmful to a free society

Have we become too coddled as a society? Political correctness has strongly emerged in the past few decades, dictating that people should be careful to not use language or behave in a way that could offend a particular group of people. While that may seem good and well initially, PC culture has ultimately trampled on First Amendment rights, as well as the backbone of our nation.

There was a time, centuries ago, when certain speech was deemed heretical or perhaps disloyal to the state. Fortunately, for humanity, the idea of free speech was entertained for the first time.

Perhaps free speech is best summed up by Voltaire when he said, "I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it."

It was an idea so central in founding this country that the Founding Fathers placed it as first on a long list of 10 important amendments that shaped our great nation. Fast forward some hundreds of years later and witness on college campuses and political rallies, and even on the Internet a wave of political correctness.

Where professors, like Donald Hindley, are found guilty of "racial harassment," without due process, for explaining the origin of the term "wetbacks" in class, while simultaneously criticizing it.

Where Yale students are threat-

ened with having shirts banned for having a quote on them from author F. Scott Fitzgerald saying, "I think of all Harvard men as sissies."

Where there are "free speech zones" at political rallies so people do not step on others' toes and hurt one another's feelings.

Where people are censored on websites for creating "hostile environments."

Let us be thankful that Baruch College has not been hit with the same idiocy and hopefully will not be hit with PC culture's stiffening rules.

Thankfully, CUNY Chancellor James Milliken has said, "Universities are places where free speech, debate and the open exchange of ideas are not just encouraged, they are necessary to our mission of exploring and understanding a diverse range of ideas and perspectives."

So is this new wave of political correctness justified when used to censor one's opponent because he or she does not like what someone said? That is no way to live in a free society.

A free society encourages debate and shuns censorship. Rejecting someone simply for voicing an unpopular opinion is no way to debate in a free society.

One has every right to say something controversial, just as another has every right to disagree respectfully and debate.

Even President Barack Obama

has weighed in on this issue saying, "...I don't agree that you, when you become students at colleges, have to be coddled and protected from different points of view. I think you should be able to—anybody who comes to speak to you and you disagree with, you should have an argument with them. But you shouldn't silence them by saying, 'You can't come because I'm too sensitive to hear what you have to say.' That's not the way we learn either."

Perhaps late comedian and social critic George Carlin truly highlights this problem, saying in 2004, "Political correctness is America's newest form of intolerance, and it is especially pernicious because it comes disguised as tolerance. It presents itself as fairness, yet attempts to restrict and control people's language with strict codes and rigid rules."

Nobody should have to tiptoe and mince words just to avoid offending another person. It would be a nice world to live in, but then again, it would not be very free.

If one's ability to say what one feels is restricted by another's feelings and reactions, we would not be living in such a free society after all—we would be living in a totalitarian society that prohibits exercising an instrumental freedom we hold.

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