

## **Are Our Voices Truly Free?**

*By Kyra Gallego*

Chapman University prides themselves in the realm of free speech to all who come across campus, it's one of the many reasons as to why I chose to come to this school. However, is Chapman's free speech policy open and supported by all voices of the school? I hold, to what I believe, are liberal and open-minded views. Therefore, I believe that people should hold the choice on their rights to freedom of speech. This becomes a conflicting topic however, when the voices of minority and suppressed views become overshadowed by another person's right to free speech. I never want to argue that one person's voice is more powerful than another's, but if one person's dominant suppressive view undermines what another person is trying to say, this is where it becomes problematic within Chapman's campus.

Last year in 2018, a student put up a "Black Lives Matter" banner in the arch of the library. The banner was put up following the rules and policies enforced by Chapman and was hung during Black History Month. Chapman already has received scrutiny due to the minimal representation of African American students on campus; only 2% of Chapman's population. The banner was put up by students exercising their right to free speech, and in doing so, showed their views on today's current political climate. During this, another student chose to exercise their freedom of speech by hanging a banner over their reading "All Lives Matter." This became a huge controversy on campus because of what the message conveyed to students on campus. Though some believed that the banner presented the argument that everyone's lives matter, not just "black" ones, others saw it as a sign of oppression from the hegemonic majority of white students on campus. The juxtaposition of views ranging from two political sides both aim to convey their own rights to the freedom of speech.

I think that both sides should display their own views as to what they believe and while remaining civil with the respects of others in mind. You can say what you wish, but when your own words start to oppress and hurt those surrounding you, that is where problems start to arise. In simple terms, yes, all lives do matter, but taken in the context to denounce and oppress a minority group not only in society, but on our own campus is where students need to understand the power of their privileged words. That student had every right to say what he said, however it could've been done in a more civilized manner rather than unjustly covering up someone else's work. Freedom of speech is incredibly important, no matter what side of the political spectrum you are on. However, it is important to understand one's privileged with their words, as it may create or cause a harmful and suppressive environment for those around you. There is a time and place for everything and that is unfortunately true with our first amendment rights.