

## **Colleges, Politics, and Free Speech**

*By Luke Kudlinski*

Throughout history, dictators with both far left and far right wing bias have committed horrible atrocities to stay in power and force their ideologies on their population. These dictators are well known as Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler and King George III. People often say that those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it and this has fallen on deaf ears. While there are only a handful of dictators in the world today, the suppression of free speech is still alive today on college campuses. Through the interviews of two very different Chapman students, we learn about Chapman University's free speech policies, clubs that share both left and right wing bias and the effect it has on the education of students.

When talking about Chapman's free speech policy, it should be said that it is more tolerant compared to other universities and colleges. For example, UC Berkeley was sued by a conservative group for limiting their free speech. The court ruled in the student's favor and UC Berkeley had to pay 70,000 dollars in reparations, according to the Washington Examiner and the San Francisco Chronicle. Also, in 2017 three college kids were arrested for "the horrible crime" of handing out copies of the U.S. Constitution on school campus. This obviously didn't go well with the students so they sued. The court ruled in the students favor but, in compensation, the students were only given 55,000 dollars. This is not a whole lot since that's compensation for winning a lawsuit and compensation for going to jail while innocent. This may seem like it doesn't apply to Chapman, but I asked a Chapman conservative about the topic and he responded "Chapman does have its fair share of radicals with numerous of these people (students and staff) either threatening, attacking, or downright mocking my conservative friends." Although it's pretty obvious already that a college education that is bias towards any far out there ideology is not good for the students to receive, the experience of this student should be an example for all colleges for what not to be.

I interviewed a Chapman Conservative to ask him about about free speech and how it is at Chapman University. The person we interviewed was Fred (pseudonym) of the Chapman Republican Club. When asked if the Chapman Republican Party was more extremely right wing or more moderate, he responded with "I think that Chapman Republicans are more moderate right than extreme. A decent amount of Republicans I know tend to have leftist views on certain social aspects and are more about smaller government in general." After that I asked him the same thing but about the Chapman Democrats and he responded with "I think Chapman Democrats are more moderately left, especially in comparison to most college campuses. A vast majority of the students and staff here tend to be open and tolerant of these opposing ideas. However, Chapman does have its fair share of radicals with numerous of these people (students and staff) either threatening, attacking, or downright mocking my conservative friends." Then, I

asked them about his views about freedom of speech. He said “I absolutely believe in freedom of speech and thought on both sides no matter the content. At the end of the day, if we start silencing views we deem extreme, then we'll keep silencing other views after that while calling those views "extreme". Finally, Fred ended the interview saying that “It doesn't feel like there's a lot of clubs out there for people that think like me. I definitely notice a lot of clubs that are centered around ideas that are left wing. This has numerous reasons behind it. On one end, Chapman conservatives need to do a better job and put more effort into actually getting out there and making the presence feel greater. However, I also notice a staff that is super anti-conservative and will do anything to silence them or prevent our ideas from spreading.” So in summary, the Chapman Republican thinks that conservatives at Chapman are better off in terms of free speech compared to other colleges, but it still is no cakewalk for them.

Then we interviewed a student with more left wing views to learn about the other side. His answers were mostly informative. For example, he agreed with the Chapman conservative when I asked him about how far extreme the left is. He said ”I consider myself fairly progressive liberal, however there are many issues upon which I sympathize with conservative points of view.” But, there was one answer he gave to my question that was contradictory to what the Republican said. For example, he said that there was “something for everyone when it came to Chapman’s clubs”. Another thing to note is that when I asked him about freedom of speech he said that “I would say there’s a lot of confusion about what qualifies as the suppression of free speech. In terms of political correctness, there is a blurry line between what someone should say, and what someone can say”. Then, later in the answer he gave me, he said “as long as your rhetoric does not unjustly defame anyone's character or threaten anyone with emotional or bodily harm, I would be happy to hear what you have to say.”

After doing hours of research and interviewing multiple people, I have concluded that political bias on college campuses is causing a rampant issue about freedom of speech and thought. Although it would be better off for the human race if we all had the same ideas and were able to work together, the reality of the human race is that people have different opinions and that might not be a bad thing because it makes everybody unique. But, when too much authority falls in the hands of those with strong left wing or right wing bias, freedom of thought and expression becomes a problem worth fighting for on college campuses.

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