The Future of Free Speech: Curiosity Culture

Olivia Eve Gross

On college campuses today, students contemplate whether sharing their opinion is worth the consequences. In this essay, I delineate the current state of speech on college campuses and explore the role of no-platforming, social coercion, and social media's impact on this environment. Additionally, I describe how students are stifling the university experience by using a variety of methods to either silence speech or ensure that certain speech receives social punishment. The practice of elevating one's own view by silencing others' speech is not a new tactic, but is one that persists on college campuses in a variety of forms. To combat the current speech climate on campus, we need to foster a culture that is more curious and inquisitive by providing tools to students at a young age that support their ability to agreeably disagree and thrive in environments of open discourse.

Before entering college in 2020, I thought cancel culture existed solely in the domain of celebrities, newsmakers, social media, consumer brands, and large corporations. I first became aware of the phenomenon in its original context: a TV show was canceled in response to a backlash after its star committed an abhorrent act. In another case, a product-endorsement contract was canceled ahead of public outcry over the spokesperson's reported behavior. As these scenarios grew more common, I assumed cancellations only took place in the realm of the famous.

At the start of my first year at the University of Chicago, I learned that cancel culture had infiltrated campus life. Students were being shunned for voicing an unpopular view in class, excoriated on social media over a pun, or shamed for asking a question because they were of the "wrong" identity for the subject matter. My campus wasn't unique – if anything, Chicago does more than almost any other university to advocate and defend principles of free speech.

This revelation was as bewildering as it was upsetting. The fundamental mission of a liberal-arts education is to promote diverse perspectives, thoughtful debate, intellectual growth, and, hopefully, classmate camaraderie in the shared experience of it all. And my university does a lot to support this objective. But students themselves are now stifling the university experience by using a variety of

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methods to either silence speech or ensure that certain speech receives social punishment. Such trends have detrimental consequences for the campus community at-large, eroding the university's formative environment of speech. In polling conducted by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, more than half of students (56 percent) expressed worry about damaging their reputation because of someone misunderstanding what they have said or done.[1]

For certain students on campus, the goal is not to rebut arguments but simply to stifle them. Speakers with whom these students disagree are to be "no-platformed." In a university context, no-platforming is the practice of blocking individuals or organizations from speaking on campus because their expressed views and agenda are deemed too offensive to the campus community or violative of its standards. All members of the university community are capable of no-platforming, whether that be students and faculty obstructing the entrance to a venue or administrators forbidding a speaker from presenting their views. No-platforming is distinct from protesting: protesting serves to communicate – literally, in many cases, to demonstrate – disagreement, whereas no-platforming seeks to deny the voice and presence of a given speaker altogether because "the targeted person is morally or politically beyond the pale, and . . . should thus be denied a view on campus."[2] While no-platforming has implications for various campus constituents and the prospective speakers, I will focus on its effects on the intended audience, the students. Further, I will describe how no-platforming greatly impacts the nature of discourse and social norms across the entire university community.

The term "no-platforming" can be traced back to 1974, when the UK National Union of Students (NUS) adopted a policy bearing that title that prohibited student unions from giving representatives of the fascist National Front Party – or other openly fascist or racist organizations or societies – access to speaking engagements at British universities. Soon after, this prohibition was applied to a wider range of speakers who espoused "harmful" views beyond fascism and racism, such as anti-Semitism, misogyny, Islamophobia, homophobia, and transphobia.[3] One's own view on the character of no-platforming will substantially depend on an individual's perspective regarding the role and mission of a university, including the university's relationship to the world beyond campus.

In discussing no-platforming in a university context, a distinction should be made between the general principles of free speech and the principles of academic freedom. Free speech principles are somewhat generic and based on the belief that "speech is entitled to special protection from regulation or suppression."[4] While the nature and extent of this "special protection" are subject to much debate, the core tenet holds that speech should not be restricted for being either bad, wrong, offensive, or false.[5] Principles of academic freedom, on the other hand, prescribe

liberties that are necessary to support the scholarly functioning and overall intellectual environment of the university. Such principles may resemble those of general free speech in seeking special protection for expression, but the premise is more specific and purposeful: "In order that everyone should have access to the information necessary for informed judgements about issues of public concern, societies need specialized institutions – including an independent university sector devoted to the creation and dissemination of expert knowledge."[6]

This points to a key concept espoused by many: the "special protection" for speech in furtherance of academic freedom requires, or presupposes, that the university is "independent" from the world outside it due to the particular nature and needs of the research and educational activity undertaken within its ivy-covered walls. This highlights a major dilemma for the principles of academic freedom as they pertain to speech and, by extension, no-platforming policies. Namely, if one of the aims of a university education is the development of students' intellectual autonomy in preparation for continued learning, personal growth, career success, and societal contribution post-graduation, then campus cloistering and censorship are fundamentally counterproductive. Exposure to and discussion on a wide range of intellectual perspectives, including those that may be extreme, disturbing, or even abhorrent, is an essential component of a student's educational journey in the development of their autonomy. Justifying the censorship of speakers and speech to preserve principles of academic freedom is contradictory to the goals of the environment. However, it is important to note that upholding free expression on campus does not equate to allowing anyone to say anything, anywhere, at any time. Universities appropriately restrict expression in myriad ways: such as forbidding students from yelling or sharing irrelevant speech in the classroom, prohibiting students from playing music too loudly in the dormitories, and punishing student protesters who violate university guidelines and disrupt campus life, as some universities did in response to students' encampments this spring. While these are not the core issues I am discussing, there are potential consequences to such restriction of speech that should also be considered.

Free speech scholars often argue that a foundational aspect of intellectual and personal autonomy is the ability to express oneself freely. The autonomy argument for free speech emphasizes the principle that limiting opportunities both to speak and, as important, to hear others speak violates a person's right to self-governance. This principle extends to various contexts, including within the paradigm of higher education and young adulthood, the process of self-actualization that enables self-governance. One's ability not only to speak freely but also to freely receive, analyze, interact with, and selectively internalize others' speech is essential to *becoming* autonomous. Philosopher Thomas Scanlon argues that such components are necessary in order to be respected as an autonomous agent: "an autonomous person cannot accept without independent consideration the judg-

ment of others as to what he should believe or what he should do" and that "persons who see themselves as autonomous see themselves as having a right to make up their own minds. . . . A right of this kind would certainly support a healthy doctrine of freedom of expression."[7] Given the formative role free speech has in the development of one's autonomy, the university campus is a domain in which protecting it becomes particularly important. The flow of information, exchange of ideas, and debating of opinions are integral to the university milieu and experience. Furthermore, free speech must be protected on campus because university students are at the age when they are undergoing their most intense and impactful intellectual, social, and personal development.[8]

An essential element and exercise of personal autonomy and, thus, an important outcome of a university education is the ability to distinguish fact from fiction, to discern the merits and demerits of an issue or position. Ultimately, this capacity enables individuals to make informed decisions about what information and opinions to assimilate or reject, asserting their independence and autonomy in shaping their own perspectives. As such, no-platforming deprives students of opportunities to develop and practice such analytical, discernment, and decision-making skills. This is consistent with philosopher John Stuart Mill's claim that an individual's views become properly defined and fully internalized only after they have withstood rebuttal and have exercised the best arguments in their opposition. According to Mill, without such a comparative, clarifying, and confirmational process, one's opinions are merely "dead dogma, not a living truth."[9] Therefore, free speech must be as open as possible to ensure exposure to and engagement with ideas and opinions that will undermine one's assumptions and challenge one's beliefs. Given the formative function and period of the university experience, Mill's imperative would seem especially applicable to students and is a further argument against no-platforming on campus.

Others, however, point to the same formative aspect of the university experience and environment to assert instead that speech should be limited and to justify no-platforming on university campuses. There is a risk that unrestrained free speech could unfairly and unnecessarily deceive students and thereby undermine their education and self-actualization. According to philosopher Neil Levy, "In refusing to offer bad views a platform, we therefore withhold misleading evidence, and to that extent, we treat the audience with the respect due to autonomous agents."[10] Here, Levy is asserting that no-platforming certain individuals is justified out of a respect for students and is rooted in an assumption that the proposed speech requires a worthiness to receive such a platform. Furthermore, because academic work entails research, development, and setting of facts and standards – that is, "creation and dissemination of expert knowledge" – for others, open access to speech on campus potentially can contaminate academic output with misinformation or disinformation.[11] While these arguments for speech

restriction and no-platforming in the name of academic freedom may seem plausible, they prevent students from exercising and enhancing critical acumen. Additionally, they embody a patronizing mistrust of students' ability to speak and judge for themselves, counter to the university's supposed mission of promoting the intellectual capacity and personal autonomy of its students.

When considering the potential consequences for speech restriction and no-platforming in the name of academic freedom, one can locate speakers or views in the past to be determined unworthy of a platform that would presently be viewed as being silenced unjustly. In the spring of 1968 at Bucks County Community College (BCCC), Dick Leitsch, president of the New York chapter of the Mattachine Society, an early national gay rights organization, was invited to give a speech. The President of BCCC, Charles E. Rollins, said that hearing from a gay rights activist "would not be in the best interest of the student body or the community" and canceled the speech. The fact that Leitsch's sexual orientation and lecture topic were reasons the administration found him to be unworthy of a platform challenges the notion that universities are capable of justly determining what is deemed to be "responsible discourse" and who is "credible" to speak. While the no-platforming of a gay rights activist would be far from the present norms on college campuses in the United States, such evolutions in who a university would deem "credible" further asserts that no-platforming provides more harm than good. The students at BCCC protested the college president's decision in what became one of the largest demonstrations in support of gay rights before the 1969 Stonewall rebellion in New York City and one of the only known pre-Stonewall gay protests on a college campus. The critical role of a university in accommodating student speech, even when it opposes both society's and the university's policies, is made evident by the protests that occurred at BCCC and on other campuses throughout history. Such expressions of speech on university campuses have allowed topics such as gay rights to be discussed long before they were considered acceptable areas for discussion in academia or society in general. As seen by what occurred at BCCC, student protest can clearly contribute to learning and progress both in the academy itself and in American society generally.

This commitment to free and open discourse is embodied in the Chicago Principles, which underscore the University of Chicago's dedication to fostering an environment of robust and uninhibited debate. Drafted in 2012 by legal scholar Geoffrey R. Stone as a response to attempts to suppress free speech, the Chicago Principles affirm the University's unwavering support for academic freedom and have been adopted or adapted by over seventy institutions across the United States. As Stone has noted, protecting free speech on campus is essential to intellectual development and autonomy: "It's about protecting the opportunity to debate ideas. Period."[12] No-platforming is therefore more adverse than ben-

eficial to the educational experience, even in cases of exposure to disturbing or offensive views. As Neil Levy asserts, students "need to learn to reason not only when we are calm but also when we feel attacked."[13] Again, as Mill argues, freedom of speech, while at times offensive, enables people to arrive at a clear understanding of truth, while censorship prevents them from distinguishing fact from fiction: "If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error."[14] Mill highlights a quintessential part of education, which is the opportunity for students to exercise their autonomy by undertaking their own truth-seeking process.

There are instances in which free speech on campus should be restrained to prevent, for example, the incitement of actual violence. While the boundaries between a person feeling attacked and being in danger of violence can in certain instances be profoundly hard to outline, speech can and should, in rare cases, be very mindfully and carefully limited. However, for the aims of a university to be achieved, the expression of ideas and opinions on university campuses must be free from coercive institutional restriction. For these goals to be pursued and reached, there are exceptions to this standard outlined by Mill: "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."[15] Mill's position is known as the harm principle, which asserts that the speech of individuals should only be limited in order to prevent harm to others. While the importance of such a standard is clear for the benefit of a university environment, drawing boundaries for when speech violates such a principle presents a difficult challenge. If such a principle is not present, members of the university are not safe from the potential incitement of violence, but if exercised to an extreme, the goals of the university space can be threatened.

No-platforming often exemplifies the overly broad application of the harm principle, causing acceptable speech to be narrowed. When no-platforming was first used as a term, it was tethered to a substantive opposition to "openly racist or fascist organizations or societies."[16] Now, no-platforming is being used as a force of increasing intolerance that targets an ever-broadening array of speakers and viewpoints deemed objectionable by a particular sect of students. This dynamic poses threats to the goals of a university education as speakers are now refused a platform on the grounds that their claims constitute harmful hate speech.[17] For example, although cases involving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict inflict emotional reactions, it is not appropriate for them to be met with no-platforming, unless those instances disrupt the university's ability to function or there is a serious threat of violence on campus. However, as stated above, determining how one defines such a threat is a challenge. The simultaneous balance between the need for

the harm principle and difficulty deciding when speech is being overly censored is a serious challenge facing universities across the world.

While it is not clear how one can and should determine the boundaries of the enforcement of the harm principle, there exists a present need for widening what is generally considered to fall within the bounds of acceptable speech. The threats that over-restriction brings to the goals of educational spaces must be handled seriously. Currently, no-platforming is being exercised in cases that do not meet the threshold of the harm principle and is disrupting learning environments. Historically, one can easily identify that speech silencing has never come from just one political ideology. The tactic of elevating one's own view by silencing speech one does not agree with has come in a variety of forms using a wide range of strategies.

Similar to the aim of no-platforming, which seeks to deny the voice and presence of a given speaker altogether, the book banning taking place in K–12 schools across the United States aims to eliminate the existence of entire subjects. Rather than welcoming speech that challenges and thus edifies one's views, books are currently being banned at an alarmingly fast rate. According to a recent report from PEN America, there are at least fifty groups across the country focused on removing books they object to from libraries across the nation, and of the three hundred local chapters that PEN tracked, 73 percent were formed after 2020. The goal is to prohibit books containing such content as violence, graphic scenes, profanity, and images of, or references to, the LGBTQIA+ community. This has included banning work such as Toni Morrisons's *The Bluest Eye*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and several young adult novels with LGBTQIA+ characters.[18] The Keller Independent School District, just outside of Dallas, passed a rule in November 2022 banning books from its libraries that include the concept of gender fluidity.[19] Such book banning does not allow students to discern the merits and demerits of an issue or position, and ultimately to decide for themselves what information and opinions to embrace or reject. Book banning directly threatens the formation of critical thinking skills and contaminates the educational experience.

While no-platforming on college campuses challenges the fundamental mission of a liberal-arts education – to promote diverse perspectives, thoughtful debate, and intellectual growth – other dynamics cause similar damage. Students are stifling the university experience through a form of on-campus cancel culture that ensures certain speech receives social punishment. While it is clear that no-platforming can have intellectually crippling consequences for the campus community at large, social punishment from peers can seriously erode the university's environment of free and open speech as well.

Take for example Niko Malhotra, a student at Williams College who wrote an op-ed in his school newspaper to describe how COVID-19 restrictions set by Williams had impacted both the campus community and many students' mental

health. Malhotra wrote this piece when vaccination was mandated, and routine antigen testing was taking place on Williams' campus. According to Malhotra, some of Williams' guidelines contradicted the recommendations the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had issued at the time, and Malhotra wrote in his op-ed, "Well, I don't follow the rules, and neither should you."[20] Malhotra published his piece with an awareness of the potential consequences, writing:

> I was ready for many people to be upset with my opinions but what I didn't expect was how much of people's reactions were targeted at me as a person rather that the content of my ideas, especially in a way that extended to my basic social interactions with my classmates on a small campus. That's what hurt – people thought of me as irredeemable in character solely because of my differences in opinion.

Following the publication of the op-ed, students he considered friends treated him as a stranger, and peers ignored him. Malhotra felt that because of his article, those who knew him and those he considered himself to be close to feared being associated with his views, and felt like they had to make a choice between remaining his friend or receiving social consequences for doing so.

Whether or not one agrees with Malhotra's views, we should aim to have campus environments that not only tolerate but encourage students of all viewpoints to freely share their opinions and write about them in their school newspaper. The thought of publishing or even speaking aloud should not be accompanied by the fear of receiving serious social punishment from peers for doing so. However, on today's college campuses, these fears are present among student bodies, eroding the environment of free and open speech. Malhotra's article intended to invite discussion, debate, and dialogue in a similar manner to the protests of the students at Bucks County Community College. According to one recent study by the Heterodox Academy, a nonprofit devoted to promoting viewpoint diversity, about 90 percent of students agree that "colleges should encourage students and professors to be open to learning from people whose beliefs differ from their own."[21] However, the treatment that Malhotra received because of his op-ed speaks to a culture on campus that socially penalizes students for sharing views that might be perceived as diverging from standards set by a student's own particular community.

Students on college campuses who desire to socially punish those who have different opinions than them are closing themselves off to new thoughts that might emerge from engaging with people or viewpoints they disagree with. Students should work to understand their peers, especially those they do not agree with, as such a process can both give them insight about what persuaded people to hold such opinions and simultaneously further develop their own intellect. While students should treat each other with respect, I am not saying that every person a student disagrees with must be their friend. Rather, I believe that we should aim

to have a culture on campuses in which people are curious to understand where those that they do not agree with are coming from. As opposed to being inclined to socially harm those we disagree with because of their views, we must invest in a culture on campus filled with curiosity.

From cases like Malhotra's, one can begin to see why, according to another study by the Heterodox Academy, nearly two-thirds of students surveyed agree that "the climate on their campus prevents some people from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive."[22] The "climate" referenced in this study is one where severe social punishment can be a result of particular speech, silencing students in fear of receiving such harm. Malhotra's friends would tell him that people would approach them asking why they would be friends with someone who held such views. When other students on Williams' campus witness the social punishment Malhotra received, they do not feel encouraged, but increasingly feel discouraged, to speak up about a variety of topics, and this is precisely what needs to change.

Malhotra's story is hardly uncommon on campus. Students can be targeted for something they said in a classroom or a social setting, censured online, and suddenly ostracized – or even accosted in person. Such behavior is usually committed in a "run-and-gun" fashion. A shamer quickly launches the attack via a mobile app or website and moves on. Others see it, internalize the accusation, and harbor and spread scorn for the target. If such a culture seems scary in professional settings, imagine what it's like on campus: the targeted person can be a roommate, a friend, an acquaintance, or a classmate. Even if it's a total stranger, the victims of campus cancellations are more visible, accessible, and therefore vulnerable to mistreatment than cancel culture beyond the campus.

Adults who are the targets of such efforts at their workplaces at least have homes to serve as distanced and separate environments; most students only have dorms. As Malhotra expressed, "Living in a dorm compounded the social consequences of voicing an unpopular or contentious opinion on COVID-19 restrictions. People who I interacted with on a daily basis in my building . . . would avoid eye contact with me out of fear of association. The consequences of speaking out in a way that did not conform to the dominant narrative were distinctly apparent." While the in-person treatment Malhotra received was hurtful, the attacks he received online took on a far more aggressive form.

Social punishment for speech that occurs online encompasses various elements that contribute to a potentially more detrimental experience for the individual being targeted. Because the shamer's social-media posting can be anonymous or disappear automatically, the target usually has no chance to respond directly with an explanation, a defense, or a correction. Even when such responses are posted, those who are already biased against the student are rarely interested in considering the other side of the story. Furthermore, Malhotra described that the negative speech

he received on social media had a combative tone that none of the harassment he received in-person possessed. Students feel far more empowered and invincible to share speech attacking someone's personhood when behind a screen, or as in some instances online, when anonymously posting.

Additionally, some accusations remain online forever and are ready to resurface with a simple internet search. We now live in a grim era in which students face potential life sentences – whose penalties include social ostracism or academic and professional rejection – based on allegations that might be distorted or baseless. Even when they are true, they are usually in response to statements that were immature, ill-considered, or easy to misconstrue – these are students after all. Rather than serving as a learning opportunity, these mistakes follow students.

Furthermore, social media amplifies the harm of cancellation beyond the initial ambush, as everybody piles on online. The group chat for all those who lived in Malhotra's dorm was utilized to call out and shame people who supported his article. And while devastating to the individual, such a social culture additionally damages the academic environment. Fear of receiving such punishment for one's beliefs has a chilling effect on students in the classroom, extracurricular pursuits, social events, and everyday interactions on campus. Students have become hesitant to offer an opinion, pose a question, or take the other side of an argument – whether in earnest or just to explore an issue – lest they say something "wrong."

The more that students are fearful about venturing beyond their comfort zones and cliques, the more the educational experience is degraded, and status quo becomes in vogue. Opinions aren't appropriately challenged in classrooms or common spaces. Trust to foster genuine open dialogue between students erodes. The great banquet of ideas that a world-class academic experience is meant to provide degrades into a diet of flavorless clichés and low-calorie conversations, exchanges for acceptance of what is most popular rather than critical analysis. This isn't what college is supposed to be and it certainly won't prepare future changemakers for the critical thinking skills required to participate in a well-functioning democracy full of respectful debate. A dedication to free speech and academic freedom is essential for rigorous and open scholarly inquiry. Students having a tendency to conform, accepting popular opinions without critical thought, can lead to dangerous consequences.

This situation is particularly disconcerting to me as a great-granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. I was raised to recognize and speak out against propaganda, silencing, groupthink, and public shaming. As an adolescent studying Talmud, Jewish religious law, I came to appreciate the questioning form of its text, its embodiment of the principles that opposing views are entitled to receive full consideration and that people can agreeably disagree. These are the roots of my passion for constitutional law, especially its core tenets of free expression, due process, and equal rights.

So how can this strain of cancel culture be counter-cultured? Outspoken contrarian voices by people in leadership positions – including, quite admirably, the late University of Chicago president Robert Zimmer – are commendable, inspiring, helpful, and necessary. However, they alone are insufficient to remedy the kind of deep-seated problem that such a pervasive campus culture of social punishment presents. They are, frankly, too few and too remote. Frightened students silently cheering them on won't change anything. Students who want a more robust intellectual experience need to stop whispering among themselves. They need to speak out and come to each other's aid when anyone, especially those whom they disagree with, is attacked for speech that is within the protections of the First Amendment.

When students on campuses witness social punishment like that which Niko Malhotra faced, they must speak up. The response to this campus culture will have to come from the ground up – from the students themselves. Sharing opinions, debating ideas, and challenging prevailing norms must not only be allowable, but expected, respected, and rewarded. And that, in turn, will require cultivating the skills of listening closely and giving others the benefit of the doubt, of practicing agreeable disagreement and fostering constructive dissent. In short, we need to replace cancel culture with *curiosity culture*.

While some universities are putting forth programming to cultivate environments of free speech, many of these efforts have come only as a response to incidents that have threatened cultures for open discourse on campus. For example, in March 2023, a group of students at Stanford Law School attempted to no-platform Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals judge Stuart Kyle Duncan by shouting so loudly that he could not deliver his remarks in full. Two days following his talk, Stanford Law School dean Jenny Martinez and university president Marc Tessier-Lavigne released a statement apologizing to Judge Duncan for the university's failure to uphold its own policies, which decree against such disruptions. In an additional statement, Dean Martinez described how a cooperative relationship between free expression and diversity needs to exist. She also announced that to create a stronger culture for open discourse, all students would be required to take a mandatory free speech training course, beginning in the spring of 2023.

Stances like Dean Martinez's are admirable and necessary, inspiring others to speak up, but such steps on isolated campuses are insufficient to remedy the kind of speech culture that now permeates on many campuses. While such efforts, regardless of their causality, are well-meaning, such work will take a far more significant amount of energy and must come far sooner in a student's academic journey. Free speech is integral not just to self-governance, but to self-actualization. If we demand the existence of academic environments in which open discourse exists, we simultaneously have the responsibility to ensure that students have the tools to get the most out of being present in such spaces. Beginning at a young age, stu-

dents need to be provided with environments of free and open discourse and be given the experience to discern information and articulate their own views.

I have been obsessed with the U.S. Supreme Court since a young age. In my adulthood, I have especially come to appreciate the Court's embodiment of the idea that opposing views can receive equal consideration and that people can agreeably disagree. During high school, I found it difficult to find spaces that achieved such a dynamic. I was intrigued by the structure of the Court and looked for extracurricular activities that similarly practiced the values of agreeable disagreement; to my surprise, I struggled to find them. I sought to interact with others in conversation, especially those I disagreed with, but wanted a space to do so that was grounded in primary documents.

This initial fascination with the Court led me to create the first High School Law Review when I was sixteen, which generated a space for students to learn about how the judicial branch functions, debate law, publish their opinions, and understand the role of dissent in the Court. We met every Tuesday morning, arrived early to discuss Court decisions, and planned our print debut. We took turns presenting and debating cases – giving equal time to differing viewpoints – and hosted guest speakers from top law school journals. Members were energized as they began to wrestle with and appreciate the interpretive challenges of the Constitution. In the law review setting, students increasingly recognized the importance of separating a person from their opinions. Additionally, within this space that we created, the fragility and ever-evolving nature of ideas was not only understood, but respected. Students were applying the notion of agreeable disagreement that they had learned while debating constitutional law to their everyday conversations. After creating this space at my high school, I began to receive notes from students around the country asking how they too could participate.

In response to this demand, I founded The High School Law Review, a curricular program and national competition centered on the value of agreeable disagreement through the study of constitutional law. Through this program, students anywhere can create a law review chapter of their own in order to practice agreeable disagreement, recognize the value in ideological difference, and promote free speech. I established The High School Law Review to facilitate a culture of curiosity, where students both desire to interact, and recognize the value in interacting, with those who think differently from them.

The path to widespread acceptance of free speech principles will be a long one, but we must start by providing students with the tools they need to confidently engage in agreeable disagreement to foster the leadership necessary for democratic participation. Getting students to begin to speak up and share their views on college campuses won't be easy. And it can certainly seem like the rewards might not be worth the risk. But this work is one of values – we need to support the thought-

ful cultivation of a college culture of curiosity, not social coercion. This work cannot be imposed but rather must be invested in at a young age through programs like The High School Law Review.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olivia Eve Gross is the Founder and CEO of The High School Law Review, which offers curriculum and programs promoting the study of constitutional law and the value of dissent to students worldwide. Olivia recently graduated from the University of Chicago, where she studied Fundamentals: Issues and Texts, a multidisciplinary major that examines a central question through classical texts. Olivia focused on Plato's Gorgias to explore the question, "How do we agreeably disagree?" She also earned a Master's in International Relations, focusing on the commodification of social norms.

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