

Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

Trumpophobia on Campus

Students at Atlanta's private Emory University were dismayed to find campaign signs "Trump 2016" chalked on sidewalks and buildings. Some students reported feelings of hurt, intimidation, and outrage. They felt unsafe. They said they feared shootings on campus, thought there was to be a KKK rally, feared walking alone. They demanded that Trump support be recognized as "hate speech."

A group of 40 or 50 (Emory's student body is 15 thousand) marched to the office of President James Wagner. They chanted "You are not listening! Come speak to us! We are in pain!" Wagner met with the group and listened to their concerns and demands. He then publicly surrendered in a message to the university community, saying in part:

"I cannot dismiss their expression of feelings and concerns as motivated only by political preference or oversensitivity." And he continued "...our commitment to respect, civility, and inclusion calls us to provide a safe environment that inspires and supports courageous inquiry. It is important that we recognize, listen to, and honor the concerns of these students..." And so on, about policy changes, opportunities for difficult dialogues, social justice issues, and (believe it or not) an annual retreat.

Then, in an apparent effort not to be outshone by Yale University's Groveling Department, Wagner thanked his betters for teaching him a lesson: "I learn from every conversation like the one that took place yesterday and know that further conversations are necessary."

If you believe that the Emory administration's capitulation was inappropriate, you aren't alone.

Amelia Sims, an Emory Young Republican who is not a Trump fan, pointed out that classifying support for a major presidential candidate as "hate speech" endangers democracy. Further, she offered that "Universities do not exist to create insulated echo boxes, which shelter students from ideas that provoke offense or discomfort. In class, professors assign ideologically offensive texts so that students may learn to analyze and challenge these arguments. Quelling discomforting thoughts prevents a free exchange of ideas."

Sims added that "Appeasing this kind of intimidation threatens to grant speech control to whoever speaks loudest or throws the biggest tantrum." She also

offered that “The atmosphere of intimidation and constant protest threatens the very mission of universities, which is to provide a forum for education and open debate of ideas... When we surround ourselves only with people who share our grievances, values, and opinions, we create polarized communities distanced by hate, resentment, and lack of empathy.”

Writer Jim Galloway was more blunt, saying the chalker “...is engaging in a political debate that will continue through the first Tuesday in November. It is an important and necessary debate. Deal with it, or get thee to a monastery.”

And another writer was even less kind, offering: “Jim Wagner might be beyond parody. How the hell did he get a job in education?”

So there are some voices of reason among those observing the campus merry-go-round of ludicrous grievances, outrageous demands, and predictable capitulations. Sanity may have even crept into academia---albeit in a Christian university.

In an open letter, Oklahoma Wesleyan University President Everett Piper responded in a similar but unrelated situation last November. Here’s a taste of what he wrote: “Our culture has actually taught our kids to be this self-absorbed and narcissistic. Any time their feelings are hurt, they are the victims. Anyone who dares challenge them and, thus, makes them ‘feel bad’ about themselves, is a ‘hater,’ a ‘bigot,’ an ‘oppressor,’ and a ‘victimizer.’”

Refreshingly, Dr. Piper went on: “...if you want to arrogantly lecture, rather than humbly learn...if you want to be enabled rather than confronted, there are many universities across the land...that will give you exactly what you want, but [this] isn’t one of them.” And: “At OKWU...we want you to model reconciliation rather than foment personal conflict...”

Dr. Piper concluded: “This is not a day care. This is a university.