



Navigation
Home
Research Links
News Links
Opinions
Write to Us
About Us
Get Involved
Contribute
Discussions
Our Bloggers
American Dream
Bill Of Right
Gadsden Flag
Gene-etics
Lokisfur
The Right Reporter
War Plans Blogger
Weiser Report
Web's Best Blogs
The American Mind
American Thinker
Andrew Sullivan
Brain Terminal
The Conspiracy to Keep You Poor and Stupid
Free Republic
InstaPundit
Kaus Files
Lucianne Goldberg
NRO's The Corner
Opinion Journal (Wall Street Journal)
Pundit Review
Real Clear Politics
Reductio Ad Absurdum
Regions of Mind
Romenesko
ScrappleFace
Spinsanity
Talking Points Memo
Viking Pundit -Eric Lindholm

Current Articles

[Home](#) » [Archives](#) » [November 2004](#)

Occidental's PC Agenda

By Jason Antebi and Daniel Aleshire

Posted On **November 19, 2004** [[9 Comments](#)]

The failure of PC-loving academics to differentiate their personal reactions to certain speech from the legality of that speech has long caused unlawful censorship and distressing uniformity on America's college campuses. Too often, protected "offensive" speech is confused with unprotected "harassing" speech. Recent actions by Occidental College in Los Angeles, California show the degree to which some colleges will punish speech they find personally offensive.

In March of 2004, Occidental College fired radio host Jason Antebi from the College radio station and found him guilty of "sexual harassment" against his entire audience for parodying two student government rivals on his show, calling one a "bearded feminist" and the other a "douche." The College claimed that Antebi's broadcasts promoted "disrespect and slander" against "women, diversity, and Occidental College," actions the College claimed constituted "hostile environment harassment."

Mr. Antebi's brand of "shock jock" humor is typical of college radio programs and made the show the most listened to radio program on campus. While undoubtedly some were offended, certainly no one was "harassed," by any reasonable definition of the word. Reason and rationality, however, did not stop Occidental from finding Antebi guilty of sexual harassment.

Once the accusations against Antebi became public, the Foundation of Individual Rights in Education ("FIRE") came to the defense of students' rights and drafted a letter to Occidental College to remind them of California's "Leonard Law," which forbids private institutions from punishing a student merely for offensive speech.

Instead of responding to FIRE's serious concerns, though, Sandy Cooper (scooper@oxy.edu), General Counsel for Occidental College, notified FIRE that Antebi was suddenly being "investigated" for criminal acts, such as slashing tires, distributing and abusing prescription drugs, and making late-night sexual prank calls to women. These charges were leveled during the final weeks of Antebi's senior year and were devastating to his academics and health. This strategy appears to have been a ruthless attempt to scare organizations like FIRE from coming to Antebi's aid. In the end, the College was unable to produce even summary evidence to bring Antebi up on student judiciary charges for any of these smokescreen accusations.

Moreover, Cooper's legal justification for punishing Antebi's speech relied heavily on a sexual harassment position paper by the American Civil Liberties Union ("ACLU"), buttressed by her belief that even the ACLU would agree with their punishment of him.

Too bad for Cooper, the ACLU completely disagrees with her. Peter Eliasberg, managing attorney for the ACLU of Southern California, wrote to Cooper, stating, "I am extremely concerned about Occidental's decision to punish Jason Antebi for sexual harassment and your attempt to rely on the ACLU's position on unprotected harassment to justify that decision." He continued, admonishing that punishing Antebi for his speech "is inconsistent with the law as well as ACLU's policies."

But Occidental administrators had gone far beyond punishing "offensive" speech; theirs was an attempt to intimidate and silence speech that mocks their politically correct agenda. For example, a segment of Antebi's radio show was titled "Token Black Girls" by an African-American friend of Antebi's. Just the use of the term "token" was offensive enough for Title IX officer, Maryanne Horowitz (horowitz@oxy.edu), to conclude, without having actually heard the segment, that the label "is sexist as well as racist - an epithet that implies an adult has a job, or for that matter a college admission that she does not merit." Had Horowitz bothered to listen, she'd have learned the segment actually mocked tokenism in higher education. Is anti-racist social satire now off limits at Occidental, if anyone happens to misunderstand it?

Through its actions in the Antebi case, the administration squelched diversity of thought, which is perhaps the most important type of diversity at an institution nominally devoted to intellectual and academic inquiry and scholarship. But Occidental College, it seems, is really concerned with superficial diversity and will happily trample upon diverse expressions of student speech. In fact, though the College strains to fill its classrooms with students from assorted backgrounds, it seems to prefer, even mandate uniformity in its faculty: 94 percent of the registered faculty members at Occidental are Democrats, whereas only 6 percent are Republicans. Are we to believe this constitutes diversity? Or that it signals any conscious effort on the part of the College?

Occidental will soon be feeling the backlash from punishing protected speech: FIRE is now spearheading an impressive

collection of liberal, conservative and moderate national civil liberty groups to protest the College's actions. The ACLU of Southern California, Students for Academic Freedom, Student Press Law Center, PEN Center USA are only some of Antebi's strong supporters.

Fortunately, FIRE and the ACLU understand the difference between "offensive" and "unprotected" speech, even though liberal arts colleges like Occidental do not. Fortunately, there is no constitutional protection against speech that one may find "offensive" - if that were the case, everyone from Rush Limbaugh to Howard Stern, and your butcher to your postal worker would be in jail.

It's time that the public, not just students, fight against these types of speech codes, which threaten to undermine the quality and diversity of thought on college campuses.

Jason Antebi (JasonNTB@aol.com) recently graduated Occidental College with a BA in Politics, and works professionally in the entertainment industry.

Daniel Aleshire (daleshire@oxy.edu) is a Senior Politics and Economics double-major at Occidental College.

[E-mail this article to a friend.](#)

Replies: 9 Comments

*Posted by: **JB** On Tuesday, November 23rd*

Jason Antebi has been wronged by Occidental. I wish I could have heard his radio shows. What a brilliant guy....Go Jase!

*Posted by: **Leonard** On Monday, November 22nd*

Jon's point would apply at private college's OUTSIDE of CA. In CA, there is a law that says private college's cannot punish based on speech. They didn't just fire Antebi, they punished him. I read more about this at www.thefire.org/oxy (for anyone who is interested). It pretty clearly shows the college went to great lengths to punish Antebi for content, which by CA State Law they cannot (see education code "the leonard law").

*Posted by: **TexMex** On Monday, November 22nd*

to Jon: you make a good point, almost, about the first Amendment (if no government action, no violation) BUT miss a few things: (1) No one's saying this is a 1st amendment issue; (2) universities receiving public funds are potentially government actors (not "private" thanks to semi-activist/expansionist 1st amendment jurists) subject to 1st amendment; and (3) the bigger issue, I think, is the indictment of academia. Whatever the remedies may be, questions for me are whether the school violates its own mission, by-laws, etc. (he could enforce that, legally, if he wanted to, if still a student) and even beyond this, shouldn't students demand better for their tuition dollar? Why are college admins 90/10 liberal while students are 50/50 (ish), what duty does the school owe, etc. my 2 cents.

*Posted by: **Jon** On Monday, November 22nd*

Whether or not Jason was in the wrong in what he said is a moot issue. If the "oppressive" governing authority was federal or state government, it would be a valid issue. However, Jason was speaking on behalf of a private institution, on a radio station owned by the same private institution, and therefore COMPLETELY responsible to that institution. Regardless of whether what he said was hurtful or legal, if it was not tolerated by Occidental College, the college had every right to fire him. I am not saying that it was right or wrong, but that's really not an issue. I am saying that what they did was completely within their rights. If the radio station that Howard Stern was being broadcast on decided to fire him, that also would be within their rights, provided no contract was broken. Jason Antebi would do well to find a radio station that would not censor him, rather than fight a losing battle which if won, would encroach more on freedom of speech than the action he is protesting.

*Posted by: **dan** On Sunday, November 21st*

people need to chill out and quit making new laws and suing people and bitching about stuff. as fun as confrontation is, accept the fact that "offensice" language often opens people ears to what is actually being said.

*Posted by: **Dane** On Friday, November 19th*

The Occidental Administration has gravely erred. Ultimately the law provides a recourse for protection, to aid those like Antebi who are persecuted unjustly. What is scarier is the fact that there is no mechanism to dissuade colleges like Occidental from institutionalizing a political viewpoint. The quality of a college education declines when the college enviroment monolithically reflects one type of political views. Its a shame that intellectual diversity isn't taken into account when colleges are ranked by magazines like Princeton Review.

*Posted by: **Bill** On Friday, November 19th*

It's nice to believe there will be a backlash, and that it would change some things. and it's a nice essay but ive seen this for years. Conservative students treated like they're organizing the next reich, they point out that it's absurd and un-American, and then they graduate. Enter the next batch of conservative victims. And I think the colleges know that student turnover protects them. No matter how bad something is, the angriest students will be gone in a few years. Not really a recipe to change things. Nicely done, though. Hope things turn out.

*Posted by: **student** On Friday, November 19th*

Occidental has overstepped its bounds and hides behind supposed sexual harrasment in an attempt to discredit and shame a student who was only guilty of challenging the oppressive majority. Diversity is only tolerated if it fits the agenda of the administration. What kind of institution is this?

*Posted by: **Martin** On Friday, November 19th*

This issue transcends left or right and strikes to the core of American freedoms. It is especially relevent in wake of the recent FCC targeting of Howard Stern and even the recent "outcry" over a trivial ad prior to monday night football.

New Comment

Name:

E-Mail:

Homepage:

Any posting containing obscene or offensive material will be deleted.



[About Us](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Submissions](#)

[Privacy](#)

© Copyright MMIV Right Press. All Rights Reserved.



Site
Design By

SHARPE
Technology Services