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Educational Group: Occidental on Thin Ice, Suppressing Student Free Speech

By Jim Brown
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(AgapePress) - [Occidental College](#) in Los Angeles is being accused of suppressing free speech by firing the host of a popular student radio program and finding him guilty of sexual harassment due to satirical jokes he made on the air.

In March, the school fired Jason Antebi for making on-air comments that two of his student government rivals claimed were offensive to "women, diversity, and Occidental College." Greg Lukianoff with the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#) (FIRE) then wrote a letter to the college on behalf of Antebi. The school's response, he says, indicated to him that the general counsel recognized they had been caught "red-handed."

"We received what was simply -- and I do not say this lightly at all -- the most dishonest response I have ever received in my career as a lawyer," he explains. "[They] distorted facts, completely manipulated chronology, and implied all sorts of serious wrongdoing [by Antebi] that was not protected by the First Amendment."

In Lukianoff's opinion, the school violated California's "Leonard Law," which ensures free speech to students at private colleges and universities. He suggests that the school rescind its decision.

"We put together a coalition that includes the ACLU of Southern California, who wrote a letter on behalf of Jason Antebi; the Student Press Law Center; and David Horowitz's Students for Academic Freedom," the attorney says, noting the college's chances of being exonerated are not good. "Occidental should understand that not only has it violated law and ethics, but that this is going to be played in the realm of public opinion, where I honestly don't think that they stand a chance."

During the controversy over Antebi's show "Rant and Rave," Occidental dissolved its student government and assumed control of nearly half-a-million dollars in student fees. FIRE accuses the school of using the Antebi controversy as a "pretext" for that move.

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