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(ABCNEWS.com)

How Free Is Free Speech?
Some Say Free Speech Is Being Politically
Corrected on College Campuses

By [Dan Harris](#)



April 5 — If the advertisement's aim was to inflame,
it succeeded.

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David Horowitz, the president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture in Los Angeles, placed an ad in college newspapers entitled, "Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Blacks is a Bad Idea for Blacks — And Racist, Too." In the ad, Horowitz argues that blacks owe a debt to the United States for the freedom and economic benefits they've enjoyed since the Civil War.

"A hundred years later, Black Americans are the tenth richest nation in the world," Horowitz says in the ad. "That is a remarkable success story that no one wants to talk about."

Fourteen campus newspapers have published the ad, while 35 have rejected it. On the campuses where the ad ran, reaction was swift and angry. At Duke University, the editor of the college paper faced a sit-in. At the University of Wisconsin, there were demonstrations in protest. And at Brown University, students stole copies of the newspaper to prevent its distribution.

"As a member of the Brown community and as an anti-racist and as a human being, I was offended and disturbed by the Horowitz ad, which I perceived to be a paid hate advertisement," says Emily Weinstein, a senior at Brown.

Speech Stifled on Campus?

There are many who say that what Horowitz has really exposed — through a deliberate act of social engineering — is that, on American campuses, free speech



only exists for some.

"It's the one place in America that does not really respect free speech," says conservative columnist John Leo, who writes for *U.S. News and World Report* and is the author of the book *Incorrect Thoughts: Notes on Our Wayward Culture*.

"The idea that you might learn something from somebody you might disagree with is not a big point on college campuses today."

Campus speeches by conservative speakers such as Henry Kissinger, Charlton Heston or anti-affirmative action activist Ward Connerly have been disrupted or canceled.

The stealing of college newspapers in which someone finds something objectionable has increased nearly 600 percent over the past decade.

And many schools now have rules that restrict speech, banning, for example, speech that results in a loss of "self-esteem."

Many argue, however, that political correctness is no larger a force today than it has ever been — and that it can even play a positive role.

"I think the learning environment is enhanced by sensitivity," says Professor Robert O'Neil of the University of Virginia.

Harvey Silverglate, a left-leaning, libertarian attorney, says sensitivity has simply gone too far: "If the First Amendment is not respected, if academic freedom is allowed to die, and if liberty is not cultivated on college campuses today, we can't expect that there will be popular support for liberty out here in the real world in 20 years," he says.

As administrators struggle to strike a balance between free speech and sensitivity, the stakes are high: the hearts and minds of this country's future leaders. ■



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