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Author

BAER, Ulrich

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Abstract

Angry debates about polarizing speakers have roiled college campuses. Conservatives accuse universities of muzzling unpopular opinions, betraying their values of open inquiry; students sympathetic to the left openly advocate against completely unregulated speech, asking for "safe spaces" and protection against visiting speakers and even curricula they feel disrespects them. Some even call these students "snowflakes"-too fragile to be exposed to opinions and ideas that challenge their worldviews. How might universities resolve these debates about free speech, which pit their students' welfare against the university's commitment to free inquiry and open debate? Ulrich Baer

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here provides a new way of looking at this dilemma. He explains how the current dichotomy is false and is not really about the feelings of offended students, or protecting an open marketplace of ideas. Rather, what is really at stake is our democracy's commitment to equality, and the university's critical role as an arbiter of truth. He shows how and why free speech has become the rallying cry that forges an otherwise uneasy alliance of liberals and ultra-conservatives, and why this First Amendment absolutism is untenable in law and society in general. He draws on law, philosophy, and his extensive experience as a university administrator to show that the lens of equality can resolve this impasse, and can allow the university to serve as a model for democracy that upholds both truth and equality as its founding principles. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

Signature

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