

'Vital Campus Dialogue is Being Snuffed Out'

In a new mini documentary produced by We The Internet, former Brown University student Rob Montz visits his alma mater to ask an increasingly relevant question: "[Is the university killing free speech and open debate?](#)"

In the course of the documentary, Montz details recent instances of student activism on the Brown campus, many of which find students shutting down debates which contain viewpoints other than their own.

It is this suppression of debate which most concerns Montz, particularly since he experienced personal growth as a thinking individual because of the discourse and debates he encountered at Brown:

"I entered Brown about a decade and a half ago, perfectly embodying that charming paradox common to newly minted adults. I'd never known less about the world, and yet somehow also never had more confidence in my opinions about it. The endless campus debates burned away a lot of the stupid stuck to my brain.

But now that vital campus dialogue is being snuffed out."

Yet Rob Montz isn't the only one who recognizes what a tragedy it is for the free discussion and debate of ideas to be snuffed out at Brown. As Brown University economics professor [Glenn Loury](#) – a recognized minority author on the issues of race and class in society – explains:

"A university must first and foremost be a place where reason determines outcomes. Not the ability to throw tantrums or fits. The people who perpetrate this act of tyranny – were

held up in heroic terms at this university – were held up as an example of student activism as a positive thing! That’s an error, it’s a profound error.

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Universities foster an environment where the exchange of ideas can lead to deepening of our human understanding. These institutions are a fragile and precious achievement. This idea that ‘We’re going to shut you up because we don’t like what you’re saying,’ that’s the enemy of this achievement. That’s what’s at stake.”

In 1764, the founders of Brown University [set out to establish](#) a school to train students in “virtue, knowledge, and useful literature.” Such a mission was vital, Brown’s founders believed, if the next generation was to be useful to society and govern the nation well.

Given the state of discourse on the current Brown University campus and colleges like it, one has to wonder: has our quest to be all-inclusive and non-offensive caused us to push true learning aside? And if so, are we depriving the next generation of the tools which they will need in order to succeed in leading the America of the future?