

College Prez: 'I'm Scared' by Rise of Emotionalism on Campus

We've seen campus discord explode in recent years and it seems to be picking up steam in the past few months. Whether it's the issue of [Halloween costumes](#) at Yale, or white girls wearing [hoop earrings](#), or [Charles Murray](#) speaking at a campus lecture, there always seems to be something that has students riled up.

According to Walter Kimbrough, the president of historically black Dillard University, this attitude was non-existent a generation ago. Writing in the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#), Kimbrough explains how a little over a decade ago he began a lecture series at Philander Smith College, another historically black institution, which sought to challenge student thinking by bringing in controversial speakers:

"I argued that this generation requires timely topics and skilled presenters. And for this to be a legitimate lecture series, I had to be brave enough to explore the unthinkable. That meant I couldn't simply invite speakers whom one would expect at a black college. I tested it early with [Ann Coulter](#)."

In the following years, Kimbrough continued to bring in controversial speakers. Speakers often received some pushback, but it was all in the realm of civil, reasoned discourse which enabled students to challenge their thinking.

Now, however, Kimbrough notes that this approach has been replaced by a frenzied form of emotionalism:

"How can we be true to the ideals of a liberal education when

the climate in the country is simply to yell and scream at anyone we disagree with? How do we break the polarized nature of our politics if we can't even listen to another's point of view, if we can't even stomach a debate where the purpose is to hear divergent views?

I'll admit. I'm scared. The robust discussion I have always sought to expose my students to doesn't seem to be worth it anymore. It feels as if the best thing to do is to play it safe and simply invite either entertainers and athletes to speak as feel-good events or hard-core academics whose presence will go unnoticed."

Kimbrough goes on to say that such an approach, while "safe," will hinder student growth and prevent the true thinkers from rising to the surface to become the next generation's leaders.

And if the rational thinkers are shut down and forbidden from rising to leadership, then it would appear that the only leadership material we are left with are the loud and vocal students who thrive on emotional responses to controversy. Unless we do something to restore rational discourse at the college level, should we be at all surprised when chaos, irrationality, and emotionalism spill over from campuses to our larger society?

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