



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 9, 2017

Poll Finds College Students Less Tolerant Today Than 40 Years Ago

A General Social Survey poll finds that today's college students are far less tolerant of controversial speech than they were four decades ago.

The *Washington Post* reports that the General Social Survey (GSS) has been “measuring people’s willingness to allow controversial people — racists, atheists, communists — to speak in their community” since the 1970s. The latest poll finds that young college students today have less tolerance than they did in the 1970s. In 1976, the poll found that 84 percent of college-educated individuals would tolerate a “racist” speaker, for example. By 2014, just 50 percent of college-educated individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 would tolerate a “racist” speaker, according to the poll.



Of course, “racist” is relative, it seems. It’s not as simple as, say, tolerating a speech by a member of the KKK or the Black Panthers, though the Constitution protects those speakers as well. But today’s trend seems to show that college students tend to indiscriminately label speech with which they disagree as racist, homophobic, fascist, etc., and then attempt to shut it down under the pretense of righteousness. Furthermore, tolerance for racism on college campuses also seems to vary depending on whether the “racist” is black or white.

In 2006, political scientist Dennis Chong attempted to explain this shift towards less tolerance amongst college students as a result of multiculturalism and political correctness, noting that the shift was most evident amongst those who were educated since the mid-1980s, “when debates over multiculturalism and political correctness reached their peak.”

Whatever the cause, it does not take a poll to prove that college students have grown intolerant of speech considered to be offensive, as evidence of this is underscored by the number of conservative speeches that have been shut down by student protesters in recent years.

Just last week, students at Middlebury College shouted down guest speaker Charles Murray (shown), author of *The Bell Curve*. Students opposed to Murray’s appearance claim his book is racist because it addresses a possible connection between race and intelligence. It’s worth noting that the book also claims that IQ can also be affected by environmental factors rather than genetics, but that’s irrelevant to the student critics.

Apparently, Middlebury College students are not the only ones who believe it is okay to obstruct Murray’s right to free speech. One of the questions posed by GSS relates exactly to this scenario:



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“Consider a person who believes that Blacks are genetically inferior. If such a person wanted to make a speech in your community claiming that Blacks are inferior, should he be allowed to speak, or not?” Less than 50 percent of students answered in the affirmative.

Meanwhile, most objective individuals recognize that Murray’s *The Bell Curve* is not racist. It finds that Asians have higher IQs than whites and that the difference in IQs between whites and blacks is shrinking. It also states that if anyone reads the work and comes away with a conclusion that either genetics or environment is more important in determining one’s IQ, then the authors haven’t done their job correctly. Finally, the book emphasizes how society can get rid of the differences — hardly the tack of people who are racist. In a 2016 [open letter](#) to the Virginia Tech community, which also opposed his appearance, Murray attempted to debunk allegations of racism against him by explaining that his theory is based on science and that the majority of the criticisms against it are political, not scientific:

Once again, the state of knowledge about the basics is not particularly controversial. The mean scores for all kinds of mental tests vary by ethnicity. No one familiar with the data disputes that most elemental statement. Regarding the most sensitive difference, between Blacks and Whites, [Richard] Herrnstein and I followed the usual estimate of one standard deviation (15 IQ points), but pointed out that the magnitude varied depending on the test, sample, and where and how it was administered.

According to Murray, the American Psychological Association (APA) assembled a Task Force on Intelligence that noted the same trend. The APA Task Force wrote, “Although studies using different tests and samples yield a range of results, the Black mean is typically about one standard deviation (about 15 points) below that of Whites. The difference is largest on those tests (verbal or nonverbal) that best represent the general intelligence factor *g*.”

However, it seems that science only matters to those on the Left when it is used to advance claims of climate change, for example, or predispositions of transgenderism in a fetus, which is miraculously a life when it’s convenient for the debate at hand but not when discussing abortion.

What’s more, the students opposed to Murray’s appearance not only labeled him as racist but as anti-gay, despite having no evidence to support that label. They chanted,

Racist, sexist, anti-gay, Charles Murray, go away!

Your message is hatred. We cannot tolerate it.

Charles Murray, go away. Middlebury says no way.

Who is the enemy? White supremacy.

Hey hey, ho ho. Charles Murray has got to go.

Anti-gay? What could have caused them to arrive at such a conclusion? Conservative pundit Ben Shapiro offers, “They simply assume that because Murray differs from them politically, he must be anti-gay.”

Therein lies the danger of the theory that all offensive speakers should be banned from campuses. Leftist students label people with whom they disagree as Nazis, white supremacists, homophobic, xenophobic, sexist, etc. and that therefore enables them the right to stop those people from utilizing their First Amendment rights. In many cases, leftists even advocate using violence against these individuals.



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When white nationalist Richard Spencer was sucker-punched in the face, for example, it ignited a fiery debate on social media in which people speculated whether it was appropriate to punch a neo-Nazi in the face. Sadly, far too many people claim that it is. But once it is deemed acceptable to use violence against someone labeled a neo-Nazi, a dangerous precedent is set. Label someone to whom you are opposed *anything* and it justifies violence against that person, regardless of whether the label is fair or not. And even if the label is accurate, the U.S. Constitution protects individual rights, regardless of how deplorable a person may be.

Interestingly enough, the GSS survey shows that college students are far more tolerant of speakers who advocate communism and atheism, both of which are espoused belief systems of the Left.

According to Chong, "Levels of tolerance for nonconformist ideas and lifestyles have remained generally high among today's college students and are almost always significantly higher than the national average," which could also explain why atheism and communism are tolerable to college students.

Of course, under the Constitution, communists and atheists are entitled to free speech, but what does it say about today's college students that they are more tolerant of individuals who would like to see the collapse of the United States than those who use science to make observations about links between intelligence and race?



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