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Oral Comm students debate campus speech regulation

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CSUSM has a designated free speech zone in front of University Hall, but should the space be subjected to speech codes?

GEO 102: Oral Communication students Caroline Chambers, Nikhil Patel, Nathan Gibbs and Jessica Silveira presented their stances on the issue to about 250 students, faculty and staff at the third annual GEO Persuasive Forum on Dec. 1 during U-Hour in Arts 240.

Chambers and Patel argued in favor of campus speech codes, citing the issue of hate speech as a reason to impose regulation. Gibbs and Silveira argued against it, both referencing the violation of the First Amendment with the imposition.

Silveira argued that campus speech should not be subjected to regulation, stat-

ing that, according to her research, "74 percent of America's institutions" already restrict speech.

She referenced the 2008 lawsuit filed by Hayden Barnes, a student at Valdosta State University in Georgia, after his 2007 expulsion for protesting against the university's plan to use student fees to build two new parking garages.

Valdosta State University president Ronald Zaccari alleged that Barnes' Facebook post opposing the construction was threatening.

Barnes later won the case in 2010 after a federal court judge determined Zaccari violated Barnes' due process rights.

Silveira presented the lack of a "definitive line between acceptable speech and unacceptable speech" as a major issue on college campuses and proposed the solution of a civility pledge by students,

staff and faculty members in place of speech regulations.

In contrast, Patel based his argument on hate speech to express his stance in favor of campus speech regulation.

"By not doing anything about hate speech and speech codes, those who express hate speech are given a thumbs up and the OK to continue doing what they are doing because no rule or enforcement explicitly and legally prohibits them from doing so," said Patel.

Patel proposed that it is students' responsibilities to eradicate hate speech from campus and society.

"We strive to make a brighter and more welcoming future for all as 'one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,'" he said.

Gibbs agreed with the emotional appeals of those in favor of campus speech regulation, but countered their



Photo by Jeffrey Davis

From left to right Rachel Brady, Nathan Gibbs, Jessica Silveira, Professor Caroline Sawyer, Nikhil Patel, Caroline Chambers, Hannah Zirzow.

stances by refuting the effectiveness of speech codes.

He amused the crowd by referencing Taylor Swift's lyric "haters gonna hate," claiming that those who engage in hate speech will con-

tinue to do so despite regulations.

Like Silveira, Gibbs referenced CSUSM's Civility Campaign as a solution to diminishing hate speech from having a place on campus.

The Civility pledge says "As a member of the CSUSM community I will conduct myself with care, respect, and empathy while acknowledging the culture

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and humanity of others." More information on the campaign can be found at www.csusm.edu/civility.

"Freedom of speech as defined by the American Civil Liberties Union is indivisible. If you take away part of freedom of speech, then that's going to come back to you and you'll lose your freedom as well," said Gibbs.

Chambers turned the argument around again and spoke in favor of campus speech regulation.

"It is no question that hate speech leads to hate crimes, just as sure as day leads into night," said Chambers. "... You shouldn't be able to incite violence with your quote unquote protected speech."

Chambers proposed the integration of speech codes that ban hate speech in order to protect people from hate crimes rooted in prejudice.

"We must get to the hate speech root before it metastasizes," said Chambers.