

Is Free Speech Under Attack on Law School Campuses?



Summary: With disruptive protests preventing the ability of free speech to happen, law schools may not be doing enough to allow healthy debate to happen.

Protesters at [City University of New York law school](#) disrupted a speech by conservative professor and lecturer Josh Blackman. Blackman, a law professor at the [South Texas College of Law](#), was visiting the New York law school to give a presentation on free speech when the protesters heckled and shouted for the first ten minutes of the speech, preventing him from having a chance to speak, according to Inside Higher Ed.

Blackman frequents as a guest lecturer on campuses across the nation and produces written pieces for conservative publications. At South Texas College of Law, Blackman teaches about legal issues, including the legal and philosophical reasons why free speech is important on college campuses. Colleges and universities are supposed to be places of healthy, more civilized debates over contrasting viewpoints but lately, free speech has been shut down.

Blackman shared the hour-long video from his visit in March to CUNY. He explained that there were just a handful of students who had attended to actually hear him speak and have an open dialogue with him. However, the large group of students that were upset that their law school allowed him to come speak continued to show disrespect by not letting him have a chance to speak or be willing to engage in a real conversation with him. Even after school officials warned the students, reminding them about the school's policy regarding speakers, they continued to speak out.

The protesters can be seen surrounding the room and even criticizing their fellow students attending the speech for supporting Blackman, not giving those students the opportunity to explain why they were there. The group called Blackman a white supremacist and racist, even shouting "F*** the law." When the students realized Blackman had cameras recording his presentation, many covered their faces with their signs.

Eventually, the group left, allowing for Blackman to get on with his presentation. He welcomed questions and comments from students. He claims that some of the students who came in after the protesters left admitted that they were intimidated by the hecklers so they waited to enter the room.

Even though higher education leaders claim that there is support for free speech and not shouting down speakers, actions speak louder than words. Whenever speakers arrive, especially conservative ones, protestors seem to show up, taking over the events without much interference from college leaders. They rarely punish those who break policy by disrupting speeches or take any other actions to prevent disruptions.

Similar incidents have taken place at other universities like [Lewis & Clark College School of Law](#). Christina Hoff Sommers was at the law school in March when she was shouted down by those who oppose her opinions. Other controversial speakers include Milo Yiannopoulos and Ann Coulter.

CUNY Law School Dean Mary Lu Bilek said in an email to Inside Higher Ed that the protest was reasonable since they ended after several minutes. "For the first eight minutes of the 70-minute event, the protesting students voiced their disagreements. The speaker engaged with them. The protesting students then filed out of the room, and the event proceeded to its conclusion without incident," Bilek said.

She added, "This non-violent, limited protest was a reasonable exercise of protected free speech, and it did not violate any university policy. CUNY Law students are encouraged to develop their own perspectives on the law in order to be prepared to confront our most difficult legal and social issues as lawyers promoting the values of fairness, justice and equality."

Blackman was invited by the law school's Federalist Society, a conservative group.

Do you think the group's behavior was appropriate and kept in line with the school policy of not disrupting speakers? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about the lack of free speech on college campuses, read these articles:

- [Berkeley Sued for Canceling Ann Coulter Speech](#)

- [Controversial Immigration Debate Cancelled at University of Chicago Law](#)
- [Antifa Members Attack Right-Wing Protestors in Berkeley](#)
- [Student Kicked Out for Questioning Teacher's Beliefs](#)

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