

A Kipper in York – No-Platforming

By [Thomas Turton](#)

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Image: University of York UKIP Association

So I have little to report on the University side of things, other than the fact that I wish to state here that I, in a personal capacity, support the cross-party motion to oppose the changes to the university porters' contracts. Particularly this exclusivity clause when it comes to day/night shifts. Our society hasn't voted on it yet, but members will be doing so at our next meeting.

As to this week, there has been a lot of anger over Germaine Greer being invited to speak in Cardiff University because of comments she made about post-operative transgender women. The York Union received similar backlash for inviting the controversial writer Julie Bindel to speak on prostitution. The main opposition to allowing these women to speak seems to centre around the idea that, by giving them a platform, the university would be advocating their views. This is complete nonsense. The BBC, whom I think we can all agree is a relatively liberal group, has given a platform to: Nick Griffin (former head of the BNP), Paul Golding (Head of Britain First, a racist/Islamophobic organisation), Tommy Robinson (the former head of the EDL), and Anjem Choudary (an Islamist hate preacher) to name a few. We can safely say that they do not endorse the views of these people, yet they were given a platform. This is because if we do not understand the views of extremists, or do not know what they are, there is no way we can combat their opinions.

Now I should mention that Bindel and Greer are nowhere near as hateful as the people I've listed, but the same logic applies. If you want to prove your opinion as the correct one, you do not silence your opposition, you let them speak and present your counterarguments. The fact that we, as academics, are even suggesting to no-platform people based on opinions we disagree with is an affront to what a university should be. I would ask those calling not to be offended by anything when they come to an academic institution, why did you bother going to university? I find the views of a lot of the Marxist theoreticians that I have to study offensive and potentially dangerous, but I read them in order to understand them better. I personally find the views on trans people expressed by Greer in particular offensive, but she's free to her opinion and to express it if she so wishes. I'm sure a debate on Gender

theory with her would be fun (no that was not a challenge to her). If you are seriously calling for limitations on academic freedom just because it might offend your sensibilities, or even just because you disagree with some opinions, then you have no place at an academic research institution. We all have different opinions, and that is something to be celebrated.

Thomas Turton is the Secretary of the University of York UKIP Association.



One comment

Jack

10 Nov '15 at 12:25 pm

Here's a lecturer at Yale addressing this exact issue very well: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gM-VE8r7MSI>

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