

# The Undercurrent

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"It was as if an underground stream flowed through the country and broke out in sudden springs that shot to the surface at random, in unpredictable places." Ayn Rand

## THE MORAL CASE FOR CAPITALISM

Achieving the good requires protecting freedom,  
not enforcing sacrifice.

by *Noah Stahl*



It is widely acknowledged that capitalist countries are the most successful at creating wealth and raising their citizens' overall standard of living. People who live in such countries enjoy access to bigger homes, better-trained doctors, more advanced technology, and higher paying jobs. By contrast, those living under collectivist systems like the European welfare states often endure long waits for poorer quality medical help and have far less choice in the things they buy and less money to buy them with. Studies like the Index of Economic Freedom consistently find that higher measures of economic liberty correlate strongly with better standards of living: the freer people are, the richer they become.

But in spite of all this, capitalism is criticized. Its detractors complain that it creates an unjust divide between rich and poor—or that employers don't pay employees their rightful due—or that the poor are "denied access" to basic needs like education, medical care, and retirement income. Even though the poor in capitalist countries enjoy far greater resources and opportunities than their counterparts in collectivist nations, critics denounce capitalism for allowing some people to

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### OBJECTIVISM

The Undercurrent's cultural commentary is based on Ayn Rand's philosophy, Objectivism. Objectivism, which animates Ayn Rand's fiction, is a systematic philosophy of life.

It holds that the universe is orderly and comprehensible, that man survives by reason, that his life and happiness comprise his highest moral purpose, and that he flourishes only in a society that protects his individual rights.

In these pages we hope to defend these values. To learn more about the ideas behind them, you can begin by reading Ayn Rand's books, such as *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, or by visiting [aynrand.org](http://aynrand.org).

## Campus Commentary On Free Speech University Mission Statements: False Promises or True Commitments?

To achieve their mission, universities must consistently uphold and defend the principle of free speech.

by *Kelly Cadenas*



Colleges and universities are identified as institutions committed to the pursuit of knowledge and the promotion of free speech. A university trains its students to think critically and encourages active debate among them. It is a place where students can forge their own conclusions and voice their individual viewpoints without fear of censure or reprisal. It is a place where they can communicate, debate, and persuade one another.

This commitment to truth and free speech is expressed clearly in mission statements and welcome letters from university presidents. Harvard University's mission statement, for example, states that the university's goal is to "[encourage] students to respect ideas and their free expression, and to rejoice in discovery and in critical thought."

But universities are not consistent in their written promises and commitments. For many years, universities have implemented so-called "speech codes" to punish and suppress

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## *The Moral Case for Capitalism*

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have more than others.

Before considering the merits of these charges, we must ask: what is capitalism? Most would say that capitalism is synonymous with a free market of profit-seeking companies. Although capitalism does institute free markets, the term fundamentally refers not to an economic system, but a political one. It is at root a system in which the government protects every citizen's freedom to act in his own interest. In practice, this means full freedom of action, so long as one's actions do not violate the rights of others. People are left free to pursue their chosen values, whether education, career, medicine, entertainment, hobbies, family, or none of the above—so long as they respect the right of others to do the same. In essence, capitalism is the system that existed in the free northern states in the nineteenth century. (America today is not a capitalist nation, but a system mixing together elements of freedom and government control.)

Capitalism, in other words, is the system where interacting voluntarily with your neighbors is the law. The use or threat of force is legally forbidden. In any role—doctor or patient, banker or customer, teacher or student, CEO or cashier—every individual enters relationships with others by choice, not by threatening them with his fists or his Senator's power to pass restrictive laws.

Let us return then to the question of those "left behind" under capitalism. Doesn't everyone deserve an education, health care, and a basic income? Isn't it unjust that some people get wealthy while others have little? Shouldn't we aim for a system that empowers the government to remedy such disparities?

Capitalism answers: no. There is only one alternative to the capitalist model of voluntary interaction—force. Every government policy that grants entitlements to some citizens does so, and must do so, by violating the freedom of others. To entitle citizens to things like education, healthcare, or public transportation necessarily requires forcing someone to teach or treat or drive, or forcing someone else (the taxpayers) to pay. In other words, to establish the "right" to education or healthcare is to establish the "right" to the time, energy, and wealth of those who must supply such benefits. When America's Founding Fathers spoke of the right to the pursuit of happiness, rather than the right to happiness itself,

they recognized that one is rightfully entitled only to what he earns or gains by voluntary consent from others—success and happiness are to be sought and earned, not expropriated from others by force. In this sense, no one is "left behind" under capitalism: every individual has the same unrestricted freedom to pursue what he needs and wants.

Criticism of capitalism stems from the ethical ideal of altruism, the idea that morality consists of sacrificing for those in need. To selfishly pursue one's own ends, on this view, is to shirk one's moral duty to others. Capitalism rebuffs this notion by upholding and protecting each individual's right to act in his own interests, in opposition to those who demand he sacrifice his time, effort, wealth and happiness for others. The altruist morality is inherently anti-capitalist because its implementation in politics requires the violation of freedom. Those who choose not to voluntarily sacrifice their interests for others must be

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**Under capitalism every  
human being is left free  
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forced to do so.

If you don't have children or wish to send yours to private school, opponents of capitalism say too bad—you must sacrifice your earnings to pay for the public education of others. If you'd like to save for your own retirement according to your own judgment, too bad—you must sacrifice your income to pay for the retirement income of others. If you'd prefer to spend \$40 a month on a gym membership rather than pay taxes to Medicaid, too bad—you must sacrifice that "selfish" pleasure so that others may have medical care. In these and a multitude of other cases, non-capitalist governments force you to submit to the sacrificial code of altruism, whether you agree and consent or not.

Capitalism is the only social system that abolishes forced sacrifice. It is based, not on the ethics of altruism, but on a morality of individualism, which holds that it is not only permissible, but morally

proper for every individual to act in his own interest. Under capitalism every human being is left free to pursue and enjoy whatever type of life he can achieve to the extent of his ability and determination. He is free to offer his values in trade for those of others, voluntarily and to mutual benefit. He is free to keep everything he earns or give it all away, according to his own uncoerced judgment.

Under capitalism, the government's role is singular and crucial: the protection of individual rights, i.e., of each man's ability to act without being subject to physical force by others (or the threat thereof). Only such a system secures for everyone the freedom to direct their lives as they see fit—as such, it is the only moral social system.

Yet capitalism is rarely defended on moral grounds. Even conservatives, its alleged supporters, do not defend its moral goodness. Though they often advocate the free market as the most practical choice for creating wealth, their allegiance to religious altruism leads them to apologize for capitalism's implicit endorsement of self-interest.

Thankfully, there does exist a rational, moral defense of capitalism in the works of Ayn Rand. In her books and essays, particularly in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, you can find a detailed explanation of what capitalism is, the morality it is based upon, and which facts support and validate that morality. And you can judge Rand's case for claiming, in her words, that "no politico-economic system in history has ever proved its value so eloquently or benefited mankind so greatly as capitalism".

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# Freedom of Speech:

## An Interview With Dr. Onkar Ghate



The Dean of the Objectivist Academic Center discusses the nature, importance, and philosophic validation of free speech.

*With a little over a year having passed since the Danish cartoon controversy, free speech remains a central issue on college and university campuses. University administrations seem increasingly unable to respond to the popular slogan that “hate speech is not free speech.”*

*What does the term “hate speech” mean? How does it relate to free speech? Is it even a valid idea? In order to judge, we need to examine the deeper philosophical roots of the right to intellectual freedom. What is the nature, source, and justification of free speech?*

*This is not an esoteric matter, nor is it a matter only for philosophers to ponder. It is a central issue facing college campuses today, and the decision will help determine the future course of the world in which we all live. There are few things more urgently needed in a university setting than a discussion and proper defense of the principle of free speech.*

*To this end, The Undercurrent has conducted an interview with Dr. Onkar Ghate, Dean at the Ayn Rand Institute. He has studied Ayn Rand’s epistemology in detail, and is an expert on her conception of the right to free speech.*

**TU:** Hello Dr. Ghate, and thank you for your time.

**OG:** My pleasure. I’m always eager to discuss free speech.

**TU:** What is the principle of freedom of speech?

**OG:** Freedom of speech is an individual’s right to express his ideas without governmental interference, that is, without governmental suppression or censorship.

Freedom of speech is an aspect of the right to liberty. Just as an individual has a right to think for himself and use his mind as he chooses, so he has a right to express the thoughts he has reached in material form, whether orally (in conversation, discussions,

lectures, speeches, classes, etc.) or in writing (in books, magazine stories, newspaper articles, web postings, etc.). Freedom of thought is the spiritual aspect of the right to liberty, freedom of speech the material aspect; one represents the mind, the other the body.

The right to free speech, however, is not a right to the material means by which to express one’s ideas. These means must be earned. It is not censorship, for example, if a book publisher refuses to publish my book. The owner of a publishing house has the right to decide which views his property will be used to express. If the government were to force him to publish my book (because I have failed to find another publisher or create my own publishing company), the government would be violating the publisher’s freedom of speech. The publisher would be forced to express not his own ideas or ideas he thinks should gain a hearing, but ideas with which he disagrees.

Similarly, the right to free speech is not a guarantee of an audience. This too must be earned. Just as I have the right to speak and write what I choose, so other individuals have the right not to listen to or read my views if they so decide. A reader of this paper, for instance, is free to stop reading anytime he chooses.

In essence, freedom of speech is the right to use, without governmental interference, one’s own body and property to express ideas to anyone who chooses to listen.

Obviously, an important function of this right is to protect dissenting individuals. Even if everyone else in society regards an individual’s ideas as wrong, obnoxious or evil, the government cannot silence him. He remains free to hold and express his views.

**TU:** Why is the right to freedom of speech such a crucial value?

**OG:** The right to freedom of speech is a crucial value because knowledge is a crucial value. Knowledge is power: it gives one the ability to achieve the goals which further one’s life. Think of any profession, from auto mechanic to computer programmer to heart surgeon. What enables members of these professions to rebuild defective engines, to write software to help manage a company’s inventory, and to perform open heart surgery? The root of any individual’s productive actions is the knowledge he has acquired. But knowledge requires a free mind. A mind can attain knowledge only if it is free to ask questions, free to follow the evidence wherever it leads, free to weigh logically the facts it has discovered. A mind cannot be forced. Knowledge cannot

be produced by the barrel of a gun.

A government can suppress an idea, but that does not convince anyone that the idea is false. A government can threaten an individual with fines, imprisonment, even death unless he professes some other idea, but that does not convert the idea into a truth in his mind. Imagine, for a moment, that I was made President of the United States and then tried to spread Ayn Rand’s philosophy of reason by physical force (a contradictory pursuit, if ever there was one). Imagine that I threatened citizens with imprisonment unless they professed that rational selfishness is a virtue. Even though I regard this idea as true, my attempt to spread its truth is worse than futile. My threats would create no thought process in the mind of an individual citizen. Indeed, I would paralyze his rational faculty: he would be afraid to think openly about or voice ideas in ethics and would simply parrot slogans he does not understand or accept. This is the nightmare of totalitarian dictatorships, where the minds of millions of starving individuals are destroyed as they are forced to chant, say, that Kim Jong Il is great and communism is the salvation of the masses.

Knowledge—rational understanding—requires a free mind. Such, in essence, is the foundation of an individual’s right to freedom of thought and speech.

Now notice an important implication of the freedoms of thought and speech. They necessarily protect a mind that reaches falsehoods, even evil, irrational falsehoods. The right to exercise one’s mind necessarily includes the right to choose not to exercise it. Thus in a free society, Nazis, communists and racists, for instance, would have the right to express their vicious irrationalities. If the government were to use the coercive machinery of the state to stop them from voicing their views, the government would become the legislator of “truth.” Anyone familiar with the history of the Dark or Middle Ages in Europe or with Galileo’s persecution by the Church knows where that leads: to the cessation of thought.

Notice too that an individual uttering the most vicious falsehoods does not infringe on anyone’s rights. If someone declared that Asians are morally corrupt (I’m half Indian), he neither “picks my pocket nor breaks my leg,” in Thomas Jefferson’s memorable words. Such an individual does not interfere with my liberty: I remain free to think, to express my thoughts in material form, and to ignore his falsehoods or oppose them with better ideas if I so choose.

Any actual champion of free speech must  
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## Interview with Dr. Onkar Ghate

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therefore possess Voltaire's famous attitude: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

**TU:** *During the Mohammad cartoon controversy, many people argued that banning the cartoons was not a violation of free speech because the cartoons represented hate speech. What is hate speech? Is it an exception to freedom of speech?*

**OG:** Freedom of speech is a rational principle. Like any rational principle, it is an absolute; which means: within its context it admits of no exceptions.

Apparent exceptions like a man yelling "Fire!" in a crowded movie theater represent a misunderstanding of the principle. As I've said, the principle of freedom of speech states that you can use your own property to express whatever ideas you choose—not that you can use someone else's property. When on another's property, you must abide by the conditions he sets. When you pay to enter a movie theater, for instance, there is an implicit agreement to respect the theater owner's terms of use, which include that you cannot disturb the other customers enjoying the movie by, say, talking on your cell phone during the movie. And you certainly cannot act to recklessly endanger the lives of other customers by, say, pretending there is a fire and creating a riot. An owner of a movie theater could, of course, announce in advance that he allows his customers to say anything they like during the screening of a movie, but likely he wouldn't retain many patrons.

Because freedom of speech is a principle, any "exception" to it actually means its destruction—which brings us to laws against "hate speech."

Such laws seek to ban speech that "offends" or "incites hatred" toward members of a group (the group is usually defined by physiological characteristics like race or gender). Since any idea may "offend" someone or may lead someone to feel hatred toward third parties, what does this amount to in practice? It means that whenever a member of some group finds an idea "offensive" or feels that it will produce hatred against his collective, the government has the power to ban the idea.

This is the death of free speech. By the non-objective standard of "hate speech," any idea can be banned. For instance, to call for the end of the welfare state—as I do—may "offend" a "poverty activist" or may lead people to hate the parasites who choose to live off of productive citizens. So this idea is a

candidate for censorship. Or: to claim that the life-giving ideas of the Enlightenment are being subverted and destroyed by many of today's leading intellectuals in the humanities—as I do—may "offend" some university professor or may lead some people to hate these academics. So this idea is a candidate for censorship. Or: the latest breakthrough of a research scientist in genetic engineering may offend an environmentalist or may lead some people to hate those environmentalists who blow up university research laboratories. So the scientist's new idea is a candidate for censorship. Or: an atheist who argues that we should discard belief in God may "offend" a religionist or may cause some people to hate fundamentalist Christians and Muslims. So the atheist's views are candidates for censorship.

The entire sphere of thought, in other words, becomes politicized. What governs now is not the principle of individual liberty but the arbitrary whims of any collective. Under the principle enacted by "hate speech" laws, the individual is no longer free to think and express his thoughts. Instead, he must seek every collective's permission before speaking,

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### The rights to life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness protect the rational mind.

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making sure that no one is offended by his ideas and that no one takes his ideas as reason to hate anyone or anything.

**TU:** *Why do you think that many people believe that there is some legitimacy to hate speech laws? Are there deeper philosophical errors that explain the increasing existence and application of such laws?*

**OG:** One reason is that whenever an individual right begins to be undermined, the attack usually starts with the least attractive exercisers of the right. In the case of the attack on free speech, and especially in the West, among the first victims are individuals who express loathsome ideas, such as support for Nazism and denial of the Holocaust. Many people uncritically think: Would we not be better off without such individuals expressing their evil views? Since, at least sometimes, the immediate result of "hate speech" laws is to ban the views of such individuals, people support the laws without really considering the fundamental principle involved. If they recognized that the cost of silencing such individuals is the destruction of the right to free speech—and that the Government might next censor their ideas—they would think twice. What people must grasp is that the only

way to combat irrational ideas is to advocate rational ones—not to reach for the gun of the government.

"Hate speech" laws, however, are not the creation of the public but of academics and intellectuals. The reason such laws are becoming more and more widespread is that Western culture is losing its knowledge of why free speech is a value. As I've indicated, free speech rests on the idea that knowledge is a value and that to be reached, it requires a sovereign, independent mind choosing to exercise its powers of reason. The value of free speech, in other words, rests on a specific view of the human mind.

The dominant voices in the humanities today uphold an opposing view. The human mind, on the modern, anti-Enlightenment approach, is impotent to reach truth; objective human knowledge is a contradiction in terms. On this view, an individual happens to embrace certain ideas because he happens to belong to the white, the black or the Indian race or to the tribe of males, of females, of those born in the West or of those born in the East. Every idea is a prejudice; all that is possible to a human mind is collective subjectivism. The power of reason, on this approach, is a myth.

The end result, logically enough, is to abandon the principle of individual rights. The rights to life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness protect the rational mind. They protect the individual's freedom to pursue truth and then to use his newfound knowledge to create the material values that his life and happiness require. But why protect the rational mind, if it cannot reach truth? Throw out reason, in other words, and individual rights lose their meaning.

If reason is discarded, what is left to guide man? His feelings. And so the world becomes a clash of (irreconcilable) prejudices—and every issue is politicized. Why? Because the basic issue in human life now becomes whose whims rule. No dispute has a right and wrong answer. Every dispute is simply a contest to see which group can impose its prejudices by the power of (governmental) force. One group, for instance, wants to express its ideas about terrorism and religion, another group feels that those ideas are "offensive" and "hateful" and should be banned. On the modern approach, there is no objective principle of freedom or individual rights to settle the matter. On the modern approach, the question is simply: whose "feelings" get to rule? And the answer is: the feelings of the collective that is able to seize control of the coercive power of the state. In the present day, this means multiculturalist, feminist, religious and other leaders, who are beginning to succeed in seizing the power of the state, passing "hate speech" laws, and becoming the new thought police.

So I think at a fundamental level, the growing rejection of free speech is caused by the growing rejection of reason. Where there

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## Interview with Dr. Onkar Ghate

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is respect for the power of the individual's rational mind, there is respect for the freedoms of thought and speech; where there is contempt for the power of the individual's rational mind, there is contempt for the freedoms of thought and speech.

**TU:** *What is hate? Is it ever proper to feel hate towards another individual or group? If so, on what grounds?*

**OG:** Hatred is an emotion. Broadly speaking, one experiences hatred when one judges that something embodies the antithesis of one's values. Hatred is the opposite of love. As Ayn Rand observed, love is a response to values. One experiences the emotion of love when one judges that something embodies one's values. For instance, one feels love for one's husband or wife, for one's child, for one's friends, for the successful small business one has worked to build up from a fledgling enterprise, and for one's favorite novels and cherished pieces of music which refuel one's spirit. By contrast, one feels hatred for the killer who threatens the life of one's child, for the employee who steals money from one's company, and for the creators of modern "symphonies" of noise, who help destroy the art of music. (Since hatred, like love or any other emotion, is caused by an individual's ideas and judgment, the attempt to ban "hatred" is obviously an attempt to ban ideas.)

Morally, it certainly is appropriate to experience both love and hatred. If one feels love for the good, one will feel hatred for the evil. If one feels love for man's life and the things which further it, one will feel hatred toward that which undermines them. I experience love or hatred toward many things—and regard both of these emotions as appropriate. Just as I love creators like Thomas Edison, so I hate destroyers like Hitler. Just as I love freedom-fighters like Thomas Jefferson, so I hate the religionists who flew planes into the World Trade Center. Just as I love Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism, so I hate the ideologies of communism and socialism. I regard these experiences of hatred as appropriate because the emotions flow from what I think are correct ideas and evaluations: the things I hate are, in one form or another, inimical to man's life. (Though evil must be opposed and combated, it and the emotions it engenders should never be granted the importance one grants to the good. One should never become consumed by hatred.)

Of course in a moral context hatred is appropriate only in regard to that which is

open to an individual's choice. It is appropriate to feel hatred toward Osama Bin Laden for the murderous actions he chose to perform. It is inappropriate to feel hatred toward a black for the color of his skin or a male for the gender of his body. It can be appropriate to feel hatred toward a group of individuals, but only when membership in the group is a product of choice. It is appropriate to feel hatred toward the Nazi leadership taken as a whole, because the various individuals chose to join the party and give their support to Hitler. It is inappropriate to feel hatred towards blacks or males as a group.

So one judges an emotion by the rationality or irrationality of the ideas which generate it. This is why one judges the emotions of hatred of a racist as morally monstrous. To believe that the content of a person's mind and character is determined by his unchosen "membership" in a physiological group—as racists do believe—is irrational. But to legally punish a racist for feeling hatred is precisely to punish him for the ideas he holds. To do so is to violate his freedom of thought. (It is of course a radically different issue if a racist takes physical action to violate another individual's rights; but even here, the racist should be punished for his action, not for his hatred.)

**TU:** *What, if anything, can students do to promote freedom of speech on university campuses? What role does Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism play in the struggle to maintain free speech in America?*

**OG:** To promote freedom of speech, students must understand its nature. In my estimation, this requires studying the works of Ayn Rand. She is the most penetrating and principled defender of individual rights.

Observe that mysticism and blind faith lead, politically, to authoritarianism—as the West witnessed for centuries after the fall of Rome. In that kind of culture, liberty is non-existent. Observe also that skepticism and the rule of whim lead, politically, to gang warfare—as the West is now witnessing as group after group seeks the political power to ban that which it considers "offensive." In this kind of culture too, liberty disappears. Only a defense of reason can provide the foundation for a defense of the rights to freedom of thought and speech.

And this makes Ayn Rand's philosophy indispensable in the battle for free speech. Taking a historical perspective, Ayn Rand's accomplishment in my view is that she completed the defense of reason that Aristotle began. Aristotle defended the power of the rational mind against both the mysticism of Plato and the skepticism of the Sophists. Ayn Rand's philosophic achievement is to defend the power of the rational mind against today's hordes of Kantian-inspired mystics and skeptics. (For the details, one must of course

study her works.)

Equipped with the knowledge that Ayn Rand uniquely provides, students would be able to argue effectively for free speech and against the imposition of public university speech codes, the banning of speakers from campuses, "hate speech" laws, etc. Faced with a principled opposition—one able to articulate the connection between reason and freedom of speech—university administrations, and more widely, the culture, may reconsider the issue. (Remember, however, that a private university has the right to impose speech codes and ban speakers, no matter how irrational its grounds for doing so.) The battle for liberty is an intellectual battle. It can be won only with the proper intellectual ammunition.

## University Mission Statements

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discriminatory or otherwise disrespectful remarks that could—in their vague language—potentially impair the "well-being" of other students. Student handbooks usually contain sections specifically devoted to listing policies that define the expected standards of conduct for students. Princeton University's *Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities* handbook demands that students "respect the rights, privileges, and sensibilities of each other." Verbal behavior "which demeans, intimidates, threatens, or injures another...is subject to University disciplinary sanctions."

These codes seem reasonable if they are meant to restrict harassment of individual students, but aggressive student activists often appeal to the vague language of these codes to target controversial ideas. It is in such cases, more than ever, that universities must have the courage to confront and discipline those who keep others from expressing their views. They must defend, not oppose, those who communicate ideas that are allegedly insulting or offensive to others.

Last fall, the Columbia administration confronted an incident that tested their commitment to the university's mission. The Columbia College Republicans invited Mr. Jim Gilchrist, founder of the Minuteman Project, an organized vigilance group that reports illegal immigrants to legal authorities. Mr. Gilchrist accepted the invitation and flew to Columbia with the purpose of communicating his anti-immigration arguments to an audience willing to listen.

Unfortunately, Mr. Gilchrist was met with fierce disruption from pro-immigration activists, who regarded the lecture as an offensive "verbal attack" on their deepest

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## University Mission Statements

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sensibilities. What began as a peaceful event on an October day quickly turned into a violent demonstration as student protesters stormed the stage to chant their view that “no one is ever illegal.” Mr. Gilchrist, forced to leave the building, was unable to complete his lecture.

Immediately after the incident, President Bollinger issued a public announcement that “the University [was] thoroughly investigating the incident.” He also deplored student activists for “[using] the cover of protest to silence speakers,” thereby threatening the very principle Columbia is “institutionally dedicated” to protecting—namely the right to free speech. After a somewhat long investigative and bureaucratic process, the university punished some of protesters for their reprehensible conduct.

The Columbia administration deserves to be acknowledged for recognizing, to a certain degree, the need to defend the very principle that, in Bollinger’s own words, stimulates “intellectual inquiry and vigorous debate.” But universities, if they are fully committed to free speech, need to do much more than merely discipline students after the fact. Given the regularity of such disruptions across college campuses, administrations should take more pro-active measures to prevent dissenters from interrupting club-sponsored events.

In contrast to the episode at Columbia University, administrators at UCLA actually took evasive measures to prevent L.O.G.I.C., the campus Objectivist Club, from holding their scheduled debate on immigration.

The leaders had organized a debate between Mr. Carl Braun, director of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, and Dr. Yaron Brook, executive director of the Ayn Rand Institute. But a few days before, the university administration cancelled the event in response to a leftist student group’s threats that it would launch a Columbia-style protest. With slogans like “Say No to Hate!” the group intended to show their opposition toward the Minutemen and their “racist agenda.”

Ironically, both L.O.G.I.C. and the Ayn Rand Institute advocate views contrary to those of Mr. Braun and his anti-immigration supporters. But Dr. Brook’s arguments in favor of open immigration were not heard in February because the university succumbed to intimidation.

In a similar case, the campus Objectivist club at George Mason University was obliged to cancel historian John Lewis’ lecture on the war on terrorism. Muslim student groups filed complaints to the university administration, which lead the department to revoke the venue in order to avoid a potential controversy.

This resulted in further “investigations” that lead the university to suspend the event on a technicality.

Fortunately, student protesters did not have the last say in these two stories. Due to the unyielding persistence of club leaders and to support from outside sources, both clubs found ways to re-schedule their events for later in the semester.

Despite their claims to the contrary, these incidents show that some protesters act to silence and suppress the free exchange of ideas between students. Their fundamental goal is not to persuade other students that their views are correct, but to impose their ideas through intimidation and aggression. As a consistent and neutral guardian of free speech, the UCLA administration, instead of building insurmountable barriers at the first sign of social upheaval, should have supported L.O.G.I.C. with adequate security during

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**The purpose of free speech is to permit the expression of ideas, but more specifically, those ideas which are not popularly embraced or that might be offensive to a group of people.**

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the event. Their hesitancy and cowardice only shows their willingness to undercut the principle of free expression in order to not offend certain student groups. This can only further encourage and embolden belligerent student activists.

With this in mind, universities must provide a safe haven for speech that is controversial, unpopular, and perhaps insulting to students with opposing viewpoints. Universities must, as a matter of principle, react immediately to threats from student activists—by punishing those who disturb student-sponsored events and by taking the necessary steps to ensure that adequate security is available. But perhaps more importantly, administrators should publicly condemn the actions of protesters as nonacademic and uncivilized while encouraging dissenters to respond by means of arguments, not disruptions.

This is especially necessary in cases where the ideas being advocated are unpopular. Popularity is in no way the measure of an idea’s validity. Ideas which many once thought correct are now known to be false and immoral. Likewise, ideas once shunned as untrue and heretical are now seen with different

eyes. History provides ample examples of this common clash between truth and majority approval. Prior to the civil war, for instance, most people in the south justified and promoted slavery and segregation. Prior to Copernicus, most accepted the model from ancient times that the planets and the stars revolved around the earth. Heretics were persecuted and killed for challenging once widespread religious doctrine.

The purpose of free speech is to permit the expression of ideas, but more specifically, those ideas which are not popularly embraced or that might be offensive to a group of people. It is only the offensive, controversial, unpopular kind of speech that actually requires protection. Speech that vilifies and denounces capitalism or promotes a “green” America needs no protection because such views are met with very little, if any, opposition. What really requires defense is unpopular speech—namely, speech that challenges environmentalist policies, denies the alleged rights to welfare and healthcare, or advocates full-blown military action against terrorism-supporting nations even at the expense of civilian casualties. These examples point to highly unpopular positions—positions which activists will attempt to silence, no matter how civil the actions of the speakers may be.

University administrators, as one can see, are often inconsistent in their defense of free expression outside the classroom. It is crucial that they implement their philosophies consistently in order to fulfill their mission—namely, to educate and train the minds of our future generation.

It is the nature of the very object of education—i.e. the student’s mind—that necessitates a proper defense of freedom of speech. The mind requires freedom: the freedom to ask questions, to seek knowledge, and to evaluate observations in order to reach logical conclusions. This freedom to think does imply that some students will reach false conclusions and hold irrational beliefs, but it is this very implication that makes the free exchange of ideas even more necessary. An honest student who holds false beliefs will have a hard time being persuaded of his errors if those who may hold true beliefs are prevented from expressing theirs.

A university must serve as the impartial guardian, the warden that protects both right and wrong ideas, independent of their popularity. It is only in this kind of learning environment—one that fosters civilized and lively debate—that the best ideas and the best minds can flourish and prevail.

*Kelly Cadenas is a third year undergraduate at Harvard University, where she currently pursues a degree in Biochemistry.*

# In Defense of Income Inequality



**Income inequality, in a free market, represents something good; the campaign against it rests on the egalitarian view that the most able should**

*by Peter Schwartz*

The issue of income inequality reveals one of the ugliest aspects of today's culture. The ugliness stems not from the existence of income inequality—but from the motives of those who denounce it.

Income inequality used to be a rabble-rousing issue of the left. Now it is being raised by mainstream figures, from the head of the Federal Reserve to President Bush, who are apologetically trying to offer solutions. But what is the actual problem they wish to solve? Certainly, it is not a growth in poverty. To the contrary, between 1979 and 2006—the period during which

income inequality has supposedly become more acute—real wages for the median worker rose 11.5%. Even workers in the lowest tenth percentile had an increase of 4%.

No, the alleged problem is not that some are becoming poor—but that others are too rich. The complaint is that while the bottom tier enjoyed a 4% rise in income, the top tier enjoyed a 34% increase. The complaint is that over the past 25 years, the share of income of the top fifth of households climbed from 42% to 50%, while that of the bottom fifth fell from 7% to 5%.

But this development represents an injustice only if we use a perverse standard of evaluation. It is unjust only if we measure someone's economic status not by what he has, but by what others have—i.e., only if he benefits not by making more money, but by making his neighbor have less.

This is the standard of egalitarianism—the standard that demands a uniformity of income, regardless of anyone's ability or effort. It is the standard of envy, whereby a problem exists whenever some have more, of anything, than others. And the

egalitarian's solution is to eliminate all such inequalities.

Egalitarianism is the antithesis of the valid tenet of political equality, under which we have equal rights. That is, we have the right to achieve whatever our ambition and talents allow, with no one permitted to forcibly stop us. Egalitarianism, however, is a denial of the individual's right to be left free. It is an abhorrent demand that some people be punished for achieving what others haven't. It is a brazen declaration that an equality of condition must be attained.

And how is it to be attained? By—as the Australians aptly phrase it—cutting down the tall poppies. No one is to be allowed to surpass his fellow-citizen. No one is to be allowed to rise. Which means that the most able must be brought down to the level of the least able. The equal spread of misery and privation is the only “equality” that egalitarians ultimately seek. This is why they extol socialist societies, where all suffer equal destitution, while vilifying capitalist societies, where all are free to advance according to their abilities

*(Continued on Page 8)*

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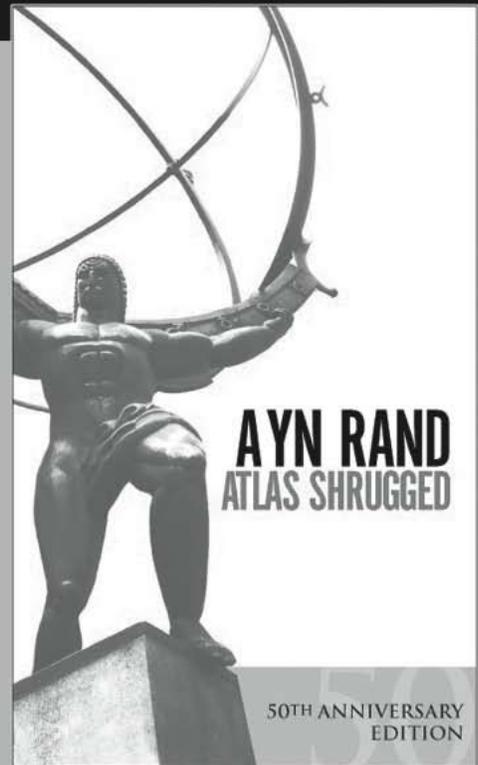
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and where the poorest enjoy greater luxuries than any citizen in a “worker’s paradise.”

Making others fall does not make you rise. While prohibiting a Thomas Edison or a Bill Gates from becoming fabulously wealthy does indeed reduce income inequality, it does not make the poor richer. Nonetheless, it is what egalitarians desire. They are motivated by what Ayn Rand called “hatred of the good”: if they lack something of value, they want to make sure nobody else has it either.

Income inequality is an effect. The cause is the difference in people’s economic production. Criticizing income inequality is like complaining that a computer carries a higher price than a paper clip. Price reflects an object’s market value—and the money someone earns reflects the market value

of his work. There is no fixed, pre-existing glob of income that somehow oozes disproportionately into the pockets of the rich. Wealth is created. The top fifth of the population have ten times more income than the bottom fifth because they have produced ten times more.

In a statist system, people advance through government favors and at the expense of the genuinely deserving. But in a free, capitalist system, income inequality represents something good. It means that exceptional individuals are free to do their productive best, and to reap their rewards. Whenever a Bill Gates arises to make his fortune, the income disparity between top and bottom increases—but so does everyone’s standard of living. If so, why shouldn’t we welcome an inequality—

including a widening inequality—in incomes? And, instead of apologizing for this phenomenon, why aren’t our leaders denouncing the egalitarian envious who want to level us all?

*Peter Schwartz is a Distinguished Fellow at the Ayn Rand Institute (www.AynRand.org) in Irvine, California. The Institute promotes Objectivism, the philosophy of Ayn Rand—author of Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead.*

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## SPEAKERS, EVENTS, MEETINGS

### Regular Objectivist Club Meetings:

#### New York University (New York, NY)

NYU Objectivist Club  
**What:** Regular meetings  
**Contact:** Kara Zavarella—nyuoc\_president@yahoo.com

#### Harvard University (Cambridge, MA)

Harvard Objectivist Club  
**Contact:** www.hcs.harvard.edu/~hoc  
hoc@hcs.harvard.edu

#### University of California, Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)

L.O.G.I.C.  
**What:** Weekly meetings on UCLA campus  
**Where:** Kerckhoff 133  
**When:** Wednesdays at 7:00 pm  
**Contact:** www.ClubLogic.org  
info@ClubLogic.org

#### University of California, Berkeley (Berkeley, CA)

Objectivist Club of Berkeley  
**What:** Weekly meetings  
**Contact:** Katie Brakora—kbrakora@berkeley.edu

#### University of California, Irvine (Irvine, CA)

Objectivist Club at UCI  
**What:** Weekly meetings  
**Where:** HH 143  
**When:** Thursdays at 6:30 pm  
**Contact:** ebrunner@uci.edu

#### University of California, San Diego (La Jolla, CA)

UCSD Objectivist Club  
**What:** Weekly meetings  
**Where:** Sequoia Room of Sierra Summit  
**When:** Mondays at 7:00 pm  
**Contact:** objectivist.ucsd@gmail.com

#### San Francisco State University (San Francisco, CA)

SFSU Students of Objectivism  
**What:** Weekly meetings  
**Where:** Cesar Chavez Student Center  
**Contact:** aynrand@sfsu.edu

#### University of Florida (Gainesville, FL)

Ayn Rand Club  
**Contact:** aynrandclub@gmail.com

#### University of Maryland (College Park, MD)

Terrapin Objectivists  
**What:** Weekly meetings  
**Contact:** terrapin-objectivists@googlegroups.com

#### Georgia Tech (Atlanta, GA)

**What:** Weekly meetings  
**Contact:** cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/aynrand

### Metro Detroit

The Objectivist Group  
**What:** Monthly meetings  
**When:** Third Wednesday of each month  
**Contact:** Togplsgruchala@comcast.net

### San Francisco, CA

Golden Gate Objectivists  
**Contact:** www.goldengateobjectivists.com  
goldengateobjectivists@yahoo.com

### Washington, DC

DC Objectivist Salon (DCOS)  
**What:** Monthly study/discussion group  
**Contact:** www.dcoobjectivistsalon.org/

### Toronto, Ontario

OPAR Study Group  
**Contact:** Dalia Tubis—daliatubis@yahoo.com & Guy Barnett—guyusj@hotmail.com

### One-Time Events:

#### Costa Mesa, CA

ARI Public Lecture “The Rise and Fall of Property Rights in America” by Dr. Adam Mosoff  
**Where:** Hilton Costa Mesa  
**When:** Wed., May 16 at 7:30 pm  
**Contact:** mail@aynrand.org  
www.aynrand.org

### GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

#### The Lucidicus Project

Free books to medical students interested in learning about the moral and economic case for capitalism.  
**Contact:** Jared Rhoads—jared.rhoads@lucidicus.org

#### The Ayn Rand Institute

Free video and audio selections online:  
www.aynrand.org

Principle” by Dr. Leonard Peikoff

“The DIM Hypothesis” by Dr. Leonard Peikoff

“9/11—One Year Later” by Dr. Yaron Brook

“Free Speech and the Danish Cartoons” with Dr. Yaron Brook and Dr. Daniel Pipes

“Passing Judgment: Ayn Rand’s View of Justice” by Dr. Tara Smith

“Democracy vs. Victory” by Dr. Yaron Brook

“Religion and Morality” by Dr. Onkar Ghate

“Atlas Shrugged—America’s Second Declaration of Independence” by Dr. Onkar Ghate

“The Separation of Church and State” by Dr. C. Bradley Thomas

“Totalitarian Islam’s Threat to the West” with Dr. Yaron Brook, Dr. Daniel Pipes, and Dr. Wafa Sultan

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