

KU Letter to the Editor: Free Speech on Campus Can Not be Silenced.

On March 4th, 2025, President Donald Trump posted on Truth Social that:

“All federal funding will STOP for any College, School, or University that allows illegal protests. Agitators will be imprisoned/or permanently sent back to the country from which they came. American students will be permanently expelled or... arrested.”

Since then, the president has indeed kept up on his promise. Right now, 21year old Yuseo Chung, a student at Columbia University and a legal US resident, is being hunted down by ICE agents who seek to arrest and deport her. She sued the administration yesterday. Graduate student and Palestinian activist, Mahmoud Khali, who holds a green card, was arrested this month by ICE. The administration seeks to deport him even though he has not been charged with any crimes. His wife, who is both 8 months pregnant and an American citizen, has not seen him since. It increasingly looks like he will miss the birth of his child and instead spend it in a detention center. These students are literally being persecuted, and sadly there are many more like them.

Dreamers, green card students and even American citizens are being threatened and silenced by this administration. This is no longer an issue that is happening far away, but to our very community, to you and me.

The US has many times affirmed the rights of students in the past. In the landmark 1969 case *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the Supreme Court affirmed that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." In 1960, the Supreme Court stated in *Shelton v. Tucker* that “the vigilant protection of constitutional freedoms is nowhere more vital than in the community of American schools.” An environment of free expression, diversity and critical thinking is critical to a healthy democracy.

I know it can be easy to fall into compliance or despair; what can I, a single student, do against the force of an administration? Well, many times in history students have spearheaded changes in society. Examples include the 1960 April revolution which pushed out Korean authoritarian Syngman Rhee, the US civil rights era and Vietnam war protests, and the 1989 Velvet revolution which peacefully overthrew the Czechoslovakian communist government. In fact, at this very moment, tens of thousands of students in Serbia have organized to protest their corrupt authoritarian government.

We have the power to enact change, and we have the constitutional right to express ourselves. I urge campus leaders, faculty and fellow students to write to your local representatives, continue to discuss ideas with one another, and peacefully protest the injustices against our community. Don't sit idle and wait for others to make change, do it yourself.

If you want to learn more, I highly recommend reading up on the March 4th open letter by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

<https://www.aclu.org/documents/open-letter-college-university-presidents-protect-speech-on-campus>