

AN OPEN LETTER: Young Americans for Freedom

You'd think with a name like this one, our college's excuse for a conservative political organization would be a group of, at least, policy minded young people. People with real political positions, rather than mere opposition to youth of color. You'd think wrong. The Hobart and William Smith chapter of this organization proves again and again that they exist merely to add to the everyday trauma that students of color and other minorities face consistently on this campus. In the first semester they brought a speaker, famous for being islamophobic, who drew comparison between nazism and Islam. This semester, they brought a black man to speak to students about how optimism is the *true* problem with the black community and they should 'pull themselves up by their bootstraps'. That speaker also stated that black people who face police brutality should just be respectful, that their fate is a result of their *attitude*. For black students on this campus, from all over the nation, who have experienced racism in the world and on this campus, they watched as their experiences were both invalidated and violated. For these *Young Americans for Freedom*, they have been relieved of every conversation they may have ever been exposed to about the black experience. The voicing of the struggles and plights of their black peers have been further muffled into silence. Now they know, the black students are merely lazy, merely complainers.

This is the extent of the political work these 'young Americans' do. They bring those who can, on some level, 'identify' as a member of groups in order to gaslight students who will, inevitably, come to watch YAFs semesterly show. They claim that these are platforms for 'free speech', knowing well that their 'free speech' defense only applies to the white populace spewing conservative and/or hateful rhetoric. These programs in actuality are speeches, followed by tightly regulated question and answer, in which follow up questions are quickly cut short. They bring these speakers, the speakers do the gaslighting, and then they do their best to insure students have no actual platform to respond. All the while, the young Americans claim to value 'respectful conversation'. As if such a format could ever beg conversation. As if had they actually wanted to have respectful political discourse, they couldn't have invited students under the premise of facilitated discussion.

Instead, their service to our campus every semester like clockwork, is to make students of color who earned their spots at the colleges, just as they did (if not, lets be honest, off even more merit), remember that in these white spaces, they will always be unwanted as long as they refuse to comply. They provide these orchestrated performances to which everyone who arrives plays a role. Any person of color who dares to speak up about the bigoted rhetoric they are hearing becomes to the institution, a stereotype. The young Americans become victimized in the age old way that white America loves to claim victimization. As usual, whiteness burns crosses on our lawns and claims the protections of speech-plus.

These young Americans fail as a political organization. They do not bring political or community leaders, they do not bring activists, they do not attempt any true political messaging beyond gaslighting. They do not even create spaces for diverse discussion. They are reactionary, existing only as a response to American minorities who work for change. They are the 'All lives matter' to 'Black Lives Matter', they are empty howls in the wind of white America's rage. How dare people of color and other American minorities fight their oppressors? How dare they seek to create a better America? These young Americans are as empty minded as they are closed minded. They look only for validation that their bigotry has a place, and that is why they bring the speakers they bring. It is interesting than, their claim of being 'for Freedom'. As if they do not exist entirely for the purpose of imposing themselves upon students of color and minorities to the debilitating degree they do. These 'Young Americans for Freedom' could at least be more transparent in their political and social ideologies and call themselves what they really are, Young Americans for White Supremacy.

Sincerely,
Students for the American Problem

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