

Freedom of Expression?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I used to have a friend from college who routinely offended people around her.

It's like she had absolutely no filter at all. If she didn't like something, she said so. Where a normal person would keep a thought to themselves, she would blurt out her opinion regardless of who might be offended or hurt.

She pretty much alienated every other female she knew because of her way of letting someone know she didn't like their hairstyle, clothing, or telling them they had gained too much weight.

I once called her out on her behaviour. Her response was, 'I speak my mind.'

When I bought my new house, she wanted to come over to see it.

I was pretty happy with my purchase. I had saved for years for a down payment and finally had a place of my own.

She walked through the house, criticized everything she didn't like, and left.

Over the next several years, she mentioned several times that I had not invited her back. She had apparently no clue, why I had never asked her back to my home.

It was a decision on my part, to not listen to her ridiculous and offensive opinions anymore. I simply ignored her.

She has the right to say whatever she wants and I have the right to not listen to it.

We supposedly have freedom of expression in this country. You can form any opinion you want. If others don't like it, they don't have to listen.

However, when people are sanctioned or disciplined for having an opinion, that's a problem.

Libraries have been going through a lot of controversy over the past few years. Books have been banned or removed from shelves because of perceived 'offensive' content. This includes many books that were previously considered classics.

But who gets to decide what is offensive? Just because one person finds a book's content to be offensive, someone else may not.

We don't need anyone telling us what to read.

If you don't like it, don't read it. Pretty simple.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, the chief librarian was fired from her job for an opinion piece she wrote in a local newspaper column.

She exercised her right to free expression in a column titled, 'Freedom to read is more than fighting book bans.'

The library board said the chief librarian had written in support of a 'right wing' American group.

In the column, the librarian wrote, 'viewpoints that don't conform to progressive agendas are rarely represented in library collections and anyone who challenges this is labelled a bigot.'

The library board certainly proved her point themselves when they fired her for having an opinion.

Basically, it came down to a 'philosophical disagreement,' said the library board chair.

This is a public library, not a religious or political institution.

Since when are librarians forced to follow an institutional thought program?

What's next? Are they going to fire an employee because they found out someone voted for a political party they don't like?

The board asked the librarian to 'take a few days' to reflect on the article and decide what to do next to resolve the article's impact on the community. Did the Niagara-on-the-Lake library board get this right out of Kim John Un's official manifesto?

They actually want someone to correct their opinion to fall in line with their own way of thinking.

Would this library board have made the same decision if she wrote in support of a far-left organization? Probably not.

When the far left and the far right go too far, they eventually meet at the extremes and end up doing the same thing.

Does the library board send out spies to hang around the water cooler to listen to conversations and see if an employee makes a comment they don't like, then take action against them having the 'wrong' opinion?

I'm not even sure you can call the library board's thought process, 'political correctness.' It's more like social incorrectness.

Here's the thing - not everyone in life is going to agree with you.

Not everyone will follow your way of thinking - you aren't right all the time, whether or not you think you are.

If this library board fires a person for not having the 'right opinion', what else have they done?

When you have people in a public institution disciplining someone for having the wrong opinion - maybe the someone should write a book about that to go into the library.

On second thought, it's already been done.