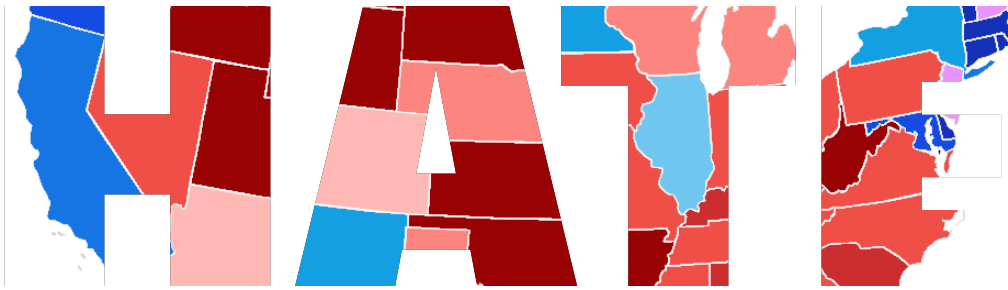


United States of



With political tensions running high, students across the nation are feeling the effects of “hate speech” from their peers and other members in their communities, while other wage a fight against “political correctness.”

By Delia Adamson, Katie Grace Upchurch, Katy Mayfield and Kennae Hunter -- NP24

“I can be walking to class and somebody will call me a faggot on my way to class,” Jaevius Lyons, Mississippi, said. “I think (hate speech has) increased since the election. Before the election none of the people didn’t have the balls to walk to me and say that to me.”

Lyons’ story isn’t unusual. Students today are living in the most politically and socially charged environment of their lifetimes: Presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump had historically low disapproval ratings, according to ABC News/Washington Post polling. Now-President Donald Trump currently has a historically low favorability rating, and both parties’

“You have the right to voice your opinion as long as it doesn’t infringe upon someone else’s existence.”
-- Brenna Outten

leaders and top activists have vowed to fight their opponents on every point.

That fight is playing out in school hallways and on social media platforms across the nation, and student journalists like Lyons are seeing and feeling the effects.

“We went to the national convention in Indianapolis. We come from the Outer Banks, which is a predominantly white area, so we never really see racism up front. But there I saw a white guy on the corner calling a black person by the N-word,” Byrde Walls, North Carolina, said. “It was just eye-opening, to see that side of America come out when Trump was elected.”

Trump, whose rhetoric has often targeted ethnic and religious groups, claims to be fighting back against a wave of “political correctness” which has silenced his supporters. His opponents, meanwhile, associate his words with an uptick in dangerous hate speech.

“I feel like when you have a person who is in power and has a voice who is spewing hate speech, then it encourages

people to come out of their shell and see, ‘Hey, this person is doing it, this is my time to kind of capitalize on that too,’” Brenna Outten, Georgia, said.

The Southern Poverty Law Center counted 867 cases of hateful harassment or intimidation in the United States in the 10 days after the election. A picture of one such instance, a Swastika painted on the side of a building with the words “Make America White Again,” went viral.

“(Seeing hate speech is) usually online for me. I have never seen it happen in person because I feel like people at our school don’t try that, because somebody will call you out on it. I’ve usually seen it on Twitter and I have seen it on the news recently,” Jada McBride, Georgia, said.

Heightened tensions and attacks are impacting many students’ relationships with their peers and their families. According to a Stanford University study, today people of different political parties are less likely to enter a relationship than any other type of couple.

“Point blank it comes down to the fact that you’re inconsiderate, ignorant, you don’t care about other people and if you can’t show respect to any and everyone, you don’t deserve (my friendship),” Samantha Sullivan, South Carolina, said.

While top democratic and republican leaders have come out against hate speech, students acknowledge its protected status under the first amendment.

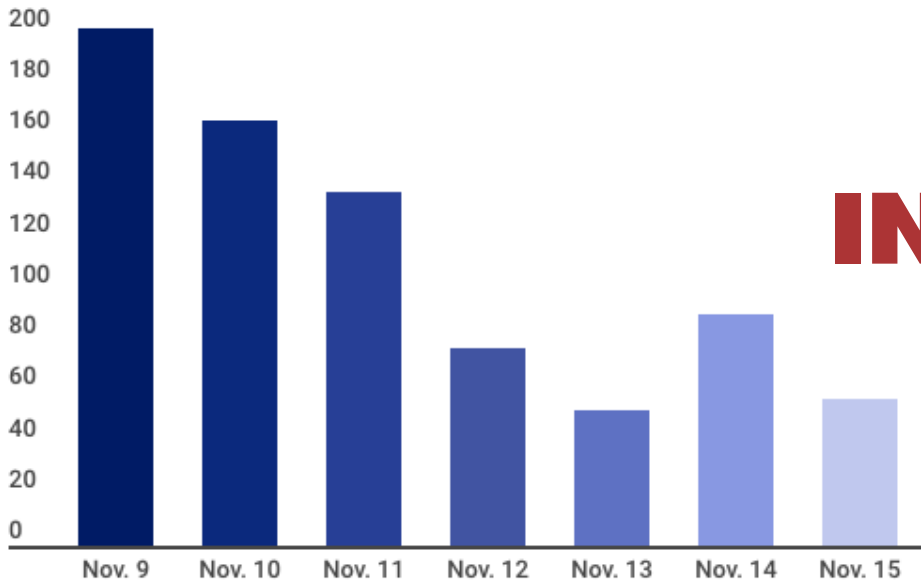
“Even though I don’t want it to be said, we’re still censoring them by telling them they can’t say it, because we live in America and in America we have free speech,” Lyons said.

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POST-ELECTION

HATE INCIDENTS

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center



I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct. I've been challenged by so many people and I don't, frankly, have time for total political correctness. And to be honest with you, this country doesn't have time, either.

--President Donald Trump

Donald Trump ran a campaign that started with racial attacks and then rode the escalator down. He encouraged a toxic stew of hatred and fear. He attacked millions of Americans. And he regularly made statements that undermined core values of our democracy.

--Senator Elizabeth Warren



I think political correctness has gone way overboard, and that's the new thing in the campaign, which I think is great. But let's just be accurate. Let's be right. ... Let's not have populism that's unattached from our principles.

--Speaker Paul Ryan