

## Listening To The Question:

### Is Forensics Accessible and Accountable to Minority and Disenfranchised Communities?

This brief presentation asserts that the leaders and tournament directors of the forensics community must do better! Based on data collected, the answer to the title question is a resounding NO! This guide which touches on the state of accessibility and accountability in the activity is based on countless interviews with students of color and students from the LGBTQ community who experienced insults, discrimination, and purposeful silencing. As a mixed-race man, I've also experienced these things throughout my tenure in the forensics community as a competitor, coach and DOF. My perspective on this matter is deeply personal but I remain committed to seeing what more can be done to address the issues.

**NO!!**

1

#### Blocking a Judge: Does it work?

Recently, several tournaments have undertaken a process to allow students to "block" judges that they have had a negative experience with from judging them. Most respondents I interviewed noted that this technique though appreciative is reactionary. Also some felt it forces a student to disclose to their coach which judges they have a problem with. There should be an standard anonymous process for whistle blowing. Also, this solution does not address the inherent bias in a judging pool. Some students noted they did not trust this solution.



2

#### Do Trigger Warnings Make Forensics More Accountable and Accessible?

Many students I interviewed recognized that they have experienced trauma in a round that harmed their mental health but did not trust a warning would help. Some did express liking this option. The debate over whether or not mandating trigger warnings seems to still be relevant. As this student noted, the issue is less about the warning and more about a judge's perception of a trigger warning or the actions taken after one is given.

"I'd rather have the ability to leave a round if I need to without punishment or negative judgement from the judge. I don't want to be responsible for telling someone where there pain is"

Anonymous Student

3



The bias on dress codes is really unfair and also limiting. I do not have access to buy designer suits. I wish the expectations for dress were gender fluid

Anonymous Student



#### Dressed For Silencing Others

Students I interviewed enjoyed the ability to dress up at tournaments; however, some noted that they did not feel that college forensics allowed them to dress how they wanted or felt comfortable. Perceptions on professional dress are changing. Most tournament invites do not make statements about supporting freedom of expression with respect to dress codes at tournaments. Are we accessible if we maintain our old ways and traditions with respect to dress and attire?

4

#### Home writes: Are we more accessible by allowing them?

Allowing others to voice their experiences with poetry, prose, etc, was noted as one of the main benefits of forensics. Yet, the discussion of allowing home writes is swept under the rug. Perhaps it's time to boldly declare home writes are good because they promote mental health.



5



I wish the forensic leaders would require tournament hosts to ask students to evaluate their experience at their own tournament. We need to call out the bad behavior.

Anonymous Student

#### Evaluate Tournaments!

Many respondents asked the community to do more to give students a way to rate tournaments and judges and make that list public!