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Next time, write a rebuttal

By Jenna A. Robinson

Despite excellent policies protecting free speech, UNC has a culture of intolerance. A recent incident provides the perfect example.

Late last week, the Daily Tar Heel printed an opinion column by a student lamenting that his classmates are willing to vacation in Israel “ongoing Palestinian apartheid.” Two days later, the columnist requested that the column be taken down because his family was receiving “hateful messages.”

Change Strip

The column was controversial, siding unequivocally with Palestine and harshly criticizing Israel and students who choose to study or travel there. I’m sure it offended some students and members of the UNC community.

But the answer to controversial speech should be more speech. As Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis wrote, “If there be time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies, to avert the evil by the process of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence.” Nowhere should this be more true than on a college campus.

To its credit, the Daily Tar Heel stood by its decision to publish the column, saying, “It is not our job to moderate anyone’s opinion. Interfering in the work of the Opinion Desk in that way would not only be unprofessional, it would be unethical...We stand proudly behind the work of our talented opinion editors, editorial board and columnists, and we are grateful for the exciting, thought-provoking work they have put in to make our paper better.”

But such a statement should not have been necessary, especially at “the people’s university.”

This incident should be a call to action to anyone who cares about free expression, civil discourse, and the marketplace of ideas. Light and liberty require free expression. Let’s work together to make Lux, Libertas a reality.