



Destroying (& Saving) Debate

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“Before anything else, including being a debate judge, I am a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist,” confesses someone now judging high school debates.

Her name is Lila Lavender, and she won the 2019 national high school debate championship. But now she has Authority.

“I cannot check the revolutionary proletarian science at the door when I’m judging.”

Start of a resignation letter?

Not on your life. Ms. Red — excuse me, Ms. Lavender added, “I will no longer evaluate and *thus never vote for* rightest capitalist-imperialist positions/arguments.”

She exalts totalitarianism, instead, and the [deaths of over one hundred million people and counting](#). And feels quite comfortable doing so . . . in this terrible, evil country . . .

in which somehow she judges debate.

She’s not exactly an aberration. High school debate has regressed “from a competition that rewards evidence and reasoning,” champion debater and coach James Fishbeck [writes](#) in *The Free Press*, “to one that punishes students for what they say and how they say it.”

He [points](#) to a listing of judges run by the National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA), where many judges on their individual but public webpages acknowledge deciding winners and losers according to their own personal politics.

“A black student I coached,” he recalls, “was told by the debate judge that he would have won his round, if he hadn’t condemned Black Lives Matter.”

One judge posted instructions that “if you are white, don’t run arguments with impacts that primarily affect POC [people of color]. These arguments should belong to the communities they affect.”

Another judge said “Referring to immigrants as ‘illegals’” would automatically lose one the debate.

While the NSDA insists that “Judges should decide the round as it is debated, not based on their personal beliefs,” Fishbeck complains they do nothing about judges who publicize their punishment of students on a political basis.

But James Fishbeck did something. He formed a new debate league, [Incubate Debate](#), which this year has already hosted 18 debate tournaments.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.