

Students And Professors Hate Debating These Topics | Clips | Dad Saves America

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SUMMARY

The discussion centers on the challenges faced by educators when questioning widely accepted narratives, particularly regarding COVID-19 restrictions, police reform, and climate change policies. The speaker emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and open dialogue in the classroom, despite potential backlash from students and peers.

- The biggest pushback comes from the belief that there are definitive answers to complex issues.*
- The speaker opposed COVID-19 restrictions, advocating for a balance between data interpretation and personal values.*
- Questions about the necessity of mask mandates and child vaccinations for COVID-19 are raised, highlighting the complexity of these decisions.*
- The speaker challenges the narrative around police racism and the call to defund the police, suggesting that evidence does not strongly support these claims.*
- The discussion includes the difficulty of measuring social issues and the importance of using social science tools to analyze data.*
- The speaker advocates for questioning established views on fossil fuel policies, such as carbon taxes, emphasizing the need for nuanced discussions.*
- There is a critique of the prevailing academic culture that discourages questioning established political and scientific perspectives.*

- What is the biggest pushback that you get from not just students, but also from your peers? - The biggest pushback you get these days is on topics that somehow there's this notion that there is a right answer. Again, this shirt, right? Trade offs only, that we know the right answer and you just should follow the science. So I was a huge opponent of Covid restrictions from the very beginning. I was vocally, I was writing, you know, newspaper in Texas.

I was helping the government centrally at the state level to try to reduce the impact of those restrictions. And one of the reasons why I was strongly against those things was not just because the fact that I was looking at data, interpreting a particular way but also weighing that against values that I have, that to me are unquestionable and things that are like, you know, I thought that we

were doing
things that were completely outside of what government
should or can do.

We don't have to re-litigate
that, but the fact that we did things that
were thought impossible for a government to do, but I
was questioning those things and I was asking my students
to go through and evaluate like, does it make sense for
us to have a mask mandate? I thought not wearing a mask
because it was not mandatory because I'm in a state institution. However, the sort of like,
cultural environment that I'm in, it felt that I was doing
something really wrong.

They were looking at me as if I was doing something really wrong. - You're killing people. - Yes. By my choice,
right? And I, we had discussions about, okay, let's go through again, use those lenses, this particular mechanism
that we just talked about to try to understand this. There's no question in my mind, those the masks are
completely nuisance and doing nothing good
in the past few years. I dare ask questions about things like, should we vaccinate a 10 year old?

Tell me why I should
vaccinate a 10 year old. Let's go through it and
I don't know the answer. Let's try to figure out whether it's a right
thing, given what we know about the vaccine, given
what we know about. So vaccinating a child
for measles, for example. No brainer. No brainer. The costs of benefits of that, right? And the risks associated
with that disease and so on. For Covid is not as clear. It's just not as clear.

And again, my kids are vaccinated. There's lots of other
reasons you wanna consider that these days. But the point is that I
dare to ask those questions. That is not an off topic thing for me. I dare to come in and discuss these ideas
and let's talk about it. Let's go through it. Let's go through the evidence together. I dare ask questions
about Defund the Police. I dare ask questions about how do we know the police is racist?

How do we know that this particular act, that's one of the things
that I think was the most difficult thing to ever
teach students in my class, is that in the context
of defunding the police, and again, talking about
how do we know things, how do we measure things? How do we measure cause and effect? How do we know
that George Floyd was
killed because he was black? How do we know that? That's a hard thing to answer.

- Wow, that's a, that's... You were asking that in class? - That was at the beginning of class. I was starting, that's October, 2020. I'm teaching a class where I asked that question, how do we know it? And you can see 50 students looking at you. it was like, are you saying this? I was like, yeah, I'm just asking the question. How do we know? It's impossible to know. It's literally impossible to know that that particular event would not have happened the same way had this person been of a different color.

We don't know that, right? Now, social sciences give us the ability to try, these tools that we have give us the ability to try to understand whether there are patterns out there and then we can study them. Let's see if, you know, in general, for this individual just is gonna be almost impossible to know unless that individual says I did it and I would not have done it if he was a different person. Right? But we can go through now the social science aspect of measuring whether or not police does things relatively more often to certain groups and other groups.

And you know, the evidence to that is not particularly strong. - Really? - It's not particularly strong. So the, if you go through the work of Roland Fryer, Harvard economist, beautifully written papers and carefully measured things, there is some evidence of certain groups being disproportionately, let's say stopped or disproportionately searched. Or there are some engagements with the police that happen more often in certain groups. Not violence. Extreme violence is just not there. So the rhetoric that we ought to defund our police because our police generates externalities and externalities means that some groups, again, going back to values, I cannot tolerate the police doing something really bad to a certain group of people.

That is a fair thing to be incredibly upset about. That's something that me, as a general libertarian person would be very upset, if that was true. If that is true. But it turns out that it's not. - I mean that's, that in and of itself is a statement that is downright heretical in our culture to talk about that. - That's right. And the same idea of fossil fuels. We mentioned fossil fuels quite a bit today already.

Same thing. If you dare to ask the question of, well, should we have a carbon tax? 'Cause that's a natural thing in economics as well, we know

carbon is an actionality. Let's think about having a carbon tax. So then the question, the way I approach that in the class, what should be the level, what should be the price of the carbon tax if we are gonna do this and it turns out, it's a very difficult thing to answer these notions of the time scale matters.

You know, the cost associated with continuation of status quo, matters and all those things, you know, might lead you to a conclusion that wait, maybe should be like, half a dollar a ton, not \$40 a ton like Canada proposed for example. You know, that's a big difference. - It's a big difference. Or under some different assumptions. - It could be \$2,000 at that. So again, all those things, right, just very.. - Or it could be zero. - Yes, it could be zero.

And asking those questions in that particular way is taking you away from a already decided perspective that you shall have as a quote scientist, right? As a scientist, my job is to go there and reaffirm their views that, you know, yes, we need to get out of fossil fuels. As a science, my, clearly I have to go in and say that we need to raise the minimum wage or all those things that there's a particular political or set of preferences that my peers have that, you know, I don't share with.

I try as best as I can to approach all those issues through the lenses that we just discussed. Not, I know the answer already. Let me tell you what it is. No, no, no. Let's use the framework here. And by the way, that's one of the reasons why there's a huge group of people at universities today that think the framework that I'm talking about, in and of itself is a problem. - If you enjoyed this clip, we've got more where that came from.

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