

Hello, I'm Naomi. I am a PhD student and have been part of this community for at least seven years. I also teach here at IU. I love to find ways for the material I explore with my students to mean more than words on a page. I want it to be meaningful, to be understood enough for them to ponder it critically and for it to become part of who they are if they wish. So, allow me to do this with you for a minute.

Imagine with me. Imagine a tree and a stream. Imagine dozens of people seated in the grass under the tree, listening, thinking, and working together. These thinkers are considering their values, the morals and beliefs most important to them, and how they can live them daily. When asked about their core values, they speak of community, integrity, love, and growth. The event under this tree is a teach-in and, here, the participants are also imagining – imagining a world led by these core values. And they are making a plan for how to live them out that very day.

I want you to know that this thing you're imagining, it happened. It happened here on April 29th, a day not covered in the “independent report” Dr. Skiba just mentioned. I know this because I was the teacher. Teach-ins are peaceful gatherings commonly focused on educating participants about justice-related topics. They offer practical information, encourage equitable participation, and inspire informed action. Teach-ins are education. And they are expressive activity.

My favorite class period of the semester is the day in which I teach about values acquisition. Most of my students are young adults, learning to make their own choices and think critically and for themselves, learning that they have a voice and a say in what the world around them looks like. It is important that they know their core values as they venture into this new territory, that they consider how these values impact their decisions and where they invest their time and energy. And

while they can (and, I hope, do) learn a lot in my classroom, learning is often more powerful when it is coupled with action. Universities are an incredible place to do this. Teach-ins did start at the University of Michigan, after all.

I love my students. I want them to learn who they are and what they have to offer. But the independent report released the other day, and the proposed expressive action policy to be voted on Monday grossly mischaracterizes them, stunts their learning opportunities, and harms their ability to practice their rights in ways that are meaningful to them. The expressive activity policy will impede not just actions like what you see here, but actions that impact all of us: yes picketing, but also celebrating. Sharing events and ideas oriented towards our clubs, sports, the Greek system, and other happenings at IU. And it robs our students of the opportunity to say something is wrong, to speak out when the people who have power over them are inflicting harm.

The proposed policy does not define “expressive activity” and, so, can be wielded to silence anything that our administration perceives as such. The requirement for approval is antithetical to the point of protest. Our administration has made it clear that we have no voice in how we are governed, so protest is how we might be heard. But what are we to do if our needs are not being met, if we are being harmed, and none of our administrative leaders seem to care or to even be willing to meet with us, and they simply do not approve this critical way we can make our voices heard? Does it make sense that our efforts to push back are only allowed at the discretion of the people to whom our pushing back is directed? If our leaders will not meet with us or hear us, should we not bring our requests to their doorstep? Instead, must we place them 25 feet away and hope the message goes where it needs to go?

Where and how can our students learn to exercise the voices they are just now discovering?

I urge you to consider the accounts you are not hearing. The information that does not make it into these official reports and communications. Why is it that this has been obstructed from you? Why are these changes happening now and all at once? It is not difficult to see that this policy is not for Hoosiers. Nor are these other changes or this report. These are for a small group of people who only want to preserve their power at the peril of those they are meant to be serving. These are not good-faith actions or done with integrity. They just want us to stop when what we need right now is to be heard. I don't know about you, but they do not align with MY values, nor those of the many people I am here to represent – my students, colleagues, mentors, and friends.

Please, do not let us or our imaginings from under this tree and that stream fade away in silence. Thank you.