



# Free Speech and the University: The State of Campus Debate

## Speaker Biographies – March 14, 2019

### Panel 1

#### **Joe Cohn, *Legislative and Policy Director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)***

Joe Cohn, FIRE's Legislative and Policy Director, is a 2004 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Law School and the Fels Institute of Government Administration, where he earned his Juris Doctor and Masters in Government Administration. Joe joined FIRE in 2012 having demonstrated a career-long dedication to advancing the cause of civil liberties. He has served as a staff attorney at the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania, a staff attorney for the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, an adjunct professor of law at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and as the interim legal director for ACLU affiliates in Nevada and Utah. Now Joe leads FIRE's efforts to defend and advance the cause of students rights through legislative advocacy.

#### **Astha Sharma Pokharel, *Bertha Justice Fellow, Center for Constitutional Rights***

Astha Sharma Pokharel is a Bertha Justice Fellow at the Center for Constitutional Rights, where she works on international human rights, corporate accountability, and abusive immigration practices. Prior to coming to the Center for Constitutional Rights, Astha was a Global Programs Fellow at Namati, an organization focusing on legal empowerment. Astha is a 2017 graduate of New York University School of Law, where she was Root-Tilden-Kern scholar. During law school, she was a student advocate in the Global Justice Clinic, where she worked with communities affected by mining in Ghana to hold government and corporate actors accountable for the impacts of the industry. She was also a student advocate in the Immigrant Rights Clinic, representing individuals in deportation proceedings.

#### **James Piltch, *Chief RA to David Gergen***

James (Jamie) Piltch is a writer and researcher focused on civics and the history of education. His writing can be found in a variety of publications, including The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, The Chronicle of Higher Education, and CNN.com. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard College, where he studied History & Literature with an emphasis on 20th century American cultural and political history. He currently serves as the Chief Research Assistant to David Gergen at the Harvard Kennedy School.

### Panel 2

#### **Kathleen Ruane, *Senior Legislative Counsel, ACLU***

Kate Ruane is a senior legislative counsel with the ACLU, where she advocates for the protection of free speech from government incursion. She also works to ensure that consumers' privacy is protected when they share their information with companies that collect their data. Kate was

previously a legislative attorney with the Congressional Research Service (CRS) for 11 years. CRS is a nonpartisan federal agency that provides in-depth research and analysis on some of the most challenging questions faced by members of Congress and their staff as they consider legislation. In her role at CRS, Kate served as an expert on the First Amendment's freedom of speech clause. She also covered issues involving telecommunications and consumer privacy. Kate received her J.D. from American University Washington College of Law in May of 2007 and her B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in 2002.

**Jonathan Butcher, *Senior Fellow at the Goldwater Institute***

Jonathan Butcher is a Senior Fellow at the Goldwater Institute. He has researched and testified on education policy and school choice programs around the U.S. His work has appeared in journals such as Education Next and the Georgetown Journal of Law and Public Policy, and he has appeared on local and national TV outlets, including C-SPAN and Fox News. He has also been a guest on many radio programs, and his commentary has appeared nationally in places such as the Wall Street Journal, Education Week, and National Review Online along with newspapers around the country. Jonathan was a member of the Arizona Department of Education's first Steering Committee for Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, the nation's first education savings account program. He is also a Senior Fellow with The Beacon Center of Tennessee, a nonpartisan research organization. Prior to joining Goldwater, Jonathan was the Director of Accountability for the South Carolina Public Charter School District, South Carolina's only statewide charter school authorizer. Jonathan previously studied education policy at the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas and worked with the School Choice Demonstration Project, the research team that evaluated voucher programs in Washington, D.C. and Milwaukee, Wisc. Jonathan studied education and family policy at The Heritage Foundation, a research institute in Washington, D.C. He holds a B.A. in English from Furman University and an M.A. in economics from the University of Arkansas.

**Jonathan Friedman, *Project Director, Campus Free Speech, at PEN America***

Jonathan Friedman is the project director for campus free speech at PEN America. He oversees PEN America's advocacy, analysis, and outreach in the national debate around free speech and inclusion at colleges and universities. Prior to joining PEN America, Friedman was an adjunct professor at New York University and Columbia University, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in comparative and international education, higher education, and social theory. His research on American and international higher education looks at such topics as university administration, organizational cultures, nationalism, and cross-cultural understanding. He also previously managed the Multinational Institute of American Studies, an exchange program funded by the U.S. Department of State for international scholars to learn about American society and culture. Friedman holds a Ph.D. in International Education from New York University, and has received awards for his teaching, research, and leadership.