

ASU Institute of Politics,

On Thursday October 9th, your institution is hosting a nationally televised debate to discuss the question "Should America End Birthright Citizenship?"

On your website, you claim that your institution seeks to bring together "leading voices in politics, media and policymaking" (ASU Institute Of Politics). While on the surface level, it appears that the people you have invited to this debate meet these requirements, a deeper look into the history of the people and institutions on the pro side of this debate quickly shows that they are not acting in good faith, nor in the interest of freedom of speech.

Mark Krikorian is the Executive Director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which certainly *sounds* like a very official organization. The Center for Immigration Studies, however, has come under fire numerous times for publishing reports deemed to be false or misleading. As recently as 2020, the CIS published a report entitled "The Fiscal Impact of Refugee Resettlement", which included the claim that immigrants cost the government more than they earn. This report was debunked by the Niskanen Center by former immigration analyst Jeremy L Neufeld. Neufeld writes "the CIS report details a series of decisions that lead to inflated costs and overconfident conclusions" (Niskanen Center). In addition to this, if false and misleading reports are not enough to discredit this institution, the co-founder of CIS, John Tanton was a white nationalist, who has been quoted supporting a majority white-european society and was described by CNN anchor Maria Santana as a man "who has openly embraced eugenics" (CNN). Due to the nature of these claims, Tanton has been accused of founding the CIS to fuel an anti-immigrant agenda. Krikorian has called these claims "hack work", but according to the Southern Poverty Law Group "on far more than a few occasions CIS has circulated materials from white nationalists and anti-Semites" (SPLC).

Horace Cooper is a "senior fellow with the National Center for Public Policy Research(NCPPR)." Once again, this conspicuously credible-sounding organization is another conservative think tank attached to numerous scandals, as well as encouraging the outright denial of climate science and denial of LGBTQ rights. In 1998, this organization was exposed for targeting senior citizens in the millions with "fright mail." Even more than being part of an untrustworthy organization, Cooper himself is a criminal. In 2010 Cooper plead guilty to a five-count felony indictment including "one count of conspiracy, one count of fraudulent concealment, two counts of false statements, and one count of obstruction of an official proceeding (Obstruction of Justice)." This charge alleged that Cooper received gifts from former NCPPR Board of Directors member and disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff while he[Cooper] was serving as chief of staff for the Employment Standards Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor.

According to an interview with the founder of the ASU Institute of Politics, Jeff Flake, "The ASU Institute of Politics will enrich [students] education with exposure to some of the most consequential political minds in the United States." This speaks true for the likes of Kris Mayes, the Attorney General of Arizona and for Chris Newman the Legal Director of NDLOM. Both the Attorney General's Office and NDLOM are creditable and respectable organizations, one being

an important part of our state's executive government and the other working nationwide to improve the lives of laborers. For Mark Krikorian and Horace Cooper, however, it is absurd to suggest they are some of the most consequential minds in politics knowing their history of fraudulent behavior and deception. It is laughable to invite them to debate with Mayes and Newman, and it normalizes their bigotry by implicitly suggesting that their opinions hold equal political weight when they are blatantly disinforming people.

If it is so difficult to find credible immigration experts willing to debate against birthright citizenship, might the debate question itself be flawed? Might the very structure of this debate mislead the average viewer, citizen, voter, etc? This highlights how the debate itself isn't "scrupulously nonpartisan" as Jeff Flake claims it should be. There is bias alone in pretending these people hold the same level of credential and deserve the same respect when they seek to sow division and hate.

"Universities have an important role to play in free speech, and ASU has a responsibility to lead in bringing people together around this shared value," ASU President Michael Crow said. "We intend to help advance the collective understanding about what freedom of speech means within the context of a democratic society."

To us, this means that — while people without credibility should have free speech — ASU should take careful consideration in who is *platformed*. Speech and debate is imperative in upholding democracy. As a large institution broadcasting this debate nationally, platforming and equating these unqualified and hateful individuals with upstanding, qualified figures degrades the integrity and credibility of free speech, especially at ASU. While freedom of speech is a noble and virtuous pursuit, it is not the job of an institution of education to platform every single stance that one can have. In fact, it is the duty of an institution of education to ensure that they are platforming logical and reasonable debates from all areas of the spectrum. It is quite clear that neither Mark Krikorian or Horace Cooper are trustworthy individuals worthy of air time within our respectable organization, and platforming their ideas which align blatantly with white supremacy and fascist ideology is incredibly dangerous in these times. As an institution of education, especially one dedicated to politics, we should know the dangers in promoting this type of speech to a national audience in our current political climate, and we, the people of ASU, urge you to stop assisting in the slow but hastening progress towards fascism within our democracy.

As an Institute of Politics, it is important that we are transparent about the people being platformed. Do we want our "leading voices" to be leading by example or leading by exploitation? As our first in what is set to be a series of "nonpartisan debates," we, ASU, have elected to platform some outstanding cases of those who lead by exploitation. Thus simultaneously making those who lead by example seem less legitimate. This is not an argument against all political opponents. We understand that it is entirely important, if not imperative, that broader perspectives are brought to the table. We only ask that great care be taken to consider how we platform the many perspectives at the ASU Institute of Politics. And maybe, just maybe, some perspectives can be thrown in the "looks like a nazi to me" bin, before it reaches said table.

Sincerely,
The people of ASU: