

The Struggle: The History of the Campus Environment Team

A slide presentation of the
KAET TV video



ASU is a community of people and ideas.



Ideally, there should be a balance between constitutionally-protected free speech . . .



And the civility to hear the new and different.



Hate speech and symbols on some American campuses caused some states to give speech codes the authority of law. But in 1990, these laws were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.



In April, 1989 four African-American students at ASU were injured in a brawl on fraternity row, after they were mistakenly associated with a group involved with an assault.

Two of those students were taken into custody for disorderly conduct.



Tension was high and on-campus protests followed.





Several days of negotiations ended with President J. Russell Nelson signing a 13-point plan, which created a study committee to combat racism.



President Nelson's successor, Dr. Lattie Coor, picked up where Dr. Nelson left off. Dr. Coor suggested that the Campus Environment Team be created.



In 1991, there was an incident in one of ASU's residence halls. Someone posted a racially-offensive poster on one of the doors in public view.



Some students were extremely angry about the poster and the students who displayed it received death threats.



The Campus Environment Team intervened and facilitated a meeting between the students.



The issue soon became a highly-charged one on campus. One faction of students demanded discipline for the students who displayed the poster. Disciplinary action would have been a violation of the offending students' First Amendment rights.



Another faction headed by Rossie Turman, then-president of the African American coalition, sought to resolve the issue by educating the public.



The subsequent rally and educational campaign resulted in a public dialogue and the implementation of multi-cultural courses.



Students deserve freedom of speech as well as equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination.

The best way to pursue both is through education -- more speech rather than censorship. This is the goal of the ASU Campus Environment Team. This strategy and the vehicle created to implement it has been a model for other campuses nationwide.