Photo by Kira Hintz/TMN

A mock Berlin Wall was put up on the quad on Nov. 28. College Republicans raised the wall for National Freedom Week and offered students passing by spray paint to write messages on the wall.

Photo by Kira Hintz/TMN

On the afternoon of Nov. 30 students knocked down a mock Berlin Wall. Knocking down the wall was supposed to be symbolic of the abolishing of communism in Germany and the start of capitalism, something the College Republicans wanted to celebrate.

College Republican's model Berlin Wall causes controversy on campus

BY KIRA HINTZ
Staff Writer

To celebrate "Freedom Week," Truman State University's College Republicans hosted a mock Berlin Wall event on The Quad Nov. 28-30 with students being able to participate by leaving graffiti messages on the wall then knocking it down with hammers.

Junior Ben Terrell, College Republicans chairman, said the idea for the Wall and "Freedom Week" came from an organization called the Young America's Foundation, which works with conservative organizations on campuses across the country. Terrell said the College Republicans planned this event for at least a month. The graffiti messages left on the Wall were meant to be representative of the graffiti put on the Berlin Wall, Terrell said.

Terrell said the Wall was supposed to represent the fight between capitalism and communism that occurred in Germany during the Cold War.

Terell said the tearing down of the wall symbolized capitalism taking its first steps.

"Once the Wall came down, East Berlin started to embrace some of the capitalism of West Berlin, Terrell said. "People who were starving there were able to get food and such like that. So we're celebrating the stretches of capitalism."

Terrell said some people expressed concerns about the Wall, especially in regard to its meaning. Terrell said some people associated the Wall with Donald Trump's Wall or as a symbol of Fidel Castro's death. Terrell said the Wall has nothing to do with Trump or Castro and was a project idea within the College Republicans organization before Trump's primary win or Castro's death. Terrell said he doesn't like that the Wall and Castro's death were so close in timing because he doesn't support Castro's actions. The event wasn't cancelled, Terrell said, because everything had already been paid for and was ready to set up.

The Wall has received a combination of positive and negative messages, but Terrell said the writing on the wall isn't just a platform to demonstrate freedom of speech.

"It's not freedom of speech or anything like that because, you know, if we wanted to we could say, 'We bought this. You can only put up what we allow," Terrell said. "But people were coming so quickly, so there wasn't a lot we could do about it. Plus, there's something to be said for you gaining more out of it if you're able to say exactly what you think, as opposed to what you're allowed to, [especially] for the sake of discussion as well."

Junior Dana Megargle said she saw the Wall and was initially confused about the project. Megargle said she assumed the Wall had to do with Trump because of Trump's wall rhetoric, as well as his status as the president elect of the United States.

After talking to Terrell and finding out the Wall wasn't related to Trump, Megargle said she still thought the Wall's presence was poorly timed. Megargle said the easy association with Trump, the anxiety and fear among people post-election and Castro's death only added layers of confusion to passersby.

Megargle said she also disagreed with the meaning behind the Wall.

"I find it, at least, very hypocritical for an organization that represents the Republican political party to be celebrating the tearing down of one Wall while simultaneously supporting or at least condoning the ideological building of another," Megargle said. "They [College Republicans] were celebrating tearing it down as a symbol of capitalism winning over communism and that they were equating freedom to capitalism, and I think that the Berlin Wall is much more complex than that."

Megargle said the Berlin Wall could have been represented better through displaying pictures of the art that stands on the east side gallery of the Wall. Megargle said the art of the Wall better shows the freedom and complexity within the Berlin Wall's history and its people.

Freshman Kjja Underwood said she also saw the Wall between classes and didn't understand the purpose of the event.

Underwood said she initially thought the Wall had something to do with Trump because of how tense the election season had been.

Better publicity and an explanation of the event, Underwood said, could've been a more beneficial way to communicate the Wall's purpose to students and leave an impact on them.

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