

Bonus Ep 01: Behind the scenes at Secularism 2019

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Here's a little bonus content from Secularism which was originally going to be in our post conference review.

In this episode, Emma Park, a freelance writer and NSS volunteer, interviewed five of the Conference speakers to explore some of the issues raised by their talks in further detail. Some of these were a bit more wide ranging than the topic. Everyone's views are their own and do not necessarily represent those of the NSS.

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Notes

Nick Cohen (00:51), political journalist, on the parallels between political and religious extremists, the lack of leadership from liberal centrists in British politics today, and the need for secularists to be self-critical and form political alliances to resist extremists:

'Generalisations are the basis of identity politics and breaking down identity politics is the road to freedom.'

Izzy Posen (08:04), President of the Bristol Free Speech Society, on the damage caused by universities' excessive tolerance of the extremist student groups trying to shut down free speech on campus:

'It's an alliance of Islamists and far leftists, and by Islamists I don't mean Muslims, I mean Islamists who have a political ideology based out of imposing Islamic values on Britain ... [These groups] unite in their hatred for the West.'

Pragna Patel (17:41), Director of Southall Black Sisters, on how secularists can challenge the claim by ethnic minority leaders to speak on behalf of an entire community, even those who may disagree with them:

'Our organisation has always challenged community leaderships, because they have never spoken on behalf of women, they have never spoken on behalf of gay and lesbian communities.'

Rachel Laser (25:13), President of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, on the threats to freedom of expression and other human rights in the US from right-wing evangelicals, and how to 'burst the pimple' of such extremism:

'Today religious freedom in America is more about the right to discriminate, or licence to discriminate, than it is about the right to be able to practise your religious observances.'

Yasmin Rehman (34:06), Member of the NSS Council, on the challenges of being a secular British Muslim, changes in the UK government's treatment of minorities in recent years, and the

compatibility of Islam with secularism:

'If you look at a religious text that was written a very very long time ago, it will endorse things that we as a society wouldn't condone ... I want to be able to practise my faith, but I also want to be able to challenge my faith, or any other, when it comes to abuses of human rights'.

You can find out more about the conference speakers and browse all videos on the [dedicated page](#).

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