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The Conservative Cookie Rebellion

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By Wendy McElroy

FOX NEWS

Want to buy a cookie? If you are a white male, that'll be \$1; for white females, 75 cents; blacks, 25 cents. The price structure is the message.

ADVERTISEMENT Through Affirmative Action Bake Sales, conservative groups on campuses across America are satirically and peacefully spotlighting the injustice of AA programs that penalize or benefit students based solely on gender and race. The cookie rebels are being slammed by such a backlash that the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) -- dreaded by many university administrators -- just shot "**an opening salvo**" in the rebels' defense.

Thor Halvorssen, CEO of FIRE, declared in a press release last Friday: "Parody and political satire are not illegal in this country. College administrators appear to be under the mistaken impression that protesting affirmative action is not covered by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Freedom of speech is a right enjoyed equally and fully by both supporters and opponents of affirmative action."

What are the AA bake sales, and why do they engender such furor?

The sales are intended to spark discussion, not profits. They are in the same genre as **guerrilla theater** -- an effective counterculture tactic usually associated with the Left -- through which societal assumptions are challenged by acting out scenarios. To the amazed query, "Are you allowed to do this?" one cookie rebel responded, "Admissions officers do it every day." By shifting the context from university policy to baked goods, the assumptions of affirmative action policies are not only challenged as sexist and racist but also revealed as nonsense.

The cookie rebels are doing the one thing political correctness cannot bear: revealing its absurdity and laughing in its face. They are not merely speaking truth to power; they are chuckling at it.

To regain the moral indignation they prize so highly, the politically correct must demonize the sale of baked goods. Thus, at Indiana University one student **filed an official complaint**, saying that the cookie sale would "create a climate of hostility against students of color and women and can easily turn violent." (The fact that those students were the ones given a price break didn't seem to occur to the irony-starved critic who equated a buyer's discount with a threat of violence.)

To its credit, Indiana University chose to protect the freedom of speech for both sides of the affirmative action issue; it allowed the bake sale to proceed. Other universities

have made the opposite choice.

The **College Republicans** at the University of Washington sponsored an affirmative action bake sale on Oct. 7. CR President Jason Chambers **reported**, "Approximately 150 students were gathered around our booth discussing the issue [AA] by about 12:30 when our booth was attacked by leftist students who disagreed with our stance on affirmative action." The Leftists threw cookies to the ground, tore down the display and physically attacked one vendor.

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When the leftists began making threats, one of the cookie rebels had called the police because he feared the discussion -- hitherto civil -- might turn violent. Chambers explained, "Unfortunately, rather than step in and arrest our attackers, the police stood by while the University said we, the peaceful ones, had to shut down because WE were creating an unsafe environment. ... Our protests that the CRs were peacefully demonstrating while the leftists got violent fell upon deaf ears."

The university allowed a handful of violent students to decide which political views could or could not be expressed on campus. This is called a "**heckler's veto**"; it is the last resort of those who cannot win an argument through facts or reason.

Halvorsen commented, "Subsequently, in a frightening betrayal of their fiduciary duty and their obligations to the Bill of Rights, UW's Board of Regents released an open letter condemning the College Republicans for being 'hurtful' while failing to mention the counter-demonstrators' disruption of the College Republicans' peaceful expression of their political views on a matter of pressing public concern."

The University of Washington is not alone.

-- The **University of California-Irvine** shut down its bake sale as discriminatory.

-- **Northwestern University** ordered students to cease selling cookies or face the police.

-- **Southern Methodist University** closed the bake sale after 45 minutes because it created an "unsafe" environment.

-- **William and Mary** officials -- claiming to be "shocked and appalled" -- also cut off the cookies.

Clearly, universities don't like the affirmative action bake sales. One reason: The sales, like that at **Indiana University**, often feature petitions "to ban the collection of racial data, particularly in the admissions and hiring processes."

But most of all, the politically correct do not like being publicly mocked and revealed as ridiculous.

FIRE is performing the valuable task of shining a bright light on the viciousness with which the PC respond to mockery. Its campaign "will include mailings to alumni, parents, university donors, and state legislators."

Meanwhile the most effective thing the rest of us can do is to keep laughing.

Boss Tweed -- that symbol of political corruption from 19th century New York -- used to rail against cartoonists who parodied him without pause. Tweed knew he could

politically survive anything except being the brunt of jokes. As with Tweed, so too with AA. That's the way the cookie and policy crumble.

Wendy McElroy is the editor of ifeminists.com and a research fellow for The Independent Institute in Oakland, Calif. She is the author and editor of many books and articles, including the new book, "Liberty for Women: Freedom and Feminism in the 21st Century" (Ivan R. Dee/Independent Institute, 2002). She lives with her husband in Canada.

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