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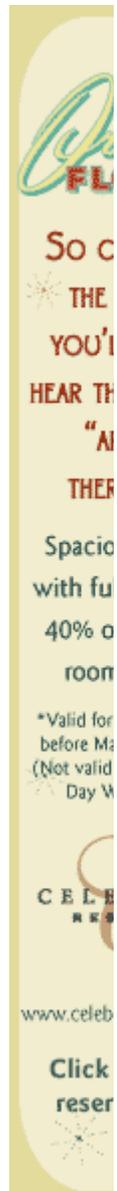
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## College Criticized For Banning Movie

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**FORT PIERCE** - A community college is drawing criticism for banning a Christian student organization from showing the controversial Mel Gibson movie "The Passion of the Christ."

Indian River Community College officials defended the decision, saying they were following a long-standing practice banning student groups from airing R-rated films.

The rule aims to protect underage students attending the college under its dual-enrollment program with local high schools, said Johnny Moore, IRCC vice president of student affairs.

"The decision ... had nothing to do with the movie's religious context," Moore said.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, or FIRE, has accused the school of a double standard because it allowed other R-rated films, such as the documentary "Welcome to Sarajevo."

FIRE President David French said the college was trampling on the "legal and moral rights to free speech and freedom of conscience." He said the ban is part of a national problem of higher-learning institutions limiting religious activities on campuses.

IRCC spokeswoman Michelle Abaldo said R-rated movies, such as "Welcome to Sarajevo," have been shown as part of class lessons, but never by a student group. Recently, the school denied another group's request to show "The Last Samurai."

"We couldn't show our Christian movie, 'The Passion,' but they can show different movies about the Holocaust or 'Saving Private Ryan,'" said Christeena Koshy, a 20-year-old nursing student and a member of Christian Student Fellowship.

"They say we're in college now, that we're all adults. But now they're saying this movie is too graphic. They're acting like we're little kids."

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Moore said the college has asked constitutional attorneys to review the college's rules on student events on campus. He said changes could be made after the review.

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