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Tongue Tied

Banned Books, Slavery, Hooters, Language

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Monday, March 10, 2003
By Scott Norvell

FOX NEWS

The ever-vigilant Foundation for Individual Rights in Education reports that a professor at Citrus College in Glendora, Calif., **forced her students to write anti-war letters** to President Bush and penalized their grades when some refused.

ADVERTISEMENT Professor Rosalyn Kahn demanded that students in her Speech 106, which is a required course, also write to a state senator expressing the same anti-war sentiments. When several students asked if they could write letters supportive of Bush instead, she told them that would not be acceptable and their grades would suffer if they did so.

"While professor Kahn is free to hold and espouse her views on appropriate matters of public concern, it is, of course, absolutely impermissible for her or any professor to coerce students to share her political orthodoxies. This was an unconscionable abuse of classroom power," said Thor Halvorssen, FIRE's CEO.

Since FIRE's intervention, the college has sanctioned the professor and apologized to the students.

Pig Problems

An English schoolteacher has **banned books** that contain stories about pigs from her elementary school classrooms in order to avoid offending Muslims, reports London's *Sun* newspaper.

Headteacher Barbara Harris removed the books from classes for the youngest grades at Park Road Junior Infant and Nursery School in Batley, West Yorkshire.

"Recently the headteacher has been aware of an occasion where young Muslim children in a class were read stories about pigs," she said in a statement. "This could have caused offense to religious sensitivities.

"The books remain in the school library and there is nothing to stop our youngest children having stories such as 'The Three Little Pigs' in small groups," it said.

Joe's Lament

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The University of North Carolina in Wilmington has **stopped playing** a modern remake of the song "Cotton Eye Joe" during its basketball games because an alumnus complained that the original song contained references to slavery, reports the Wilmington *Morning Star*.

A rap version of the song -- performed by a group called Rednex -- was part of a play list downloaded from an online CD called ESPN Jock Jams. After the university received the complaint, the song was dropped from the play list.

Melton McLaurin, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, said because of its minstrel roots even a modern remake of the old song could offend African-Americans. "It makes people uncomfortable," he said.

But while officials object to "Cotton Eye Joe" being played on campus, they will allow the rapper Ludacris to perform it at an upcoming performance.

Let 'Em Starve

A high school athletics director in Wisconsin was **suspended** and almost fired for taking a group of high school seniors to a Hooters restaurant after a game, reports the Green Bay *News-Chronicle*.

Ann Rose was suspended for taking the boys -- all of them 18 except for her son, who turned 18 later in the month -- but will not be fired as the district administrator requested.

"I never dreamed it would offend anybody," Rose said. "If I thought it would, I wouldn't have taken them there."

Diverse and Multicultural, Except ...

Fund-raising bricks **emblazoned with crosses** on a walkway at a high school in Virginia have been removed because a parent complained that they were an inappropriate religious display on public property, reports the *Clarke Times-Courier*.

Parents and students in Loudoun, Va., were allowed to buy bricks on Potomac Falls High School's "Walkway of Fame" as part of a fund-raising effort by PAWS, the parent-teacher organization there.

But a parent took offense because some people had crosses etched into the bricks along with the names of loved ones.

As a result, the school has decided to remove bricks with religious symbols on them and replace them with blank ones. Loudoun is a "diverse" and "multicultural" community, and these characteristics were taken into account when the school made its decision, said Wayde Byard, the school system's public information officer.

Another Meany

A Latina student at the University of Northern Colorado filed a **complaint** with the Department of Education alleging that a professor demeaned and ethnically intimidated her in a debate over a bilingual education initiative, reports the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Valerie Lara says finance professor Junius Peake insulted, degraded and intimidated her because she called into question his motives for writing an op-ed piece in favor of a ballot measure that would have banned bilingual education.

A school investigation found that Peake was not guilty of intentionally intimidating Lara, but that he could have been more sensitive to her feelings.

But the UNC Black/Latino/a Coalition says the incident is all about race.

"For us, the fact that this is a woman of color matters," said Genie Canales, professor of social psychology at UNC. "When I was a graduate student, I went through a similar experience, approaching a professor to ask a question and was treated in a demeaning, insulting fashion. That was 20 years ago ... I often fail to see respect for students of color."

Motherlode

This month's *Atlantic Monthly* includes an excerpt from Diane Ravitch's new book, *The Language Police*, which is either amusing or horrifying depending on your point of view. The piece is a simple list of words and phrases banned by major textbook publishers and their suggested alternatives. The piece is not online.

The best among many:

Blind leading the blind, the (banned as handicapism)
Busybody (banned as sexist, demeaning to older women)
Confined to a wheelchair (banned as offensive; replace with "person who is mobility impaired")
East, Eastern (banned as Eurocentric)
Elderly, the (banned as ageist; replace with "older people")
Fairy (banned because it suggests homosexuality; replace with "elf")
Founding Fathers, the (banned as sexist; replace with "the Founders" or "the Framers")
Huts (banned as ethnocentric; replace with "small houses")
Jungle (banned; replace with "rain forest")
Little person (banned as offensive; replace with "person of small stature")
Lumberjack (banned as sexist; replace with "woodcutter")
One-man band (banned as sexist; replace with "one-person performance")
Regatta (banned as elitist)

And the best (Stalin's minions couldn't have done better):

Mother Russia (banned as sexist; replace with "Russia, vast land of rich harvests")

Can't wait until next Monday for more snippets of politically correct nonsense? Head over to the daily edition of Tongue Tied at the [Tongue Tied Web Site](#).

Mailbag:

Garth T. in Minneapolis, Minn., writes:

So Disney is once again rewriting history so as not to offend anyone. What's next, making a movie about how the Japanese were defending themselves at Pearl Harbor? Perhaps one that shows how well the Nazis and Jews were getting along until the Imperialist U.S. went over and started shooting for no reason.

Juan G. in St Louis writes:

Someone needs to tell Disney that not all of Mexican-Americans are brown. Some of us are just as white as Mr. Disney himself.

Heather W. writes:

It is people like Glenda Gill and Jesse Jackson of the Rainbow/PUSH coalition that keep African-American citizens focused on the past instead of looking toward their future. You can add Mr. Sharpton to that group as well.

I often wonder if these supposed "leaders" of the black community will ever stop repressing "their people" at the expense of their bank accounts. It is because of these leaders that the black community will never take their rights and prosper with them. If that ever happened, the Rev. Jackson might actually have to work for a living.

Ray P. at the University of Kansas writes:

In reference to your 3.3.2003 piece about the cartoon in the student newspaper of the U of California at Riverside, some thoughts:

You suggest that the cartoon's artist should be free to express negative ideas that make generalizations about Asian graduate students, but that people who don't like the cartoon should not be free to denounce it.

You have no knowledge of the reality of such situations, which are far more complicated than what the cartoon depicts. First, graduate students who wish to become teaching assistants in American universities must pass English tests to qualify, and they are not easy tests. Second, many undergraduates mistake speaking English with an accent for poor English. Third, having been a college writing teacher for nine years, I can tell you with absolute confidence that the majority of American undergraduates are barely competent in speaking and writing their own language. They have no business criticizing the presumed shortcomings of graduate students from other countries, most of whom worked harder to get into college than the average American student, and continue to work harder once they earn admission.

The problem is not with the Asian graduate teaching assistants. The problem is with spoiled, impatient American undergraduates who look for ways to confirm the stereotypes they bring into the classroom.

Tony, serving overseas in the USAF, writes:

Your article about the University of California, Riverside's publishing of a cartoon depicting an Asian Graduate Teaching Assistant teaching while speaking in broken English was funny because it was true.

As a graduate of UCR, half of my classes were taught by foreign Grad Students who spoke such poor English, the students would almost always end up teaching themselves

after class. We couldn't understand the teachers! Now the campus is upset because someone exposed the truth? I guess reality is a pill all too difficult to swallow in California these days.

Thank God I'm in Afghanistan!

Josh K. writes:

Tongue Tied's stories are presented as examples of "politically correct nonsense," but because of the neutral tone of the stories, it is necessary for the audience to read them with a sense of irony. We're supposed to be laughing at these politically correct fools for being too careful or whatever it is that makes these examples nonsensical.

Because your critique of Political Correctness in these cases consists of nothing but

a compilation with no analysis, you give the impression that you find each element of the scenarios worthy of contempt: premise, quotations, etc. Because your views are not stated directly, it seems you disagree with the statement from Richard Cook, for example, from the Remembering the Alamo segment, "You have to stay away from the stereotypes and not make broad judgments of any group."

Taking the contrary attitude has never led to anything positive, indeed those attitudes provided the atmosphere of discrimination and racism prior to the civil rights movement. I hope it is not your intention to cast a negative light onto such statements as Cook's.

I have no objection to your opposition of Political Correctness, I also am uncomfortable with its presence as a potential censor in political discourse. I think that merely presenting instances of it, however, is an ultimately shallow resistance to it. Tongue Tied could be deeply enriched if the motivations for and causes of Political Correctness were criticized on an individual basis. The PC war would be much more effectively waged out of the abstract and in concrete examples such as the ones you present. However, unless you provide such criticism, your article will remain thin and smug.

Bob T. of Southampton, Pa., writes:

You just lost another viewer and reader. This is not in any way a balanced news-site. Try coming back to the center if you go any further to the right you'll fall off the scale.

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