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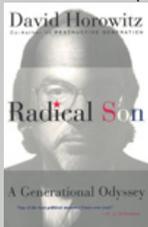
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Young Conservative Defies the P.C. Campus

By **David Fein**

CNSNews.com | July 11, 2003

Initially labeled a "suspicious white male" by police investigating a dispute at the multicultural center on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, student Steve Hinkle continues to defy university officials who want him to apologize for posting a flyer advertising a conservative speaker.

The original dispute occurred Nov. 12, 2002, when Hinkle, a member of the College Republicans, entered the Cal Poly Multicultural Center to post a flyer promoting an upcoming speech by Mason Weaver, a conservative black author of the book *It's OK to Leave the Plantation*. The book analyzes the dangers of blacks becoming too dependent on government programs.

Several students confronted Hinkle and told him he needed approval from the coordinator of the multicultural center before he could post anything. While Hinkle left to investigate the claims, one of the students called the campus police department.

According to the police report eventually filed in the case, "On 11-12-02...we were dispatched to the multicultural center to investigate a report of a suspicious white male passing out literature of an offensive racial nature."

On Jan. 29 of this year, Cal Poly charged Hinkle with disrupting a student meeting - a Bible reading - in the multicultural center's lounge area.

In February, university officials held a hearing to determine Hinkle's culpability, a transcript of which was compiled by Hinkle's faculty adviser. During the hearing, Cornel Morton, vice president of student affairs, attempted to explain to Hinkle the mindset of his accusers.

"You are a young white member of CPCRC (Cal Poly College Republicans). To students of color, this may be a collision of experience," Morton said. "The chemistry has racial implications, and you are naive not to acknowledge those."

A copy of the transcript from the hearing was provided to **CNSNews.com** by the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a free speech group representing Hinkle in the dispute.



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On March 12, university Vice Provost W. David Conn found Hinkle guilty and ordered him to write letters of apology to the offended students, informing Hinkle that if he failed to write the letters, he would face much stiffer penalties.

But Hinkle refuses to apologize.

"What is so shocking about this case is that Cal Poly decided not to punish the student censors, but rather, to punish the student who simply attempted to post a flyer that included only factually accurate information," said Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for FIRE.

Lukianoff said Hinkle's accusers were responsible for the disruption in the student lounge, not the other way around. He added that the student Bible-reading group had no formal recognition from the university and therefore could not have been conducting a campus-related function.

The irony, according to Lukianoff, was that "Hinkle was actually posting flyers for an event that was sponsored by a recognized student group and by the student government, and it is he who has the far better claim to campus function status."

Hinkle not only isn't planning to apologize, Lukianoff wants Cal Poly to apologize to Hinkle and the entire student body. The university must also "overturn its rulings against Steve Hinkle, expunge any derogatory information from his record and take serious corrective action to make sure that no students believe that they can report a student to the university police simply because they dislike that student's expression."

Carlos Cordova, Cal Poly's legal counsel, defended the university's handling of the matter.

"Mr. Hinkle was charged with engaging in conduct which disrupted a student meeting, a content-neutral rule applicable to all students. He was not charged because of his political affiliation or because some members of our campus community considered the flyers he attempted to post to be offensive."

Any decision to punish Hinkle will be made by the university's director of student judicial affairs, who was unavailable for comment. However, Morton emphasized that an expulsion or suspension was not being considered. Morton would not speculate on how the university might respond to Hinkle's refusal to apologize.

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