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Insanity

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Wednesday, Jul

By JEFFREY RECORD CO

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He didn't hit any. He didn't utter a word to the lesbians that all decent men use.

But he responded. William Paterson and now stands professor.

If Jihad Daniel, 66, Professor Arlene, threatened any man impatiently also was guilty of threatening.

If to "threaten" is to express intent to cause harm, Jihad Daniel is an innocent man.

And if his e-mail "threatened" Scala, the idea of free speech has been turned on its head.

This mess began last winter when Professor Scala posted a notice on WPU's computer bulletin board about a showing of the movie "Ruthie and Connie: Every Room in the House." She described the film as "a lesbian relationship story."

"Ruthie and Connie" is a documentary about two older gay women who left their families and made a life together. It premiered at the 2002 Berlin Film Festival.

Daniel's Muslim sensibilities were offended. Possibly confusing e-mail with the bulletin board announcement, he wrote to



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Scala: "Do not send me any mail about 'Connie and Sally' and 'Adam and Steve.' These are perversions. The absence of God in higher education brings on confusion. That is why in these [WPU] classes the Creator of the heavens and the earth is never mentioned."

In her two-paragraph complaint to WPU officials, Scala said Daniel's message "sounds threatening" - but didn't say how. She urged that WPU inform Daniel that he had violated university policy - but didn't say how he had done so.

WPU President Arnold Speert told Daniel that, based on the definition of "perversion," Daniel had shown bias toward a "protected category" of people and that this was intolerable.

The reprimand is a permanent part of Daniel's personnel file.

Daniel appealed. To Speert, he cited Plato and Aristotle. He cited the First Amendment. He cited James Madison. He noted his own religious beliefs.

Threatening? He told Speert: "I have been here 14 or 15 years. No one - I repeat, no one - can say that they ever felt or experienced any threatening or hostile behavior, mentally or physically, from Jihad Daniel."

The censure stood.

So now, four months later, did Scala possibly overreact?

She absolutely did not, Scala says, and as the head of the women's studies department, she stands for "an end to all systems of oppression."

But censure for "threatening?"

Scala says she had little to do with what befell Daniel. The censure was not her decision but the university's.

Yet in her complaint, she suggested Daniel be informed that he had violated WPU policy. "I'm not sure of what else should be done to censure him," she wrote.

Scala says her movie invitation was made not to individuals but to the WPU announcement board. This is correct, but the invitation clearly identified her as the "contact person" and included her phone number and e-mail address. The inclusion of that information makes it sound like responses are acceptable. It doesn't say they must be positive.

Here is the eloquent Mr. Jihad Daniel in his failed appeal to Speert: "People disagree with my ideas and I never, by any stretch of the imagination, said, 'Oh they don't agree with me so they must be a threat.' That is insanity."

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