



## CARROLL: Star Chamber at CC

By Vincent Carroll

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

I'm delighted to hear from the director of Colorado College's Feminist and Gender Studies Program that many of her colleagues "disagreed" with the abominable way that two male students were recently treated after publishing a satire of a radical feminist flier called the *Monthly Rag* (see today's Speakout, "Feminists at CC seek dialogue").

Not that professor Tomi-Ann Roberts actually uses the word "abominable." She is too busy building her case that the satiric flier was a "hostile" voice - which it was not, and which you can verify by reviewing it and the publication it parodied at the Web site of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (thefire.org).

A more accurate term for both might be "somewhat juvenile."

In her response to my original column on this topic ("CC's free-speech fears," April 8), Roberts makes two remarkable claims. First, she denies that the students "were subjected to a punishment" for exercising their First Amendment rights. She manages this feat by failing to note that the dean of students found the two young men guilty of "violating the student code of conduct policy on violence under the college value of Respect." This alarming but baseless finding goes into their files, I was told by an associate dean.

More to the point, the process itself was the punishment: being hauled before a "conduct board" to be grilled for more than three hours on the students' personal beliefs and attitudes, fearing that a wrong answer risked possible expulsion. As political science professor David Hendrickson complained in the student newspaper, "This entire procedure was in fact an atrocious invasion of the most elementary personal rights. I do not know of any system of jurisprudence in the modern world that would give a formal sanction to this miscellany of unguided missiles directed at the supposed perpetrators."

Finally, Roberts marvels that anyone would assume that radical feminists on campus might have had a hand in pressing for the inquisition. In fact, the assumption flows inevitably from the nature of the panel's queries. As Hendrickson reconstructs the questions, they included such gems as, "Have you ever taken a feminist and gender studies class? Have you ever felt threatened on campus? What is feminism, to you? What is traditional masculinity, to you? What do you think your position in society is? How do you think this relates to issues of race, class, gender and power on this campus and in the wider society? What was your intent? Did you write this thinking that your favored position within an oppressive power structure would absolve you of accountability for your acts?"

Why, perish the thought that this witch hunt had anything to do with the fact that the satire's targets were hypersensitive, radical activists determined, by Roberts' own admission, "to fight back." Of course not!

Colorado College is an excellent school, evidence for which includes the fact that many students and professors are apparently disturbed by the Star Chamber-type proceeding that was used to intimidate two free thinkers. But it's time for President Richard Celeste to reaffirm the college's core values; he could do that by repudiating the way the office of student life investigates student conduct and by apologizing to two students

tarred by an absurd and despicable finding.

*Vincent Carroll is editor of the editorial pages. Reach him at [carrollv@RockyMountainNews.com](mailto:carrollv@RockyMountainNews.com).*

© Rocky Mountain News