Hackney, Sheldon: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (1993): News Article 24

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No group is a reliable defender of free speech—although individuals within groups may be. During the 1970s, much of the Jewish establishment in the United States was viciously attacking blacks, Jews, including some rabbis—active in the civil rights and anti-war movements—who objected to Israel’s human rights violations in the Occupied Territories. I knew a rabbi in St. Louis who was arrested as he was a trainer to all the Jews who ever lived. And from vigilantes, I received death threats because of what I had written about Palestinian rights being violated.

Recently, a white conservative columnist in the Daily Pennsylvanian angered a number of black students at the University of Pennsylvania. Instead of writing an answer to or questioning the paper or bringing the paper, they conflated just about the entire run of an issue—some 14,000 copies—-and threw them into the garbage.

A group calling itself the Working Committee of Concerned Black and Latino Students said the protest had been directed at "the blatant and covert racism continually perpetuated by both institutions and individuals on the University of Pennsylvania campus."

If white students had done the same thing in furious reaction to what a black columnist had written, I expect these Concerned Black and Latino Students might have demonstrated against so raw a violation of the black columnist’s free-speech rights.

I’ve covered many newspaper stories around the country—by perpetrators on the right and on the left—and no one ever got away with a teaser. They all say they had the right to suppress speech that was harmful. At the University of Pennsylvania, the Concerned Black and Latino Students not only class they had the moral right to try to destroy all the copies of the daily newspaper but they also insist that it was a “legal protest.”

Now dig this. This ranks as one of the lamest excuses for what was undeniable a deliberate suppression of speech. The Concerned Black and Latino Students—just as many Jordan reported in The Washington Post (April 17)—declared that "not only did the papers free, but there exists no explicit restriction on the numbers of papers that any given student may remove.

Can you imagine Malcolm X—if he had ever done anything like this, which he never did—diluting the impact of his act in order to swirling out of all real responsibility for it?

Meanwhile, the head of the University of Pennsylvania, Sheldon Hackney—who is the very model of a politically correct university president—publicly said he regretted that because of this hijacking of the papers, "two important university values—diversity and open expression—seem to be in conflict."

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Said the Black Student: You Can’t Fight Racism Without Fighting Antisemitism—and Vice Versa


did—-as cork in a bottle, as cork in a wood—-then he is to invite every group we can find to have dinner at Hillel, to sit in a room privately and just talk as human beings and students about what our lives as Harvardians are like. We’ve managed through that to make some serious friendships, I have an active relationship with the leaders of all the eight major ethnic groups, including the Black Students Association.

Andi Milens of Washington University in St. Louis said she became friendly with officials of the Association of Black Students, and then told of this incident: "A Jewish student on campus is a blatant racist. In response to a book sale where one of the black sociologists was selling an obviously anti-Semitic book, he had a watermelon sale. Another Jewish student intervened, talked to the black students and said, ‘Look. He doesn’t speak for us.’ And I called up my friend from Students and said, ‘What do you want me to do? You know he’s a racist, and that we are Jewish. What do you want me to do? ’ He told her, and she issued a Hillel statement saying just what she told him.

The Jewish racist got worse, put up flyers falsely quoting black speakers. Andi Milens and her friends from the Association of Black Students confronted, and she suggested that a letter be printed in the paper ‘from as many Jewish organizations as possible saying that this person doesn’t represent the Jewish community.’

Ten Jewish organizations signed the letter, and it was unanimously cited, throughout. I think that the Jewish racist represented only his vicious self.

Then came the notorious ad that appeared in a number of college papers around the country. The ad that Holocaust had never taken place. It’s like telling blacks that slavery had never taken place.

The Jewish students at Washington University held a protest—a protest against the ad, not against the college paper’s right to print it. There was Christian organization at the protest, along with the Gay and Lesbian Community Alliance. But what about the Association of Black Students? Andi Milens called a leader of the association, and he said, ‘Tell us what to do. That’s it.’ Members of the Association of Black Students understood, and one of its leaders spoke. He emphasized that racism and anti-Semitism go hand in hand, and you can’t fight one without fighting the other.

At Washington University and at other campuses where Hillel students and black students are in conversation, all is not, of course, always harmonious. Jewish students, for instance, are hardly enthusiastic about some of the speakers some of the black groups invite. One, Conrad Mohammed, a representative of Malcolm X Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam, spoke at Harvard and received—I’m surprised at the making of the evening news—that Jews are responsible for the depredation of the entire nation. And I imagine, Jews understand that.

Some months ago, I was in Washington at a meeting of the B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation Center for Campus Study. Among those speaking were student leaders at the Harvard Black Student Union. They were talking about Jewish-black tensions on their campuses.

Shai Feld of Harvard said: "One of the things we’ve