

1993

Hackney, Sheldon: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (1993): News Article 52

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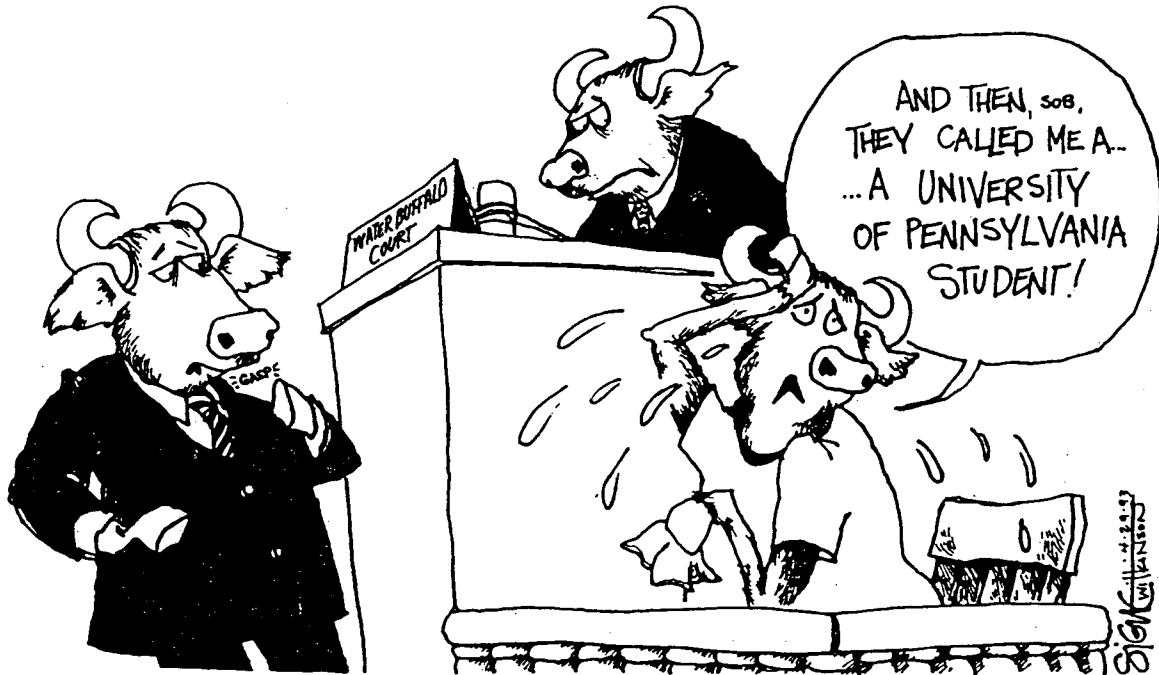
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Opinion



In Our Opinion

Name-calling — Ivy League style

These are not good times for creative insult.

Call somebody a dunce and you'll get angry mail from an organization of people whose heads come to a sharp point, asserting grievous injury to their collective self-image. There's probably an organization of pusillanimous poltroons too.

But there has never been an imbecility that couldn't be topped. Generally, the best at this fine art have been universities, where very smart people gather in large groups to behave like pompous fools.

At the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, there is an actual, entire employee whose job is to dig deeply into all disagreements, think deeply and profoundly, and announce that it was all a matter of racism.

This relieves the university of the difficult task of actually doing anything to help minority students be comfortable and productive in a sea of Ivy League twitdom. It also means the administration need not do anything intelligent to address real racism.

The most recent incident involves a typical campus situation — students making noise while other students are attempting to study. The result was also typical — loud shouts to shut up, accompanied by angry epithets.

One student called the noisemakers, a group of young women, "water buffalo." Perhaps that's a little off. Jackasses, hyenas or seagulls would have seemed closer to the point, but the kid called them water buffalo, even

though that noble critter isn't especially noisy.

Enter the thought police. The women were black. Some water buffalo live in Africa (although most are from India and some from Australia). He couldn't have been calling them Australians. Aha! The official prober decreed that the insult must have been racist, based on an incorrect assumption about the water buffalo's point of

origin, and the disturbed student should be tried for his crime.

It is difficult to imagine bright young minds being educated by a pack of idiots, but apparently that is the way things currently go at Penn.

Let the kid go. The effort would go farther if directed toward real race problems (even education). It's hard to justify breathtaking tuition hikes when acting like a herd of dik-diks.