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Hackney, Sheldon: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (1993): News Article 25

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Pennsylvania Preparing to Buffalo a Yeshiva Boy

Jeffrey Goldberg Uncovers the Case of a Freshman Caught in the Crossfire of the Culture Wars

In a case that embroils President Clinton's efforts to mend the National Endowment for the Humanities, the University of Pennsylvania will go on trial next week before a school disciplinary committee on charges that he called a group of black women "water buffalo." As unlikely as the charge sounds, the hapless freshman, Eden Jacobowitz, is taking the proceedings seriously. If found guilty, his transcript could be stamped "racial harasser," and Penn regulations allow the administration to expel him from school. His defense — he's arguing it himself, since Penn rules prohibit him from bringing a lawyer to argue for him at Monday's trial — will be that there were no racial overtones to what he said. What he did, he says, was to translate, unconsciously, a non-sectarian Hebrew put-down often heard at his Long Island yeshiva — "behemah," a word that means "livestock" or "buffalo" but whose slang meaning is "idiot." The case of Penn vs. Jacobowitz will be closely watched not only because it is turning into one of the most remarkable skirmishes in the culture wars.
NEW YORK METROPOLITAN

Penn Preparing to Buffalo a Yeshiva Bocher

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culture war being waged on college campuses across America, but because Penn's president, Sheldon Hackney, an advocate of sexual and racial harassment, is the White House's nominee to head the perennially controversial NEH. Mr. Jacobowitz tells him that he has been victimed of racial harassment. While the social told him that Mr. Hackney is writing a Rebuttal "Everyone who was yelling racial epithets out of their dorm room and brought him down to the station for further questioning. "I slipped over the racial harassment codes on campus, Mr. Hackney could not be reached for comment, but a Penn spokesperson says that the president stands firmly on the side of free speech.

Writing a Rebuttal

"He says that it's wrong to take the newspapers," says Barbara Beck, the spokesperson. "There are other ways to protest what a newspaper says, such as writing a column in rebuttal or boycotting its advertisers."

Mr. Jacobowitz says that the case will be handled by the school's judicial inquiry officials, the same officials now pressing the racial harassment charges against Mr. Jacobowitz.

Mr. Jacobowitz's troubles began shortly after midnight on Wednesday, January 13. Residents of High Rise East, a dormitory, had been yelling racial epithets out of their dorm windows, according to the accused's adviser, says that the inquiry officials, the same officials that entered the dormitory.

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