

Prof fights reprimand for 'wetback' reference

By Marie Szaniszlo | Friday, January 25, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | [Local Coverage](#)

Free-speech advocates are calling on Brandeis University to apologize to a longtime professor who was disciplined after he allegedly told students in his class on Latin American politics that Mexican migrants are sometimes pejoratively referred to as "wetbacks."

The university accused Donald Hindley of making statements that violated its policies on discrimination and harassment, Hindley said in a statement Wednesday.

Neither the letter nor Hindley's statement specified what he said or is accused of saying. But in a press release this week, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education said Hindley turned to the group for help, insisting that he criticized the use of the word "wetbacks" as a racial slur, only to have the university threaten to fire him unless he agreed to allow a temporary "monitor" in his class.

"It's like being in some Woody Allen film. It's a self-parody of political correctness," said Wendy Kaminer, a lawyer who sits on FIRE's advisory board. "And I'm sure the people who disciplined this professor are some of the same people who carry on about the Bush administration being Kafka-esque."

Brandeis spokesman Dennis Nealon declined to comment.

Hindley was not allowed to appeal the provost's decision and has refused to attend sensitivity training, said his lawyer, Andrew Good.

"I have been persecuted for some years because I am outspoken," Hindley said, ". . . and this is vindictive persecution for my outspokenness."

Students in Hindley's class staged a sit-in, criticizing Brandeis for not involving them in its investigation. And the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities lambasted the Waltham school for its handling of the case.

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