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Race, Diversity, Speech Rights, Dress Codes

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Sunday, April 27, 2003

By Scott Norvell

FOX NEWS

A group of **Boston ministers** who used to enjoy free golfing at a city-owned course is saying the decision to rescind that privilege is racist, reported the *Boston Globe*.

ADVERTISEMENT A city contract to run the course in Franklin Park, Mass., previously allowed the mayor, the parks commissioner and "duly ordained ministers" to play without paying greens fees. But last week, after details of the contract were revealed, the policy was abolished.

The Rev. James Allen, pastor of the Shekinah Glory Church of God in Christ in Mattapan, Mass., said the decision was unfair because a majority of the preachers on the list were black.

"I don't want to use the race card, but let's be honest," he said. "I don't want to make it a racial thing, but it seemed like that's what it was."

Brace Yourselves

Newspaper readers across the country should prepare for a week of **hyperventilating** about diversity by their local papers as editors rev up for Time-Out for Diversity and Accuracy week, reported the Associated Press.

Media outlets say they will make efforts to count the number of minorities in print, speak Spanish and eat Mexican food, and bulk up their electronic minority source guides. To read the AP version of events, the push doesn't have any critics or naysayers.

The fifth annual effort, a project of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, is intended to get people thinking about diversity as a "core journalism value," says David Yarnold, editor and senior vice president of the *San Jose Mercury News* and APME's diversity committee chair.

As part of the effort, the *San Jose Mercury News* said it would scour photos in the paper and track the age, race and gender of the subjects. In Kansas City, AP editors said they would count the number of stories they wrote about minorities. And managers at the *Democrat and Chronicle* in Rochester, N.Y., will — in addition to lengthy workshops and brainstorming sessions — conduct daily reviews to make sure enough stories about minorities get on the front page.

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Discriminatory Semantics

The folks at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education **have sued Shippensburg University** in Pennsylvania alleging that its **speech codes** flagrantly violate students' free speech rights, reported the Associated Press.

FIRE alleges that the restrictions codified in the school's **student handbook** are overly broad and vague. It cites restrictions regarding "unconscious attitudes toward individuals which surface through the use of discriminatory semantics," as well as bans on "presumptive statements" and conduct or "attitude" that "annoys" another person or group.

"Does that mean that if I'm a student, I can't wear a T-shirt that might annoy someone, or I can't have an attitude that might be offensive to someone?" asks Thor Halvorssen, the group's chief executive officer.

FIRE said the lawsuit was the first of many the group would file across the country.

Cross-Wise

A Pennsylvania teacher's aide was suspended for a year for wearing a **cross necklace** in school, reported the *Indiana (Pa.) Gazette*.

Brenda Nichol of Glen Campbell, Pa., who worked at the Armstrong-Intermediate Unit 28 for eight years, says she was suspended for refusing to remove or tuck in the jewelry.

Officials at the district wouldn't comment on Nichol's case specifically, but said their employee handbook was based on the school code and prohibited all employees from wearing religious garb.

Higher Educated

Notices about a dance at Harvard University that offered **free admittance** to incoming female students was called demeaning to women and in poor taste, reported the *Harvard Crimson*.

The poster, an advertisement for a weekend dance party that included the words "Pre-Frosh Girls Free," also might offend the gay community because they denote "a straight atmosphere and are exclusive to the sizeable gay population" of the campus, said student Matherite Amelia A. Showalter.

"Everybody in class thought the poster was degrading and really reinforced the concept of Harvard as a boys' club," Showalter said.

Blind Eyes

A Massachusetts rehabilitation hospital **banned employees from wearing yellow ribbons** in support of U.S. troops in Iraq because it did not want its patients reminded of the war, reported the *Boston Herald*.

Patients at the Rehabilitation Hospital of the Cape and Islands could read papers and watch the news, but the ribbons on nurses' and doctors' uniforms might have proven too upsetting, hospital management said.

"Our primary mission while within [the hospital] is to create a therapeutic atmosphere

that promotes our patients' rehabilitation and healing," hospital president Dr. Carol Levy said. "We believe that this goal is best served by minimizing the reminder of the war while patients are within the hospital."

Can't wait until next Monday for more snippets of politically correct nonsense? Head over to the daily edition of Tongue Tied at the [Tongue Tied Web site](#).

Mailbag:

Meghan in Tallahassee, Fla., writes:

I am a female student at Florida State University, and have set foot inside the Women's Center twice in my three years at the school. The Women's Center walls, ceiling and doors are covered in "empowering" statements all right, but among them are other statements, words, and drawings that anyone with any shred of dignity would find disgusting. I don't see how "I love my c---" is "empowering."

The walls may fall under an expression of free speech, but then why were several other government agency offices at FSU asked to remove American flags and other patriotic posters? It seems some people felt they were "taking sides" and were offended at their expression of free speech.

I don't feel uncomfortable at the Women's Center because of the wall, I feel uncomfortable at the Women's Center because it is clear that unless you are a card-carrying member of NOW and Planned Parenthood, you are most certainly unwelcome.

The answer is clear as crystal in the "Our Links" portion of their Web page — links to NOW, NARAL and something called a "Womyn's Music Festival," but no Feminists for Life, no Right Grrl.

"A place where all women are equal?" Only if you agree with the majority.

Jeff B. in Chicago writes:

I would have to say that the Black Student Union President at the University of Maryland is racist for assuming that a "thug-themed" party is discriminatory against black students. The truth is that thugs come in all colors. For a student leader to attribute that lifestyle across his entire "constituency" is demeaning, regardless of what color he is.

John C. from Houston writes:

While I am shocked by the many examples of political correctness you print, the case of the Boston students snow day essay is just an example of a bad test question. Not only are students from other countries penalized — students from the Southern states would be in a similar situation.

Personally, I haven't seen snow in four years and I have friends who have never seen snow in their entire life. Imagine a Boston student having to write about hurricanes.

Having graduated from high school five years ago, I still remember these standardized tests and can assure you that this is the model of a bad test question.

Mike in Glassport, Pa., writes:

You mean to tell me that these kids from warm climates live in Boston and hadn't yet experienced a snow day?!

Presumably people coming from warm countries to the northeast United States only do so in June, July, August and September and therefore never experience the wonderful winter weather in New England? I wasn't aware that the school year in Boston was crammed into the summer months.

What do these kids do with the other eight months of free time? Maybe they're on the Kennedy campaign payroll!

Jim D. writes:

Let me see if I get this straight. Certain people don't want to go to a school because the person it was named after used to be a slave owner? Is this interfering with their education?

Why not just call it "school?" Then the only ones [who] will be offended will be the students, who will complain the word "school" reminds them of schoolwork all year long and ... won't be able to enjoy their summer vacation as much?

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