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# Dishonor on the campus

Suzanne Fields [\(archive\)](#)

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Just when you think the politically correct clowns on the campus can't get any more ridiculous, they shoot another live white man out of a canon.

Steve Hinkle is an undergraduate at California Polytechnic University. He has been found guilty in the campus kangaroo court of posting a flier on a student bulletin board offending the sensibilities of a small group of students so intellectually fragile they belong in a day-care center.

The flier invited one and all to a speech by Mason Weaver, a black man, author of a book called "It's OK To Leave the Plantation," comparing black dependency on government to dependency on the old massa down on the old plantation.

The metaphor is hardly new, but the book was not written for the faint of heart. The offended students hadn't read the book, indeed had not heard of it and didn't know anything about it, but the title upset them. They called the campus police to report "a suspicious white male passing out literature of an offensive racial nature."

The incident should have ended right here, with the Cal Poly administrators using the incident as an opportunity to give the students a little instruction in the First Amendment. But when they learned that the students who called the police were holding a Bible study meeting, they charged Steve Hinkle with "disrupting" a "campus event." (They stopped short of burning the Bible, with its stories about slaves.)

The Foundation for Individual Rights, which looks after free speech rights on the nation's campuses, scoffs at the "disruption" charge. The bulletin board with the offending announcement was in a public student lounge.

At the hearing, the vice president for student affairs described the offense in explicit terms: "You are a young white male member of (the Cal Poly Republicans)," he told Hinkle. "To students of color, this may be a collision of experience. . The chemistry has racial implications, and you are naïve not to acknowledge it."

Translation: You're white and dumb not to realize that free speech is

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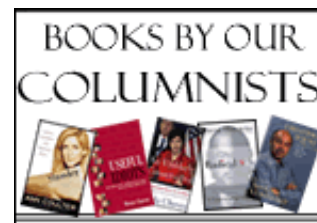
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dangerous (and you're a Republican as well).

He was ordered to write letters of apology to the students, apologizing for being white, dumb and Republican. He refused. "I get offended all the time on campus when teachers bash conservatives," he said. "Since when do we have a right not to be offended?"



Now he faces stricter punishment, which could lead to expulsion. This is academic freedom run amok, having become farce. It demonstrates how quickly diversity encourages division. Instead of fostering debate, diversity teaches students to find offense.

In an ambitious survey of more than 4,000 students, professors and administrators on 140 campuses, three distinguished social scientists discovered that diversity does not improve relations between races or contribute to learning. In fact, Stanley Rothman, Seymour Martin Lipset and Neil Nevitte found, "The higher the enrollment diversity, the more likely students were to say that they had personally experienced discrimination on campus."

As the enrollment of black students rises, satisfaction among all students falls. This doesn't mean that actual discrimination increases, but suggests that the perception of discrimination does.

When individual identity is sacrificed to group identity, diversity encourages discord and the campus is balkanized. The triumphs and failures of that ambiguous term, even with the Supreme Court's decision in the Michigan case, have not been measured.

"The results we have found should lead to further study of interracial relations on campus, the educational backgrounds of minority students and the academic effects of affirmative action," the three social scientists write in the magazine *Public Interest*.

In a wonderful new book by Peter Wood, *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept*, the author looks at the many ways the diversity concept has been used to undercut free speech, individualism, equality of sex, religion, ethnicity, and even the sense of national unity.

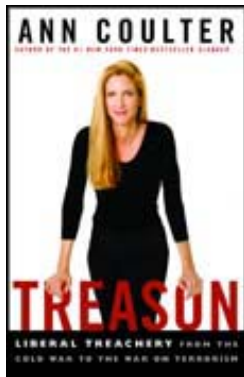
He urges us to look again at the affecting appeal of Martin Luther King in his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail": "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

King emphasized the strength in America's myriad of connections reinforced by respect for difference, with an emphasis on commonalities. Those Cal Poly students who wanted to prevent Steve Hinkle from putting up his flier, those administrators who demanded that he apologize for his free speech, the student who charged him with bad "chemistry," are pulling at threads in our common garment of destiny.

They won't unravel it, but they weaken the weave - and dishonor and disrespect themselves.

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