Affirmative Action Bake Sale Nixed

DALLAS, Sept. 25, 2003

(Photo: AP Photo)

QUOTE

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled universities could use race as a factor in admissions under limited conditions. In Texas, universities had been banned from using race as a factor under a 1996 decision by a lower court.

(AP) Southern Methodist University shut down a bake sale Wednesday in which cookies were offered for sale at different prices, depending on the buyer's race or gender.

The sale was organized by the Young Conservatives of Texas, who said it was intended as a protest of affirmative action.

A sign said white males had to pay $1 for a cookie. The price was 75 cents for white women, 50 cents for Hispanics and 25 cents for blacks.

Members of the conservative group said they meant no offense and were only trying to protest the use of race or gender as a factor in college admissions.

Similar sales have been held by College Republican chapters at colleges in at least five other states since February.

A black student filed a complaint with SMU, saying the sale was offensive. SMU officials said they halted the event after 45 minutes because it created a potentially unsafe situation.

"This was not an issue about free speech," Tim Moore, director of the SMU student center, said in a story for Thursday's edition of The Dallas Morning News. "It was really an issue where we had a hostile environment being created."

The sale drew a crowd outside the student center and several students engaged in a shouting match, Moore said.

David C. Rushing, 23, a law student and chairman of Young Conservatives of Texas at SMU and for the state, said the event didn't get out of hand. At most, a dozen students gathered around the table of cookies and Rice Krispies treats, he said.

"We copied what's been done at multiple campuses around the country to illustrate our opinion of affirmative action and how we think it's unfair," he said.

Matt Houston, a 19-year-old sophomore, called the group's price list offensive.

"My reaction was disgust because of the ignorance of some SMU students," said Houston, who is black. "They were arguing that affirmative action was solely based on race. It's not based on race. It's based on bringing a diverse community to a certain organization."

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The group sold three cookies during its protest, raising $1.50.

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