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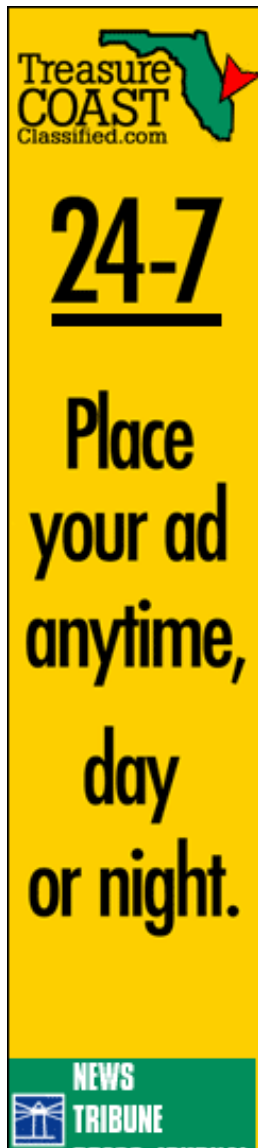
Editorial: Contrary to news report, IRCC doesn't fit politically correct model

February 3, 2005

ABC's "World News Tonight" claimed in a nationally televised segment Tuesday that Indian River Community College is among institutions of higher learning that suppress politically conservative speech on their campuses.

The allegation is unjust on several fronts.

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Broadcasting from the IRCC campus in Fort Pierce, the segment entitled "Conservatives censored on college campuses?" based its allegation on the school's refusal, under an existing policy, to allow a campus group to screen an R-rated movie for other students.

Under most circumstances, it might be assumed that protest of that decision would be based on a liberal viewpoint. But, in this case, the group protesting the decision is a Christian organization on campus and the film is "The Passion of the Christ," a telling of the last days of Jesus leading to his crucifixion. The R-rating is due to graphic violence.

ABC attempted to link that incident to conservative complaints that in some elite universities where a majority of faculty members are politically left of center, conservative opinions are not included in dialogues to the extent they should be. We don't disagree with such complaints. But, IRCC is hardly a hotbed of liberalism and to give such an impression by implication is wrong.

In addition, Christian or other religious speech is not per se conservative, regardless what political propaganda may say. Some of the most liberal policies of this nation, including civil-rights legislation and the fight against poverty, have been largely the result of religious speech and actions.

We in no way fault the students for their

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concerns about the IRCC policy that prohibited the screening of the Mel Gibson film. Their complaints led to a valuable review of such policies throughout the IRCC system, which includes 42,000 students and 48 campus clubs along the Treasure Coast.

As a result of that review, the school announced policy changes on Wednesday and approval of the screening of the movie. Motion picture ratings will no longer be used as criteria in approving student activities or events.

ABC knew that announcement was going to be made, but decided to air the segment on IRCC anyway, giving the school an unwarranted black eye.

We trust the decisions made by IRCC in this matter. We can't say the same for ABC.

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