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Satire magazine avoids censorship by student governme

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WISCONSIN — Succumbing to pressure by student press advocates, government at a Wisconsin university said it would not attempt to limit a campus satire magazine Wednesday.

The Student Association Senate at the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse **resolution** it passed on March 29 limiting the number of copies *The Student Alternative News* was allowed to distribute on campus. The publication distributes 2,000 copies; the resolution would have reduced the number

The resolution was in response to an **article** printed in the paper that ridiculed President Dick Cheney's hunting fiasco where he accidentally shot one

The sentence from the article that sparked outrage in the senate said, "at some thought-to-be-bloods, he was actually shooting at individuals referred to as 'his very best niggaz.'"

"People are sort of shocked by [the word 'nigga'] regardless of the context," said Gullo, editor in chief of the paper. "I don't think the solution was to limit the paper, the solution is discourse."

The reversal was a victory for Gullo and the Foundation for Individual Freedom in Education, a nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia that intervenes in cases involving the paper.

"Initially the first resolution that was introduced in the student senate would bar us from being a student organization," Gullo said. "Then the second resolution was to limit our distribution."

Gullo compromised with the senate to raise the limit from 60 to 900 at a time when he feared that the low number would be detrimental to the paper's relationship with advertisers, he said. Once dissenting senators informed him that the senate's action was a violation of the First Amendment, he said he contacted FIRE.

FIRE wrote a **letter** to the university chancellor on April 13 asking him to rescind the resolution and cease the censorship of the paper. By Wednesday, the university issued a **statement** saying: "After much deliberation between representatives of the Student Association office, understanding the Federal Constitution, the fact that our position, even if upheld by Student Court, will not be overturned by UW-System or State law, we... relinquish our legislation limiting distrib

Second Supper Alternative News across campus."

Although the senate acknowledged that it could not censor the *Supper*, Senate President AJ Clauss said that the paper "was making life difficult for students."

"[The use of the term 'niggaz'] could be considered borderline hate speech," Clauss said. "We had numerous students of color come in and complain, 'What is the Student Association going to do for us?' We feel diversity is extremely important on campus."

Clauss said that use of the word "niggaz" was offensive, even in a satirical context. She said the senate was looking to protect minority students with the First Amendment. She also said she does not see the *Supper* as a satirical paper.

The senate has no further plans to legislate against the *Supper*, Clauss said. The Student Association is trying to put together forums to "talk about free speech and what is free speech."

"Satire and parody are vital, effective, and very strongly protected forms of speech. Unfortunately they are under constant attack on today's college campuses," FIRE President Greg Lukianoff said in a statement. "UW-L did the right thing by not censoring the *Supper*, vindicating its students' rights to express themselves in these time-honored ways."

The paper is already funded entirely by ads and has extended its office hours, said Gullone. The paper retains its student organization status because that allows them to distribute the publication to a larger audience, he said.

"If we could fulfill that niche and keep that readership up without having a tie on campus, that would be great," he said.

—by *Ricky Ribeiro* SPLC staff writer

For More Information:

- [View a copy of the story in The Second Supper Alternative caused the controversy \(requires Adobe Acrobat\)](#)

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