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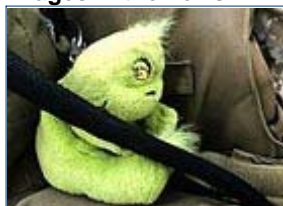
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## U.S. media response to cartoons skewered

By **Gerry Doyle and Margaret Ramirez**

Tribune staff reporters  
Published April 26, 2006

As dozens gathered Tuesday night in a University of Chicago lecture hall to discuss the visceral and sometimes violent reaction to cartoon depictions of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslim students who had been invited decided to watch a movie across campus instead.

The three-man panel discussion, organized by the university's chapter of the Objectivist Club, mainly focused on the U.S. media's reluctance to reprint the cartoons, first published in Denmark in September.

Panelist Greg Lukianoff, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, said the issue was simple: Journalists are afraid.

"There's a lot of dishonesty" in the media's explanation for not displaying the cartoons, he said. "Nobody has a right not to be offended."

There was little disagreement among the panelists, and the audience applauded after comments from Lukianoff and the other two participants, Yaron Brook, president of the Ayn Rand Institute, and Tom Flynn, editor of Free Inquiry magazine.

Discussion organizers said they invited Muslim students, activists and faculty to participate, but they all declined. The Muslim Student Organization arranged a showing of the Palestinian film "Paradise Now," which is about suicide bombers, in another building at the same time as the panel's talk. The group's leaders repeatedly declined to comment Tuesday night.

About 60 people attended the discussion in the Kent Chemical Laboratory building's lecture hall. U. of C. spokeswoman Julia Morse estimated that about half the attendees were students.

Enlarged pictures of the cartoons that triggered riots and deaths in Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kenya, Somalia and Lebanon were mounted on easels behind the speakers. The display included photos of angry

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Muslims with signs showing violent slogans.

One of the cartoons depicts the Prophet Muhammad wearing a turban shaped like a bomb.

Brook suggested that U.S. media were right to be afraid of publishing the cartoons because there are violent strains of Islam in the United States, as there are worldwide.

Flynn disagreed, saying that the unique freedoms and social makeup of the United States precluded any violent outburst over the cartoons, such as seen elsewhere.

"I think the American-Muslim community is dealing with this in a mature way," Flynn said.

Muslims in the U.S. condemned the cartoons in peaceful protests as offensive and sacrilegious and also denounced the violent response as contrary to the religion. The Council on American-Islamic Relations in Washington responded by using the negative incident as an opportunity to educate others about the Islamic faith and launched an education campaign on Prophet Muhammad's life.

The panel also addressed the motive behind the violent protests.

"The whole point of the demonstrations ... is to impose [strict Muslim] law on us," Brook said, calling it a continuation of the war against the West that started with the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The idea for a panel discussion on the controversial cartoons came from a university student group known as the Objectivist Club, which supports the ideas of novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand. According to the Ayn Rand Institute in Irvine, Calif., there are more than 70 Objectivist Clubs on college campuses throughout the nation.

Rebecca Knapp, a senior at the University of Chicago and vice president of the campus Objectivist Club, said students had been discussing the cartoons and waiting for U.S. media to respond or publish the caricatures.

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