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[Snohomish County](#)

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[Inside Politics](#)

[Inside The Times](#)

[Here and Now](#)

[The Rev. Dale](#)

[Turner](#)

[BUSINESS/TECH](#)

[NATION/WORLD](#)

[EDUCATION](#)

[OBITUARIES](#)

[SPECIAL](#)

[PROJECTS](#)

[OPINION](#)

[SPORTS](#)

[ENTERTAINMENT](#)

[HEALTH](#)

[TRAVEL](#)

[NORTHWEST](#)

[LIFE](#)

[PACIFIC NW](#)

[MAGAZINE](#)

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[SERVICES](#)

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Discord simmers over UW group's mock bake sale

By [Nguyen Huy Vu](#)

Seattle Times staff reporter

Ward Connerly, the California conservative who inspired Initiative 200, this state's anti-affirmative-action measure, has weighed in on the University of Washington's decision to shut down a student group's mock bake sale earlier this month.

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The businessman from Sacramento, Calif., said Tuesday he believes UW officials inappropriately stopped the Oct. 8 bake sale — in which goods were priced according to the customer's race or ethnicity — because they disagreed with the point the College Republicans were trying to make about what the group sees as the inequities of racial preferences.

"The university has a responsibility to its students to teach them to unleash their minds and think for themselves. But their actions teach the exact opposite. They are teaching these kids that when confronted with a point of view you oppose, rather than approach it critically, you shut it down. ... They're teaching that ideas that some may find unpopular should be oppressed," Connerly said in a statement released by his American Civil Rights Coalition, which opposes affirmative action.

But university spokesman Bob Roseth said the only reason the College Republicans were sent packing was because they didn't have a permit for the bake sale. "It was that simple," Roseth said. "It was not a political call at all."

Although the bake sale was more than three weeks ago, the controversy it stirred up hasn't ended.

At the event, the College Republicans sold chocolate-chip cookies at 25 cents for Native Americans, 30 cents for African Americans, 35 cents for Latinos, 50 cents for Pacific Islanders, 95 cents for Asian Americans and \$1 for whites. Doughnuts were available for 50 cents to everyone except Asian Americans and whites.

Similar bake sales have been held by conservative student groups on college campuses around the country. In most cases, the sales prompted debates over free speech, and whether the sponsors were trying to promote discussion or provoke a fight.

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At the UW, several people questioned what point the College Republicans were trying to make with the sale, because Initiative 200 ended affirmative action in enrollment and hiring five years ago. Campus police halted the event after an angry student tore down the price list, tossed cookies on the ground and a minor melee erupted.

In an Oct. 21 letter to the editor of the University of Washington Daily, Gerald Grinstein, president of the Board of Regents, described the bake sale as "tasteless" and "hurtful."

"Learning is not advanced when the dialogue is demeaning and disrespectful. We are deeply disappointed that the College Republicans' bake sale's 'statement' did not embrace the basic value of respect for its student colleagues and others of the University community," Grinstein wrote on behalf of the board.

Phillip Goggans, president of the Washington Association of Scholars and a Seattle Pacific University associate professor of philosophy, said the UW should protect students who have unpopular ideas. "It's clear that the College Republicans expressed themselves in a dramatic and provocative way. It was designed to get attention, rouse people a little bit," he said. "The University of Washington regents should have been defending the rights by aggressively pursuing those who violently disrupted the bake sale and instating disciplinary measures."

Jason Chambers, president of the College Republicans, has been pleased by the support from people like Connerly, who he said issued a news release on the topic without being asked to.

"Whether they agree with our views on affirmative action or not, we're glad there are people who support free speech, even if it is minority free speech," he said.

Chambers, 22, said race-based decisions are still being made at the UW. He said that as a freshman, he filled out an enrollment form that asked him to state his race and had to fill out a federal affirmative-action form when he was hired at The Daily.

"(Affirmative action) is still a hot topic and (as a group) we can weigh in on national issues as well as campus issues," he said.

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