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## A Response to SFSU's Ellen Griffin

Written by [Abraham Miller](#)

Friday, December 03, 2004

*Editor's Note: You may read the letter to ChronWatch, written by Ellen Griffin, director of public affairs and publications at San Francisco State University, in response to Mr. Miller's original article on the election and SFSU by going to the "Letters" section of today's edition of ChronWatch. Below is Mr. Miller's response to Ms. Griffin's letter. Follow the link for Mr. Miller's original.*

Giving new meaning to the worn campus quip that nothing is to be believed until the public affairs office officially denies it, San Francisco State University's campus spokesperson, Ellen Griffin, has taken issue with my depiction of the Jihad at SFSU.

What has vexed Ms. Griffin in her capacity as official apologist for a campus that enshrines and defends the anti-American left is my characterization of events that occurred at the campus on November 1, 2004 and November 3, 2004. In my [Chronwatch article](#) (November 30, 2004) on the reaction in academia to waking up to the Bush election victory, I pointed to the tolerance with which academia generally greets the most outrageous behavior of the left.

Those who follow the work of my colleagues at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), the Center for Individual Rights (CIR), and the online network of the California Association of Scholars (CASNET) know full well that there is no shortage of examples of academic outrage to be culled from the daily press.

I chose one close to home. The Jihad at SFSU was compellingly documented. Not only did journalist Lee Kaplan martial eyewitness accounts of the episodes; he also produced photographs and, subsequently, a number of police reports describing the first of the Jihadists' attacks.

As a columnist, I found Kaplan's work engaging and well substantiated. He described in detail two episodes, one the day before the election and the other the day after the election. In both, a mob of Palestinians, other Arabs, Moslems,

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and assorted leftists attacked the College Republicans as they attempted to disseminate their literature. Kaplan names the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) and describes the menacing behavior of several women and the larger mob.

Could there be any doubt that these events occurred as Kaplan described them and as confirmed, at least in part, by the police reports? Ms. Griffin seems to think so and gives us a version that to this writer seems to be an apologia for the assailants.

Enough! It's Ms. Griffin's job to clean up after the administration of President Robert Corrigan. And it can't be easy. Let's see what she has to say. You decide what is going on here.

Ms. Griffin writes, "In truth, the four female students (three of whom are U. S. citizens) who engaged the College Republicans in a heated dialogue were not members of the General Union of Palestine Students. They are not Palestinian, and the General Union of Palestine Students has denied association with the women."

In Ms. Griffin's characterization there is mention of only four female students. And they were engaged in a "heated dialogue." Later Ms. Griffin tells us that she knows the motives of these students as they accosted the Republicans. "They approached the table to criticize Republican policies...."

How refreshing! What an artful portrayal. Four students engaged on a college campus in "heated debate" with political adversaries. Isn't this what the campus experience is all about?

Lee Kaplan describes a rather different type of engagement--a menacing mob of over "300 Palestinian, Arab, Muslims, and radical leftist students surrounding [the Republican] club's table." Kaplan tells us that 13 San Francisco State police officers were forced to surround the table to protect the Republican students. This is the incident of Nov. 3, 2004, the day after the election.

Why take Lee Kaplan's word for it? After all, he writes for what some SFSU officials have described as a sensationalist Internet magazine. Dare I say, "Frontpage?"

First, there are those photographs. But if those aren't sufficient, Kaplan has posted the SFSU police reports for the first day of the confrontation, Monday November 1, 2004. Look, I believe Kaplan. But you might not. Maybe I am just a conservative nut and Ms. Griffin is right. Go to [the website](#) and draw your own conclusions.

Here are some coming attractions for those of you who don't want to leave the page. According to the police report (as posted by Kaplan), SFSU police Captain Borja, ID#301, in reference to the episode of November 1, 2004 and listed as Incident #04105, states, "I saw approximately 50 people... The crowd was getting larger and the discussion seemed to be getting confrontational. I could hear people shouting in the crowd, 'F—k Bush!'... I was watching both sides of the table and watching the females becoming more and more agitated... I could hear people in the crowd also shouting at the men staffing the [Bush, Cheney] table. The volume of the yelling was so loud, and so many people were yelling at the men behind the table, I had trouble deciphering exactly what was being said... I looked down and saw that someone had poured a soft drink on one or more of the signs of the table."

Captain Borja continues: "I knew that at this point the crowd was so enraged that I had to act quickly to get the people who were staffing the table out of the area for their safety. I instructed them to gather their things and I would see them out of the area. I escorted two young men in the direction of the gym. As we were walking, **I explained that I was doing this for their safety and mine. I explained to them that the crowd was hostile, and I wanted to make sure they were safe.**" (Emphasis added by Kaplan to his posting of the report.)

Remember this is the less-threatening confrontation, not the one on November 3, 2004 where the numbers swelled to what Kaplan describes as a mob of 300.

Now, a conservative like me wants to know, why weren't any of these people arrested? After all, they prevented the College Republicans from exercising their constitutional rights.

So were these two events the mob scenes that Kaplan describes or the "heated dialogue" between a mere four women students and the College Republicans as Ms. Griffin would have us believe? Is pouncing on a table and shouting obscenities in people's faces an exercise in free speech? If conservative students did that, they would find themselves in violation of some decency code. All universities have incredible discretion in how they enforce rules. It appears that at SFSU you can menace and intimidate Republicans and cause them to require police protection and be in violation of nothing. But that's my conclusion. Read the police reports and Kaplan's articles and draw your own conclusions.

Ms. Griffin objects to the characterization of the women as "Jihadists," noting, "They approached the table to criticize Republican policies, not to wage holy war on behalf of Islam."

Ms. Griffin of course would like us to restrict our focus to the four women,

but that hardly appears accurately to characterize the situation, from what we already know about the mob or the behavior of the women.

Kaplan describes one of the women Nala Gardizi, an Afghan national, as having made, according to eyewitness reports, terrorist threats and references to suicide bombings.

Kaplan quotes College Republican Lee Wolf as recounting the shouts of one of the women demonstrators, "The only way we can defeat you is to kill as many as possible! I'd rather die a suicide bomber's death than to call myself an American!"

I presume at SFSU this is neither a death threat nor an embrace of Islamic martyrdom but merely "heated dialogue."

Kaplan reports further that Mazouza Assaf, a Palestinian-American, at the second demonstration, threatened to blow up the College Republicans. Kaplan cites eyewitness accounts for this statement.

Now let's see if I understand SFSU's position. On two separate occasions, College Republicans--while exercising peacefully their rights to assemble, speak, and distribute literature--were confronted by an enraged mob, some of whom threatened to blow them up. Campus police had to intervene to protect them from harm. In the SFSU police report, a captain records fearing for his own safety from the mob.

Nonetheless, according to Ms. Griffin, this is nothing more than a "heated dialogue" over contemporary political issues between four women students and the College Republicans. Ms. Griffin has given new meaning to the term "heated dialogue."

Ms. Griffin says that the four students are not associated with the GUPS. We have the GUPS' word for that. Again, it is not about the four students but the larger mob. A mob with a large contingent waving Palestinian flags and wearing keffiyahs! Who supplied these, the College Republicans?

We could know if the four students are associated with the GUPS if Ms. Griffin would provide the group's membership list. According to Kaplan, she claims such a list doesn't exist.

SFSU must be a strange place indeed. Universities traditionally require a membership list because there is a membership threshold before a group can receive official sponsorship. Access to group offices routinely requires members to sign some list. Campus clubs, at most universities, require faculty sponsors, and, as a former faculty sponsor at another university, I received a

membership list twice a year. Some universities require participants in clubs to maintain a certain grade point average. We are asked to believe none of this exists at SFSU.

Ms. Griffin tells us that one of the female students and one of the Republican students have been sent to disciplinary committee, each for striking the other. That begs several questions including whether Republicans have a right to defend themselves. Certainly the Republican student didn't wake up that morning planning to create a mob scene that would require others to secure police protection for their personal safety. Certainly, he did not go out of his way to confront anyone. Or is passing out literature on behalf of Bush-Cheney an act of violence at SFSU?

Most of us who follow political events in the Bay Area know of the shocking action taken against Tatiana Menaker who, until an outpouring of community outrage, was expelled from SFSU for defending herself against her harassers. Ms. Menaker was also sentenced to community service with SFSU's rather anti-Semitic stipulation that she could not perform the service for any Jewish community organizations. This episode in and of itself should have merited a gubernatorial investigation of the SFSU administration.

Ms. Griffin, to me, is not convincing. Perhaps, if she wants the larger community to believe her interpretation of events, she might begin by posting all the police reports from these incidents on the Internet and letting the public view them and draw their own conclusions.

And why is it that only one person from the threatening mob has been sent to a disciplinary committee?

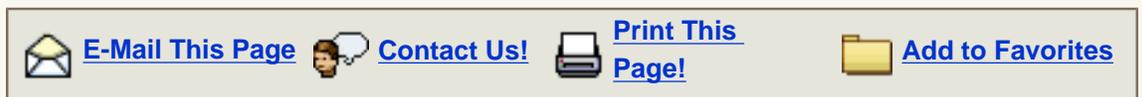
And how many more such demonstrations before College Republicans fear to stand on the campus and hand out literature? The university's message to them is crystal clear. They are not wanted. Their physical safety can be protected but not their First Amendment Rights. The SFSU administration defends the mob by hiding its existence.

Ms. Griffin's letter does serve one useful purpose. It confirms the lengths that the left, now entrenched in the faculty and administration of higher education, will go to protect those who share their ideology and how far they will reach to violate the norms of common decency and fairness to persecute those who do not share their sordid vision of America.

To paraphrase a comment George Will made many years ago about another university, there is nothing wrong with SFSU that the California department of public roads couldn't fix by bulldozing it into rubble and paving it over with several thousand tons of asphalt.

Those who are now actively calling for a gubernatorial investigation of SFSU should heighten their efforts. After all, why should we taxpaying suckers keep open an institution where a bunch of thugs (who are cheering on the people killing our young men and women in Iraq) can prevent American citizens from exercising their constitutional rights?

*About the Writer: Miller is professor emeritus of political science at the University of Cincinnati and a former Bradley Fellow at The Heritage Foundation. His writings on political correctness have appeared in numerous popular and academic forums here and abroad. .*



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