



# Conservatives Censored on College Campuses?

## Free Speech Movement Finds New Group of Supporters

**Feb. 1, 2005** - When Christian students at Indian River Community College asked to host a screening of "The Passion of the Christ," administrators at first rejected the idea because of the film's R rating.

At the campus theater weeks later, however, another student performed a monologue in which she described performing sexual acts before the image of Jesus.

"That hurt, that shocked and I did take that kinda offensive," said Christina Koshi, a member of Indian River's Christian student fellowship.

Demarr Bell, another member of the group, said he thinks it is a case of discrimination against Christians.

College administrators say there was no discrimination; they simply didn't know about the monologue, which they will now investigate.

## Conservatives Suppressed

David French, whose nonpartisan group, Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, monitors free speech on campuses, says conservatives are systematically suppressed and censored.

"The universities have been so captured by the left point of view, that you're going to get more political and intellectual diversity at your average suburban mega-church than you are at an elite university," said French.

Students are speaking out at institutions ranging from Columbia University -- where Jewish students complain about harassment from pro-Palestinian professors -- to Foothills College in California -- where Ahmad al-Qloushi says he was told by his American government professor to get psychotherapy after refusing to write an essay criticizing the Constitution.

"I was attacked and intimidated because I love America," al-Qloushi said.

Conservatives have responded with Web sites where students can name and shame professors, and they also spearheaded an effort to pass an academic bill of rights, outlawing what they call "in-class indoctrination."

Many academics say conservatives are blowing a few isolated incidents out of proportion to launch a McCarthyesque witch hunt designed to limit academic freedom and create a type of affirmative action for conservative professors.

Robert O'Neil, former president of the University of Virginia, says conservative students may be trying to protect themselves from ideas they don't like. But he says schools should include more conservative views.

"I think there's also a sense that liberals have had it their way, they've advanced their views for quite some time," he said. "There should be balance."

The historical irony is rich. In the 1960s, liberal students started the "free speech" movement to take on the government. Today, conservatives are invoking the same argument for very different purposes.

*ABC News' Dan Harris filed this report for "World News Tonight."*

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