



Students

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NOTEBOOK

Student's Analogy Using Race Draws St. Cloud State U. Officials' Ire

A rebuke by St. Cloud State University administrators of a student who used an analogy about race has critics of political correctness crying foul.

In December, Christopher Monson, a junior at the university, was quoted in the campus newspaper, the *University Chronicle*, as saying that refusing to give credit-card companies free access to the campus would be similar to "not allowing blacks on campus." Mr. Monson, the student-services chairman of the student government, had been preparing resolutions for the student government on how to deal with complaints about solicitors.

Mr. Monson's comment drew many people's ire, including that of Suzanne R. Williams, St. Cloud State's president. "The University finds the statement -- intentional or not -- to be demeaning and totally inappropriate. We are looking into the quote to determine the circumstances, and to take whatever action is necessary to stem racial insults such as these," Ms. Williams wrote in a universitywide e-mail message.

According to Mr. Monson, high-level administrators "strongly recommended" that he attend diversity training, and the student government's president suggested that he could be fired. Mr. Monson says administrators overreacted. "My point was to prove that it's not good to ban any specific group," he said. He acknowledged that the analogy may look bad, but insisted that it "would have been fine if I had worded it better."

* * *

Now, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education and the **American Council of Trustees and Alumni**, two nonprofit

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groups founded to promote free speech on campus, contend that Mr. Monson's First Amendment rights were violated, even though he was never formally disciplined. The president of the foundation, Alan Charles Kors, a history professor at the University of Pennsylvania, learned of the incident while speaking at St. Cloud State this month.

"It is bad enough to have a university president unable to follow the simple logic of a benign analogy," Mr. Kors said, in a statement. "It is a scandal, however, that the president of a public university, an institution bound by the First Amendment to the state and federal constitutions, neither recognizes nor respects her clearest obligations to the rule of law."

Calling Mr. Monson's remarks "utterly innocent," the trustee and **alumni** group asked the president to apologize to the student and "rescind the punishment."

Marsha Shoemaker, a university spokeswoman, insists that Mr. Monson was never formally punished. It would be unfortunate, she added, if he "became a pawn" for conservative organizations.

Mr. Monson was unaware, until a *Chronicle of Higher Education* reporter called, that the two groups had risen to his defense.

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