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Academic Bias Against Evangelicals?

Tuesday, May 8, 2007



The [Institute for Jewish and Community Research](#) recently conducted a [poll](#) of American college professors, asking them to rate their feelings toward specific religious groups. The [report](#) points to one glaring fact — a majority of the polled faculty members said they held “unfavorable” views of American evangelicals.

Gary A. Tobin, the Institute’s chief pollster and director, called this finding “explosive,” according to [The Washington Post](#).

Here’s how the paper introduced the story:

Frank G. Kauffman was teaching a course in social work at Missouri State University in 2005 when he gave an assignment that sparked a lawsuit and nearly destroyed his academic career.

He asked his students to write letters urging state legislators to support adoptions by same-sex couples. Emily Brooker, then a junior majoring in social work, objected that the assignment violated her Christian beliefs. When she refused to sign her letter, she was hauled before a faculty panel on a charge of discriminating against gays.

The case has fueled accusations by conservative groups that secular university faculties are dominated by liberals who treat conservative students, particularly evangelical Christians, with intellectual condescension or worse.

The pollster argued that his report found bias and prejudice among the academics. Academic leaders offered rather embarrassing arguments defending themselves against charges of bias and prejudice.

From the article:

Cary Nelson, president of the American Association of University Professors, disagreed. What the poll reflects, he said, is “a political and cultural resistance, not a form of religious bias.”

Nelson, a professor of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said the unfavorable feelings toward evangelical Christians probably have two causes: “the particular kind of Republican Party activism that some evangelicals have engaged in over the years, as well as what faculty perceive as the opposition to scientific objectivity among some evangelicals.”

William B. Harvey, vice president for diversity and equity at the University of Virginia, said that even if the survey has correctly identified a “latent sentiment” among professors, “I don’t know that it is fair to make the leap . . . that this is manifested in some bias in the classroom.”

Leave it to a professor of English to argue that the professors are displaying “a political and cultural resistance,” not “a form of religious bias.” No intelligent person should buy that argument. Couching their bias in the language of political resistance is obfuscation of the highest order.

The fact that such bias exists is significant in its own right, considering the fact that a majority of Americans at least

claim to be evangelical Christians. The ideological chasm that increasingly divides the academic elite from the larger culture is in full view here. Many academics, by their own admission, look down upon evangelical students, evangelical churches, and evangelical citizens.

This means that many academics, comfortably situated in their tenured positions, willingly take tax and tuition dollars from a population they look down upon.

As Gary Tobin observed: "If a majority of faculty said they did not feel warmly about Muslims or Jews or Latinos or African Americans, there would be an outcry. No one would attempt to justify or explain those feelings. No one would say, 'The reason they feel this way is because they don't like the politics of blacks or the politics of Jews.' That would be unthinkable."

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