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New York

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION RESIDES IN OBSCURITY

Few Students Aware Of First Amendment

By JACOB GERSHMAN Staff Reporter of the Sun

Yinon Ravid, a junior at Columbia University who was caught lumbering to a late breakfast with his friends yesterday, wasn't quite prepared for a pop quiz on the First Amendment. After a little prodding, he gave it a shot.

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Asked to name the rights protected by the First Amendment, he paused and replied: "Is that freedom of speech? No..."

It wasn't the answer that would make a high school civics teacher proud. But, to his credit, Mr. Ravid fared no worse than a large chunk of college students and administrators who were quizzed on the First Amendment in a recent national survey. The results suggest that a nationwide field trip to Washington, D.C., wouldn't hurt.

More than two-thirds of college students don't know that freedom of religion is guaranteed under the First Amendment, according to the survey, which was commissioned by the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a four-year-old nonprofit, civil liberties group. Two percent of students identified freedom of religion as the first right mentioned in the First Amendment.

The survey also found that 21% of school administrators were able to name the first right guaranteed in the First Amendment, and 11% couldn't name any of the protected rights.

Less than 1% of students surveyed could list all of the rights — freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, right of assembly and association, and right to petition.

Students interviewed by The New York Sun said they used to know more about the Bill of Rights back in high school. For most, the information has since retired to some inaccessible region in the brain that shares space with calculus and the periodic table.

Confronted with the same quiz, Nolan Zimmerman, a New York University student busy researching the relationship between male identity and clothing, reached back for an answer.

"Freedom of speech, freedom of liberty, creed, to protest — my God, it's been a while," he said in front of the university's Bobst Library.

Victoria, another NYU student who didn't want her last name used, refused to take the quiz. "Oh, man, I'm a chemistry student," she said. "It's all a blur."

Thor Halvorssen, the chief executive officer of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, doesn't take the results lightly. "They should frighten all of us. How on earth are we going to preserve those rights if we don't know what they are?" he said.

The survey, conducted between December 2002 and April 2003 by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut, quizzed 1,037 students and 306 administrators from more than 300 American colleges. The margin of error was 2.8% for students and 5.6% for administrators.

The survey also questioned students and administrators about their views on various rights issues. While it found that 74% of students and 87% of administrators believe it is essential for students to have the right to practice the religion of their choice, it also found that 41% of administrators and 32% of students believe "religious individuals should spread their religious beliefs by whatever legal means they choose."

Almost half of administrators at private universities and 34% at public universities said their students are required to undergo diversity training that leads them "to value all sexual preferences."

Mr. Halvorssen said the failure of college administrators to correctly answer basic questions about religious liberty in America has consequences for religious students, pointing to recent examples in which pro-Christian campus groups have faced restrictions.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education last year waged a campaign against Washington University School of Law after its Student Bar Association refused to recognize a

pro-life group. Facing press scrutiny, the bar association voted in favor of the group.

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