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LIFESTYLE COLUMNIST



Ralph De La Cruz

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Free speech: Can't have cake and eat it, too

Published February 28, 2006

Sometimes it's good to be at the end of a peninsula.

You're separated and insulated. Which can be uncomfortable when the craziness is close at hand (see: Elian Gonzalez and the 2000 presidential elections). But a real blessing when you realize how screwed up things can be up there, in the rest of the United States.

Today's a good day to be on the peninsula.

I say that after hearing about a bizarre expression of free speech on college campuses: bake sales.

You probably haven't heard about affirmative action bake sales because, like me, you're peninsulated.

Despite the title, these events are actually anti-affirmative action. Conservative students, usually connected to the Republican party, sell baked goodies -- with a provocative price list: White males pay full price, blacks, Hispanics and women are charged less. Asians often pay more.

It's intended to show how minorities and women have it easier under affirmative action.

Very clever. Even if it is a bit misguided.

You see, affirmative action has basically been gutted by two

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decades of court rulings.

Instead of using race as a key factor in college admissions, the new formulas now typically give most weight to things such as academic performance, community service and individual need. Race is way down on the list.

The first mention I found of these bake sales came from UCLA in 2003. The Bruin Republicans charged black, Latino and American Indian females 25 cents a cookie, while male blacks, Latinos and American Indians were charged 50 cents. White females a dollar. White males and all Asians two.

The bake sales spread up the West Coast, and to parts of the Midwest and Texas, which has been one of the hottest battlegrounds in the legal fight over affirmative action.

"Basically, I woke up one morning and there was this new form of protest," said Greg Lukianoff, interim president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. His group fights for First Amendment rights and is challenging schools' efforts to ban the sales.

Yep. Up there, this has turned nasty.

Signs have been ripped up. Cookies tossed. Police summoned. School administrators have tried to keep the sales off their campuses, citing safety or sensitivity concerns.

This month, College Republicans at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania were selling cookies, cupcakes and brownies for \$1 to whites, and 25 cents to blacks (I guess there aren't enough Hispanics or Asians in Kutztown, Pa., to matter). Women actually got a 25-cent credit.

Heck of a deal.

The irony is, these sales mimic wage-gap bake sales by feminist groups, which were allowed by colleges. So, this may be a disgraceful publicity stunt. It may be uncomfortable. You may find it offensive.

But these groups should be able to make their cookie statement. Precisely because it *is* uncomfortable and offensive.

"You don't need a separate amendment to protect *polite* speech," Lukianoff said, adding, "The funny thing is, when [colleges] don't try to shut them down, they get a lot less publicity and just die off. It's an old, common message: If you don't want a particular message to get out, don't censor it."

Seeing how these sales have moved across the country, you've got to wonder when we'll see them here.

It won't be in Boca Raton.



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"This is the first time I've heard of them," said Anna Alexopoulos, co-chair of Florida Atlantic University's College Republicans.

"We've never considered them here. And we won't."

Smart woman.

"It *is* offensive," she added. "People just need to remember these things are done by individual groups and don't represent all Republicans."

It's a good day to be on the peninsula.

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