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Muzzle Tov to Brandeis and Valdosta State!

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On Tuesday, the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression announced this year's recipients of its annual "Muzzle Awards," a dubious distinction awarded to "the country's most egregious and ridiculous censors." The list included such august institutions as the FCC (winner of a "Lifetime Muzzle"), the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, CBS Radio and MSNBC. Also among the honorees were two universities that continue to ignore their contractual and legal commitments to free speech, despite widespread public condemnation and, for one of the schools, a federal lawsuit.

Brandeis University overachieved to earn its [Muzzle](#). Brandeis found Donald Hindley, a veteran professor who has taught at the school for 47 years, [guilty of "racial harassment"](#) for using the term "wetback" in his Latin American studies course in order to explain and decry the term! Yup. It's right out of Philip Roth's [The Human Stain](#). But what makes Brandeis' handling of the case still worse is that it's clear that the school knows it did something wrong. Once [faculty](#), [students](#), and the [media](#) all lambasted the school's behavior, Provost Marty Krauss issued a statement saying that they considered the matter

"closed"—but leaving the guilty finding intact. Such a response is obviously unacceptable. Brandeis must exonerate Professor Hindley immediately. Until they do, their well-deserved Muzzle fits like a glove.

Meanwhile, Valdosta State University (Ga.) President Ronald M. Zaccari [earned his Muzzle](#) by expelling former student T. Hayden Barnes for protesting a 30 million dollar parking garage with a "threatening" collage. After intense [media attention](#), pressure from [FIRE](#), and the filing of a [federal lawsuit](#), The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia [reversed the expulsion](#). But this case is not quite done yet. First, the federal lawsuit is still pending. Second, as you can see in [this video](#), Valdosta State maintains a tiny "free speech zone" that not only restricts free speech to less than 1% of a 168 acre campus, but is also only available for student use from noon to 1 PM and from 5 to 6 PM—and even then only if you give 48 hours notice!

Finally, while I know it's only April, I already have two nominations for next year's Jefferson Muzzles. First, I would like to nominate Colorado College, where administrators have used tragic school shootings of recent years as justification for finding two students [guilty of "violence"](#) for posting a flyer making fun of another flyer. I ask readers once again to compare these flyers [side by side](#) and tell me if they feel endangered by either.

But most of all, I would like to nominate Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) where a student employee reading a book called Notre Dame vs. the Klan: How the Fighting Irish Defeated the Ku Klux Klan was found guilty of ["racial harassment."](#) Why? Because the book -- which celebrated the defeat of the Klan by Notre Dame students in a 1928 street clash -- apparently had pictures of Klansmen on the cover. Despite utterly misunderstanding the book's premise -- not to mention the entirety of both harassment and First Amendment law -- the school's finding against the student-employee has yet to be repealed. Surely that qualifies IUPUI as an early season favorite for a 2009 Muzzle.

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