



## Editorials

# Editorial: Brandeis shames itself

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Brandeis University, in Waltham, Mass., is named for the late Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, a passionate defender of freedom of speech. The university has dishonored its name, it appears, in its persecution of Prof. Donald Hindley, a politically liberal member of the faculty for 48 years.

Mr. Hindley's troubles began last year, not long after he told his Latin American politics class that Mexican migrants to the United States were (and are) discriminated against and disparaged as "wetbacks." Certainly, such a statement would be factually correct. Indeed, in 1954, the U.S. government itself named one of its programs to expel illegal Mexican immigrants Operation Wetback.

But a student complained anonymously to the administration that the professor had made "inappropriate, racial, and discriminatory" statements, according to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), which is aiding Mr. Hindley.

In a letter to Mr. Hindley soon thereafter, Provost Marty Krauss threatened him with termination and told him a monitor would observe his classes until Mr. Krauss was satisfied that Mr. Hindley could "conduct [himself] appropriately in the classroom." The provost also ordered him to attend sensitivity training. (An Orwellian land.)

Professor Hindley said he was stunned, since he never used a term pejoratively. Moreover, the university provided him no evidence that he had done anything wrong or afforded him a hearing so that he could defend himself. His lawyer was not allowed to appeal the provost's action, and Brandeis officials declared the matter closed, even after the Brandeis Faculty Senate objected to the unfair treatment of the teacher.

Instead of surrendering to this Kafkaesque process, the professor emphatically denied wrongdoing and flatly refused to attend sensitivity training. He said Brandeis had behaved "outrageously and atrociously."

The university has repeatedly refused to comment on the case, saying it is a "personnel and private matter" and that it must protect the "confidentiality" of the individuals involved.

But that has not stopped people who care about freedom of speech and fairness in higher education from commenting.

The university's student newspaper, Hoot, complained that Brandeis had made the longtime professor's guilt a foregone conclusion, striking at the heart of academic freedom, and damaging the school's reputation in the eyes of potential students and professors. Nationally syndicated columnist Nat Hentoff, a longtime defender of the First Amendment, lambasted the university in a blistering column. The Massachusetts ACLU also joined the case against Brandeis.

Brandeis owes it to its students, the principles of academic freedom, and the memory of Justice Brandeis to

explore and remedy this apparent wrong to Professor Hindley.

The mere notion that someone somewhere might be offended should never be cause enough to intimidate speakers and silence speech. Universities, in particular, should be places where complex ideas may be intelligently expressed and debated by grownups. And those caught in the crosshairs of political correctness should be given the opportunity to explain themselves and be treated with a modicum of due process.