

ROLLINS CONTINUES

COLLEGE

DRAMA

Bill Donohue

Yesterday, we addressed news reports about a Rollins College student, Marshall Polston, who was suspended following an exchange with his professor, Areeje Zufari. It is claimed that Zufari punished Polston after he disagreed with her comments saying Jesus was not crucified and his apostles did not believe he was divine. Rollins suspended Polston citing threats that he made.

Polston called me yesterday to discuss this matter. So did the president of Rollins, Dr. Grant H. Cornwell. We had a lengthy exchange in response to my letter that was addressed to him. We also heard from Allan E. Keen, who is chairman of the Board of Trustees. Today, Keen sent another email and an article from the *Orlando Sentinel* on this issue.

Both Cornwell and Keen argue that the reporting on this story constitutes “fake news.” But neither provides any specifics to support his claim.

In particular, I pressed Cornwell to offer me a “bullet-type response,” one that would address my letter, the student’s claims, and news reports on this issue. I asked for proof that Polston made threats. Cornwell cited legal reasons for not commenting any further. He also said he did not know enough about what happened in the classroom.

The following remarks are in reply to Keen’s email today, which includes a letter he sent to the Trustees, and the piece in the *Orlando Sentinel*, “Rollins Student, Prof Clashed for Weeks in Religion Class,” written by Gabrielle Russon. The italics are my response to cited remarks.

- In his email today, Keen says Polston “was suspended because of a matter related to another student.” *No details were given.*
- In his letter to the Trustees, Keen contends this issue was not a recent development, saying that “there were actions and concerns going back for several months, and even after some intervention, the student continued to act somewhat unusual...” *No details were given.*
- Keen says the student was not suspended for his “disagreements with the professor, or these classroom activities.” Rather, “it was related to a ‘different’ incident with a student.” *No details were given.*
- In her story in the *Orlando Sentinel*, Russon says the professor “filed a ‘protection against stalking’ request” against the student last Friday. Rollins then suspended him. *No one questions the filing or the injunction. But is there evidence that he actually stalked her? Or did she file the complaint believing he might stalk her?*
- The injunction, Russon says, lists the nature of the professor’s problems with the student. “He has disrupted class twice (we’ve only had two classes) with antagonizing interjections, contradicting me and monopolizing class time.” *As a former professor, this complaint reads as an indictment of the professor, not the student. “Antagonizing interjections”? Meaning he sharply disagreed? More important, since when has it been regarded as inappropriate student behavior to “contradict” a professor? Why isn’t this simply a matter of free speech? Similarly, did he not allow other students to speak—did he filibuster?—or was he overly talkative?*
- Russon says of the professor, “She wanted him out of her class.” *Precisely—this says it all.*
- Russon writes that “School officials intervened to meet with Polston and his behavior improved over the next few weeks.” *But what exactly did he do wrong to merit this*

intervention? Did he violate campus policy in some way? And how did his "behavior" change? Or was the intervention meant to have a chilling effect on his free speech? If so, this is a very serious matter.

- The professor failed Polston (a straight-A student) for an essay he submitted on March 8. Russon says the professor "was concerned about his reaction" and wrote to a public safety official about it. "The next day, Polston emailed her." He accused her of "extreme bias." *In other words, the professor contacted the public safety office **in anticipation of a threat, one that never happened!***
- Russon quotes an associate dean saying, "At no point did he threaten anyone openly." *This seals it: Her complaint to the public safety office was not based on any threat by the student.*
- Russon writes, "Zufari was so concerned that she canceled class." *About a non-existent threat? This is posturing, a gambit designed to indict the student on charges that are false, by her own admission.*

So who is this unnamed student who was "threatened" by Polston? Was it the Muslim male student who justified "beheading for gays and adulterers"? This is not a matter of dispute. According to Robby Soave in reason.com, "Someone even notified the FBI." By the way, there is no evidence that Zufari found this comment to be "antagonizing," nor did she contact public safety officials about this proponent of shariah law.

There are so many outstanding questions—egregious matters left on the table—to make any reasonable observer skeptical, if not cynical, of the account offered by Cornwell and Keen. Only they can clear this matter up, but to do so they need to get specific. Otherwise, we are left with the impression that Zufari was intimidated by Polston, leading her to make false conduct charges against him.

One more thing. Overlooked in this entire issue is the propriety of Zufari telling students that Jesus was not crucified nor was he seen as divine by the apostles. If a Christian professor instructed his students on the merits of the Biblical account, he would be accused of indoctrination. So why isn't Zufari?

CUT FUNDS TO NEA, NEH, NPR, PBS

Bill Donohue

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), National Public Radio (NPR), and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), are all subsidized by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The Trump administration is right to propose a budget that completely guts these entities of federal funding. That is why I am asking members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to honor the president's request.

Justice demands that these agencies should be eliminated: Taxpayers should not be forced to pay for assaults on their religion.

Christians constitute roughly 75 percent of the population; Catholics are approximately 25 percent of the total. In the name of "art," these Americans are expected to pay for irreverent exhibits, but depictions that are reverential—such as a nativity scene outside City Hall—are denied a dime. It's time we stopped giving the arts a privileged position and cut their funding. The same is true for publicly funded radio and TV programming that has a history of insulting the majority of

Americans.

The CPB was founded in the 1960s, and it has been plagued with problems ever since. In the late 1980s, the NEA funded Andre Serrano's "Piss Christ" and Robert Mapplethorpe's "The Perfect Moment." Serrano took a crucifix and dropped it into a jar of his own urine, branding it art. The NEA gave a Philadelphia museum \$30,000 to display graphic homosexual S&M photos taken by Mapplethorpe.

In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that there is no constitutional prohibition against Congress setting decency standards for the NEA. But attempts by the NEA to enforce grant recipients to sign an anti-obscenity pledge went nowhere. This is why Congress must act.

To show how perverse things have become, President Barack Obama not only approved generous grants to the NEA, he actually included \$50 million for the arts as part of his "federal stimulus package." One of the first beneficiaries was a San Francisco outfit, CounterPULSE. It received \$25,000 to pay for employees' salaries. What did the public get from it? The group hosted "a long-running pansexual performance series" called "Perverts Put Out"; it asked the audience to "Join your fellow pervs for some explicit twisted fun."

Catholic League Conflicts with the NEA

- 1995: Ron Athey abused Catholic imagery by indulging in several sexually explicit and vulgar statements, so much so that I wrote a letter to the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee asking for his support in defunding the NEA.
- 1998: I led a demonstration of 3,000 protesters outside the Manhattan Theatre Club, funded by the NEA, for hosting a play, "Corpus Christi," that depicted Jesus having sex with his apostles.
- 1999: I led a demonstration outside the Brooklyn Museum

of Art, which received funding from the NEA and the NEH, for its "Sensation" exhibit. It showed a huge portrait of Our Blessed Mother smeared with elephant dung, adorned with pictures of vaginas.

- 2000: The Whitney Museum, an NEA-funded institution, hosted "Sanitation," a vile attack on Mayor Rudy Giuliani for opposing the anti-Catholic "Sensation" exhibit. The Whitney had previously displayed "Abject Art"; it featured depictions of excrement and hard-core pornography.
- 2000: The Theater for the New City Foundation, which received NEA funds, was host to a play, "The Pope and the Witch," written by Dario Fo, a Stalinist and a vicious anti-Catholic. It depicted Pope John Paul II as a heroin-addicted, paranoid schemer. I wrote to the Appropriations Committee asking members to reconsider funding the NEA.
- 2010: The Smithsonian, which receives 70 cents of every dollar from the taxpayers (via the NEA and NEH), hosted an exhibit, "Hide/Seek," that featured a video showing huge ants crawling all over Jesus on the Cross. I contacted the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, and the video was pulled.
- 2013: The Oklahoma City Theatre Company, an NEA recipient, hosted "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told," a foul homosexual play that featured homoerotic performances, including simulated sex acts. It also mocked the Bible.
- 2015: The NEA's support for the Milwaukee Art Museum resulted in an exhibition that showcased a portrait of Pope Benedict XVI made up of condoms.

Catholic League Conflicts with NPR

- 1997: On July 5, the Weekend Edition aired a segment with host Scott Simon and musical satirist Tom Lehrer that featured Lehrer singing "The Vatican Rag." It

disparaged Catholicism and the Eucharist, including the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

- 2005: NPR questioned the religion of Supreme Court nominee John Roberts. NPR's Lynn Neary wondered that since he is a Catholic whether "that might affect the way he views an issue like abortion, for instance." Nina Totenberg of NPR even went so far as to say that his wife was "a high officer of a pro-life organization. He's got adopted children. I mean, he's a conservative Catholic."
- 2006: During the Easter season, NPR twice took aim at the divinity of Jesus.
- 2006: Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Turkey was used by NPR as an occasion to lecture the pope on being sensitive to Muslims by not making any overtly Catholic comments or gestures. It cited prayer and kneeling as examples.
- 2007: When Samuel Alito was nominated to the high court, NPR's Dahlia Lithwick said, "People are very, very much talking about the fact that Alito would be the fifth Catholic in the Supreme Court if confirmed."
- 2008: Utah's NPR station, KCPW, featured a skit, "Fair Game with Faith Salie," that mocked Jesus and the Eucharist.
- 2012: Barbara Bradley Hagerty did a piece that was posted on NPR's website that said a Philadelphia priest accused of raping a minor was "not that unusual" for a member of the Catholic clergy.
- 2013: A movie, "Paradise: Faith," depicted a "devout" Catholic woman who masturbates with a crucifix as she is making love to Jesus. It was highly recommended by NPR.
- 2014: An NPR game show, "Wait Wait Don't Tell Me!", made fun of Jesus dying on the Cross. Sexual references to Jesus were also made.

Catholic League Conflicts with PBS

- 1996: FRONTLINE blamed Catholicism for the killings of a Catholic maniac, John Salvi. He killed two abortionists from Brookline, Massachusetts. The program functioned as a promo for Planned Parenthood and a hit job on the Catholic Church.
- 2006: It aired a show on Jesus during Lent implying that Christian beliefs are a hoax.
- 2007: "The Secret Files of the Inquisition" was a four-part docudrama that gave voice to Black Legend propaganda. The horrors it attributed to the Catholic Church have been wholly discredited by scholars such as Henry Kamen.
- 2009: PBS banned member stations from carrying new religious programs. It said, without foundation, that such shows might imply official endorsement. It did not say why only sectarian shows might imply endorsement.
- 2014: PBS aired "Secrets of the Vatican." It was the 48th time that PBS addressed sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. By contrast, it has a history of ignoring this problem in other religions, never mind its widespread existence today in the public schools.

The NEA, NEH, NPR, and PBS have had decades to clean up their act, but they refuse to do so. The time to cut funding is now.