

ROLLINS COLLEGE PUNISHES FREE SPEECH

The following is the text of a letter sent by Bill Donohue to Rollins College president Grant H. Cornwell regarding a violation of a student's rights on his campus.

I am requesting your intervention in a serious matter that has arisen on your campus involving the abridgement of free speech. My interests are twofold: (a) as president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, I take issues of religious discrimination seriously, and (b) I served on the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars for 20 years, during which time I was a college professor.

From news reports that I have read, a sophomore at Rollins, Marshall Polston, was suspended for allegedly creating a "threat of disruption within the operations of the College," and for jeopardizing "the safety and well-being of members of the College community and yourself."

Those are strong charges. Yet the incident that gave rise to this incendiary situation was apparently a classroom disagreement that Mr. Polston had with professor Areej Zufari. She asserted that the Biblical story of the crucifixion was not true, and that Jesus' apostles did not believe he was divine.

Professor Zufari is entitled to her belief, and so is Mr. Polston. What she is not entitled to do is punish him for disagreeing with her: he is a straight-A student and she failed him for his "disruption." Worse, college officials have now deemed him to be a threat to campus safety. This is absurd, outrageous, and indefensible.

You have served as a Director of the Association of American

Colleges and Universities, and previously served on the National Advisory Board for Liberal Education and Global Citizenship. You therefore know the value of free speech and the unfettered right to pursue truth. That is why I am asking you to intervene in this matter.

Thank you for your consideration.