

# ROLLINS COLLEGE REINSTATES STUDENT

**Bill Donohue**

"There is more free speech in pubs than on the typical college campus." That is what I told Rollins College president Grant Cornwell on March 28, the day I first addressed the suspension of student Marshall Polston. Rollins has now reinstated the student.

This issue may be over for Polston—he courageously stood up to those who sought to abridge his freedom of speech—but it should not be over for the professor, Areej Zufari, or the administration. There are too many serious issues left unaddressed.

When I spoke to Cornwell, he said Polston was not being suspended for anything he did in the classroom, but for his threats. I asked if he carried a gun. He said no. I asked if he carried a knife. He said no. I asked if he verbally threatened Zufari. He said no. "Then who did he threaten?" He said he was told by lawyers not to divulge who it was.

Cornwell also told me that the entire story was nothing more than "fake news." He said he was "calling me out" on this. That was a mistake. I responded by saying, "I am calling you out," and then proceeded to tell him how badly he was handling this matter.

If I were the president of Rollins, I told Cornwell, and I had evidence that a student was threatening someone, I would call the police. But he didn't. Similarly, I said, if I were in his shoes, and I was convinced that this story was "fake news," I would hold a press conference and offer evidence to support my claim. But he didn't.

We now know why Cornwell didn't call the cops or hold a presser: there was no evidence that Polston had done anything wrong.

Zufari is the issue, not Polston. She does not belong teaching in any college or university in America. Her contempt for the free speech rights of her students is appalling, and her vindictiveness is obscene. It's actually worse than this.

Zufari called the public safety office to lodge a complaint against Polston. On what basis? No one, not Cornwell or Zufari, claims that Polston threatened her. So why didn't the administration put her on the carpet? After all, a student's reputation was damaged and nothing was done about it. Zufari also accused Polston of "stalking her." But there is no evidence that he did.

By reinstating Polston, it suggests there never was any stalking, or threats against anyone.

The administration is also the issue. Why was the administration so upset with Polston for arguing with Zufari in the classroom that it intervened to change his behavior, but it did not intervene when a Muslim student recommended beheading gays and adulterers? Why did Zufari treat this comment as if it were uncontroversial? I would love to know why.

Why did the administration not question the propriety of Zufari telling her students that Jesus was not crucified, and that his apostles did not believe he was divine? Would the administration be okay with a Christian professor for proselytizing in the classroom?

The *Orlando Sentinel* story in today's newspaper ends by saying, "Students and Rollins employees held a private meeting on diversity Thursday to discuss what happened."

Diversity on college campuses never means diversity of

thought—the most important diversity a college should foster—it means demographic diversity. If Rollins were serious about making real reforms, it would not be talking about the diversity that a Muslim professor brings to the campus; rather, it would be talking about the right of students to question his professors.

The case against Polston was ideologically charged from the beginning. Zufari violated every tenet of academic freedom, and the administration engaged in a cover up on her behalf, sundering the rights of an innocent student in the process. There is nothing “fake” about that account.