

YALE VIOLATES RIGHTS OF ORTHODOX JEWS

Five Orthodox Jewish students who attend Yale University are being penalized for objecting, on religious grounds, to mandated residence requirements on campus. The students, Lisa Friedman, Jeremy Hershman, Elisha Hack, Batsheva Greer and Rachel Wohlgelernter, do not want to live in dorms where the sexes are integrated and where bathrooms are shared by men and women; they also object to such sexual messages as condom machines and "safe sex" literature in the dorms.

Yale officials have instructed the students that the only way they can bypass living on campus is to buy their way out: the students have been told that if they pay the room and board fee (nearly \$7,000), then they can live at home.

Though Catholics are not directly involved in this case, the Catholic League very much wants to assist the students. What is at stake is a principal of religious liberty: practicing and observant believers should have their rights respected by college administrators. If Catholic students come forth and request the league's assistance in this matter, they will, of course, be defended.

Currently, it is unlawful for private colleges and universities to discriminate against students on the basis of race and ethnicity, but when it comes to religion, there is no such prohibition. If this case is tested in court, religion may very well be added to the list of unlawful practices. Regardless of what happens in court, the Catholic League believes that what Yale is doing is an outrageous violation of the religious freedom rights of the objecting students.

William Donohue wrote to Yale president Richard Levin requesting that he reconsider the request of these students.

Levin answered by saying "Although I respect the position of the Catholic League, I stand by the Yale policy for freshman and sophomores." Assuming that the students' attorney, Nathan Lewin, goes forward with this case, the league plans to file an amicus brief in support. Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz also stands ready to defend the students.

Here is the statement that the league made to the press about this issue:

"The Catholic League has been asked to review the situation confronting five Orthodox Jewish students at Yale University. It is our conviction that these students cannot be expected to maintain their religious commitments while being subjected to an environment that is so demonstrably antithetical to their beliefs. The degree of accommodation that they are requesting is reasonable and without burden to others.

"To force students to violate their deeply-held religious beliefs for the sake of satisfying Yale's sexually-correct living arrangements is unconscionable. It is also difficult to see how the much-vaunted goal of diversity can be accomplished when pluralism is so summarily abridged.

"The Catholic League is asking Yale administrators to reconsider their decision. In the event they do not, the league is prepared to join with others in taking whatever steps are necessary to secure justice."