

From The Editor's Desk  
*Racism: We Have A Problem*

By Andrew Garib

For Affirmative Action fans, it's always nice to see minority groups well (albeit artificially) represented in the most important institutions in our society – whether it's academia, government, or the media. And I'm sure campus liberals rejoiced when the Cornell *Daily Sun* decided to actively recruit a higher number of conservative columnists than the standard one Joe Sabia of the 2003-2004 academic year. In all irony's glory, the *Daily Sun*, in its gradual slide towards the eternal mediocrity of being the *USA Today* of Ivy League dailies, decided that its op-ed columnist roster too well reflected the general beliefs of the student and faculty body. Damn liberal bias in academia!

Over the past year, a litany of very conservative and often controversial pieces have appeared in the *Daily Sun*, and despite liberalism's soft spot for oppressed minorities, our beloved independent daily's rightist columnists – in particular *Cornell Review* alum Sarah Townsley – have had campus progressives and moderates up in arms. Well, sort of. One of the most controversial articles, Townsley's 'Mecca, We Have A Problem' (21 September 2004) listed crimes and atrocities perpetrated by Muslims worldwide, and then not-so-subtly suggested that despite what liberals and the politically correct brainwashed masses think, Islam is not a religion of peace.

Indeed most level-minded people seemed to have a problem with Townsley's article. That's good. But only a handful of the dozens replying to the article on the *Daily Sun* website, and hardly anyone I've talked to about the hateful piece, seemed comfortable using that oh-so-special R-word we apply to those who love to hate: racism. That's bad. And what's more, one of the few people to use the term was among the online defenders of Townsley's position, painting the readers who object to her article as those crying 'racism.' If only it were true.

Was Townsley's article racist? Absolutely. When was the last time you read a columnist complaining about how political correctness brainwashes us into believing the obvious falsehood of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and other belief systems being religions of peace? It's ludicrous – the world's great religions aren't inherently peaceful or war-like. Any sensible person can see that it's how religions are practiced – and how peoples' beliefs are used for political ends – that gives religiously tinged actions their character. No reasonable person would posit that Judaism or Christianity, with violent traditions and histories of their own, are not religions of peace. So why is Islam, derived from the same Judaeo-Christian tradition, the target of hateful, ignorant and cynical moralizing?

It's how Townsley and her armchair theological historians address Islamic terrorism that shows their true colors. It doesn't matter how many caveats they'll make about how most Muslims are good, or how there is a minority of thoughtful Muslims who take a stand against Islamic terrorism and regressive illiberal practices prevalent in many Muslim societies. Townsley's very use of the misapplied dichotomy – Islam: good or bad?? – reveals a religious and cultural double standard, and a brooding racism that's simmering not that far under the surface.

What's particularly wonderful about racist ejaculations such as Townsley's piece is how they bring out the bigot in all of us. That same racism, usually flying low under the social radar, emerges in the comfortable company of fellow prejudice and hatred. Hideous responses to Townsley's article – and responses to the responses – include more rants about the supposedly obvious and inherent belligerence of Islam, about how it's the 'typical Muslim's job' to placate the West and separate radical Islam from more moderate versions, the hugely erroneous proposition that all terrorists are Muslims, and even a frightening biblical condemnation of an alleged murderous communist-Jewish conspiracy.

Perhaps Townsley is right: it's all a function of political correctness. Former *Review* columnists seemed to have left behind their cries of reverse racism against the supposedly dreadful evil that is Affirmative Action and have allowed themselves to be embraced by the equal opportunity clause in the *Daily Sun*'s hiring policy. Moreover, it's politically correct for liberals to apologize for terrorist movements by appealing to the nature of the terrorists' religion, rather than placing these movements in their social and political context and criticizing Muslim leaders in many parts of the world for spreading reactionary hatred. And, it seems, the PC movement has forced us to pretend racism isn't there even when it obviously is, grinning behind the pseudo-academic musings of prejudice and ignorance.

Americans can no longer live in the fairy-tale land of a color-blind society. Racism is there – and it can only be revealed and routed if we insist on talking about race, culture and ethnicity, as well as fear and hatred, in a frank manner. That means we need candid discussions about racism, misogyny, violence and other forms of barbarism in all cultures – including Muslim culture and our own.

It's no secret that the most illiberal elements of many Islamic cultures have emerged in the form of anti-Semitism, anti-Americanism, violence against women and disrespect for democratic ideals. It's no secret that during the Final Solution, Jews and gypsies were massacred not only by the gas chambers of the Third Reich, but the blunted and bloodied weaponry of Eastern and Central European peasantry, the vitriolic words of European citizenry, and the murderous silence of religious authority when a civilization needed it most. And today, it's no secret that the hatred and ignorance of Americans towards the people of one of the world's great religions lies dormant under the guise of politesse and political correctness, only emerging at times of crisis, with the growth of popular racist movements and literature, and behind the curtains at the ballot.

Like the monstrous beliefs expressed online in support of Townsley, one needed to merely scratch the surface of social order to reveal hatred and violence festering beneath in 1940's Germany and in today's Muslim world. But unlike Nazi Germany and the Islamic world, political correctness bears the burden of the totalitarianism and cultural indoctrination of other times and places right here at home. It's political correctness that is the thick skin of the diseased patient, protecting the virus of hatred from the purifying air of reason and liberalism.

In reading this Election Issue of *Turn Left*, let's put aside our intellectual timidity, most evident in the political correctness that both muzzles reasoned opinion and allows irrationality, sensationalism and hatred to breed. And let's start by calling things for what they are: First, Confucius said, let's get the names straight.

**Pulled Quotes:**

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