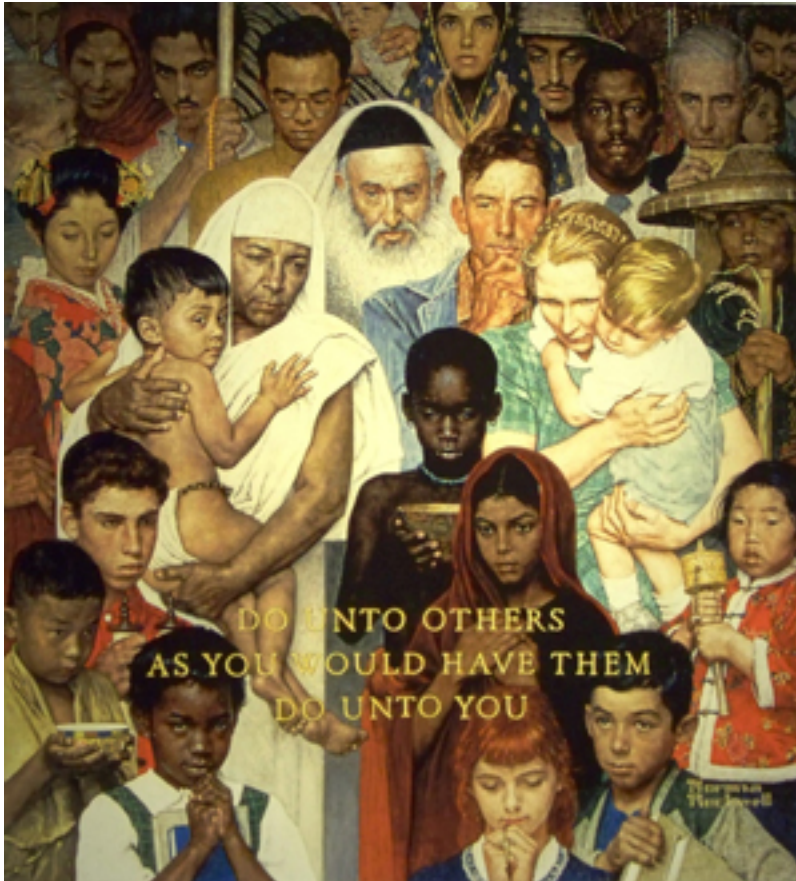


PM: Back to School: And the Golden Rule?

By Polly Mann

It looks like Mark Yudof, president of the University of California, has gone and done it again—while on university ground, attempted to forward his one-sided personal bias. Back when he was president of the University of Minnesota (1997-2002), his wife, Judy, and the general counsel of the University, Mark Rotenberg, planned to hold a fundraiser for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which is one of the most powerful lobbying groups in the country. AIPAC not only promotes Israel's interests and the interests of other countries affecting the US-Israel relationship around the world, it also provides free trips to Israel for members of the US Congress. The Yudofs and Rotenberg could have done this as individuals, but they had planned to hold the fundraiser at the official residence of the university president—a big, beautiful, white house on the Mississippi River. Holding the event on this university property would infer that they endorsed it as representatives of the university, and give the impression that the university itself endorsed it.

Upon reading this, we in Women Against Military Madness who opposed the US support of Israeli military actions against Palestinians, requested that, in fairness, we also be allowed to hold a fundraiser in the presidential manor. Before we received notice that this would not be permitted, it was announced that the AIPAC fundraiser had been canceled. Whether or not WAMM's request had anything to do with that we'll never know.



“Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto You” the iconic 1961 painting by Norman Rockwell. Variations of the Golden Rule exist as a moral foundation in every culture and major religion.

The present situation in California is a bit different. President Yudof sent an open e-mail letter on March 8 of this year that went to the entire UC student body decrying an “alleged climate of anti-Semitism and intolerance on the ten campuses that comprise the lofty UC systems.” His letter did not mention a similar zero-tolerance policy toward Islamophobia or anti-Arab sentiment. And his letter stated that he was invoking the help of the Museum of Tolerance and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to improve the campus climate.

Clearly, it does need improvement, but without bias. A Muslim & Arab Student Campus Climate Fact-Finding Team report of July 9, 2012 found that for “students who are visibly and apparently Muslim or Arab, as well as active participants or leaders of organized student groups, the daily experience on UC campuses is notably negative and characterized by institutional insensitivity and daily harassment.” Student complaints included, but were not limited to, everything from harassment, hate mail, name calling (“terrorist”), defacing of peaceful displays, equating criticism of Israeli government policy with hate speech, inaction on the part of the administration when incidents are reported, and bigotry in student newspapers

(including a racist 2011 David Horowitz Freedom Center ad run in The California Aggie on the UC Davis campus).

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) spoke at UC Davis, organized by the aggressive StandWithUs organization, which had previously been caught on camera at UC Berkeley “physically harassing and pepper spraying people with opposing viewpoints.” Needless to say, there is a perceived double standard in the application of campus policies toward Muslim and Arab student events. Even worse, the events take place in an accusatory and even “criminalizing” environment, involving UC administrative staff.

Yudof himself had established the President’s Advisory Council on Campus Climate, Culture and Inclusion in 2010 that produced the report in response to a Muslim student group’s protest of Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren at UC Irvine. However, the “communication practices and actions by campus administrators and President Yudof” were one of the major issues students identified as creating an unfavorable climate for them. Jewish student groups who do not subscribe to Yudof’s biases have complained as well.

Yudof’s March 8 letter also elicited a response from the California Scholars for Academic Freedom (SCAF), who stated that Yudof was actually delivering a blow to the right of dissent and protest. Furthermore, SCAF charged that “neither the Zionist ADL, which defames critics of Israeli policies and has a history of spying on Americans, nor the Museum of Tolerance is qualified to offer advice on academic freedom.” Professor Gabriel Piterberg, who grew up in Israel and is an historian who has written about Israel/Palestine issues, belongs to SCAF. In a teach-in, he charged that Yudof’s motivation was to silence criticism of Israel on UC campuses and to chill other dissent.

Piterberg said he believed that Yudof’s letter was probably prompted by a series of UC campus lectures made by Israeli Ilan Pappé, another Israeli historian and activist who is critical of Israeli government policy toward Palestine and Palestinians. Piterberg concluded that “Yudof can be a Zionist personally but as UC president he should represent the entire and diverse UC community equally, or he should resign and become an employee of the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee.”

Polly Mann is a cofounder of WAMM. Her column appears regularly in this newsletter.

Muslim & Arab Student Campus Climate at the University of California Fact-Finding Team Report & Recommendations. July 9, 2012.

Ibid, Attachment 3: Open Letter to UC Community from President Yudof. March 3, 2012

Ibid, Attachment 8: Open Letter Regarding Yudof's Statement to the UC Community.
April 8, 2012

Ibid, Appendix B: Work Group Charge Letter. Campus Council on Community and
Diversity Arab and Muslim Student Community Work Group-UC Davis

UC President Yudof Enlists ADL, Museum of Tolerance to Monitor Campus Civility,
Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, June/July 2012, pp.48-49

UC Climate Survey Reveals Muslim Students Feel Intimidated. June 28, 2012
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<http://www.mpac.org/programs/young-leaders-development.php>

Students and Civil Rights Groups Caution Against Efforts to Silence Student Activism
July 12, 2012 International National Lawyers Guild (web site)

Salahi, Yaman (2012, August 2) Al Jazeera How UC devalues Arab and Muslim
student voices.