

NEW YORK CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION

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October 1, 2006

Dr. Lee C. Bollinger  
President  
Columbia University  
202 Low Memorial Library  
535 West 116th Street  
New York, New York 10027

Dear President Bollinger:

I was shocked and chagrined to learn about the suspension of Columbia's Men's Ice Hockey Club on the alleged basis that they did not follow established protocols of posting their flyers, flyers that some at Columbia, including University officials, deemed objectionable on the basis of the use of the word "pussy". It is my understanding that few if any found the use of that same word-"pussy"-offensive when others used it in 2004 at Columbia, notably on T-shirts distributed by the Student Council. So what is so offensive about the word "pussy" today?

What is happening at Columbia that even student leaders are apologizing for the use of a perfectly good word, a word that is not only in the dictionary but a word that was cleverly used in the Men's Ice Hockey Club's flyers as a play on words, used to recruit and advertise for the team known as the Columbia Lions? What can possibly be so offensive or objectionable to the phrase on a flyer, "Stop being a pussy," in this context?

Nor am I persuaded that the Men's Ice Hockey Club was punished simply because they supposedly did not follow the rules for postings. Had the flyers in the eyes of the thin-skinned, prudish and fragile egos at Columbia contained laudatory phrases, or neutral or even positive expressions about Columbia activities, clubs, and events or about issues germane to campus life, would any one, would student leaders, would Columbia officials actually insist that the posters be pulled down, and that the people who put them up be found and punished for violating the procedures for posting? I truly doubt that. And I know that you know better than that. Indeed, as a former resident of Harlem, and a lifelong New Yorker, I know the history and traditions of Columbia and of the posting of flyers there without permission, and of the Fre417(l)-2.53536(u)-0.956417(m)-3.4

There must be something else at work here, and we suspect that that something else is the

We join our sister civil liberties/civil rights organization-FIRE (the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education)-in urging you to promptly rescind this punishment of the Men's Ice Hockey Club immediately. Let those who find offense in the phrase "Stop