

Brown University Apologetic but Puzzled

by Lorna Salzman (January 2016)

The administration and board of trustees of Brown University remain puzzled at charges that the university has failed to achieve an acceptable policy that maximizes racial and ethnic diversity and creates a welcoming safe space for minorities.

After protests and sit-downs at the office of the president, he released a statement outlining the admissions policy that has existed at Brown for the past fifty years and wondering what specific changes the protesters and critics are seeking.

“Our admissions policy has never wavered in actively seeking a student body that reflects our pluralistic society at large. Our society has long manifested a diversity consistent with American values and attitudes. The spate of recent attacks on African-Americans and harassment of students representing a wide variety of sexual preferences is proof of this; in addition to WASPS, high-IQ whites, and other groups, we have never excluded right-wing redneck racists, ill-mannered loudmouths, rude boors and militant agitators from our classrooms or campus.”

He went on to say that not only does the university mirror the rest of American society but also the highest legislative body in the country: the U. S. Congress, as well as some presidential candidates. All of these, he stressed, were not unusual or aberrant individuals but are representative of our society and culture, and have long been used by us as models for our own student body. “What better model could anyone suggest?”, he added.

He did acknowledge, however, that the recent calls for instilling “cultural culpability” in instructors and creating

a separate cultural space for minorities where they could be in full control of discussions and debates were worthy of implementation. Until now, and since the civil rights protests and marches of the 1960s, African-Americans in particular have been strong supporters of integration. Civil rights legislation overthrew, to the joy of millions of American liberals, the discriminatory relegation of African-Americans to separate facilities, most notably those in schools, businesses and the workplace. As a result, the country's social, economic and political infrastructure changed for what was assumed to be the better.

But the new calls for separate educational and social facilities for the exclusive use of African-Americans will, he conceded, go a long way toward appeasing the newly emerging movement for self-segregation. When asked why this new call for black separatism was acceptable whereas past segregation was not, he first pointed out that the university already had segregated divisions such as the Brown Center for Students of Color, the Sarah Doyle Women's Center and the LGBTQ Center and that these were already contributing to the new revisionist agenda of students of color and unconventional gender preference. When asked about the rumor that the university would install separate drinking water fountains for African-Americans, he said that he would look into the matter.

Then he briefly consulted with an aide, and then stated: "Frankly, if the only way to create a safe space on the campus is to appease segregationists, then the ends justify the means."

Lorna Salzman's career as an environmental activist and writer began when the late David Brower hired her to be the regional representative of Friends of the Earth in NYC. Later she worked as an editor on *National Audubon's American Birds* magazine and as director of Food & Water, an early opponent of food

irradiation, and then spent three years as a natural resource specialist in the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection. She co-founded the New York Green Party in 1984 and in 2004 she sought the U.S. Green Party's presidential nomination. She is the author of "[here](#)."

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