

NEW YORK POST

DIVERSITY DOUBLE-TALK IVY'S 'INCLUSION' EXCLUDES MILITARY

By Matt Sanchez

December 4, 2006 -- Did you hear the one about the Marines that Columbia University invited to campus for Fleet Week? Not any time in the last few decades, you didn't.

But you might have heard the one about the Marine who was told by a fellow Columbia student that he was stupid for joining the military because he's Hispanic and didn't realize he was being used for cannon fodder. It's actually kind of funny - but when it happened to me during Columbia's Activities Day last year, I was fighting mad. Not because I was publicly humiliated in front of several hundred of my fellow classmates (any devil dog who has spent a summer on Parris Island gets used to insults), but because of what the incident showed about New York's most prestigious university.

On the surface, Columbia is all for diversity (good, very good) and completely opposed to intolerance (bad, really bad). On any given day, eager undergrads can speak out for Starbucks employees forced to make coffee with non-ergonomic espresso machines, or call for the school to install non-gender-specific bathrooms.

The administration? Well, I've heard Mary McGee, the dean of students, speak with great consternation about the need to be sure that no student populations were marginalized or excluded. To illustrate the point, she pondered changing all the doorknobs on campus to accommodate those with physical limitations who might literally be "shut out." She said that, to date, no student had complained about the smooth metallic doorknobs, "but they should not have to" I figured that a dean so concerned about student inclusion would certainly look into a simple case of student harassment. You see, I had a problem: fellow student Monique Dols.

Back on Activities Day, Dols didn't just lecture me on my stupidity in serving our nation; she also yelled that I was a baby killer. For a Marine, being called a killer is almost flattering - but for months Dols and her friends had been disrupting pretty much every event I attended.

Most famously, her crowd rushed the stage at another group's event, preventing the guest (from the border-enforcement advocates, the Minutemen) from delivering his remarks, and nearly causing a riot.

That day, Dols claimed to be protesting for the recognition of the humanity of illegal Hispanic immigrants. Yet somehow her concern doesn't apply to a citizen Hispanics proud to serve this country and eager to go to college.

And the Columbia administration seems to agree. Despite bringing national embarrassment to the university with her actions, she's gone completely unpunished.

The university has chalked it up to free speech. All points of view are welcome at Columbia, from Venezuelan presidents to voices from vaginas. Unless you're in the military.

But Columbia's hypocrisy on inclusiveness isn't just a matter of the apparent immunity that Dols & Co. enjoy. The school also has no faculty member who specifically deals with veteran affairs.

Sure, Curtis Rodgers, the dean of admissions, says veterans are a great asset for the Columbia community - and a very nice woman at the bursar's office will help veterans process their GI benefits to pay tuition. Yet when a Marine deployed to Iraq was having problems clearing up an error on his tuition bill, no one on staff was prepared to help him break through the school's bureaucracy.

Columbia veterans would love to invite Marines and sailors onto the campus during next year's Fleet Week - but we don't want them to experience the Columbia version of a sniper attack. The sad fact that they'd face such an assault is something Columbia University just won't own up to.