

# Racial tensions high after publication of controversial cartoon

By Scott Andrews

SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I. (AP) — Racial tension burst through the surface at the University of Rhode Island last week as minority students, furious about the publication of a racially charged editorial cartoon, demanded drastic changes at the student newspaper.

The cartoon depicts a white professor at "U.T. Law School" facing a group of white students. A black man is walking into the room. The professor tells him, "If you're the janitor, please wait until after class to empty the trash. ... If you're one of our minority students, welcome!"

About 100 students gathered copies of the newspaper, marched to the newspaper's office in the student union, threw the newspapers on the floor and demanded an apology.

The protest was led by Brothers United for Action, a group of black men who marched in military formation. They called for an advertising boycott, resignation of the top editors, an end to student funding for the paper and a new newspaper that "promotes a vision of cultural empathy and

understanding."

In a tense meeting marked by shouting and sobbing, a student Senate finance official froze funding for the newspaper, *The Good 5 Cent Cigar*. One white senator said during the meeting that he was afraid.

"You should be in an uncomfortable position because all the people of color in this room are in an uncomfortable situation every day of their lives, on campus, in the Ram's Den, every day," screamed Ed Givens, a black university worker. The Ram's Den is the student cafeteria.

The cartoon was reprinted from the Sept. 16, 1997 edition of the *San Antonio Express*. The artist, John Branch, said last Friday that the cartoon criticizes a University of Texas professor who said "blacks and Mexican Americans can't compete academically with whites" and come from cultures in which "failure is not looked upon with disgrace."

The professor, Lino Graglia, supported a court decision banning racial preferences in admissions at Texas state colleges and universities.

Patrick Luce, a managing editor of *The*

*Good 5 Cent Cigar*, said his newspaper wanted to show its support for affirmative action programs.

But that is not how many students read the cartoon. Many said they did not understand that the cartoon referred to the incident in Texas.

"Most of the people in this room feel that this was an act of hate," said one student at a meeting between critics of the cartoon and leaders of the student Senate. The Senate created the newspaper and provides about 20 percent of its budget through student fees.

After the cartoon's publication last Wednesday, the newspaper published an explanation Thursday but did not apologize. That evening, 100 people met and vowed to protest.

University president Robert Carothers, the cartoon's artist and students not involved with the protest, criticized the newspaper for publishing the cartoon without providing context.

But Luce, the co-managing editor, said the cartoon remains timely because of continuing attempts to abolish affirmative action

programs in other states.

Several students and administrators said the anger unleashed against the newspaper has been building.

They include a racist message left on the affirmative-action answering machine, assault charges against football players who are black and Hispanic, a note saying "Nigger go home," on a black student's door and a white student who urinated on a black disc jockey.

Among the 9,897 undergraduates at the school, 3.7 percent are black. The faculty is 2.4 percent black, 1.7 percent Hispanic, 0.3 percent Native American and 8.8 percent Asian.

Newspaper leaders vowed last Friday to continue publishing. Faculty advisor Professor Linda Lotridge Levin committed the \$800 the newspaper needs to publish half-length editions this week. She also is seeking money from professional newspaper publishers.

No advertisers have pulled ads, said newspaper business manager Jessica Rojas.

"I guess this is the price you pay for freedom of the press," she said.

## Minority enrollment down at University of Massachusetts

AMHERST, Mass. (AP) — Undergraduate minority enrollment dropped slightly this year at the University of Massachusetts, falling short of a goal of 20 percent.

Officials said the drop-off of 2 to 4 percent, outlined in the Fall 1998 Admissions and Enrollment Report, could be the result of tougher admission standards and increased competition among colleges for top minority students.

"We're not sure if this represents a blip for one year, or if it represents something else," Daphne Layton, UMass associate vice president for academic affairs, told the Union News of Springfield.

The UMass-Amherst administration has agreed twice in the past six years to bring undergraduate minority enrollment up to 20 percent, following student protests.

Minority enrollment was down from last year at the Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth, and Lowell campuses.

At UMass-Amherst, freshmen minority enrollment dropped by 41 students to 655 for a total of 19 percent. The Boston campus has 14 fewer minority students and Dartmouth 4, Layton said. She did not have the number for the Lowell campus.

In March, more than 100 student protesters held a sit-in at the Goodell Building on the Amherst campus that dragged on for six days. The university was eventually forced to relinquish control of the entire building, which houses offices for finance, graduate student programs and intracampus mail.

In a formal agreement with protesters, top administrators set the 20 percent minority goal, vowed to strive for more

racial diversity among administrators and pledged millions of dollars more to help poor and minority students. The students said they were trying to make the university live up to commitments it made in the fall of 1992, when protesters occupied another campus building for a week.

According to the latest figures, the percentage of UMass minority students enrolling as transfer students increased from 13 percent to 15 percent.

Overall, UMass attracted a larger freshman class than the previous year at all four campuses. Layton said the minority enrollment figures might look worse than they are because of the increase in applications.

"The actual numbers are not much lower than they were before," she said.

Overall, incoming

students had higher standardized test scores and high school grade point averages.

At Amherst, the average high school GPA was 3.16 on a 4.0 scale, up from 3.09 a year ago, and SAT scores increased by 16 points to 1,124. Scores among

freshmen at each of the other three campuses averaged below 3.0 and 1,100 in high school GPA and SAT scores.

Nelson Acosta, director of the UMass-Amherst office of African, Latin, Asian and Native American (ALANA) Affairs, said that the university's emphasis on

minimum standards may be making it difficult for working-class and minority students to attend UMass.

"We're supposed to be a land-grant university, but in some ways we've become a safety net for kids who don't get into private colleges," he said.

## Toys

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soft vinyl toys not specifically designed for sucking and chewing but often found in cribs or playpens and to remove these products from the child's environment if they observe that the child is sucking or chewing them for extended periods," warned the Canadian advisory.

While other countries have agreed to restrictions, U.S. Commerce Department memos, obtained by environmental groups, allegedly show that Mattel and Exxon have pressured the Clinton Administration to derail any European restrictions on soft vinyl toys, said Clapp.

A letter from Mattel even praised the Department of Commerce for "helping the U.S. toy industry defend against the recent EU initiatives to ban the use of polyvinyl chloride in toys," according to Greenpeace.

"Commerce and State Department officials

embarked on a crusade to protect the continued sale of these products in at least 18 foreign nations," Greenpeace added.

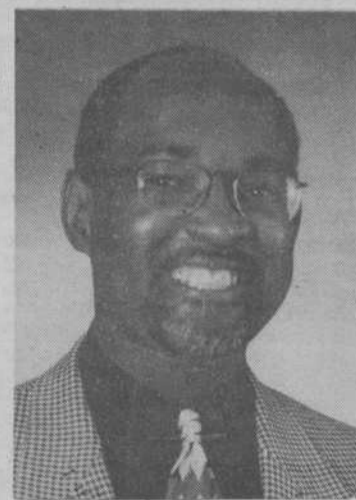
As a result of U.S. lobbying efforts, the European-wide restrictions were postponed and are currently being considered by individual countries, according to the coalition demanding the ban. The Commerce Department and Mattel did not answer an IPS reporter's request for comment.

"What must worry lobbyists for toy manufacturers is that if Europe bans these chemicals, the U.S. public will demand the same safety standards," said a statement released by the coalition that wants a ban imposed.

The groups are demanding that the U.S. Department of Commerce, answer the question why it "is protecting toy companies rather than the children who play with their products?"

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