Free speech demands fair treatment

Adam Brailove's letter ("West- erners deplore Rushdie threat, not book criticisms," March 7) could have been, Brailove rhetorically asks, what was it so think of a let- her whose general principles I was often in agreement with, yet whose attitude often left me dumbfounded? Let me start out by saying that I agree with Brail- love's defense of the freedom of speech, even if that speech may be considered offensive by some. Yet, free speech is best served when complemented by a fair and respectful treatment of oth- ers when they speak, even if one disagrees with what someone else is saying. It is in this regard that I believe Brailove did not always accord Semidein Türköko - "Satanic Verses is offensive to Islam," Feb. 28 - the fair treat- ment and respect that he deserved.

Brailove bases many of his arguments on the death threat of Ayatollah Khomeini against Salman Rushdie and faults Türköko for not addressing that issue. Yet, these arguments miss the whole point of Mr. Türköko's letter: "That the Satanic Verses in and of itself is offensive to Muslims. The whole of Mr. Türköko's letter was an attempt to show how and why Muslims find this book of- fensive; Brailove even realizes this when he says that we "must respect his sincerest desire to tell us, how deeply offensive this book is to those of the Islamic faith."

Yet, if this was Türköko's desire, then why is he to be required to explain or condemn the actions of a fanatic whom he has proba- bly never met and may not even love's defense of the freedom of speech, even if that speech may be considered offensive by some. Yet, free speech is best served when complemented by a fair and respectful treatment of oth- ers when they speak, even if one disagrees with what someone else is saying. It is in this regard that I believe Brailove did not always accord Semidein Türköko - "Satanic Verses is offensive to Islam," Feb. 28 - the fair treat- ment and respect that he deserved.

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