LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Political correctness: censorship from the left

There has been a recent trend on campuses around the country towards censorship, as supported in Jill B. Soley '92's letter "Free speech can't excuse abuse," April 21.

This new censorship is different in that it is coming from the political left, rather than the right. It attempts to stop the expression of ideas that are not "politically correct," and is championed by such "heroes" as Soley and Associate Provost Samuel J. Keyser, while conservatives like Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-IL) are trying to stop it.

In the 1950's, the speech that was "dangerous to all Americans" was pro-communist. Today it is speech that is hurtful to certain groups of people, such as women, Jews, blacks and homosexuals.

Soley is correct that speech can be hurtful. I have no doubt that women who have been raped are hurt by some films, whether sexually explicit or not, and that many blacks and Jews were hurt by David Duke, the ex-grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, coming to speak in Boston.

One purpose of speech is to challenge people's views, and this can be hurtful. Certain bigotry is hurt when their beliefs are challenged, yet no one tries to stop this.

The question is not the effect of this speech, but whether people like Soley should be given the power of a "heckler's veto," the power for someone in the audience, to stop a speaker if she does get this power, what else will she censor?

Whom does she want to have this power to decide what is hurtful or evil? Does she want to have the majority of the campus decide what is hurtful to the minority? Maybe we should let it go to the government, so that people like Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) can decide what is offensive to women?

The answer is not to give anyone this power, but to allow everyone to express his or her views, whether they are sexist, racist, or pc. Persons who disagree should use their voices to express their counter beliefs.

Yes, some people will be hurt by hearing things that they do not like, but as adults on a college campus we should not need to shelter people from ideas.

When I showed Deep Threat, it was to protest such censorship. I do not subscribe to the views that Soley feels are expressed in it. However, I do agree with the right to hold and express those views, or any other horrible sexists, racists or homophobic views.

I can only assume that Soley wants to censor it even though she did not see it. Had she been there she might have come to the discussion I had following with many members of Pro-Feminists, whom I invited, to discuss free speech and sexism. That is the right way to address such issues.

I have no doubt that Soley intends only to eliminate the truly dangerous and hurtful ideas, but do not want her, Keyser, or anyone else to decide which ideas those are. As Justice Brandeis wrote:

"Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government's purposes are beneficent. Men (and women) born to freedom are naturally alert to repel invasion of their liberty by insidious rulers.

"The greater dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachments on the sphere of free expression as of religion, than from專al restraints on the will or the mind."

Adam Dershowitz

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Native American Student Association (NASA) & American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) of MIT

Friday, April 26

Bldg. W31-301
1:30-2:30 p.m.

Film Series: "HEALING THE HURT" Parts I & II.

Saturday, April 27

Grass Area behind Kresge Auditorium
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A one woman slide show that is an exposé on oppression.

A group discussion of Native American perspective on the Quincentennary Celebration of America.

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