

Do You Mind If I Smoke

Student faces expulsion over blog post

smoked, the police need to do a better job, you are not the police. and how is it that you feel threatened what was said that was so threatening. I feel

Sunday, May 28, 2006

A 17-year-old student faces expulsion by the Plainfield School District in Plainfield, Illinois as a result of blog posts he made on xanga.com which were critical of the school staff, alleging bullying and intimidation. The student has already been suspended for 10 days for the "inappropriate comments" and "threats" the school felt he had expressed on his blog. The posts were not made on school time or with school equipment.

On May 1, the student posted the following message that apparently initiated the suspension:

"dear plainfield school district 202:

i know you read this. and you suck. suspend me or what ever you would like to do. but this is my fuckin web site and i can put what ever i want on it. kinda goes with the first amendment. by suspending kyle again for his xanga you guys are pathetic and totally irrational. first amendment you fucks. freedom of speech. and who the fuck are you to say what some one can do from there own personal computer. one more thing kiss my ass."

On May 2, the student continued his passionate rant, giving some background to the controversy:

"you are bully's. I feel threatened by you. if you don't like what you see here then do not come here its that simple. I'm pretty sure when you suspended Sam you brought her to tears, you are a bully and you make me sick. there's nothing you can do about us posting about parties we've been to and how much liquor we had or how much pot was smoked, the police need to do a better job, you are not the police. and how is it that you feel threatened what was said that was so threatening. I feel threatened by you, I cant even have a public web page with out you bullying me and telling me what has to be removed. where is this freedom of speech that this government is sworn to uphold? none of this is posted at school, its all posted from our home computers, and once we step foot into our homes we are not on school property any more. you are just power hungry, don't you ever think? did you stop to think that maybe this will make parents angry that you are bullying their children around? did you ever stop to think that maybe now you really are going to have a threat on your hands now that you have just pissed off kids for voicing their opinions? did you ever stop to think this will start a community backlash? The kids at Columbine did what they did because they were bullied. In my opinion you are the real threat here. None of us ever put in our xanga's that they were going to kill or bring harm to any one. we voiced our opinions. you are the real threat here. you are depriving us of our right to learn. now stick that in your pipe and smoke it."

Attorney Carl Buck, who feels the school authorities have overstepped their boundaries, says, "The district is going to take away the student's education for exercising his freedom of speech... I feel like they are trying to control his freedom of speech. ... He is saying, 'You can't bully people and we have a right to object and you can't throw people out of school for voicing their opinions.'"

Other students at the school posted messages of support in their own Xanga blogs. A blogger named Meghan wrote, "As Americans, we have the right to speak our mind." Another student, Heather, who found out about the possible expulsion through the local news, wrote that "first of all, Xanga is outside of school ... second of all ... there was no threat towards anyone on his posts."

In a related case in March 2006, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that an Alaska high school acted improperly by suspending a student for carrying a banner reading "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" across the street from the school.

Canada's Don Valley West (Ward 26) city council candidates speak

do you feel is most relevant to your ward in this election? A: The need to engage all communities and ensure fair representation of the whole ward. I

Friday, November 3, 2006

On November 13, Torontonians will be heading to the polls to vote for their ward's councillor and for mayor. Among Toronto's ridings is Don Valley West (Ward 26). Four candidates responded to Wikinews' requests for an interview. This ward's candidates include Muhammad Alam, Bahar Aminvaziri, Orhan Aybars, Michele Carroll-Smith, Mohamed Dhanani, Abdul Ingar, Geoff Kettel, Debbie Lechter, Natalie Maniates, John Masterson, John Parker, David Thomas, Csaba Vegh, and Fred Williams.

For more information on the election, read [Toronto municipal election, 2006](#).

Author of My Billion Year Contract reflects on life in elite Scientology group

operations? If you were the head of the organization, what would you do differently

what would you change about Scientology practices? NM: If I were the - Thursday, January 14, 2010

Wikinews interviewed author Nancy Many about her book *My Billion Year Contract*, and asked her about life working in the elite Scientology group known as the "Sea Org". Many joined Scientology in the early 1970s, and after leaving in 1996 she later testified against the organization. Published in October, Many's book has gone on to become one of the top selling new books on Scientology at Amazon.com.

Ingrid Newkirk, co-founder of PETA, on animal rights and the film about her life

cheap sugar and smoke them out and kill them." I thought that I don't need honey. It was just another thing where you think, "Why do I need this?" DS:

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

Last night HBO premiered *I Am An Animal: The Story of Ingrid Newkirk and PETA*. Since its inception, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has made headlines and raised eyebrows. They are almost single-handedly responsible for the movement against animal testing and their efforts have raised the suffering animals experience in a broad spectrum of consumer goods production and food processing into a cause célèbre.

PETA first made headlines in the Silver Spring monkeys case, when Alex Pacheco, then a student at George Washington University, volunteered at a lab run by Edward Taub, who was testing neuroplasticity on live monkeys. Taub had cut sensory ganglia that supplied nerves to the monkeys' fingers, hands, arms, legs; with some of the monkeys, he had severed the entire spinal column. He then tried to force the monkeys to use their limbs by exposing them to persistent electric shock, prolonged physical restraint of an intact arm or leg, and by withholding food. With footage obtained by Pacheco, Taub was convicted of six counts of animal cruelty—largely as a result of the monkeys' reported living conditions—making them "the most famous lab animals in history," according to psychiatrist Norman Doidge. Taub's conviction was later overturned on appeal and the monkeys were eventually euthanized.

PETA was born.

In the subsequent decades they ran the Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty against Europe's largest animal-testing facility (footage showed staff punching beagle puppies in the face, shouting at them, and simulating sex

acts while taking blood samples); against Covance, the United State's largest importer of primates for laboratory research (evidence was found that they were dissecting monkeys at its Vienna, Virginia laboratory while the animals were still alive); against General Motors for using live animals in crash tests; against L'Oreal for testing cosmetics on animals; against the use of fur for fashion and fur farms; against Smithfield Foods for torturing Butterball turkeys; and against fast food chains, most recently against KFC through the launch of their website kentuckyfriedcruelty.com.

They have launched campaigns and engaged in stunts that are designed for media attention. In 1996, PETA activists famously threw a dead raccoon onto the table of Anna Wintour, the fur supporting editor-in-chief of Vogue, while she was dining at the Four Seasons in New York, and left bloody paw prints and the words "Fur Hag" on the steps of her home. They ran a campaign entitled Holocaust on your Plate that consisted of eight 60-square-foot panels, each juxtaposing images of the Holocaust with images of factory farming. Photographs of concentration camp inmates in wooden bunks were shown next to photographs of caged chickens, and piled bodies of Holocaust victims next to a pile of pig carcasses. In 2003 in Jerusalem, after a donkey was loaded with explosives and blown up in a terrorist attack, Newkirk sent a letter to then-PLO leader Yasser Arafat to keep animals out of the conflict. As the film shows, they also took over Jean-Paul Gaultier's Paris boutique and smeared blood on the windows to protest his use of fur in his clothing.

The group's tactics have been criticized. Co-founder Pacheco, who is no longer with PETA, called them "stupid human tricks." Some feminists criticize their campaigns featuring the Lettuce Ladies and "I'd Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur" ads as objectifying women. Of their Holocaust on a Plate campaign, Anti-Defamation League Chairman Abraham Foxman said "The effort by PETA to compare the deliberate systematic murder of millions of Jews to the issue of animal rights is abhorrent." (Newkirk later issued an apology for any hurt it caused). Perhaps most controversial amongst politicians, the public and even other animal rights organizations is PETA's refusal to condemn the actions of the Animal Liberation Front, which in January 2005 was named as a terrorist threat by the United States Department of Homeland Security.

David Shankbone attended the pre-release screening of I Am An Animal at HBO's offices in New York City on November 12, and the following day he sat down with Ingrid Newkirk to discuss her perspectives on PETA, animal rights, her responses to criticism lodged against her and to discuss her on-going life's work to raise human awareness of animal suffering. Below is her interview.

ACLU President Strossen on religion, drugs, guns and impeaching George Bush

punishment do you think is most compelling for it? NS: If I had to be a devil's advocate... Boy. I-I-you're really tongue-tying me, which is novel. I would say

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

File:Nadine Strossen 5 by David Shankbone.jpg

There are few organizations in the United States that elicit a stronger emotional response than the American Civil Liberties Union, whose stated goal is "to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to every person in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States". Those people include gays, Nazis, women seeking abortion, gun owners, SPAM mailers and drug users. People who are often not popular with various segments of the public. The ACLU's philosophy is not that it agrees or disagrees with any of these people and the choices that they make, but that they have personal liberties that must not be trampled upon.

In Wikinews reporter David Shankbone's interview with the President of the ACLU, Nadine Strossen, he wanted to cover some basic ground on the ACLU's beliefs. Perhaps the area where they are most misunderstood or have their beliefs most misrepresented is their feelings about religion in the public sphere. The ACLU categorically does not want to see religion disappear from schools or in the public forum; but they do not want to see government advocacy of any particular religion. Thus, former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore's placement of a ten ton monument to the Ten Commandments outside the courthouse is strenuously opposed; but "Lone Ranger of the Manger" Rita Warren's placement of nativity scenes in public parks is vigorously defended. In the interview, Strossen talks about how certain politicians and televangelists purposefully misstate the law and the ACLU's work in order to raise funds for their campaigns.

David Shankbone's discussion with Strossen touches upon many of the ACLU's hot button issues: religion, Second Amendment rights, drug liberalization, "partial-birth abortion" and whether or not George W. Bush should be impeached. It may surprise the reader that many ideas people have about the most visible of America's civil libertarian organizations are not factually correct and that the ACLU often works closely with many of the organizations people think despise its existence.

Edmund White on writing, incest, life and Larry Kramer

wouldn't mind if it goes down. DS: Do you believe in a higher power? EW: No, not at all. I'm glad people do believe who are in the recovery programs. I was

Thursday, November 8, 2007

What you are about to read is an American life as lived by renowned author Edmund White. His life has been a crossroads, the fulcrum of high-brow Classicism and low-brow Brett Easton Ellisism. It is not for the faint. He has been the toast of the literary elite in New York, London and Paris, befriending artistic luminaries such as Salman Rushdie and Sir Ian McKellen while writing about a family where he was jealous his sister was having sex with his father as he fought off his mother's amorous pursuit.

The fact is, Edmund White exists. His life exists. To the casual reader, they may find it disquieting that someone like his father existed in 1950's America and that White's work is the progeny of his intimate effort to understand his own experience.

Wikinews reporter David Shankbone understood that an interview with Edmund White, who is professor of creative writing at Princeton University, who wrote the seminal biography of Jean Genet, and who no longer can keep track of how many sex partners he has encountered, meant nothing would be off limits. Nothing was. Late in the interview they were joined by his partner Michael Carroll, who discussed White's enduring feud with influential writer and activist Larry Kramer.

Wikinews interviews Joe Schriener, Independent U.S. presidential candidate

refrain: "I think we need a staff." ((WS)) If you had complete power at this moment, what would you do? How would you change America? ((JS)) If this means

Saturday, April 17, 2010

Journalist, counselor, painter, and US 2012 Presidential candidate Joe Schriener of Cleveland, Ohio took some time to discuss his campaign with Wikinews in an interview.

Schriener previously ran for president in 2000, 2004, and 2008, but failed to gain much traction in the races. He announced his candidacy for the 2012 race immediately following the 2008 election. Schriener refers to himself as the "Average Joe" candidate, and advocates a pro-life and pro-environmentalist platform. He has been the subject of numerous newspaper articles, and has published public policy papers exploring solutions to American issues.

Wikinews reporter William Saturn? talks with Schriner and discusses his campaign.

Wikinews interviews U.S. Libertarian presidential candidate Wayne Allyn Root

change that if elected. ((WN)) : Why do you want to run for president? How would you help your fellow Americans if elected? Mr. Root: I decided to run

Wednesday, February 6, 2008

Wikinews held an exclusive interview with Wayne Allyn Root, one of the candidates for the Libertarian Party nomination for the 2008 U.S. presidential election.

Root is the founder and chairman of Winning Edge International Inc., a sports handicapping company based in Las Vegas, Nevada. In addition, he is an author and a television producer, as well as an on-screen personality both as host and guest on several talk shows.

Root, a long-time Republican, declared his candidacy for the Libertarian Party on May 4, 2007.

He says he is concerned about the qualities of many who run for president, and fears that they do not know the needs of American citizens. He also says that they cater to big businesses instead of small ones.

He has goals of limiting the federal government and believes that the US went into Iraq for wrong reasons. A strong supporter of the War on Terror, he feels that it was mishandled. He has conservative values and came from a blue collar family in New York. He graduated from Columbia University with fellow presidential hopeful Barack Obama in 1983.

Root believes that America is in trouble and hopes to change that if elected.

Augusten Burroughs on addiction, writing, his family and his new book

are. You know? I mean, it's shocking. DS: Do you believe in a higher power? AB: I wouldn't say that I believe in one. I don't know. I don't know if there's

Friday, October 12, 2007

I had an unofficial phone call from Gay Talese last Tuesday. He had just flown back from Colombia and he was cranky. "I'm happy to do an interview with you," he said, "but what the hell could you ask me that's not already out there? Have you even bothered to look?!"

"Jeez, Mr. Talese, lots of things," was my response. I lied. The truth is that when I call people to interview them, I do not have a set of preconceived questions. My agenda is to talk to them and gain a sense of who they are; to flesh them out as humans. To find out what they think about the world around them at that moment. With Gay Talese I had little interest in talking about Frank Sinatra Has a Cold and with Augusten Burroughs I had little interest in discussing Running with Scissors. I want to know what they think about things outside of the boxes people have placed them in.

With a memoirist like Burroughs, even this is a challenge. What parts of his life he has not written about himself, other interviewers have strip-mined. When we met for dinner at Lavagna in the East Village, I explained to Augusten this issue. I suggested we make the interview more of a conversation to see if that would be more interesting. "Instead of you in the catbird seat," I said, "let's just talk."

We struck an instant rapport. What set out to be an hour and half interview over dinner had turned into four hours of discussion about our lives similarly lived. I removed half of the interview: the half that focused on me.

Below is Wikinews reporter David Shankbone's conversation with writer Augusten Burroughs.

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