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**viewpoint** BY MICHAEL WILLIAMS

## Object of Scorn

Pacifica Forum seeks to silence its critics

**B**illy Rojas, "free speech" advocate, threatens to sue me for criticizing Pacifica Forum (PF) programs (Viewpoint, 1/14). The irony could sink a cruise ship.

It is true that I have described the content of many PF programs as anti-Semitic, anti-Islam, anti-Muslim, anti-homosexual, anti-immigrant, misogynist, racist, bigoted, hate speech, white nationalist/ supremacist, neo-Nazi, or some combination. There are no other suitable adjectives. I do not use those words to describe either PF or its attendees, yet Billy Rojas insists that somehow he has been defamed and will sue.

PF spokespeople respond to criticism two ways. The most frequent response is to attack the critics, usually through conspiracy theories and personal slurs, now including public threats of legal action and harassment of a student leader. This distracts from the real issue, which is the content of PF programs.

When "defending" program content, PF folk tend to prove the criticism accurate instead. For instance, at the Jan. 8 program "Everything You Wanted to Know about Pacifica Forum," respondents repeatedly made statements that can only be described as misogynist, anti-Semitic or neo-Nazi, with occasional forays into other "anti-"s.

Rojas' EW opinion piece last week is another example. Attempting to show that his positions on homosexuality and Islam are not bigoted, he claimed "homosexuality is pathological in nature" and spoke of "the criminal nature of Islam itself." With defense like that, no prosecution is needed.

Rojas wants us to judge PF only by programs in the past two years. (When I offered to share my listing of programs, how I rated them and why at least half were categorized as bigoted, Rojas declined to talk and subsequently threatened to sue.) OK. Let's look at 2008-09 programming.

- Martin Luther King Day 2008 was celebrated by a vicious attack that the speaker admitted was "racist," and he was "unabashed" about it. Another lecture dealt at length with black-on-white rape as an attack on the white race. During 2009 Valdas Anelauskas was responsible for one third of PF's programs.

- Three sessions on the Southern Poverty Law Center were largely anti-Semitic and racist invective leveled at the SPLC. "The Frankfurt School and Cultural Marxism" was two lectures during which professors at the German Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt were repeatedly ridiculed as Jewish homosexual communist perverts.

- "Marxist Roots of Radical Feminism" was three lectures that repeatedly derided feminist leaders as unsavory Jewish communist lesbians. When pointed out that this was not a critique of feminism, just character assassination, the speaker agreed saying it was indeed "character assassination" because the Left holds them up as idols and heroes, and he wanted to tear them down.

- Thirteen programs were dedicated to complaining about criticisms of Pacifica Forum, invariably accompanied by theories of a Jewish conspiracy to "silence" PF. Three honored the court-certified pro-Nazi anti-Semite David Irving. Two programs were explicitly anti-Islam, one anti-homosexual, another slandered a local minister for not being anti-homosexual or anti-Islam. Three lectures claimed immigration into Europe from North Africa threatens European civilization. Two programs mentioned the "brown hordes" crossing our borders, and at least four raised the specter of "mongrelizing" or diluting the white gene pool. Two programs claimed "anti-Fascism" is just Jews trying to counter criticism of Israel.

The overwhelming trend at PF is toward programs attacking minorities and women, promoting white separatism and nationalism. In the past two years PF has become the most prolific outlet for public presentations of America's most extreme rightwing political ideologies between Seattle and Sacramento. At no time has PF provided for a stream of programs to counter this trend. In the marketplace of ideas, PF is bankrupt.

Over the past six years PF principals have consistently mentioned suing various people for defamation. Although these threats are groundless, there is concern that this new very public threat may have a chilling effect on people who are critical of PF programs. Threatening lawsuits is a cheap way to intimidate and silence critics.

As a community we are responsible for the kinds of speech we nurture and host, and the kind we discourage. Even though government is compelled to allow legal speech, when it transgresses community values and violates our norms of conduct, that "legal" speech can and must be criticized and condemned as contrary to community standards.

*Michael Williams of Eugene is a member of the Anti-Hate Task force and has observed Pacifica Forum for six and a half years.*