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Hate sign removed from Durfee Hall

BY NAOMI MASSAVE

Staff Reporter

Morse College freshman counselors removed an offensive banner from Durfee Hall Monday. The banner had upset several students, but the students who hung the sign said it was meant to be a joke.

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The sign, which read "Kill 'em all, Let God sort 'em out," was interpreted by many as a hate message directed against Muslims and South Asians.

But the male Morse students who put up the banner, who refused to give their names, said the sign was meant as a joke to counter pro-peace banners, and said they do not advocate violence.

"Nobody that actually put that sign up agrees in any way shape or form with what that said. It was put up to get people to be like, 'What the hell,'" one of the anonymous freshman said. "I actually helped put it up, and nobody here hates anybody. I'm actually a liberal person almost, I don't have a gun rack on my bicycle or stuff like that. It's so ridiculous."

Students in the suite said Morse freshman counselors came into their room Monday afternoon and removed the banner.

"Basically our counselors came and confiscated the sign, and we just discussed with them why we put it up," one of the freshman involved said. "Apparently people were complaining because they interpreted it in a way it was not meant to be interpreted."

The first freshman said the sign was made with red spray paint on a sheet bought at the Salvation Army.

"It was quoting a redneck bumper sticker slapped on the back of a pickup truck driving down Broadway with a gun rack -- then we knew it was an ultraconservative," he said. "[It said] 'Kill 'em all, let God sort 'em out,' then it had an American flag on the bumper sticker."

Morse Dean Rosemary Jones said she is not ready to comment about the situation yet, and Dean of Student Affairs Betty Trachtenberg said its consequences were not yet certain.

"I can't give you any definitive answer yet about what's being done about it, but I've spoken to [the] freshman counselors and the dean of the college where the banner was hung," Trachtenberg said. "What will be done will come out after conversations with the people involved."

Anjan Bhullar '05 said he does not condemn punishing terrorists but added he was bothered by the implication that killing civilians is acceptable.



"Implicit also is that among the dead are civilians," he said. "The only reason [they're] being killed is because they're of the same people, they're the same ethnicity."

Ethnic counselor Edward Teng '02 said he believed that although everyone has the right to free speech, the banner might create a hostile environment for some ethnic minorities.

"Being an ethnic counselor, one of my primary concerns for Muslim-Americans, Indian-Americans, and South Asians at Yale was the fact that although the sign maybe might have just meant kill the Taliban -- it didn't say that: It said kill them all," Teng said. "It has implications for the way people are going to read in to it, and the way people are going to react, and how they might treat their peers on campus."

Morse Master Frank Keil said he was disappointed in the behavior.

"Obviously I think it's inappropriate to have that kind of hate language going on," Keil said. "We really hope it wasn't Morsels, and it just got hung out of Durfee."

Teng said the Trumbull College freshman counselors discussed the most appropriate way to deal with the situation, weighing the right to free speech against the right for freshmen to feel safe in their own community. One of the solutions discussed included making other banners to counter the message of the Durfee banner.

A Pierson College freshman counselor also spoke with the students in the suite to try to convince them the banner was offensive and persuade them to remove it of their own volition.

"He suggested we take it down, otherwise there would be protests," one of the Morse freshmen said.

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