



Senior Brock Towler, SURGE member, addresses students Monday in the Pit about free speech prior to the summer reading discussions.



Freshman Megan White speaks to the media Monday after talking with "Pit Preacher" Gary Birdsong about the summer reading program.

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book's excerpts from the Quran. Some students questioned the authors' selections, others applauded them.

Most admitted they had little understanding of the Islamic faith and said the book gave them a fresh perspective. A few even tried to unravel motives behind the Sept. 11 attacks.

"The one thing I thought about when I was reading this book was, what about all the terrorists - what went wrong?" asked one student.

The mood inside Provost Robert Shelton's discussion section was equally civil.

After a cautious start, most of the 19 students openly exchanged views about a variety of topics surrounding the controversial book.

Shelton moderated the discussion, posing challenging questions to students about individuals' own interpretations, cultural barriers of studying the religion and the national debate about the book in the media.

None of the students who participated said they were offended by the book, and most reflected the willingness to learn about a culture and religion very foreign to their own.

The reviews of the book were mixed, with some students looking for a more conclusive analysis of the religion and not just the favorable aspects.

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haps, guilty of perjury."

But University officials said they have no intention of changing the Web site.

Glover said FPN officials plan to continue fighting this case, and he said it is possible that the case would reach the Supreme Court. "Our greater goal is to re-establish a precedent that you can not require students at a publicly funded university to submit to any sort of religious indoctrination," he said.

But Susan Ehringhaus, vice chancellor and general council for UNC, said Thursday that this was not a victory for FPN and that UNC would not change the reading assignment. As of Monday, the program had continued as planned.

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not followed when proposing and considering the resolution.

But she conceded that concern about stepping on legislators' toes while they were still considering university funding might have influenced some votes.

"It could have had an impact with some of our folks," Little said. "None of us want to anger the people that hold our purse strings."

Simply put, timing was bad, she said.

The BOG Education Policy and Planning Committee will hold a hearing Thursday to consider passing an additional resolution supporting academic freedom.

Responding to the initial BOG vote, the Executive Committee of the UNC-CH Faculty Council unanimously passed a resolution Aug. 12 almost identical to the one the BOG failed to approve.

"It is a much broader issue - it's not about the book anymore," said Sue Estroff, Faculty Council chairwoman.

Taking that perspective, other campus contingencies followed suit. The same day, the Campus Minister's Association at UNC-CH adopted a statement supporting the University's summer reading choice.

UNC-CH's Student Congress passed a resolution in support of academic freedom by a vote of 20-4 during an emergency meeting Monday night.

Speaker of Congress Tony Larson said he called the meeting because a student perspective had not been presented in the debate. "As the voice of the students, it's our responsibility to say what we believe," he said.

U.S. Congressman David Price echoed the sentiments of students and faculty members who contend that the assignment is harmless and enhances the overall academic experience.

"I do think that this is an assignment for freshman that is perfectly legitimate," Price said. "It's like assignments at many universities. The opinion (in Washington) overwhelmingly is that this is something that universities do."

He added that it is inappropriate for outside groups to attempt to control a university's academic offerings.

"I am hopeful that attempts to interfere with the function of the University will cease."

Assistant University Editor Jeff Silver contributed to this article. The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

HISTORY
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"You either have it or you don't."

Friday actively protested the ban on Communist speakers, which was approved by the General Assembly in 1963 and then declared unconstitutional five years later.

"We spent an awful lot of time and an awful lot of tax money trying to resolve the issue," Friday said.

UNC journalism lecturer Jock Lauterer, who was a student during the bans, said he immediately thought of the speaker controversy after reading an article about the summer reading debate.

"I saw (the article), and I just said, 'This is the speaker ban all over again,'" Lauterer said. "The issues of academic freedom are hauntingly similar."

One of the most memorable images from the speaker ban is Frank Wilkinson, who was not a Communist but was still prohibited from lecturing on campus, speaking to a crowd of students across the wall separating McCorkle Place from Franklin Street.

"We were out there not because we were Communists or radicals. We were out there because we supported the University," said Lauterer, who attended the speech.

In more recent history, the University came under fire last year when a group of professors held three teach-ins to denounce U.S. military involvement following Sept. 11.

"It was the first teach-in, as far as we know, held in the country after September 11," said Elin O'Hara Slavick, an art professor who helped organized the events.

"It just seemed so logical and educational to me."

Slavick said she is impressed by how the University has dealt with recent controversies.

"We were still able to have our teach-ins, and students are still reading this book," she said.

Chancellor James Moeser, who has defended the University during both the teach-in and summer reading controversies, said he is willing to fight for academic freedom.

"People are fearful of what they don't know and don't understand," he said.

"We're not afraid of controversy," Friday also said that although the nature of the fights might change, the issues remain the same.

"There is one thing, above all else, that the University must maintain, retain and nourish, and that is its freedom," he said.

"Freedom is the very soul of its existence."

The Features Editor can be reached at features@unc.edu.

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