



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 20, 2016

Pro-Trump Students Exonerated After Investigation

Two pro-Trump college students accused of racist and aggressive behaviors by students who supported Hillary Clinton have been exonerated of any wrongdoing by Babson College officials after an investigation found no evidence of misconduct.



On November 8, Babson College students Edward Tomasso and Parker Rand-Ricciardi jumped in a pickup truck that was waving a Donald Trump flag and drove around campus, reportedly “whooping and hollering.” Their joyride continued onto the nearby all-female Wellesley College, Clinton’s Alma Mater, which ticked off some frustrated Hillary Clinton supporters who struggled with their candidate’s loss.

Wellesley student Syndney Robertson was one of the students offended by Tomasso’s and Rand-Ricciardi’s behavior. She posted on Facebook that the two spat on a passerby, though two of the videos she included in her post did not capture that behavior. Robertson took particular issue with the fact that the celebration continued in front of the Harambee House, a dwelling that houses black Wellesley students, saying:

Today, Wellesley women, like a lot of America, were in mourning.

Edward Tomasso and Parker Rand-Ricciardi, two students at Babson College, decided to drive around our beautiful campus with a Trump flag in a pick up truck. They laughed, screamed and sped around campus. Then, they parked in front of the house for students of African decent, and jeered at them, screaming Trump and Make America Great Again. When one student asked them to leave, they spit in her direction.

This is not my America, this is Trump’s America filled with hatred and bigotry. This is what he has provoked. Please help us get these faces out there, they cannot get away with this.

Before the case was even investigated, Babson College quickly denounced the actions of the two students.

“It is important to understand that our students’ behavior was experienced by many students of color and perceived by many others ... as racially offensive and gender demeaning,” Babson Student Affairs Vice President Lawrence Ward said in a statement.

Babson president Kerry Healey stated that there were 40 “bias incident reports” filed in connection with the boys’ actions, which claimed that the two “antagonized” students, and that investigators would look into the incident.

Despite the absence of any evidence that the accusations were true, Tomasso and Rand-Ricciardi were immediately expelled from their fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, and faced disciplinary action by Babson College for their alleged racist behavior. The two were also banned from campus until



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December 11.

An investigation launched by Babson College's associate director of community standards was unable to corroborate any of the allegations, however, and even suggested that some of the accusations were outright false. But the school continued to forge ahead with a hearing scheduled on December 16 before the college's honor board.

The case became the subject of a serious national debate over First Amendment-protected rights, with a civil liberties group, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), issuing a [letter](#) to Babson College asking the school to stop the pursuit of charges against the two students:

The [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education] is deeply concerned about the threat to freedom of expression at Babson College posed by the pursuit of student conduct charges against two students over their display of a flag and involvement in speech celebrating the election of Donald J. Trump in the November 2016 presidential election.... The continued pursuit of charges and a hearing, after Babson College's own investigation cleared the students of much of the alleged conduct, is at odds with Babson's promise to protect its students' freedom of expression.... Accordingly, we call upon Babson College to cancel the December 16 hearing and publicly confirm that it remains committed to defending freedom of expression.

The school went ahead with the hearing, however. But on Monday, the board officially ruled that the students had done nothing wrong. The decision followed a "lengthy closed-door hearing," the *Boston Herald* reports.

Tomasso and Rand-Ricciardi were understandably relieved by the school's decision.

"This has been an extremely difficult, painful five weeks for Parker and his family, one that has naturally taken a toll on them," Jeffrey Robbins, Rand-Ricciardi's attorney said in a statement. "They are grateful for the kindness and support of so many people, including both friends and complete strangers."

Tomasso's attorney, Brad Bailey, said that his client "is extremely happy that his name has been cleared of allegations that were completely untrue and had no basis in fact."

Sadly, however, prior to the board's admission that the students committed no wrongdoings, both Tomasso and Rand-Ricciardi were bullied into apologizing for their actions, despite having done nothing wrong. A flier featuring their images as well as their names was circulated across Babson's campus calling for their expulsion.

Tomasso's Facebook apology gave the impression that he was metaphorically beaten into submission, as it seems to tick off all the main arguments by the PC police:

I'm not a racist. I'm not a bigot. I'm not homophobic. On Wednesday, in an act of extremely poor judgment I drove through Wellesley campus yelling trump 2016 and make America great again. I didn't spit on or towards anyone. In fact, I didn't spit at all. I didn't use profane language. Not even a single time. I didn't go to the harambee house intentionally. I didn't even know what that was. However, this post is not intended to deflect responsibility. Nevertheless I hurtfully displayed a flag that symbolizes fear for many people and my actions caused pain that I am responsible for.

For anyone part of the LGBTQ, African American, Muslim, immigrants, sexual assault victims, and another other community or individuals impacted by my actions: I can never understand what you are going through right now. I have perpetuated the fear that exists throughout the world today.



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That was not my intention and I am deeply sorry that this has happened. Although I do not support prejudice or discrimination of any kind, I've trivialized the suffering by the hands of those who do.

As a white male, I do not feel threatened by the new president. I have not had to work for that privilege. It was something I was born with. However, I'm willing to listen to how I can use this privilege to help those impacted by it and promote unity, equality, and prevent the marginalization of those afflicted.

Rand-Ricciardi also apologized, writing that his "insensitive celebration of the Trump victory was an extremely poor choice, plain and simple."

Still, the board's decision is something of a happy ending for the two students. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education applauded the decision as one in favor of free speech.

"While Babson College is not bound by the First Amendment, its policies expressly recognize the importance and value of free speech," stated the FIRE letter.

However, FIRE claims that the hearing should not have been permitted to go on and that the school set a dangerous precedent against freedom of expression: "Once the more serious allegations were determined to be unsubstantiated, the college should have immediately dropped the matter. Babson must ensure that students are free to express their views without fear of official sanction."

And while Babson College was quick to apologize to the Wellesley College community for the boys' actions immediately following the incident, it made no such apology to Tomasso or Rand-Ricciardi, despite putting them through this five-week ordeal.



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