



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 31, 2014

University Refuses to Condemn Professor's Violence Against Pro-lifers

The University of California at Santa Barbara is taking the side of a feminist studies professor who is charged with assault for attacking two young anti-abortion protesters. In a letter from Michael Young, the university's vice chancellor, the school concedes that the professor should not have responded so extremely to the situation, but also ultimately seemed to place the entire blame for the incident on the girls' presence on campus.



Two sisters, Thrin Short, 16, and Joan Short, 21, were staging an anti-abortion protest with the Survivors of the Abortion Holocaust Group at the university on March 4 in a designated "free speech zone" when Associate Professor Mireille Miller-Young approached them and stole their pro-life signs. Miller-Young, who teaches feminist studies at the university, grabbed the signs from the girls, and when the sisters attempted to retrieve them, they claim Miller-Young kicked and pushed them.

Professor Miller-Young, according to the *National Review*, "specializes in black cultural studies, pornography, and sex work."

A very [detailed description](#) of the encounter with the professor can be found at the website for Survivors of the Abortion Holocaust. Miller-Young first led a mob-like group to chant, "Tear down the sign." The protestors attempted to converse civilly with the chanters, prompting the professor to shout, "They're trying to separate us, don't talk to them." When the girls continued to engage in one on one conversation with several members of the crowd, the professor angrily grabbed the sign. The site reports:

Professor Young's mob dwindled after she stole the sign. She paraded across the campus with two female students carrying the sign. Joan and Thrin followed, Thrin video-taping and Joan on the phone with the police.

The parade weaved through two buildings and entered an elevator in the third. Thrin attempted to get on the elevator with them, but Young blocked the doorway. Thrin stuck her foot in the door, but Young pushed it out with her foot. Tenaciously Thrin put it back. This happened several times as Thrin pleaded with the students to not get involved. "The police are on their way," she told them, "you don't want to be with Professor Young."

Suddenly Young reached out and pushed 16 year old Thrin. "Don't touch me!" Thrin cried, startled. Young's long fingernails scratched Thrin's arm. Young pushed Thrin twice more and each time Thrin kept the door from closing with her arm. Finally, Young got out of the elevator, and tried to pull Thrin away from the elevator door. Thrin held onto the elevator with her other hand, the one holding the camera. Realizing that students were trying to take the camera out of her hand, Thrin let go of the elevator.



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Professor Miller-Young has asserted that she set a good example that day.

The University of California remained silent on the incident for a few weeks before finally releasing a 1,000 word letter, wherein Vice Chancellor Michael Young labels the professor's response to the girls' pro-life demonstration as less than dignified, but wholly targets the girls as the reason for the entire ordeal, calling them "anti-abortion crusaders" and "evangelical types" who purposefully came to the campus "to provoke us, to taunt us and attempt to turn us against one another."

In fact, the letter begins by taking jabs at the protestors and not the professor and her intolerance.

"Over the past several weeks, our campus has been visited by a number of outside groups and individuals coming here to promote an ideology, to promulgate particular beliefs (at times extreme beliefs), or simply to create discord that furthers a certain personal agenda," it reads.

While the introduction also alludes to those who "peddle hate and intolerance with less-than-noble aims," it is not clear who exactly that allusion refers to because in the next paragraph, the letter once again turns its attention to the pro-life protestors.

"Whatever the motives and goals, the presence of such people and groups on campus can be disruptive and has the potential to draw us into the kind of conflict that puts at risk the quality of exchange of ideas that is fundamental to the mission of our university."

And still, the professor remains untouched by the letter's scathing tone, as it continues, "What we see at UCSB today is simply the most recent generation of true believers, self-proclaimed prophets, and provocateurs."

While the letter goes on to begrudgingly admit that freedom of speech is absolute and should therefore be respected, it adds, "Just because you can say or do something doesn't mean that you should. Civility plays an important role in how we choose to exercise our right to expression."

The letter also makes a bizarre reference to the U.S. Constitution, one that seems to both criticize and yet praise it all at once. "Our Founding Fathers — all white men of privilege, some even slave owners — got it right when designing the First Amendment of the Constitution," chancellor Young wrote to the student body.

There is a brief snippet, at the very end of the letter, that seems to refer to the professor's response to the girls' protest, but reads more as advice for the future rather than a reprimand for the professor's reprehensible response:

If we take the bait, if we adopt negative tactics and engage in name calling, confrontation, provocation, and offensive behavior, then they win and our community loses. While urging you to engage with differing ideas and opinions in a civil manner, I also want to remind you that you have the option not to engage at all....

... If you feel that you must respond, hold a peaceful, thoughtful, civil, and dignified counter-demonstration, and show how students engage intellectually and politically at UCSB.

The letter takes a sanctimonious tone, implying that those opposed to the pro-life cause are the enlightened ones who know how to "engage intellectually and politically." Evidently that includes professors who show pornography to their students in the classroom. (See Professor Miller-Young's article "The Pedagogy of Pornography: Teaching Hardcore Media in a Feminist Studies Classroom" wherein she defends this practice.)



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Still, despite the university's unwillingness to attribute fault to the professor, Miller-Young's violence against the young pro-life activists is being addressed by the Santa Barbara district attorney, who has filed charges of grand theft, battery, and vandalism against the professor.

Joan and Thrin's mother, Catherine Short, is the legal director of the Life Legal Defense Foundation, and issued a statement on behalf of her family, wherein she voices confidence in the legal process.

Short also asks the university to remain true to its mission — which states that the school is committed to the “creation and distribution of knowledge” — by “observing a pro-life outreach.” Her statement explains that if Vice Chancellor Young did so, he would realize that the pro-lifers would not be guilty of provocation, as his letter reads, but that the individuals would attempt to make their point “by employing facts, reason, discussion, and persuasion.”



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