



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 14, 2022

Liberal Camp Closes After Staff Quits, Last Minute, Over BUDDHIST Swastika

First there was the Taliban blowing up Buddhist statues. Now staff at a liberal camp have blown up 900 kids' summer experience — quitting just six days prior to first-session commencement — because, in part, they were upset about pre-Nazi-era Buddhist swastika designs that adorned a camp building.

The resignations prompted Hidden Villa, in Los Altos Hills, California, to abruptly cancel all its summer camps, a move that will affect 28 seasonal staff in addition to the disappointed children. As the *Los Altos Town Crier* [reports](#):



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Staff resignations triggered the unprecedented cancellations — four critical camp leaders resigned last week amid a dispute over how Hidden Villa administrators were addressing staff concerns about racism and inclusion at the nonprofit farm and wilderness preserve in Los Altos Hills. Summer camps were slated to kick off June 13.

An email from Hidden Villa to camp families cited “existing staffing shortages in addition to sudden and unrecoverable staffing difficulties” as the reason for the last-minute cancellation.

Camp director Philip James, who is Black, told the *Town Crier* he resigned from his position June 5 due to the organization's failure to address issues of structural and institutional racism. The flashpoint for James and other staff was the presence of, and failure to remove, a swastika design on the exterior of the Hidden Villa's Duveneck house. Camp assistant director Mimi Elias, who identifies as a queer person of color and has been living in the house, said the symbol makes her deeply uncomfortable. She was also among those who resigned.

“Every day I had to go to my place of residence and had to look at swastikas and walk beneath them,” Elias said.

Whether or not the situation was supposed to be “all about her” was not reported.

Of course, these swastikas, symbols found for ages in basket-weaving cultures, have nothing to do with Nazism. The *Hamden Journal* [explains](#) that “Hidden Villa — which is home to a camp, hiking trails, and farm — once belonged to Frank and Josephine Duveneck, according to the camp's statement. On the couple's honeymoon to Asia in 1913, they brought back and hung artistic tiles with lotuses and Buddhist symbols, including the swastika, which was later appropriated by the Nazi Party after the first World War.”



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Unfortunately, ignorance-born “woke” controversies are hardly new. Just consider the “niggardly” stories. In 1999, for example, then-director of the Office of the Public Advocate in Washington, D.C., David Howard, [resigned](#) after underlings were offended that he used the term “niggardly,” which means cheap. That the term has no relationship whatsoever to the “n-word” racial epithet was irrelevant to the offended ones.

Also in 1999, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, there was another niggardly brouhaha when an *English* major and vice chairwoman of the Black Student Union complained that a professor teaching Chaucer had used the term. The student, Amelia Rideau, “said the professor continued to use the word even after she told him that she was offended,” [relates](#) LiquiSearch.com. “‘I was in tears, shaking,’ she told the faculty. ‘It’s not up to the rest of the class to decide whether my feelings are valid.’”

One could ask here: Should this young lady have been granted an English degree when she refuses to understand or accept simple language distinctions?

The tragedy in all these situations is that they reflect descent into “Idiocracy.” Instead of using these events as a teaching moment — instructing the “offended” on the actual historical background or meaning of the symbols or terms in question — we’re pandering to the most ignorant among us. As opposed to raising them up, we’re letting them bring us down.

As for the swastika controversy, *The Hamden Journal* also reports that it “was brought to the community’s attention that the Buddhist symbols were experienced differently and some individuals experienced harm from their presence on the building.”

“Harm”? A person could just as well say he suffers harm seeing the Democrat symbol the donkey and “experiences it differently” because of the party’s history with slavery. In reality, no relevant or actionable “harm” is caused by such things, and basing rules proscribing harm on subjective measures leads to injustice.

After all, most everyone is offended by something and most everything offends someone. What of people who might have taken offense at Miss Rideau’s dislike of “niggardly” or someone today who takes umbrage at the discrediting of Buddhist symbols? Why, just consider the swastika matter through the following leftist lens: An evil group of “privileged” white supremacists (Nazis) co-opts a non-white culture’s symbol, causing that symbol to be stricken from public view. Couldn’t this be considered cultural insensitivity?

There actually are real moral issues here. One is illustrated with a story: As an aspiring tennis player, my first job at age 17 was being a junior counselor at a summer tennis camp, for which I was paid \$60 a week. If I’d followed my emotions after the first day — teaching long hours outside in the blazing hot sun and managing sometimes unruly children (at mealtimes, too) — I would’ve quit on the spot. But that was never even a consideration because I’d made a commitment to my employer.

Did Hidden Villa camp director Philip James and the other derelict staff consider, even for a moment, the 900 children to whom they had a commitment and whose summers they could be ruining? Did they consider the 28 seasonal employees who perhaps counted on their paychecks? No, their feelings were all that mattered.

It’s the epitome of narcissism and self-centeredness and reflects the lack of virtue characterizing our time. And in a saner world, the quitters would now be unemployable.



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