

# Merrill College Provost Continues Probe Of Racism Charges

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Merrill College's top administrator has moved against reported problems of racism and anti-semitism at that UCSC college, but students faculty and some administrators are unhappy it took so long to recognize and address trouble they say has been brewing since fall.

Provost Ralph Guzman, who took over a troubled Merrill administration Jan. 1, last week barred two students from the dorms and moved them to motels in town while charges of racist and anti-semitic abuse and harassment against them were investigated.

One of the students has requested a formal administrative hearing, and is

represented by the local law firm Goldman and Goldman.

An informal hearing was held Friday for the other student accused.

In it, she admitted spitting on Michelle Gregory, a black Merrill student, but said it was a case of mistaken identity and denied any racially-motivated behavior.

She will not be allowed to live on campus, and must write a letter of apology to Gregory. A copy of the letter will be sent to the student publication City on a Hill.

Guzman said Saturday this week's formal hearing may not take place if attorneys reach agreement in discussions.

Students at the college say there have been racial and anti-semitic incidents there since fall. They say there is a "core group of about four or five students," two of which have espoused white supremacy and facism and reportedly said "they didn't like Jews or blacks."

Blacks at Merrill say they have been called "nigger," hit with water balloons and targeted for other physical, verbal and psychological abuse.

Students were reportedly tracked through a rifle scope in the dining hall, posters on dormitory doors reportedly depicted a black man being lynched and a napalmed Vietnamese child with the caption, "The Third World — Who Needs It?"

(Merrill's focus of study is the Third World.)

Concerned students took such incidents to Guzman as early as March, but contend no apparent action was taken.

Gregory said she complained in March that a white student had fondled her breast. Guzman was late to one meeting about the matter, Gregory could not at-

tend a second because of classes, and the matter was dropped with no follow up.

Guzman says that as soon as he became aware of the problems, he asked for names and began investigating. In one water balloon-throwing incident, he talked to at least six students, he said, but the victims were not aware of his actions.

A faculty member at another college, Roberto Crespi, who is close to minority students on campus saw it differently.

"The administration hemmed and hawed and hemmed and hawed until there was a crisis, when they could have nipped it in the bud.

"We all heard about these 'proto-nazis,' or whatever they are, in the fall, and we thought it was a joke. The next we heard was this. I was shocked it wasn't crushed immediately, shocked it was allowed to go on for so long."

Another administrator, who did not wish to be identified, said he was "not surprised" that racist incidents occur on campus.

"The country is drifting toward the right, unemployment is up, people are insecure financially, the Klan is active in high schools — I'm not surprised some of that would be happening here. I am surprised we let it."

He attributed the situation at Merrill to "bad management."

Guzman took over as Merrill provost in January when the previous provost left under fire.

He inherited a staff he says is "held together with baling wire and chewing gum," and has yet to resolve all the staff problems and organize the college's administration. Other provosts said, and Guzman agreed, the situation has ham-

pered his administration's effectiveness at several levels.

"During one period, I was working with no staff at all; only with my personal secretary and a couple of other secretaries," Guzman said.

Another problem, he said, was lack of concrete evidence.

"I have asked for names and evidence from the beginning. As soon as I got names, I called them in. As provost, I can act only when I have firm evidence. I don't have to wait for evidence if someone is about to be injured, but when the complaints are cloudy, I have to have firm evidence in the interest of due process and the rights of all students."

David Kaun, provost of Stevenson College, said however, "You don't need due process to talk. (There is) a way of dealing with problems without going to written depositions."

(None of the provosts interviewed would comment directly on the situation at Merrill. They spoke only of their own colleges.)

"One of the real problems," Kaun said, "is that students have felt they couldn't come to provosts. Whether it's true or not, that is their perception."

If incidents were reported and ignored, he said, "that's inexcusable and we're asking for a hell of a lot of trouble."

Slightly more than two percent of the students at the university are black. Nearly 84 percent are white.

Herman Blake, provost of Oakes college where the focus is on minority students, said, "The university administration and the overwhelming majority of the faculty don't understand the environment of fear and insecurity these (minority) students

live in. It's been a part of their world, all of their lives."

Many incidents of racism on campus have gone unreported because of this sense of isolation he said, including one in which three robed and hooded people threatened a black student with a dead chicken, the symbol that a lynching is about to occur.

There have been other incidents reported at other colleges, he said, which have been "dealt with quickly and effectively by the provosts, and no public point has been made of them."

The Merrill Fellows met Friday, Guzman said, and established a committee there to "oversee any future problems involving any future charges, and to act on them immediately."

A series of seminars will begin Tuesday, he said, taught by philosophy professor Carolyn Clark, for those students who have made charges and countercharges, and any other interested students. Merrill core courses will be expanded to study the changing society and racism within it, Guzman said.

The council of Provosts last week issued a public apology to students who said they were victims of racial and religious intolerance and abuse.

The statement said physical and psychological harassment was "totally unacceptable behavior and will not be tolerated at any college at UCSC. (It) will be viewed by us as a form of violence...and any individual or group engaging in (it) will be immediately subjected to disciplinary procedures which could lead to sanctions as severe as dismissal."