

Rutgers ... and More Evidence of Liberal Intolerance

✘ Condoleezza Rice was supposed to be the guest speaker this month at the Rutgers University graduation ceremonies in New Brunswick, New Jersey. She won't be there. Eighty-eight days after she accepted the invitation, she said thanks but no thanks.

When it was announced that she had been chosen to speak at graduation and receive an honorary degree, left-wing members of the faculty passed resolutions calling for her to be "disinvited." About 100 students protested outside the office of the university president, some with signs calling her a "war criminal" because of her role in the Iraq War and the Bush administration's use of waterboarding.

Ms. Rice, the former secretary of state, had had enough.

"Commencement should be a time of joyous celebration for the graduates and their families," she noted. "Rutgers' invitation to me to speak has become a distraction for the university community at this very special time."

"I am honored to have served my country. I have defended America's belief in free speech and the exchange of ideas. These values are essential to the health of our democracy. But that is not what is at issue here," she said. "As a professor for thirty years at Stanford University and as (its) former provost and chief academic officer, I understand and embrace the purpose of the commencement ceremony and I am simply unwilling to detract from it in any way."

Who could blame her?

There's something especially pathetic when liberal intolerance shows up, of all places, on a college campus. Students who

would gladly welcome Hillary Clinton, who as a U.S. senator voted to go to war in Iraq, could not tolerate Ms. Rice. It's also a safe bet that liberals would have been overjoyed if Barack Obama were invited to speak at their graduation, despite the fact that he – a Nobel Peace Prize winner – has killed more human beings with drones (many, but not all, who deserved it) than anyone in the history of the planet.

The president of Rutgers, Robert Barchi, never wavered in his support of the selection of Ms. Rice, saying it was important for the university to stand up for free speech and academic freedom.

“Whatever your personal feelings or political views about our commencement speaker,” he wrote to the university community in March, “there can be no doubt that Condoleezza Rice is one of the most influential intellectual and political figures of the last 50 years.”

A Muslim terrorist, or some domestic intellectual known for trashing America, would get more respect from the Rutgers faculty and its left wing students than they showed Ms. Rice.

So, for anyone who has followed the illiberal tactics of some liberals on America's college campuses, the Condi Rice incident isn't much of a shock. Shouting down speakers with whom they disagree, dis-inviting conservatives, even throwing pies at guest speakers they don't like, is nothing new. Still, it is troubling that so few supposedly open-minded liberals – on a campus of about 31,000 undergraduates – can make so much noise and manage to get their way.

While President Barchi was on the right side of this travesty, I wish he had gone further. I wish he had told his left wing faculty that their displeasure with Ms. Rice was noted but that we're all displeased about something or other at some point. “Get over it,” he might have said. And he should have told his students, if any of them disrupted Ms. Rice's remarks

in any way, they would be hauled off and arrested – right there in front of Mommy and Daddy. And if he could legally get away with it, he should also have informed them they would not be getting their degree anytime soon.

In the end, Condi Rice did the right thing. Who needs the hassle? Rutgers, a university that opened its doors in 1766, 10 years before there was a United States of America, has let a relatively few liberals embarrass the entire school. As I say, normally I wouldn't think this is noteworthy, given how common stuff like this is on college campuses. But Rutgers is my alma mater. I should be proud of my school, a university that has educated young people for nearly 250 years. Today, I'm anything but.