

University Apologizes for Forcing Students to Stomp on Jesus' Name

Florida Atlantic University has issued a formal apology for a lesson in which a professor had his students write Jesus' name on paper and stomp on it.

"This exercise will not be used again. The university holds dear its core values. We sincerely apologize for any offense this caused," the multi-campus institution said in a prepared statement posted on its website.

It continued: "Florida Atlantic University respects all religions and welcomes people of all faiths, backgrounds and beliefs."

The institution also said that "no students were forced to take part in the exercise" and "that no student has been expelled, suspended or disciplined by the University as a result of any activity that took place during this class."

Charisma News and various outlets reported that Ryan Rotela had been suspended for refusing to participate in the assignment during an Intercultural Communications class.

"I'm not going to be sitting in a class having my religious rights desecrated," Rotela told WPEC. "I truly see this as I'm being punished."

Though the instructor was supposedly trying to teach the students "a lesson in debate," the FAU junior found the assignment to be offensive and insulting.

"I said to the professor, 'With all due respect to your authority as a professor, I do not believe what you told us to do was appropriate,'" Rotela, a Mormon, explained. "'I believe

it was unprofessional and I was deeply offended by what you told me to do.'"

Deandre Poole, the professor who oversaw the class, is unaffiliated with FAU. He is also chairman of the Palm Beach County Democratic Party. According to the group's website, he is a member of Lighthouse Worship Center Church of God in Christ, Fort Lauderdale, where he belongs to the congregation's usher board.

Included in the textbook, *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach, 5th Edition*, trampling on Jesus' name is actually an entire lesson.

"Have the students write the name JESUS in big letters on a piece of paper," a synopsis for the lesson reads. "Ask the students to stand up and put the paper on the floor in front of them with the name facing up. Ask the students to think about it for a moment. After a brief period of silence instruct them to step on the paper. Most will hesitate. Ask why they can't step on the paper. Discuss the importance of symbols in culture."