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REX MURPHY

Human Rights Gone Awry

January 3, 2008 (Runs 4:29)

Why in the world are human rights advocates going after columnist Mark Steyn? And whatever happened to free speech, asks Rex.



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TRANSCRIPT

Time was when "human rights" was a truly large and noble idea. I associate the concept with, and its birth out of, some of the great horrors of the past century: the bestial depredations of the Nazis, their 'race science' and death camps, the horrors of unbridled totalitarianism - under which, the whim of the rulers was sufficient to mutilate, torture and destroy lives, collectively or individually - send millions to arctic slave camps - the debasement of internal exile and psychiatric rehabilitation.

More currently, I associate real human rights advocacy with the case of a young Saudi woman, who very recently was repeatedly gang-raped - and then she - the victim - charged and sentenced by a Saudi court to 200 lashes and six months in jail for being in a car with a male not her relative. The sentence, after international protest, was voided --- but that young woman's case represents a real example of the violation of basic human rights.

What I do not associate with this deep and noble concept is getting ticked off by something you read in a magazine - or for that matter hear on television - and then scampering off to a handful - well, three - of Canada's proliferate human rights commissions - seeking to score off the magazine: this is what four Osgoode Hall law students and graduates --- a very definition of the 'marginalized' --- under the banner of the Canadian Islamic Congress have done after reading an excerpt from Mark Steyn's America Alone in Maclean's. The complainants read the article as "flagrantly islamophobic".

Maclean's magazine? Well, we all know what a hotbed of radical bigotry and vile prejudice Maclean's magazine has been. Go away ... for what seems like a century Maclean's was no more "offensive" (that is the can't term of choice these days) than a down comforter on a cold day and if Mark Steyn's article offended them: so what? Not every article in every magazine of newspaper is meant to be a valentine card addressed to every reader's self-esteem. Maclean's published a bushel of letters following the article's appearance: some praised it: others scorned it. That's freedom of speech: that's democracy: that's the messy business we call the exchange of ideas and opinions.



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But where does the BC Human Rights Commission, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Commission come into this picture? Has anyone been publicly whipped? Has someone or some group been hauled off to a gulag? Is there a race frenzy sweeping the land?

Why is any human rights commission inserting itself between a magazine, a television show, a newspaper and the readers or viewers? Is every touchy, or agenda-driven sensibility now free to call upon the offices of the state and free of charge - to them - not their targets - to embroil them in "justifying" their right to write and broadcast as they see fit? The Western Standard magazine, during the so-called Danish cartoon crisis got hauled before the Alberta Human Rights Commission for publishing the cartoons that all the world was talking about. The action drained the magazine's resources - but it was free to the complainant.

Meantime real human rights violations - threats of death against Salman Rushdie, riots after the cartoons, death threats against the artists, the persecution of Hirsi Ali, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, neither inspire nor receive human rights investigations.

Macleans and its columnists - especially of late - are an ornament to Canada's civic space. They should not have to defend themselves for doing what a good magazine does: start debate, express opinion, and stir thought. And most certainly they should not have to abide the threatened censorship of any of Canada's increasingly interfering, state appointed and paradoxically labeled human rights commissions.

Comments

Dear CBC:

Like many young people, I found Rex Murphy's criticism of a group of law students who are bringing human rights complaints against Mclean's Magazine (Jan 3rd, the National) to be misleading, one-sided, poorly researched and not factual. I am disappointed that the CBC would air such sloppy journalism, especially in light of recent attempts to whip up racist and anti-immigrant hatred across the country such as the "Reasonable Accommodation" hearings in Quebec. At the very least we must now hear from the complainants on this issue of great significant to Canada.

Sincerely,
Johan Boyden

Posted by: Johan Boyden | January 4, 2008 05:42 PM

Bravo Rex Murphy!

I frequently don't agree with Mr. Murphy's opinions. In fact, once or twice I've found his opinion to be offensive. But that's okay because I believe that unfettered free speech is a fundamental human right. Keep up the awesome work Mr. Murphy -- you're doing a great job!

Some individuals don't seem to understand that as a citizen of a free country the price you pay for that freedom is that you must tolerate things people may say/write/broadcast even if you don't agree with those things or even if you find those things offensive. In a free country Mr. Steyn has the right to his opinion and Maclean's has the right to print it. That's the way it is and the way it must be.

The alternative to free speech -- the control of expression of ideas by government or by religion) -- is not acceptable because it citizens of a fundamental freedom.

IMO it's shocking that a HRC (let alone 3 of them) would even consider involving itself in an issue regarding freedom of speech and a magazine. It's bad enough that the average Canadian can easily get hauled before one of these freedom-suppressing travesties and now it appears the press has to worry about it.

In the past the importance of fundamental freedoms was understood. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers lost their lives defending established and accepted fundamental freedoms including the right to free speech. It's sickening to think that the freedoms these soldiers died for are being destroyed in the name of a noble lie, political correctness.

Enough already!

Citizens who are offended by the free and open exchange of ideas should perhaps consider living in a country which suppresses their thoughts and speech more to their liking. The rest of us we need to get off our collective and individual backsides, and make the government understand that we will no longer tolerate a deterioration of our freedoms.

Posted by: GC | January 4, 2008 05:40 PM

I agree with Rex Murphy when he states that a good magazine should "start debate, express opinion, and stir thought" but that is where our opinions part ways. It is quite obvious that it is an attempt to silence the voice of complainants. We surely have a right to free speech but we do not have a right to instill hatred and provide false or incorrect information about a group of people without the basis of any facts.

Posted by: Baqa R | January 4, 2008 05:39 PM

For Mr. Rafiq (3:38pm)

Steyn in a Maclean's opinion piece today:

The CHRT Grievance #16 objects to the following assertion:

"The number of Muslims in Europe is expanding like 'mosquitoes.' "

That claim certainly appears in my piece. But they're the words not of a notorious right-wing Islamophobic columnist but of a bigshot Scandinavian Muslim:

" 'We're the ones who will change you,' the Norwegian imam Mullah Krekar told the Oslo newspaper Dagbladet in 2006. 'Just look at the development within Europe, where the number of Muslims is expanding like mosquitoes. Every Western woman in the EU is producing an average of 1.4 children. Every Muslim woman in the same countries is producing 3.5 children.' "

Given that the "mosquitoes" line is part of the basis on which the HRC accepted Dr. Elmasry's complaint of "Islamophobia," I'm interested to know what precisely is the offence? Are Mullah Krekar's words themselves Islamophobic? Or do they only become so when I quote them? The complainants want a world in which a Norwegian imam can make statements in a Norwegian newspaper but if a Canadian columnist reprints them in a Canadian publication it's a "hate crime." It's striking to examine the Canadian Islamic Congress's complaints and see how many of their objections are to facts, statistics, quotations--not to their accuracy but merely to the quoting thereof. But, of course, they've picked the correct forum: before the human rights commissions, truth is no defence.

Posted by: John | January 4, 2008 05:28 PM

Yah..If we let the muslims do what they want here and change things to there way I'ts good bye CANADA.

I wonder if some muslim gang will come and visit me. pete.

Posted by: peter henderson | January 4, 2008 05:23 PM

I read America Alone, as well as most pieces Mark Steyn has written, and none of it has inspired hate in me towards anybody. However, this fiasco has inspired in me unspeakable hatred of the complainants, the human rights commissions, as well as anybody who would justify this travesty. Im in shock at the naivete of the posters here who so easily try to find ways of weaseling out of protecting freedom of speech. Those people, are the true sources of hatred.

Posted by: jermo sapiens | January 4, 2008 05:13 PM

When an article presents fact alone how can it be argued against? This does not seem to be the case here, however. If a major national magazine prints a non-factual opinion about a group or individual, it MUST give an opportunity for rebuttal. Just because Islam is the current target for Western fears, does not give anyone the right to an uncontested, inflammatory, propagandist conjecture in a nationally published magazine. Freedom of speech is supposed to allow us to speak out against our government, not our neighbor's religion.

Posted by: Ed Hiebert | January 4, 2008 04:54 PM

What people are forgetting, quite dishonestly I may add, is that the complainants had window after window to voice a rebuttals in any venue that would accept them, not just MacLeans. And given the heavy pudding stirring nature, they should have no problem finding one. MacLeans also had a number of rebuttals in the appropriate sections of their magazine soon after the piece. What they wanted a specific detailed and editorial control of their own counter piece in the same journal. It's MacLeans's magazine and MacLeans has every right to have its say as to what goes on and between its covers (hence the very justified bankruptcy comment). Otherwise, we should just that magazine and any other magazine that has to take on the same policy "Crybaby of the Week." If you can't cope with it, go back and live in your mother's basement, because the adult world requires much sterner stuff that what you have. Moreover, given the statements made by some of the co-complainants that are equally offensive to me as a civil libertarian, I seriously doubt they would reciprocate "equal time" to anyone *they* may offend by being... well... a bunch of crybabies.

Posted by: Bill | January 4, 2008 04:31 PM

I share the outrage and indignation that Mr. Murphy expressed in his commentary last night. The complaint lodged against Mark Steyn's article in Maclean's Magazine may well have been "flagrantly Islamophobic" but it was also flagrantly self-serving. That the Human Rights Commission of Canada would even entertain the idea of prosecuting a writer for exercising his right to freedom of speech, by expressing his personal opinion, makes me shudder. It calls into question the Commission's respect for, and understanding of the legal/moral rights of all Canadians. What I find most offensive and contrary to the principles of equality, is that any citizen who may feel

offended by a remark, is entitled convenient access to a well funded government machine—fully armed with the authority to prosecute the alleged authors. This smacks of McCarthyism and the Salem witch hunts. By crying "Witch, you have offended me" it would appear that any citizen stands to advance his or her own cause, and with the full support of the authorities, burn the witch and effectively shut down forums of discussion promoting opposing views deemed "offensive".

Free speech in Canada is more of a risk, than a right—all under the guise of tolerance and equality for all.

Posted by: Andy Stout | January 4, 2008 04:27 PM

Macleans used to be Canadian. Now, like an Astor family propoganda machine, it spews out unenlightened claptrap about how bad the 'terrorists' are. It fails to even accept that we caused all of this ourselves, They are people, not brownskinned terrorists. People. If htey are fighting us, in their country, I can't imagine us doing any different if they were invading us.

Posted by: Neil Thompson | January 4, 2008 04:18 PM

Rex point of view was a lip service for the Israelis/Right wings lobbies...
Q) Should I strike Israelis out (from the sentence above)because the freedom of speech really stops there?

Posted by: Haidar | January 4, 2008 04:05 PM

Does Rex Murphy even know what he is talking about? The Maclean's article the Canadian Islamic Congress has complained about claims that Muslims are multiplying like mosquitoes, that European Muslims are part of a Muslim conspiracy to turn Europe into a "Muslim continent", and that Muslims wish to wage a bloody war against Western societies. This article was subject of a Western Standard blog which contained genocidal speech against Muslims: calling for all of them to be deported, all of them to be killed or forcefully converted to Christianity, among others.

So the Mark Steyn's article is hardly as harmless as he falsely claims.

Mohammad Rafiq
Toronto.

Posted by: Mohamed Rafiq | January 4, 2008 03:38 PM

On 25 May 1998 - nearly a decade ago - a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, convened to hear a complaint sworn against Ernst Zundel delivered a written decision that in essence concluded that "Truth is no defense" - that, in effect, the truth of any material posted on the Zundel website was totally irrelevant in the ruling to be handed down against the old Hitler sympathizer in the course of the hearing. Here's a telling excerpt, which begins with the affirmation that human rights rulings are mostly concerned with effect rather than intent, that: ". . . consistent with a focus on effect rather than intent, it is the effect of the message on the recipient, and ultimately on the person or group vilified, that is the focus of the analysis. The truth in some absolute sense really plays no role. Rather, it is the social context in which the message is delivered and heard which will determine the effect that the communication will have on the listener. It is not the truth or falsity per se that will evoke the emotion but rather how it is understood by the recipient. The objective truth of the statement is ultimately of no consequence if the subjective interpretation, by virtue of tone, social context and medium is one which 'arouses unusually strong and deep-felt emotions of detestation, calumny and vilification'. Therefore, in our view, whether the message is true or not is immaterial. Whether it is perceived to be true or credible may very well add to its impact, but its actual basis in truth is outside the scope of this inquiry." Notice that towards the end it is determined that should some statement made by the one accused be perceived to be true this may add more weight to the complainant's case as adjudicated by the tribunal. That said, I note that Rex Murphy, ominously, in the context of that CHRT ruling may himself now be vulnerable to a complaint before one or more Human Rights Commissions based on yesterday's commentary on CBC's The National. Happy 1984 everyone!

Posted by: Eye Sore | January 4, 2008 03:33 PM

in response to Farhan, you have missed the point. Your personal opinion on the article is not in question and is actually irrelevant to the issue. I disagree with your opinion on the article and have the freedom to say so, alternatively I could have filed a complaint against you at great economic charge to yourself and none to me. You defending my ability to haul you up in front of a tribunal because I was insulted by your post would more accurately reflect the issue at hand. Whether you agree with the article or not or found it too simplistic or too complicated is a non issue

Posted by: Neil | January 4, 2008 03:04 PM

Hmm... judging by some of the comments here, I wonder if the Canadian Muslim community will now decide to start their own magazines. And they will have all the editorial control over those magazines that they could hope for. (whether or not anyone buys/reads them is up for debate, but hey! this is Canada - they'll get a government grant to do it!) It is not in MacLean's best business interests to have this ethereal "Muslim community" write articles and demand to have them published. Heck, I've been trying to get published for years, and that is NOT the way to do it!! MacLean's writes and publishes what THEIR readers want to read. That's why they've been around so long. If the "Muslim community" wants a platform, let them get that grant and start that magazine!

Posted by: Wendy Sullivan | January 4, 2008 02:57 PM

This is in response to several comments posted here, trying to justify the complaint of the law students. They keep repeating the claim that it was reasonable to file a complaint because McLeans refused to print a "counter-article" by someone with another point of view. Folks - there is no right to dictate to a magazine about the content they choose to publish. This is an elementary principle. Freedom of speech means that the editors are permitted to choose what they publish AND ALSO get to choose what they don't publish. Think about it - if someone forced you to say something you disagree with this would be as much of a violation of your rights as if they punished you for speaking your views. If you want to publish a counter-argument, go out and start your own media source.

Posted by: Tom Paine | January 4, 2008 02:05 PM

I am sad, but not surprised by Rex's comments. I am "all for" freedom of speech, but draw the line when it comes to inciting hatred. If Rex was a true advocate for freedom of speech, would he approve Anti-Semitic remarks or burning of a cross or Star of David as a means of freedom of speech and expression? If you support those, then hats off to you; if you don't then you are nothing but a hypocrite!

Posted by: Mohamed Sabry | January 4, 2008 01:58 PM

As usual, Rex is a breath of fresh air. The importance of free speech and property rights is underscored in

this controversy. Those above that would force private resources to subsidize their censorship goals (Islamic playbook victimization?) are carrying out a mission which can only be described as a frontal assault on the essentials of Western civilization. Free speech is an absolute human right and should be constrained only by libel and slander laws. Society can endure and filter-out the ugliness of the Zundels of the free speech continuum, but with the self appointed speech police of the Trudeaupian HRCs, not only will you lose the Zundels but the Steyns and the Murphys etc leaving only self-censored PC pablum.

Posted by: John Chittick | January 4, 2008 01:53 PM

Please..the people posting here who are so upset with MacLean's and now with Rex's comment, try reading the actual HRC complaint and WHY MacLeans turned down the request for extensive rebuttal space in their magazine. Read the actual background story before using the R word...you know the racism word.

Posted by: John | January 4, 2008 01:51 PM

I believe strongly that when the notion of 'respect for the individual' is the basic principle of Canadians, and I ask myself: why are Canadian-Muslims not allowed to fight for that fact?Our Charter of Rights, gives us the right to practice freely a monotheistic religion, and hence no religion should have to accept degrading remarks towards its religion and people.

Posted by: Sabira | January 4, 2008 01:47 PM

Rex criticized the students for airing their grievances with Maclean's biased publication before the human rights tribunal saying that this has shown their stance against free debate and "the exchange of ideas" that Canadians value. Macleans itself did not facilitate this type of debate with respect to such important issues as how Muslims fit into the West when they refused to publish a response to Steyn's piece. It's ironic that it's only because the students launched their complaints that we're having any sort of debate on the issue at all. I think it's those that are trying to shame the students efforts to bring an important issue to the public attention that are trying to silence opposition. It's also interesting to note that Rex never discusses the content of the article, and many of the commentators on this space have not either. This debate cannot take place without regard to the allegations in the article - including that most Muslims share the objectives of terrorists. CBC should look into this whole issue in a more in-depth manner because it certainly is deserving.

Posted by: Beenish | January 4, 2008 01:36 PM

Freedom of Speech should not allow for fear mongering of an entire group of people. Consider the following passage from Steyn's article:
Age + Welfare = Disaster for you;
Youth + Will = Disaster for whoever gets in your way.
By "will," I mean the metaphorical spine of a culture.
Africa, to take another example, also has plenty of young people, but it's riddled with AIDS and, for the most part, Africans don't think of themselves as Africans: as we saw in Rwanda, their primary identity is tribal, and most tribes have no global ambitions.
Islam, however, has serious global ambitions, and it forms the primal, core identity of most of its adherents -- in the Middle East, South Asia and elsewhere.
Islam has youth and will, Europe has age and welfare."

Or how about this:

"Here's another difference: in the old days, the white man settled the Indian territory. Now the followers of the badland's radical imams settle the metropolis".
These statements are offensive on their own but consider this: if we were to substitute just about any other religion or ethnicity for references to Islam, there would have been a National outcry at the time of publishing. Why is it any different in this context?
The old colonial lines of Canada's dirty past are near to the surface in Steyn's article and indeed in many of the replies above. I remain proud that I canceled my subscription to Maclean's after having read this piece of Islamophobia dressed up as journalism and stand with those who believe those who choose to publish such things need to be challenged.

Posted by: Nora Loreto | January 4, 2008 01:36 PM

Rex Murphy's comments about the abuse of power by Canadian Human Rights Tribunals in their to support the Canadian Islamic Congress are right on. The McLeans article seems reasonable to me and the notion that the Canadian Islamic community has the right to stifle the flow of information because they are Islamic and their perceived rights trumps the rights of all other Canadians. What is really scary is that the Human Right folks seem to agree that if you are Islamic you have special rights here in Canada. The rest of us just became second class citizens.

Posted by: Bruce Robertson | January 4, 2008 01:30 PM

Rex is a voice of sanity and reasonableness. This sentence is a masterpiece of logic and style:
"Not every article in every magazine or newspaper is

meant to be a valentine card addressed to every reader's self-esteem."

Posted by: Tony Montana | January 4, 2008 01:24 PM

I totally agree about raising debate. However the debate raised by McLeans sounded more like "What can we do to make sure it doesn't happen" debate. Even though I totally disagree with "The Future belongs to Islam" It was a non issue to begin with. Debate is good when positive results transpire for society as a whole. I don't see nothing positive here. Like money, With freedom of Speech or free-press comes great responsibility, considering the influential power it holds.

Posted by: Jay | January 4, 2008 01:23 PM

There seems to be a fairly widespread misconception about what the freedom of expression means. It does not mean that a magazine, newspaper, blog, or whatever is compelled to print anything and everything that its readers or opponents want to have printed.

There are hundreds, or more likely now with the proliferation of websites, hundreds of thousands of places where people can express their opinions. The owner of any one of these multitudes of organs has an absolute right to control what gets published and what doesn't.

You don't like it? Start your own blog.

Posted by: Louise Shah | January 4, 2008 01:18 PM

The way "our" free speech works here in Canada goes like this: Those with low or little standing in popular opinion or the media might have their right to free speech denied with little or no fanfare and protest from the general run of opinion makers (i.e. Rex Murphy and other media lions). Ah, but... should some favourite ox of theirs be suddenly gored (in Mr. Murphy's case, one Mark Steyn and, by extension, the Macleans magazine), they'll rend their garments in public and complain bitterly about how those sundry misnamed "human rights" commissions are out to gag EVEN those with far higher standing in popular opinion or media; as though free speech was the exclusive property and sole preserve of media elites. In fact, here in Canada -which cynics among us sometimes called "Banada" - that's more or less what it is, or was until now.

Posted by: Orest Slepokura | January 4, 2008 01:18 PM

The biggest problem we have in Canada and the rest of the West is that journalists cover and shape our world views. Reading Mr. Murphy's interpretation of what constitutes a violation of human rights is really scary. He stated "Has anyone been publicly whipped? Has someone or some group been hauled off to a gulag?"

I suppose he is of the view that sexual advances to a woman in the work place should be ignored and for the ladies to grow up, or different forms of discrimination in the work place are just irritants that 'some of us' should learn to live with. The Nazis that he feared so much focused first and foremost on what people read. The battle for the hearts and minds was obvious to them and they rose to power through the spread of hatred and myths about several groups. Mr. Murphy seems to think that overnight we had concentration camps and fascist soldiers spread across Europe.

I don't expect journalists to learn more about the law of the land nor the history of the world in which they live, but I do hope that the CBC will exploit the interest in this case by giving it more insightful coverage.

Posted by: Moe El | January 4, 2008 01:17 PM

Where you been media? The HRC and it's provincial tribunals have been ruining Canadians lives for years because something they wrote or said did not meet the idealogical bar of the lawyers who act as judge, jury and investigator on these tribunals. If a Canadian breaks the law then charge them and bring them before a judge in a real court where there are rules of evidence and they stand a chance of being found innocent based on the evidence.

This is the same media organization that has sung the praise of Richard Warman for being the chief attack dog of the HRC. Getting closer to home I suppose! When is someone in the media going to ask Mr. Warman about the huge payments he has received (been awarded) for bringing these complaints before his old employer, the CHRC.

Rex I applaud you for this public insight. I implore you don't drop the ball now, we need good men like you to help us rid our land of these Star Chambers.

Let Free Speech be real in our nation not just a slogan that means nothing and only applies to those who the HRC and Mr. Warman agree with.

Posted by: Jhon | January 4, 2008 01:12 PM

Rex states that a good magazine starts debate and stirs thought. I have been following the media attention on this story for a long time and it seems to

me as if that's what these students wanted to do - continue debate and respond to Steyn's ludicrous allegations that Muslims in the West want to take over the world with their "global network" and subject everyone to Sharia law and bloody war. By disallowing a response, Macleans has shown an unwillingness to participate in the "debate" they started with an article that was unfairly biased and clearly provocative. Further, by portraying Muslims as a wholly identical mass of people who mostly think and act in the same way, the subtleties of the interplay between the West and Islam were ignored. This article was overly simplistic in its treatment of a complex, multi faceted problem and as such, doesn't lead us anywhere closer to achieving a solution. Good for someone to point out the bias in Macleans.

Posted by: Farhan | January 4, 2008 12:53 PM

Yes, Human Rights Commissions have gone too far, for Years. Better call them... "Kangeroo Courts". If immigrants don't want to understand what freedom of speech and democracy means in the Western World, they should return to the society where they came from. When coming to Canada, one cannot demand only rights, but one has to adjust to the customs and accept responsibilities.

Posted by: CAM Vangastel | January 4, 2008 12:45 PM

I think Rex Murphy has every right to question the use of Human Rights tribunals and CBC has every right to give platform to this Islamophobic "pompous bafoon". What I disagree with is Murphy's leaving out of some important details (like Maclean's retort that they would rather go bankrupt rather than publish something by a mutually agreeable author). I even agree that Maclean's does not have to accept such an offer but that was an important piece of information that Murphy chose to exclude from his piece. (a good magazine should always present an opposing viewpoint by a journalist of the magazine's choice.)

Posted by: Kurban M | January 4, 2008 12:36 PM

Rex,
You were speaking for me and every I know. Steyn is an important voice in the West at this time and we would all do well to listen up. Macleans is a magazine that publishes what it wants to with the money of subscribers and sponsors. It they offend those groups, they have a problem. All other offended groups may start-up your own Magazine.

Posted by: John West | January 4, 2008 11:53 AM

Thank-you Mr. Murphy for bringing the HRC issue to the nation's attention on the National. You are a brave man and I am thankful that an individual who has a pulpit from which to speak has used it in defence of freedom of speech and liberty in this country! You had the opportunity and you seized it. I hope the nation and what we stand for as a culture takes note of what you said and realizes that freedom and democracy are things that must be defended if we are to keep it. At the end of your piece I couldn't help but think that in its essence, at its core, you have conveyed the most important set of ideas to this country in the young 21st century and brought it to the nation's attention. Thank-you so much!

Posted by: Neil Whitaker | January 4, 2008 11:37 AM

To all the posters saying that McLeans didnt publish the rebuttal by the 4 losers and that they would "rather go bankrupt", since when does a magazine have to publish anything from the public? Go and publish yourself - that is freedom of expression. Freedom of expression also entails that a magazine can refuse to publish crap. The attitude of these cry-babies makes me sick. They have a blog, they had an article published in the National Post - but they never rebutted anything anywhere. Go ahead and rebut - just get your own freaking magazine to publish. Geez, not only havent they rebutted, they proved Steyn's entire point by their child-like behavior.

Posted by: jermo sapiens | January 4, 2008 11:12 AM

Re:Human rights gone awry.....Freedom of the press...debate it?of course,debunk it?if you must,delete it? NEVER!!!!

Posted by: Henry Wiersema | January 4, 2008 10:56 AM

I am so frustrated over this and similar incidents that I am not even sure what to say and where to start. Perhaps this will suffice: I am a Muslim and I completely agree with Rex's point of view on this topic!

Posted by: Jenna | January 4, 2008 10:18 AM

Added to the inanity of no fewer than 3 'Human Rights Commissions' seeing fit to involve themselves in our fundamental constitutional rights to free speech and freedom of the press, are the very sources of this so-

called complaint, Muammar Gadhafi and Norway-based Mullar Krekar, whose views as to the numerical and philosophical superiority of their co-religionists were quoted in the Steyn article.

The education of these law students appears to have been neglected with respect to the values and meaning of a free society. The proper answer to this farrago is to direct the complainants to look within their own society and seek to enlighten it and themselves, rather than attempting to impose on all of us their 'hurt feelings' via taxpayer-funded commissions.

Such use of human rights commissions to attack Maclean's is itself an abuse of the very human rights codes these commissions are charged with administering, and far from the intent of those who created them.

Posted by: Penny Russell | January 4, 2008 04:08 AM

Dear sports:

The main and in the end, the only reason HRC are absurdly pursuing Mark Steyn is because the Steyner's book 'America Alone' is empirically correct. If Steyn said Islam is a laugh a minute and really cares about having a good time and, you know, just getting along, maybe bringing a plate of cookies, or a small non-exploding gift, there would be no problem. No one would say a thing. Because everyone would know that this is a lie.

The problem with Islam is that it has nothing to offer the free West. Nada. Zilcho. Zip. Nothing but the abyss, really.

Study the empirical truth of its founder, history, book, doctrines and current daily and relentless actions. Muslims seem very eager to dismiss any of their actions with the same repeated words. Gee, I wonder why? Couldn't be the Koranic concept of 'Taqiyaa' could it?

I believe the predictive parts of 'America Alone: The end of the world as we know it', will come to pass, except probably far worse than we can imagine, as Islam has a hideous propulsion of its own. And what's stopping it exactly? Nothing. Nothing at all.

If anything, it's being very much assisted by most of the PC Left Liberal mindset of the 'self loathing multi culti' West. Talk about selling the rope to your own hanging...

Or that should be a sword to our own beheading, eh? Oh yes, plenty of IED's too. I imagine.

All the best from Colonel Neville, Melbourne Australia. colonelrobertneville.blogspot.com

Posted by: Colonel Neville. | January 4, 2008 03:55 AM

On January 3, the National ran a "Point of View" segment, in which Rex Murphy strongly criticized a group of law students who have brought human rights complaints against Maclean's Magazine.

This is an issue that has catapulted into one of national concern. Firstly, based merely on the media attention it has garnished appearing in every major newspaper and secondly because of the nature of the debate it raises. This debate focuses on issues such as, media responsibility freedom of speech, and the role of human rights commissions.

It therefore, deserves more than a one-sided, three-minute, splashy "comment" by Rex Murphy. We need, as Canadians, to have a proper debate on these issues which affect us all. I request therefore, that these human rights complaints be the subject of a proper news story at the very least, which represents both sides of the issues. We have heard from Rex Murphy, now lets hear from the complainants.

Thanking you,
Riaz Hussain

Posted by: Riaz Hussain | January 4, 2008 03:34 AM

Human Rights gone Awry - Thursday, January 8
You are right Mr. Murphy. An Human Rights mishap has indeed occured when a journalist is hawled on the carpet for speaking his mind. This creates an exchange of ideas. Let's hope that Free Speech is not disallowed. Democracy in the western countries would be in danger!

Posted by: Clay Lane | January 4, 2008 02:19 AM

Mr. Murphy's segment, as a point of view clip, failed to convey the factual basis for the complaints and the circumstances surrounding the case against Maclean's Magazine.

For instance, Mr. Murphy stated that the complaints have been filed against Maclean's Magazine, although it seems, that they have been filed only against Maclean's for refusing to publish a response to Mark Steyn's article.

The human rights complaints raise some very important issues including media accountability, the right of communities to participate in media discussions, and the role of human rights commissions.

I humbly suggest that a proper news story by the National is required, which also explores the position of the law students and the organization that has brought these complaints forward, so that Canadians may be fully informed of the facts.

Posted by: Talal Awan | January 4, 2008 01:50 AM

Hats off to Rex Murphey for his wonderful and accurate comment. Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of a functioning democracy. Section 2(b) of the Charter states that "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: ... freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication." Canadian Islamic Congress is a threat to our secular Canadian society.

Posted by: Momtaz Ahmed | January 4, 2008 01:36 AM

Hear, hear Rex, My sentiments exactly. I cannot think how often I have felt exactly as you say. Its just the same as celebrating Christmas and wishing people a Happy Christmas or Happy Hanukah, I am not denying anyone else the right to celebrate their beliefs, but I am celebrating mine. I hope that I have the same rights as others to express my beliefs as I have not-so far-caused bodily harm to a soul by wishing them Peace and Love and Happiness. Bravo for having the strength to voice your opinions. I may not always agree with you, but by God, enough men lost their lives and limbs in the last 2 World Wars, and at other times in our past, to give you the freedom to voice those opinions. Be strong and God Bless. Julie Moren- Campbell River, B.C.

Posted by: Julie Moren | January 4, 2008 01:24 AM

I would like to hear the perspective of the muslim students!!! It is my impression that they only asked for the right to speak!!! why is their perspective being ignored???

Posted by: Elizabeth | January 4, 2008 01:08 AM

Dear Mr murphy great show. You hit the nail on the head. why should we have to walk on tip toes to not offend others with what our beliefs or thoughts are. The human rights should be investigating offenders not reporters. I as a person who not only had the human rights turn there back on me while I was kidnapped and tortured for two and a half years when it was over they sent me a letter saying oh well I guess no harm done. Because The Mexican government has impunity

Posted by: peter kimber | January 4, 2008 12:25 AM

I would have no problem with Rex Murphy's, usually anti-muslim opinion, had he mentioned that in defiance of "free speech" Macleans told those wishing to publish an article in response to Steyn's piece, that "Mcleans would rather go bankrupt than do so". Free speech is a cherished fundamental right unless it is demanded by those who seek to challenge the hate speech deteremined to protray Muslims and Islam in the most negative light possible. I am sick and tired of the constant hypocracy people like Rex Murphy continuously demonstrate and believe it is a service to the rest of Canada. His oppinions are arrogant and most of all ignorant of the reality that exists in Muslim communities, both in and out of Canada. His myopic oversimplification of complex issues like those of Bhutto's assination-demonstrate his stupidity and simple mindedness. For an apparently intelligent and repectible organization like the CBC to continually put this Buffoon on air, is if nothing else in bad taste.

Posted by: Sumera Sahar | January 4, 2008 12:14 AM

Xi Xi Xi ,poor pal Mark....

I was arrested for reading Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on public meeting in the University of Western Ontario and now I am pending trial for Trespass of Property....

Posted by: Peter Dobreff | January 3, 2008 11:58 PM

I would like to say a loud public AMEN to Rex Murphy's commentary, 'Human Rights Gone Awry', but I am afraid the Human Rights Commission will protest that pronouncing an AMEN on the CBC is offensive to non-Christian religions.

Posted by: Lindsay Gray | January 3, 2008 11:13 PM

Hey Rex,
Here's human rights gone awry: male circumcison.
Could someone at CBC explain why the media is almost completely silent on this despicable practice?
Thanks

Posted by: Quentin Opie | January 3, 2008 11:00 PM

Attaboy Rex,
You just hit another one out of the park on the MacLean's bit.

Posted by: Tom Eden | January 3, 2008 10:55 PM

Dead On!! You said it better than anyone, Rex Murphy
- Proud that the CBC made the point. Hopefully, the

politicians will listen! Thanks!

Posted by: Svend Williamsen | January 3, 2008 10:54 PM

Absolutely right on!!! These people who are complaining are completely anti-free-speech. And the Human Rights Commissions are a travesty. They should either be abolished or their budgets and mandate stripped to a minimum.

Posted by: Jim Inglis | January 3, 2008 10:50 PM

I think Rex Murphy is absolutely right in pointing out that our Human Rights Commissions should not be getting involved in limiting a magazine's free speech. As a practising Christian, I'm offended rather regularly by stuff aired on CBC, will the Ontario Human Rights Commission now tackle Rick Mercer, or Air Farce on my behalf? That would really mark a change of heart! So, why is it that these supposedly-public bodies so frequently support various minorities who have the gall to clamour loudly about their bruised sensitivities? In doing so these Commissions often trample on the very rights and principles that have made this a good country in the past. They ought to throw out these present complaints against Macleans or we will soon completely lose our basic freedom of speech, and also the freedoms of association and of worshipping as we chose. Many thanks to Rex for so often defending the fundamentals of democracy. Is anyone really listening there at the CBC or in Ottawa?

Posted by: Richard Poortinga | January 3, 2008 10:45 PM

I could not agree more with Rex Murphy. The Human Right Boards seem to have a hidden agenda; as when the Hindus and Muslims (~15-20 years ago) complained that they were being preyed upon by rascists who did not understand their "customs", when their city governments tried to limit the amount of people residing in a home. Governments backed off and city planners had their hands tied, fire trucks could no longer turn around in cul de sacs etc.; and the complainants began their road to unprecedented wealth as more and more extended older family members immigrated to Canada and began to collect old age security while living under one roof. Children stayed until 30 years old while in the workforce. Don't complain if your guests cannot park on your street. If you do, then you must be a rascist. Smacks of 1940s-1950s US McCarthyism; "You're a Commie, (rascist) if you try to debate against me". H-m-m, maybe it's not a hidden agenda by Human

Rights Boards, but hidden agendas by opportunists.

Posted by: Kelly | January 3, 2008 10:28 PM

If Rex Murphy is an advocate of any and all 'free speech', then this should extend to anti-Jewish statements by Nazis and the like. He should at least be consistent in his views.

Assuming that he read the Maclean's article, I would assume Rex to be an Islamophobe himself if he supports that type of fear-mongering and anti-Islam propaganda.

It is quite telling that Rex failed to mention that the group that was filing the human rights complaint did approach Maclean's to publish a counter-article to Mark Steyn's piece, by an author that was mutually agreed upon. Maclean's response was that they "would rather go bankrupt". So much for free-speech and the open exchange of ideas, eh Rex?

In Rex's world there is "Free-speech", so long as Islamophobes dominate the media and brainwash the masses.

Posted by: Hadi Izadi | January 3, 2008 10:21 PM

Thanks Rex for echoing the feelings of so many of us. I couldn't agree with you more. You've accurately express my frustration with the cosmetic, opportunistic efforts of certain ethnic/religious groups to further their hypercritical values with the support of our provincial/federal governments.

Posted by: Ron Watkins | January 3, 2008 10:06 PM

Not always in agreement with Rex's point of view. But as a Canadian from birth, totally agree with his comments. It shocks me more and more how government has gone off the deep end when it comes to common sense and how innocent Canadians are dragged thru "Hell" to defend the truth. What is happening to our nation? Why are we bending to every notion from outside of our culture? This political correctness is destroying our land and will have unbelievable consequences if we don't put a stop to it. We must keep our identity as Canadians (which has served us so well world wide in the past). With such frivolous thinking we are becoming the laughing stock of the world. Let our country be leaders in defending with a back bone the principles of freedom, truth and doing this globally. Keep up the good work of pointing out this type of absurd activity and stand upright for the true Canadian spirit!!! Thanks Rex!

Posted by: Disgusted Totally | January 3, 2008 10:06 PM

Bravo to Rex Murphy. It's about time someone has the balls to speak up about real human rights. I'm glad to hear that Mr. Murphy is the man to do it. He is 100% right and I take my hat off to him!

Posted by: Stephen Culley | January 3, 2008 10:01 PM

Steyn's book excerpt was in MacLeans over a year ago, the HRC complaints filed only recently. Letters to the editor were published aplenty. The young law students filed with the HRC after demanding a magazine cover plus 5 pages unedited by MacLeans and control over artwork. They were turned down. Steyn's was an opinion piece, always designed to provoke a debate amongst us. Steyn mixes in an ascerbic wit and humour in all his writings. For the good of us all, left or right, religious or spiritual or atheist, let there be conversation not intimidation and highly secretive HRC's. After all we do have the courts. Please let common sense prevail.

Posted by: John | January 3, 2008 08:25 PM

I'm in favour of immigration--my parents were immigants. They worked very hard to get rid of their accent and adopt Canadian ways. They felt that if Canada allowed them in and it was a good place to live the least they could do was adopt the good things of the country

Posted by: Jim Eastwood | January 3, 2008 07:54 PM

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