

Not Fired for Teaching

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The headline states that a “USC Professor Who Used Chinese Word That Sounds Like English Slur” was “Not Dismissed Nor Suspended.”

Sure. The professor was “only” removed from the course he was teaching.

Greg Patton, who teaches business communication at the University of Southern California, had been telling students about “filler words,” which for native English speakers is stuff like “uh, uh, uh.” We apparently don’t all grope for words in exactly the same way. If one grew up speaking Mandarin, one tends to say “nèi ge, nèi ge, nèi ge.”

If only the professor had been a mind reader and expert military strategist, he might have avoided this land mine.

No sooner had the example been provided than a contingent of the perpetually aggrieved lurched into action.

Their failure to simply talk to Professor Patton, and the overkill of their response



— including a letter claiming that his utterance “offended all of the Black members of our Class. . . . Our mental health has been affected. . . .” — suggests the disingenuousness of that response.

A USC dean issued an abject public apology.

Patton also, regrettably, apologized.

Fortunately, many of Patton’s students, and others, rose to his defense, including Chinese class members who noted that Patton’s “use of ‘nei ge’ [was] an accurate rendition of common Chinese use, and an entirely appropriate . . . illustration of the use of pauses.”

If only the professor had been a mind reader and expert military strategist, he might have avoided this land mine. But training in proactive appeasement of bullies is not the solution here.

What’s needed is a determination to stop appeasing bullies.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.