

Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

“Exactly What He Deserved”

I'm pretty cautious about travel. I go to friendly spots like Canada and western Europe.

If the State Department recommends against going someplace, it's likely I had already crossed it off. Places not to go include: Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Zimbabwe, and a whole passel of other enticing destinations---like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

As you have surely heard, 22-year old University of Virginia student Otto Warmbier went on an organized tour to North Korea (DPRK). If I'd been invited to tag along, chances are pretty good that I would have had other plans. But he went. A bad decision, as it turned out.

Warmbier stole a poster off his hotel wall, likely as a souvenir, was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to 15 years at hard labor. All done probably as quickly as it took you to read that sentence. People are unlikely to survive 15 years in a DPRK prison. And he didn't. We can only imagine the beatings and other horrors he experienced, but after a year of it he was returned to his family with severe brain damage and died shortly after.

Politicians, pundits, folks across the political spectrum cried out for some redress of this injustice. It was a terrible decision to go tourist in the DPRK. But his death at the hands of that barbaric regime surely deserves our sympathy for him and his family rather than our criticism.

But along comes 62 year-old Katherine Dettwyler, adjunct professor of anthropology at the University of Delaware. Washingtonpost.com reported that Dettwyler's subsequently-deleted Facebook post said Warmbier was “typical of a lot of the young, rich, clueless males who come into my classes.”

She also wrote: “These are the same kids who cry about their grades because they didn't think they'd really have to study the material to get a good grade. His parents ultimately are to blame for his growing up thinking he could get away with whatever he

wanted. Maybe in the U.S., where young...rich, clueless white males routinely get away with raping women. Not so much in North Korea.”

Campus Reform reports that in another since-deleted comment she posted: “If you knew these kids you’d be appalled. They think nothing of raping drunk girls at frat parties and snorting cocaine, cheating on exams, and threatening professors with physical violence.”

So Dettwyler, who likely never met Warmbier and likely knows nothing about him except what has been in the media, links him to raping, drug use, violence, and cheating on exams. Her abusive rants smear young white males in general, and Warmbier in particular. Her writings reek of racism, sexism, and a callous disdain for the tuition-paying parents of her rich white male frat boy students.

But her most odious comment was this: “Is it wrong of me to think that Otto Warmbeir got exactly what he deserved?”

Responding to the backlash that followed, the University rightfully disowned Dettwyler: “We condemn any and all messages that endorse hatred and convey insensitivity toward a tragic event such as the one that Otto Warmbier and his family suffered. We find these comments particularly distressing and inconsistent with our values. Our sympathies are with the Warmbier family.”

Adjunct professors work on contract and are not tenured. At the time of Dettwyler’s comments she was between semesters. The University’s statement said Dettwyler “will not be rehired to teach at the University in the future.”

Apparently Dettwyler’s hateful comments were not an anomaly. The Review, a student newspaper, said that she had a reputation for being politically outspoken. One student who had taken two courses from her said Dettwyler’s Facebook post was typical of her: “the most Kathy thing I’ve ever seen.” So apparently she was known for doling out her ugly opinions in the classroom.

If she had not posted her despicable message on social media, Dettwyler’s behavior would probably never have been exposed. Donors, parents, and alumni would probably never have learned of her existence, let alone her hateful mindset and statements. So there would have been no public outcry and the University would never have had to denounce and terminate her.

What's worse, she would still be in the classroom projecting her hatefulness. And the parents she so despises would still be paying her salary to preach her loathsome opinions to their children.