



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 9, 2010

University Drops Award That Honors Controversial Journalist

Michigan's Wayne State University has dropped an award honoring legendary — and highly controversial — journalist and former White House bureau chief Helen Thomas, after the former “First Lady of the White House Press Corps” made anti-Semitic remarks at a diversity conference.

During a speech at the conference held in nearby Dearborn, Thomas aired her bitterness toward Jews in general and Israel in particular, declaring, “We are owned by the propagandists against the Arabs. There is no question about that. Congress, the White House and Hollywood, Wall Street, are owned by the Zionists. No question in my opinion.”



Thomas' latest remarks follow on the heels of similar comments, made during a Jewish Heritage Day event at the White House last May, that Jews should “get the h*** out of Palestine,” and go back to “Poland, Germany, and America and everywhere else.” After those remarks Thomas, who for decades was a highly respected White House correspondent for UPI, was dropped as a columnist with Hearst News Service, a position she had held since 2000.

Following the latest comments, the university from where the 90-year-old Thomas graduated in the 1940s quickly issued a statement saying it was dropping its Helen Thomas Spirit of Diversity Award. “As a public university, Wayne State encourages free speech and open dialogue, and respects diverse viewpoints,” the statement read. “However, the university strongly condemns the anti-Semitic remarks made by Helen Thomas during a conference yesterday.”

Matthew Seeger, dean of Wayne State's college of fine arts, explained that the latest controversy involving Thomas “has brought a negative light to the award, which was never the intent of the award.”

Weighing in on the latest Thomas' meltdown, Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League said that Thomas “has clearly, unequivocally revealed herself as a vulgar anti-Semite. Her suggestion that Zionists control government, finance, and Hollywood is nothing less than classic, garden-variety anti-Semitism. This is a sad final chapter to an otherwise illustrious career. Unlike her previous, spontaneous remarks into a camera, these words were carefully thought out and conscious. It shows a prejudice that is deep-seated and obsessive.”

Foxman addressed other institutions that have honored the senior journalist over the years, suggesting that it is time “to consider rescinding those honors in light of her pervasively anti-Semitic rhetoric. Professional associations and academic institutions should not want to be associated with an anti-Semite.”



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Following Wayne State's decisive actions Thomas blasted her alma mater, saying that "the leaders of Wayne State University have made a mockery of the First Amendment and disgraced their understanding of its inherent freedom of speech and the press." She later told the [Detroit Free Press](#) that the university "has betrayed academic freedom," and called it "a sad day" for the school's students.

Thomas' sister, Barbara Isaac, noted that family and friends were not surprised by the move, saying it is the price the outspoken journalist pays "for being honest and forthright. She wanted to tell the truth."

For a professional journalist who spent a storied career with a highly respected news agency, serving as a supposedly objective observer of Washington politics, Thomas has been surprisingly vocal of late with her vitriolic rhetoric against Israel. While famous for her outspoken style over most of her career, as time went by Thomas increasingly grated the nerves of Presidents and their Press Secretaries. By the second term of President George W. Bush, her seat of honor had been taken from her, and she was relegated to the back row during White House press conferences.

Don Irvine of [Accuracy in Media](#) observed that while Thomas "has every right to say what she thinks now that she is no longer employed by a news organization," it is hard to imagine that her feelings of ill will toward Jews and Israel "didn't affect her writing during her long career in Washington."

Nonetheless, "her employers never questioned her bias against Israel which seems to only have emboldened her in her old age."

In reality, the special immunity Thomas enjoyed finally caught up with her in May when her anti-Semitic remarks cost her a position with Hearst, and it all came crashing down last week when Wayne State, which had earlier refused to address her untoward public outbursts, finally parted company with their notorious alumnus.

Photo of Helen Thomas: AP Images



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