

PSCcuny/ Professional Staff Congress / City University of New York

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November 1, 2016

James B. Milliken, Chancellor

The City University of New York

205 East 42nd Street

New York, NY 10017

Dear Chancellor Milliken:

On behalf of the membership of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, I enclose the resolution passed by the union's policy-making body, the Delegate Assembly, on October 13, 2016: "Freedom of Speech and Assembly for All Faculty, Staff and Students at The City University of New York." The resolution reaffirms the PSC's unequivocal condemnation of all forms of bigotry and systematic oppression, including racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

The resolution calls on the CUNY administration, as well as New York City and New York State, "to treat all accusations of discrimination and repression seriously and equally, and to affirm its support for freedom of speech and assembly for all faculty, staff, and students at CUNY."

The call in the resolution has become newly urgent. On October 17, 2016, *Frontpage Mag*, a website produced by the so-called David Horowitz Freedom Center, reported that the David Horowitz Freedom Center had put up posters at Brooklyn College targeting named students and faculty for their alleged political activity and/or religious beliefs. The website boasts about several different posters, including one that contained an image and the name of an individual Brooklyn College student, and one that implied that several named Brooklyn College students and one faculty member were connected to terrorist activity.

The College took commendably quick action to have the posters removed, but the damage had already been done. The posters have been reproduced or described on various websites, with the names visible.

The David Horowitz Freedom Center has been named by the Southern Poverty Law Center as one of 892 hate groups currently operating in the United States. The posters they put up and then publicized are designed to foster hate, silence political speech, and intimidate the college community. By naming individual students and faculty, and associating the names with terrorist acts, the posters and subsequent website reports invite retribution against individuals. They are dangerous. The climate of fear the posters are designed to create is especially damaging on a college campus, where the freedom to think and speak is essential.

American Federation of Teachers Local 2334

New York State United Teachers • New York State AFL-CIO

American Association of University Professors • New York City Central Labor Council



Brooklyn College President Michelle Anderson writes in the strong letter she sent today to the Brooklyn College community condemning all expressions of hate and bigotry that on October 25 a student reported that four swastikas had been carved into a bathroom stall at the college. Such expressions of anti-Semitism are also designed to intimidate, silence and provoke retribution. They are dangerous, and they have no place anywhere, especially at CUNY.

On October 28, *The Village Voice* published an article, “A Shadowy Website Targets Student Protesters with ‘Classic McCarthyism,’” reporting on the website *CanaryMission.org*. The website, as the article reports, “publishes the names, photographs, and biographical information of students engaged in Palestine activism across the United States.” Among them are several CUNY students and faculty. Material posted on the website states that one purpose of the site is to expose the alleged actions of the named individuals for the use of potential employers.

The central University administration must speak out. President Anderson’s letter, “We Stand Against Hate,” is an important statement, as is the independent report on allegations of anti-Semitism the University commissioned, which found that the charge of “unchecked anti-Semitism” at CUNY was baseless. CUNY officials provided a statement for the October 28 *Village Voice* article, but the statement fails to address the urgent issues at stake.

As chancellor of a university that is remarkable for its diversity and its practice of collaboration across differences, you have an obligation to make clear the central administration’s condemnation of bigotry, hate speech and repression. Every attempt to silence free speech at CUNY and every act of bigotry against any members of the University community must be condemned. Failing to condemn the most recent, egregious acts of intimidation will make other acts of intimidation more likely.

On behalf of the membership of the PSC, I call on you to denounce all attempts to intimidate CUNY students, faculty and staff, all actions that endanger individual members of the University community. Everyone at CUNY suffers when anyone at CUNY feels unfree to think, learn, speak and thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Barbara Bowen".

Barbara Bowen
President, PSC/CUNY

cc: PSC Delegate Assembly