

IN SUPPORT OF FREEDOM OF DISSENT AND ASSEMBLY AT CITY COLLEGE

Be it resolved:

That the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY supports the petition by faculty of the City College of New York, which includes the following statements, among others:

We note with alarm the events surrounding the seizure by security forces of the student center located in NAC 3/201. Such an intrusion by force is unprecedented within our experience, stretching back over the past half-century, and including times of severe political stress.

The support of this action by academic officials is even more alarming, as it suggests that maintaining a suitable academic atmosphere must give way to maintaining a sort of order, enforced by the security forces of the university and the city. Such order is inimical to the needs of open discussion and of reasoned argument that an academic institution requires.

The suggestion that a vastly expanded Career Center is needed can be discussed; perhaps such a need exists. The suggestion that the only conceivable location for a Career Center is the location of the most prominent center of dissident thought on campus, and that this space had to be seized in violent fashion in a nighttime raid, is bizarre. The excuse that has been offered by the college administration is not credible.

An academic institution is defined by its openness to many directions of thought, not all of which sit comfortably with those in power. This raid suggests that there are severe bounds to what types of thought are acceptable at this university.

The policy on expression of dissent being contemplated for adoption by the Board of Trustees carries further the limits on the expression of thought at this university. Thought is meaningless if it cannot be made public, which may require more than writing something on a piece of paper and filing it; the rules that are proposed would even limit the distribution of leaflets, suggesting that arguments in support of unapproved points of view are to be forbidden in the university.

For this reason, we protest the raid on the student center at City College, and the proposed rules for limiting the distribution of thoughts that have not been approved by the administration of the university. We are being asked to teach our students that independence is unacceptable, and conformity is the essence of what it means to be an educated person. In our considered opinion, based on long experience with education at a university, this is contrary to what is meant by a university education. The introduction

of security forces into academic discourse, plus the limitation of the right to speak, and to disagree, are the means of destruction of a university.

Be it further resolved that the Professional Staff Congress:

Condemns the CUNY administration for their nighttime raid of the Morales/Shakur Center, NAC 3/201.

Condemns the confiscation of personal property during the raid;

Condemns the CUNY Administration's punitive, anti-intellectual overreaction to protests on campus following the seizure of NAC 3/201;

Condemns the temporary closing of the NAC Building on October 20, 2013, an action that prevented students in certain classes from attending class, blocked access to the library, and confined faculty and staff within the building;

Condemns the CUNY Administration for closing all but one entrance to the NAC Building in the weeks following the seizure of NAC 3/201, an action that unnecessarily disrupted access to academic activities at the college;

Calls on the CCNY and CUNY Administrations to refrain from using excessive force or punishment for student, faculty or staff dissent;

Calls for all criminal charges against Khalil Vasquez and Tafador Sourov to be dropped, as the disciplinary charges against them have been addressed appropriately, through the College disciplinary process.