

## **Sami Disu, Adjunct Lecturer, Testimony to Board of Trustees Hearing**

**10/22/2018**

Dear Board of Trustees,

I would like to begin by thanking you for your service.

My name is Sami Disu, and I teach in the Africana Department at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The one issue that I need to bring to your attention immediately is the plight of part-time professors.

Adjunct professors are paid poverty level wages. My wife is also an adjunct lecturer in the Africana Department at John Jay College. So let me assure you that between the both of us we understand the reality of trying to raise a child on adjunct incomes.

Between the two of us, we are teaching 5 courses this semester and we love teaching the next generation of police officers, emergency personnel and legal professionals that will go on to providing public safety for our beloved City. Our love for teaching is the only reason we haven't moved on to better paying professions.

The situation of the economically-unviable lives we live as adjuncts is worsened by the fact that the students we teach are historically from an underfunded, and under-resourced public school systems, to begin with. Any college professor –adjunct or full time - understands this fact when we grade assignments. Yet, many adjuncts make the sacrifice to spend numerous unpaid hours outside class helping students overcome their limitations.

And if you understand that most students who attend CUNY are from black and brown communities, then you will understand that underpaid college professors combined with austerity funding levels for the CUNY system amounts to racial injustice - whether deliberately designed or not. You don't need to be a professor of African American History like me to understand this issue.

Let me be blunt in saying that my wife and I have applied for public welfare assistance in order to raise our child. Since we can't pay for childcare on adjunct incomes we take turns looking after our daughter on days one partner does not teach. So, even though we could aim to teach more courses for a little more income we simply cannot because paying for childcare is impossible on adjunct wages.

This semester I am also serving as the PSC-CUNY Adjunct Liaison on my campus. My responsibilities as the adjunct liaison requires me to meet with professors and staff who routinely lament the poverty level wages we receive.

I routinely meet adjunct professors who are juggling 4, 5 and 6 courses not because they love teaching, but because they are trying to combine the wages of a number of lowly-paid

courses in order to make rent. But, others, I speak to have given up and are leaving the college teaching profession with the first better paid alternative. There is real suffering going on under your watch, board of trustees and you can do something about it.

**I call on you as trustees to oppose austerity for CUNY. Take a public stand for a contract that is fully funded, includes real raises for all, and increases adjunct pay to 7K per course. Thank you.**

Sami Disu