

My name is Sofya Aptekar. I am a faculty member at the CUNy School of Labor and Urban Studies. I will read the testimony of one of the four Brooklyn College professors who have been fired and have not been provided with a reason or due process.

“All of the fired four are excellent teachers and we all contribute to our union and to CUNY. What we all have in common is that we have spoken up against the genocide in Gaza. Along with our firings, CUNY management is engaging in the repression of students, including the suspension of Hadeeqa Arzoo Malik.

This firing has felt dehumanizing. It’s like being faced with a brick wall that doesn’t see us as human beings or valuable members of the CUNY community. I am passionate about my work as an educator, work that has been ripped away from me with no explanation.

Here is what some of my peers and students have said about me. I want you to ask yourself if I sound like a teacher who should be fired.

Quote “[This professor] is an expert teacher. She used various instructional strategies to foster engagement and academic rigor, while maintaining a relaxed and respectful learning environment.”

Quote “The instructor has personal qualities that are very suitable for an instructor: she speaks clearly using understandable language even while presenting complex ideas and is quite receptive of and open to students’ ideas including those that are radically opposed to her own.”

Quote, “Her session was well planned and organized establishing clear academic goals and communicating them to students. She provided instruction at an appropriate pace and included meaningful real-world examples relating to the readings.”

Quote “Her scholarship is clear in her well-developed and well-sourced syllabus for the class. Students are presented with challenging questions and well-sourced materials to move their thinking beyond opinion to evidence-based reasoning. Her scholarship was also evident in the way she asked questions of the students: they were questions that moved the students thinking forward.”

And these are student evaluations:

Quote “One of the most valuable aspects of this course was the safe and inclusive environment that your professor cultivated. Without your guidance, it would not have been possible for us to have such productive and respectful discussions. I appreciate your willingness to listen to our ideas, to challenge us to think deeply, and to provide constructive feedback.”

Quote *"There is nothing I would change about this class because it models a community of diversity, warmth, safety, and acceptance—qualities that are desperately needed in every classroom community today."*

Quote *"I was very interested in the content in this class and I enjoyed it very much. I was always excited to come in on Fridays and always spoke highly about the content discussed at home, sharing things I found interesting. The content is very relevant and important to know, regardless of where you want to go in life. Classes like this also provide skills and a break from typical teaching methods, allowing an open space and engaging learning."*

Quote *"If i had to say one thing i learned from this course, its that being able to have meaningful discussions with people can allow things that usually kept in the dark to come to light, when allowed a free space to do so, and i say you did an excellent job of allowing such an environment to flourish so keep it up!"*

Quote *"I thoroughly loved the class discussions, despite coming from a background where involvement was difficult for me. I used to believe that speaking up in class was frowned upon, and I was always afraid of saying something that would offend people. But taking your class has provided me with a wealth of knowledge, insight, and confidence. Thank you for allowing me to be myself in your class; it helped me feel at ease and allowed me to focus on studying without fear of being judged. I'm quite grateful for this, as it has significantly improved my studying experience."*

Does this sound like someone who should be fired-- and fired without any due process-- over the heads of her department chairs that want her to teach? All of the Fired Four have stellar teaching records.

CUNY management refuses to tell us what the charges against us are, a gross violation of due process and free speech rights. It is right out of the McCarthyism playbook, the Donald Trump playbook to fire people without letting them defend themselves or even telling them what they are accused of.

This is my story, but it is a story that is echoed in all of the fired four: we are excellent teachers, part of the fabric that makes CUNY great. We have not done anything wrong, indeed, I believe that the fact that all four of us have been active in a movement speaking up against a genocide is a good thing."

Reinstate the CUNY Fired Four.

End this McCarthyist witch hunt on students and faculty