

Subject: Follow up on AS Senate Vote to end discussions on Resolution for Peace and Safety of All Students

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From: Suzy Quezada

To: Fatima Jinnah, John Fox, Voltaire Villanueva, Ben Kaupp, Robert Cormia, Patrick Morriss, Brian Evans, Mona Rawal, Julie Jenkins, Stephan Schnell, Tracee Cunningham, Leticia Serna, Ana Maravilla, Robert Hartwell, Kate Jordahl, Rachelle Campbell, Francis Niccoli, Kelly Edwards, Katy Ripp, Rocio Giraldez Betron, Stephanie Chan, Destiny Rivera, Eric Reed, Sara Cooper, Michael Chang, Roxanne Cnudde, ASFCPresident, Carolyn Holcroft, Stacy Gleixner, Ajani Byrd, Adiel Velasquez, K Allison Meezan

CC: Hilda Fernandez, Rolando Robles Ramirez, Nurzhamal Akylbekova

Colleagues-

I am unable to attend this quarter's Academic Senate meetings in person as I am teaching at that time, for this reason, I offer a "public" statement here for your consideration.

To voting members of the Academic Senate:

I am deeply disappointed in the move to silence the authors and supporters of the Resolution for the Peace and Safety of All Students at the April 8 Academic Senate meeting-- not only because I believe that the content of the resolution (and its supporting documents) are important discussions to have in an educational institution that purports to value equity and authentic engagement with the changing world, but also because I could not believe that my colleagues decided that we (the authors of the resolution) should not have the opportunity to speak.

On March 18, authors of the resolution and students who came out to support the resolution were yelled at, insulted, physically confronted, and shamed in public by a vocal and well-resourced and organized contingent of people against all ideas of the resolution. Yet when it was our time to speak on the resolution and defend our perspectives and support of it, we were blocked from doing so through process.

I thought that perhaps after 20 years of labor for this institution, much of which has been grounded in working with and for our most underserved students, that my colleagues would respect me enough to hear my voice. I naively believed that colleagues who know me and my work and dedication to this college would at least be curious about why I would take such a grand risk to publicly support a resolution that has caused such an uproar in and outside of our campus community.

Do any of those voting members who silenced us care to know our sources? Were any of the sources we provided in the document itself read openly and with a desire to understand? And if this point of order motion could have been made at any time, then why not wait to make it

until after those of us taking the risk of speaking were at least able to defend our perspective?

I know that many fear this conversation because mainstream, Western media has failed to accurately present the reality of what is happening in Palestine. And if folks do not actively seek out reliable journalism about this violence, then the dominant, master narrative, might make it seem as though we, the authors of the resolution, are outliers and radicals who are acting out of pocket and creating havoc. If we are to follow this line of thinking that people speaking up to end this US sponsored violence are “radicals,” then so, too, are the thousands of the faculty and students across the country who are risking arrest, livelihoods, and academic opportunity to speak on an issue that has effectively changed the trajectory of our global, social-political and economic landscape.

Silencing colleagues and students now is paving the way to a clear path towards the attack on academic freedom and speech on our campus and all efforts grounded in equity work that our students need for us to do as educators. Programs such as Umoja, Puente, and even all of our 13-55 efforts will be in danger if we cosign the idea that certain discussions grounded in race, identity, class struggle, anti-militarization, anti-imperialism, and justice are not within the “purview” of this body. What we are seeing across the country, especially on college campuses, is the weaponization of antisemitism in order to silence dissent- dissent that is essential to a thriving democratic nation.

Over 57% of Biden supporters and voters want the United States to call for a permanent ceasefire and end all military aid to Israel. And this same majority see this violence that the United States is sponsoring as one of genocide. So, effectively, those who protest in whatever manner they can, are standing against genocide- something that before this time most people would agree is an *imperative of humanity*. Yet, despite this majority opinion, students and faculty across the country who speak up to call for a ceasefire are being treated as some outlier, fringe force and are thus being treated accordingly- accused of creating an “unsafe” environments, or being antisemitic, or terrorists, and they are being removed by force from our institutions of higher learning. Programs grounded in ethnic studies theory and practice are now being heavily scrutinized and vilified as sites of such dissent and those studying these disciplines are being told they should not, in fact, take action grounded in the literature they study.

Additionally, the silencing on this campus continues in ways that exist outside of this body. Last week I noticed that a post about the Muslim Heritage Month art installation in the quad, which honored the lost lives of the children and journalists of Gaza and uplifted the voices of Palestinian poets, was removed from the Foothill College Instagram social media page. A few comments noted that this installation made them feel “unsafe.” I feel like a broken record saying this, but being uncomfortable does not mean being unsafe.

What makes me feel unsafe is the silencing by my colleagues who center the threats of outside groups while telling us that our concerns are irrelevant to the work we do as

educators. What makes me feel unsafe is the way that some people's claim to not feeling safe (despite evidence proving that lack of safety) so easily overrides the non-violent messaging of an art installation by students and faculty who are trying to raise awareness on a campus that has, since October 7, provided *no other space* for dialogue. Silence in times like this creates a lack of safety for us all.

And it is this type of silencing that has galvanized thousands of college and university students across the country to enact non-violent acts of protests on campuses everywhere. Students are not just taking over physical spaces on university campuses, they are also creating spaces for dialogue and discussion that administration refuses to provide; students are organizing teach-ins, and even providing "de-escalation mediation zones" to bring together folks with different and passionate perspectives on what is happening in Palestine. And we've seen clearly that the power structures of these colleges have chosen to align themselves with the police state rather than the voices of their student body.

Here at Foothill College, I wonder what we are modeling for our students to shut down dissenting and uncomfortable opinions or cowering to threats against our lives by people who have little to nothing to do with the daily workings of this campus. Who do we want to be right now, at this time in history? Will Foothill College follow the footsteps of Columbia University, arresting its own students for protest and banning them from campus? Will we follow the lead of USC and cancel all commencement celebrations for fear of anyone speaking up and creating discomfort with their speeches? Who do we want to be right now, at this time in history?

Your colleague-

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"I have never considered compassion a finite resource. I would not want to live in a world where such was the case." - Roxane Gay