

A Resolution Condemning Islamophobic Hate Speech at the University of California

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WHEREAS, the University of California has identified the issue of campus climate as a priority for administration, staff, and students across the UC system; and,

WHEREAS, the UC prides itself on welcoming students from any race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, yet pockets of racism and hate still exist on this campus which makes the UC an unwelcoming experience for certain communities; and,

WHEREAS, Islamophobia is defined as the irrational fear of Islam, Muslims, or anything related to the Islamic or Arab cultures and traditions; and,

WHEREAS, since September 11, 2001, Islamophobia has become the latest “hazing” technique across the United States and has created a chilling effect for Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians in their communities, work-environments, and campuses; and,

WHEREAS, according to a Gallup Study, 60% of Muslim Americans say that Muslims face prejudice from Americans [1]; and,

WHEREAS, 48% of Muslim Americans say that they have personally faced racial or religious discrimination, which is on par with Hispanic Americans (48%), and African Americans (45%), while 54% of Arab Americans say they have experienced this type of discrimination[2]; and,

WHEREAS, since 2006, Muslim students have been targeted for surveillance by the FBI in Orange County, who said that they are paying particular attention to Muslim students at UC Irvine and UCLA; and,

WHEREAS, this surveillance is occurring on the East Coast as well, with the New York Police Department surveillance of Muslim students at Yale, Columbia, Syracuse, Rutgers, New York University, and Brooklyn College [3]; and,

WHEREAS, these racist and selective surveillance procedures are justified by figures in mainstream media, such as David Horowitz, who defines the core mission of the MSA to “advance the Islamic Jihad against the Jews and Christians of the Middle East, and ultimately against the United States”, and,

WHEREAS, attempts to mischaracterize and chill Palestinian activism have occurred on Berkeley’s own campus, with a lawsuit filed in July 2011 (later dismissed in court) against the UC Regents and President Mark Yudof containing extremely Islamophobic and anti-Arab rhetoric referring to Students for Justice in Palestine and the Muslims Students Association as “anti-Semitic” and “pro-terrorist”; and,

WHEREAS, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit allege that “the more publicly active SJP may be understood as the more militant arm of the outwardly benevolent MSA” and that SJP, MSA, and MSU all “fund terrorism” and are tied to terrorist groups; and,

WHEREAS, more recently, UC Santa Cruz lecturer Tammi Rossman-Benjamin has been responsible for inciting racist and Islamophobic rhetoric by claimings that students in the MSA and SJP are “...generally motivated by very strong religious and political convictions, they have a fire in their belly, they come to the university, many of them are foreign students who come from countries and cultures where anti-Semitism is how they think about the world ... These are not your ordinary student groups like College Republicans or Young Democrats. These are students who come with a serious agenda, who have ties to terrorist organizations.”; and,

WHEREAS, claims such as those cited above create an unsafe and divisive environment for Middle Eastern, Muslim, South Asian students, and others who may be perceived as being of similar descent, and these claims are completely opposite to the values of a premier university system; and,

WHEREAS, the President of the University of California, Mark Yudof, is responsible for advocating for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation; and,

WHEREAS, the University of California is no place for hateful and inflammatory rhetoric and holds its students, faculty, staff, and affiliates to higher standards that promote a positive and inclusive campus climate; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the ASUC condemn the remarks of lecturer Tammi Rossman-Benjamin and those described in the above-mentioned lawsuit as hateful and inflammatory; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ASUC urge President Mark Yudof to condemn these inflammatory, hateful, and racist assumptions by UCSC lecturer Tammi Rossman-Benjamin against Middle Eastern, Muslim, South Asian, and Palestinian activists; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that EAVP Shahryar Abbasi write a letter to UCOP condemning the racist and bigoted language by Tammi Rossman-Benjamin and President Yudof’s failure to address the matter, as well as passing a similar bill with UCSA; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ASUC urge other campuses to pass similar bills in their respective student governments.

Footnotes--

[1] <http://www.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx#2>

[2] <http://www.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx#2>

[3] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/nyregion/nypd-muslim-monitoring-and-a-climate-of-fear.html?_r=0