

February 6, 2013

President Karen L. Gould
Brooklyn College
2900 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11210

Dear President Gould:

We are writing to follow up on our letter to you of January 31, 2012, regarding the “BDS Movement Against Israel” event taking place tomorrow at Brooklyn College. We want to thank you for your leadership on this issue.

In our letter, we expressed concern that the Political Science Department’s co-sponsorship of this student-organized event suggested that it was an official position of the college, and encouraged action to make a more diverse range of views heard on this issue.

Equally, although it has been obscured in some media accounts, in our letter, we stood strongly for academic freedom for students and academics. We affirmed the right of students to sponsor the event. We did not request its cancellation. We did not, and would not, threaten the funding of Brooklyn College. We will continue to oppose efforts that would seek to undermine the free and open debate of critical issues.

We are grateful that the following steps have now been taken:

- You affirmed the strong traditions of free expression at Brooklyn College, making clear that departmental co-sponsorship of a student-organized event does not imply endorsement of that event, and that “Brooklyn College does not endorse the views of the speakers visiting our campus next week, just as it has not endorsed those of previous visitors to our campus with opposing views. We do, however, uphold their right to speak, and the rights of our students and faculty to attend, listen, and fully debate.” At the same time, you encouraged “students and faculty to explore these issues from multiple viewpoints and in a variety of forums so that no single perspective serves as the sole source of information or basis for consideration.” This is the model of academic freedom and inclusive dialogue that we were seeking to encourage, and that fact been lost in too much of the media coverage on the issue.
- In your letter to Brooklyn College Hillel, you made clear that Brooklyn College “does not endorse the BDS movement nor support its call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel,” affirmed the college’s “proud history of engagement with Israel and Israeli universities,” and that you “deeply value our Israeli partners and would not endorse any action that would imperil the State of Israel or its citizens.”
- The Political Science Department has put in writing its policy for considering co-sponsorship of student-organized events, making clear that requests from “any groups, departments or programs organizing lectures or events representing any point of view ... will be given equal consideration.” However, as has been clear in this instance, the

departmental practice of co-sponsorship of specifically student-organized events has caused real confusion among students regarding intent and endorsement of views (as evidenced by Student Body (CLAS) President Abraham Esses' "Open Letter" in this regard). We, therefore, believe that the policy would be strengthened greatly by the explicit inclusion of language that you and the Department have used on this case – that sponsorship does not imply endorsement.

- Planning has begun for additional event(s) at Brooklyn College's Wolfe Institute on the Humanities that will bring a range of additional viewpoints on these issues to campus in the coming months. While these are not required as a matter of free expression, we believe that they will help contribute to the cause of understanding and dialogue. We hope the Political Science Department will follow its newly codified policy and co-sponsor these events as well.

As we stated in our letter, we are strongly opposed to BDS. We continue to believe that "the BDS movement is a wrongheaded and destructive one, and an obstacle to our collective hope for a peaceful two-state solution. These simplistic and one-sided approaches do a disservice to the cause of peace and stability by unfairly placing blame entirely on one side, and by attempting to delegitimize one party on the world stage, and will do nothing to bring either party back to earnest negotiations or enhance a better understand of complexity of this conflict."

Others disagree, of course, and we will fight for their right to do so. But we will also continue to argue strongly against them. We note, for example, that many advocates of the BDS movement have called for a boycott of Israeli scholars and institutions, which would, of course, deny them their academic and free speech rights. This hypocritical position should not undermine our commitment to the fundamental values of a free society, but it speaks to the nature of the BDS movement.

In closing, we share your goal that Brooklyn College "should be a place free from hate; one where diverse points of view, on even the most controversial topics, may be debated without intimidation or fear of reprisal."

Again, thank you for your leadership, dialogue, and action on this matter.

Sincerely,



Jerrold Nadler
Congressman



Brad Lander
City Councilman



Christine C. Quinn
City Council Speaker



John Liu
City Comptroller



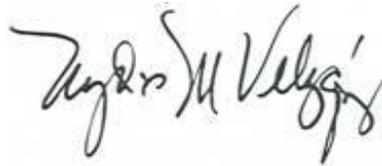
Bill de Blasio
Public Advocate



Marty Markowitz
Brooklyn Borough President



Yvette D. Clarke
Congresswoman



Nydia Velazquez
Congresswoman



Hakeem Jeffries
Congressman



Kevin Parker
State Senator



Daniel Squadron
State Senator



Rhoda Jacobs
Assemblywoman



Karim Camara
Assemblyman



Joan Millman
Assemblywoman



Walter Mosley
Assemblyman



Letitia James
Councilwoman



Stephen Levin
Councilman