

The City University of New York
CUNY SCHOOL OF LAW

November 19, 2018

Statement Regarding Islamophobic Incidents at the Law School

We, the undersigned members of the City University of New York School of Law faculty, write to express our strong condemnation of the string of Islamophobic, racist, and sexist notes left on defaced pamphlets about Islam in the Prayer/Meditation Room on the 6th Floor of our law school. We also wish to express our unwavering support to all Muslim-identifying students, staff, and faculty in the hostile climate these incidents have created.

Incidents like these within our building, which seek to degrade entire groups along religious, ethnic, racial, and gender lines, erode trust that the humanity of all members of our community will be respected. And, as history has shown us, they also occasionally serve as prelude to more widespread and dangerous attacks.

As law faculty at a school devoted to social justice, we restate our collective commitment to an environment that is safe and welcoming to all of our students, staff, and faculty. Members of our law school community face the harmful impacts of oppression daily outside our walls. It is our duty to create a learning and work environment that allows each one of us to thrive and that prepares our students to become social justice lawyers.

In particular, as faculty, we restate our collective commitment to having (and not avoiding) difficult but necessary conversations in our classrooms around such topics as race/racism (including anti-blackness and anti-semitism), white supremacy, Islamophobia, sexism, transphobia, heteronormativity, classism, and ableism, among other forms of systemic oppression. We recognize that how we collectively live up to this responsibility may be a contributing factor to incidents like the ones we recently experienced in our building.

We stand behind the collaborative efforts of a coalition of student organizations, including the Muslim Law Students Association (MLSA), and our law school's administration, joining to act in solidarity with Muslim-identifying students, staff, and faculty and their allies drawn from many segments of our community, and working together to achieve the following:

- Creation of a multi-denominational, multi-confessional prayer space in the law school that is separate and apart from any meditation space and available and accessible to students and other members of our community during all hours when our building is accessible to them.
- Continuing clarity and transparency by the administration about any investigation that is presently underway regarding the recent incidents in the Prayer/Meditation Room on the 6th floor.

- Commitment by the administration to avoid any further criminal justice system-based, police-based, or surveillance-based response to these specific incidents.
- Including CLEAR alongside members of our law school's administration and its Director of Security in a review of our general practices and obligations with respect to security, investigations, and the access of law enforcement agencies to our campus.
- Protocol that requires informing all members of our community, including cleaning staff and administrative personnel, whether they are CUNY School of Law employees or not, whenever a hate incident occurs within our building.
- Protocol requiring that every reporter or complainant of an incident at our law school, whether a victim or not, will receive a follow-up conversation from security (and/or, as appropriate, the Title IX Coordinator / Student Affairs / the Chief Diversity Officer) and separate outreach from our counselor.
- Restoration of student organizations' ability to communicate directly and across all classes using the Student Events list without their emails having to go through prior review or screening by the Office of Student Affairs, or any other office.

We commend all involved for their efforts culminating in the above measures that will contribute to the betterment of our community. We encourage the administration to continue working with students and other concerned members of our community towards the following objectives:

- To the greatest extent possible, and in the interest of closure, keeping the community informed if the investigation that is presently underway regarding the recent incidents in the Prayer/Meditation Room on the 6th floor results in sanctions directed towards any person(s) deemed responsible (even if the identity of such person(s) cannot be publicly disclosed).
- Clarifying any response protocol or policy for such incidents going forward and, to the greatest extent possible, consulting with affected individuals or groups before any future response is undertaken (including by the law school's security / Public Safety department).

We will continue to follow the leadership of MLSA and our Muslim-identifying colleagues as we help to create an institution where Islamophobia may no longer find space to exist.

Sincerely,

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