

September 21, 2007

Via Facsimile and E-mail

Mr. Lee C. Bollinger
President
Columbia University
535 West 116th Street
202 Low Library
Mail Code 4309
New York, NY 10027

Dear President Bollinger:

This firm represents Rabbi Avi Weiss and Amcha – the Coalition for Jewish Concerns (“Amcha”). I write in connection with the upcoming visit of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the President of Iran, to the Columbia campus on Monday, September 24.

Rabbi Weiss and Amcha intend to protest against Mr. Ahmadinejad but have been advised that only Columbia University students and faculty will be permitted on the campus on Monday, September 24, and thus, neither Rabbi Weiss nor Amcha will be permitted to protest against Mr. Ahmadinejad at that time.

You are a First Amendment scholar of considerable repute and as such are, I suspect, both sympathetic to and supportive of the First Amendment principles of free expression that permeate Columbia’s own policies and regulations regarding demonstrations, rallies and picketing. Specifically, Section 440 of Chapter XLIV of the Rules of University Conduct provides:

Demonstrations, rallies, picketing, and the circulation of petitions have an important place in the life of a university. They are means by which protests may be registered and attention drawn to new directions possible in the evolution of the University community.

While the University as a private institution is not subject to the Constitutional provisions of free speech and due process of law, the University by its nature is dedicated to the free expression of ideas and to evenhanded and fair dealing with all with whom it conducts its affairs. The Rules of University Conduct are thus enacted by the University to provide as a matter of University policy the maximum freedom of expression consistent with the rights of others. . .

While the University certainly has the right to enact and apply reasonable restraints on the time, place and manner of demonstrations, banning all non-University affiliated persons from the entire campus is not such a reasonable restraint.

This limitation on non-University affiliated persons is particularly inappropriate here where the speaker and his considerable entourage (which I understand will be permitted on the Columbia University campus) is not affiliated with Columbia University.

I therefore ask that you advise by return facsimile today or on Sunday whether the University will permit Rabbi Weiss, Amcha and others similarly situated, onto the Columbia University campus on Monday, September 24, 2007 so that they may peaceably demonstrate against Mr. Ahmadinejad and the hate-filled and offensive positions that he has long advocated.

Should the University not permit Rabbi Weiss and Amcha to demonstrate on campus on Monday, September 24 in accordance with the University's own policies and guidelines, Rabbi Weiss and Amcha will consider pursuing their legal remedies.

Very truly yours,

Steven Lieberman

SL:dob

cc: Rabbi Avi Weiss