

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 6, 2024

The Honorable Kristen Clarke
Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Assistant Attorney General Clarke:

We write to express our outrage about the current environment at Columbia University, which is yet another college campus, where Jewish students have been subjected to harassment, intimidation, and violence laced with violent anti-Semitic rhetoric. Given your history of anti-Semitism and attendance at Columbia University, we have concerns regarding your ability to impartially carry out your duties and would like reassurances that you will support Jewish students and disavow your extensive connections to well-known anti-Semites.

In the past several days, hundreds of protesters have swarmed Columbia University's campus and created an unlawful encampment while spewing violent rhetoric and deliberately endangering the safety and well-being of Jewish students. Pro-Hamas protesters have been heard chanting "Go Back to Poland" and "go Back to Belarus" at Jewish students. These same protesters have also been chanting "from the river to the sea", an anti-Semitic trope that the House of Representatives formally denounced as anti-Semitic on April 16, 2024. As a result, Jewish professors and campus leaders have encouraged students to return home, given the university's inability to protect Jewish students. In fact, the environment has become so dangerous that Columbia University was forced to hold all classes remotely for a day and switch to hybrid classes for the remainder of the semester.

The students, faculty, and university administrators responsible for the facilitation of this unacceptable lawlessness and chaos have likely violated federal law, such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As you know, Title VI prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of an individual's race, color, or national origin. As a recipient of federal funds, Columbia University is required to follow Title VI, and is accordingly obligated to protect the safety and wellbeing of Jewish students. Furthermore, Executive Order 13899, which was issued on December 11, 2019, requires "the executive branch to enforce Title VI against prohibited forms of discrimination rooted in anti-Semitism as vigorously as against all other forms of prohibited discrimination." It further requires that such investigations consider the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition and examples of anti-Semitism. Recent events have made painfully clear Columbia University's failure to uphold its Title VI obligations, and the need for the Department of Justice to support an investigation.

However, we are deeply concerned that your history of association with known anti-Semites hinders your ability to impartially support an investigation into violations of Title VI at Columbia University. As president of the Harvard Black Students Association, you hosted Tony Martin, who authored the virulently anti-Semitic book, *The Jewish Onslaught*, and allowed him to spew anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about Jews. You even went on record and stated that "Professor Martin is an intelligent, well-versed Black intellectual who bases his information on indisputable fact." You have expressed your support for Linda Sarsour, a well-known anti-Semite, who has claimed that Israel was "built on the idea that Jews are supreme to everyone else." This is one of many anti-Semitic quotes by Ms. Sarsour, which has a shocking similarity to the ideas espoused by Mr. Martin at the event you hosted at Harvard. You have also expressed your support for Tamika Mallory, who, in addition to Ms. Sarsour, is well-known for her affiliation with Louis Farrakhan. Louis Farrakhan has called Hitler a "very great man", stated that "[they] call me an anti-Semite, stop it, I'm anti-Termite," and "Jews are my enemy." Ms. Mallory has stated that Mr. Farrakhan is "the GOAT" or greatest of all time, and Ms. Mallory has accused Jews of "upholding white supremacy." Both Ms. Sarsour and Ms. Mallory left the Women's March Group after repeated accusations of anti-Semitism. These affiliations with well-known anti-Semites erodes our faith that you will be able to impartially support a Title VI investigation, and litigation if necessary.

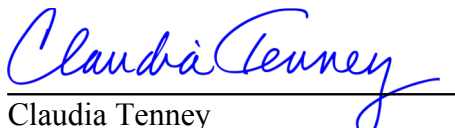
Finally, your connections to Columbia University extend far beyond that of a traditional alumna. Not only did you attend Columbia Law School, but you have also co-taught a seminar, received an alumni award, and delivered the keynote address at a Columbia University event. This year, you are even slated to be the graduation speaker for Columbia Law School. Given your deep connections to the university, your ability to impartially enforce the law against Columbia University in the event that litigation is necessary is seriously in doubt.


Given these extensive concerns, we respectfully request answers to the following questions no later than May 13, 2024:

- 1) Will the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division support an investigation by the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights into Title VI violations by Columbia University? If not, why?
- 2) Will the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division prosecute individuals threatening and attacking Jewish students, such as the attack against Sahar Tartak at Yale University? If not, why?
- 3) Will your office abide by Executive Order 13899 which requires the consideration of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism when prosecuting Title VI cases pertaining to anti-Semitism? If not, why?
- 4) Do you disavow your affiliation with Ms. Sarsour and Ms. Mallory? If not, why do you continue to maintain relationships with these well-known anti-Semites?
- 5) Do you disavow your previous comments regarding Mr. Martin and his ideology? Do you still believe that he “bases his information on indisputable fact?”
- 6) Do you believe that your attendance at Columbia University, the relationships you formed with the professors and administrators, and the fact that you were employed by Columbia Law School pose a conflict of interest?
- 7) Do you still intend to speak at graduation given the horrifying campus environment that currently exists? Do you believe that speaking at Columbia University at this time aligns with your values?

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing your responses and working together to protect our Jewish students and unequivocally denouncing anti-Semitism.

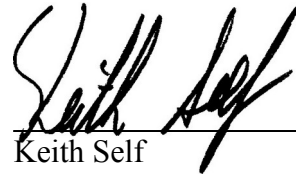
Sincerely,


Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress


Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress



Keith Self
Member of Congress



Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress