

## OPINIONS

# Letter to the Editor – Joy James

By *JOY JAMES*

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We care.

We care about our students, including the brainiacs, artists, fierce advocates for equity and dignity, who care for (disenfranchised) communities and the environment – often while being denied reciprocal care.

Passionate about justice – social and restorative – we note that repressive rhetoric leverages predation. Prizing intelligence in varied forms – especially emotional intelligence – we are not always happy to but will publicly clash with willful ignorance and mendaciousness displaying brain rot and ethical decay.

Grateful that we have been spared from attending funerals for friends who worship in mosques, synagogues and black churches, we understand that some of our students are stressed because they or kin seek solace and spirituality under threats by white supremacists, misogynists, trans/queer/ biphobes and their enablers. We worry about student health and well-being, especially for those whose vulnerabilities exponentially increase through social and state persecutions.

Openly claiming our biases for justice as part of our humanity, we are troubled that we have to continuously re-state facts that should be self-evident.

First, while crime in the US is at an all-time low ([https:// www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/03/5-facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/03/5-facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/) ([https:// www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/03/5-facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/03/5-facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/))), sexual assault reporting increases (<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem> (<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem>)) and white supremacist violence is at an all-time high (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/us/hate-groups-rise.html> (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/us/hate-groups-rise.html>)).

Second, in an asymmetrical fight, those backed by structure, police and wealth destabilize any balance in power for social justice advocacy.

Third, increasingly narcissistic bashing of progressive students, through white nationalist and alt-right platforms, blogs, and bots, erodes the college's ability to provide quality security and education. Interrogating activists likely creates more stress than actionable intel for the greater community. Intimidating anti-racist organizers also evokes DOJ fabricating “black identity extremism” while failing to competently monitor white supremacist terror ([https:// theintercept.com/2019/03/23/black-identity-extremist-fbi-domestic-terrorism/](https://theintercept.com/2019/03/23/black-identity-extremist-fbi-domestic-terrorism/) ([https:// theintercept.com/2019/03/23/black-identity-extremist-fbi-domestic-terrorism/](https://theintercept.com/2019/03/23/black-identity-extremist-fbi-domestic-terrorism/))).

Pugilists popular enough to become president become role models for some. Just because something is legal does not give it virtue. At our best, intellectuals and scholars will continue to support civil and human rights as well as student advocacy as it evolves with compassion and courage.

– *Joy James, F.C. Oakley Professor, Humanities*