



Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Dr. Santa J. Ono, President and Vice Chancellor
University of British Columbia
Seventh Floor, Walter C. Koerner Library
1958 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC
V6T 1Z2

Dear Dr. Ono,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the nearly 5,000 members of the Association of Administrative and Professional Staff, who collectively form the largest employee group at UBC, to express our deep concern over the University's decision to serve as a platform for bigoted, anti-transgender hate speech.

I have heard from a large number of AAPS members who have expressed that Jenn Smith's upcoming anti-SOGI (Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity) presentation makes them feel violated and/or unsafe as well as wholly disrespected by their employer.

While University Provost Dr. Andrew Szeri has used a free speech argument to defend the University's decision to serve as a platform for anti-transgender hate speech, I wish to indicate that AAPS wholeheartedly rejects that argument and is frankly disappointed that the University would characterize the spreading of hate speech against transgender individuals as a matter of free speech. Surely, the University would not offer a platform to an individual spreading hate speech about racialized or indigenous communities.

If it is the case that the University is going to go ahead and allow Jenn Smith to speak on campus, I would respectfully request that you provide an explanation about why the University believes that transgender/non-binary individuals are not worthy of the same protections as individuals in other marginalized groups.

Further, I would note our concerns are not just philosophical. In the past, Smith has used the notorious anti-immigrant group The Soldiers of Odin as "security" for his events. This group has a long history of violent attacks on marginalized groups. For the University to allow an individual



who freely associates with this group to host an event on campus is to risk physical injury to the students, staff and faculty of the University.

The University's decision to expose its students, staff and faculty to physical and emotional harm flies in the face of public statements by the University that it values the well-being of those who study or work on campus. By allowing this event on campus, the University is telling the campus community that it values the so-called "free speech rights" of hate mongers more than the safety and well-being of the University community.

Such a decision is not just indefensible, it is also irresponsible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joey Hansen', is written over a horizontal line that extends to the right.

Joey Hansen
Executive Director

Copy: Barbara Meens Thistle, Vice President, Human Resources, UBC
Andrew Szeri, Vice President Academic and Provost, UBC Vancouver
Lindi Frost, Director, Human Resources-Employee and Labour Relations, UBC