

## LDB Praises Hunter College Statement, While Urging Further Action

November 24, 2015, Washington, D.C: This afternoon, the Brandeis Center applauded the City University of New York's (CUNY) Hunter College for condemning anti-Semitism on its campus as an important first step, while still urging further action from CUNY administrators. LDB President Kenneth L. Marcus commented, "As a former CUNY instructor, I am saddened by the ugly anti-Semitic incidents that have recently marred that great institution. We have been in communication with CUNY officials, and we are heartened by some of their statements. At the same time, it is clear that more must be done."

Marcus, who previously held the Lillie and Nathan Ackerman Chair in Equality and Justice in America at CUNY's Baruch College School of Public Affairs, noted that CUNY is very much on LDB's radar screen for several reasons. "We have been very pleased by the leadership of CUNY students in establishing a chapter of the Louis D. Brandeis Center at CUNY Law. These students have been especially concerned about the rise of campus anti-Semitism nationwide. They have also been concerned about recent developments within their own university system."

On Friday, November 13, [LDB](#), a national civil rights organization best known for its work fighting anti-Semitism in higher education, [issued a letter](#) to CUNY Hunter College President Jennifer Raab and CUNY Vice Chancellor Frank Sanchez. The letter urged the administrators to strongly condemn recent anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in the CUNY system, specifically, the "Million Student March" that took place at Hunter College on Thursday, November 12. Significantly, the signatories to LDB's letter included the co-presidents of the LDB Law Student Chapter at CUNY Law School, Andrew Klaben-Finegold and Erica Berger. Marcus commented, "We are proud of our LDB CUNY law students and pleased that they are taking a prominent role in addressing this issue."

The "Million Student March" rally at Hunter College, endorsed by NYC Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) as well as five individual SJP groups at CUNY schools, was part of a nationwide campaign demanding tuition-free education and a host of other alleged inalienable rights. However, this rally differed from the national movement in that, in addition to calling for a tuition-free education and other things, the SJP groups used anti-Semitic slurs to link the financial concerns of CUNY students to its "Zionist administration." The Facebook event stated,

The Zionist administration invests in Israeli companies, companies that support the Israeli occupation, hosts birthright programs and study abroad programs in occupied Palestine, and reproduces settler-colonial ideology throughout CUNY through Zionist content of education. While CUNY aims to produce the next generation of professional Zionists, SJP aims to change the university to fight for all peoples liberation.

At the rally itself, student protestors chanted things like, "Zionists out of CUNY!" and "Intifada! Intifada! Long live the Intifada."

The Brandeis Center, along with the CUNY LDB law student chapter, called on CUNY officials to condemn such bigoted behavior. As LDB noted, chanting things like "Zionists out of CUNY!" can create a hostile environment for Israeli students on campus in violation of federal civil rights law, and calling for an "intifada," a term long-associated with violence against Jews – especially troubling in the context of the recent knife attacks on Jewish civilians in Israel – could reasonably lead to incitement to violence, and raises concerns about the safety of Jewish and Israeli students on campus. "While we respect the right of all members of the university community to express their opinions in accordance with the First Amendment, hateful and bigoted speech should be strongly condemned by university administrations," the letter said.

Following LDB's letter, President Raab, along with President of Undergraduate Student Government, Chika Onyejiukwa, and Hunter Senate Chair, Sandra Clarkson, issued the following statement:

We, the President of Hunter College, the President of Undergraduate Student Government and Chair of the Hunter College Senate, on behalf of our campus constituencies, strongly condemn anti-Semitic comments made at a rally last night seeking to exclude members of our campus community based solely on their identity. As the Chancellor said in remarks today, CUNY is "a place of inclusion, not exclusion." While we are committed to the right of free speech and free expression for all within our campus community, there is no place for hate speech and other acts of bigotry, harassment, intimidation, exclusion and intolerance based on an individual's beliefs and backgrounds. Such behavior is unacceptable on our campus. Hunter must be a community where all express their views and opinions, without personally attacking others based on who they are and what they believe.

“At a time when colleges and universities nationwide are facing difficulties with free speech and hate speech, we applaud this statement condemning anti-Semitic hate on its campus,” said [LDB President Kenneth L. Marcus](#). “However, more must be done to repair the CUNY school system, which has been facing many recent problems with anti-Semitism on its campuses.”

Moving forward, CUNY must establish stronger policies to address anti-Semitism as well as other forms of intolerance. Adopting a uniform definition of anti-Semitism, such as the [U.S. State Department’s definition](#), would be a great place to start. Additionally, CUNY must provide education and training, orientation programs, and stress the need for better communications, to its students, faculty, and administration, on how to prevent and respond to anti-Semitic incidents. If and when anti-Semitic, or anti-Semitic-disguised-as-anti-Israel, incidents do occur, CUNY officials must thoroughly investigate the situation, firmly disciplining student perpetrators and sanctioning perpetrating student groups. CUNY must continue to promptly and forcefully, with specificity, condemn anti-Semitic incidents, just as they would any other form of hate or bias. CUNY administrators must also closely monitor hateful groups, which are not only creating a hostile environment for Jewish and Israeli students on many CUNY campuses, but also often breaking school rules and federal and state laws.

LDB has been involved in fighting anti-Semitism at CUNY for several years. In 2013, LDB represented three pro-Israel Brooklyn College students who were wrongly thrown out of a BDS event in violation of their First Amendment rights. LDB worked with the CUNY administration on new student conduct policies so that Jewish and pro-Israel students would no longer have their rights violated on campus and publicly apologized to our clients. Two weeks ago, LDB urged Brooklyn College President Karen Gould to speak out more forcefully against troubling anti-Semitic activity and free speech issues at Brooklyn College.

LDB opened its law student chapter at CUNY Law School last February, in response to several troubling anti-Semitic incidents on CUNY campuses. The CUNY LDB law student chapter is part of a network of [17 LDB law student chapters](#) spanning the country, from the East Coast to the West Coast to its most recent expansion to the [Pacific Northwest](#). LDB law student chapters can help combat anti-Semitism on their campuses and in their regions, as well as host educational programs on a variety of topics related to using legal tools to combat anti-Semitism and civil rights; international human rights law; anti-terror law; and more. LDB CUNY law students initially notified LDB attorneys about the anti-Semitism associated with the Million Student March, and signed on to the letter to the administration.

Marcus added, “We are pleased with Hunter’s statement condemning anti-Semitism, but administrators must be aware that releasing a statement is not enough.” LDB has urged CUNY to follow other [Best Practices](#), such as closely monitoring campus hate organizations, as students affiliated with these groups have a pattern of causing trouble for Jewish and Israeli students on their campuses; firmly applying sanctions; and providing outreach to the targeted groups.

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About The Louis D. Brandeis Center: The Louis D. Brandeis Center, Inc., or LDB, is an independent, nonprofit organization established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all. The Brandeis Center conducts research, education, and advocacy to combat the resurgence of anti-Semitism on college and university campuses. It is not affiliated with the Massachusetts University, the Kentucky law school, or any of the other institutions that share the name and honor the memory of the late U.S. Supreme Court justice. For more information, contact Michelle Yabes at [myabes@brandeiscenter.com](mailto:myabes@brandeiscenter.com), or find us at [our website](#).