

COLUMBIA TARGETS CATHOLIC STUDENTS

*Columbia has a problem with Jewish **and** Catholic students.*

April 16, 2025

Ms. Claire Shipman
Acting President
Columbia University
Office of the President
202 Low Library, 535 W. 116 St., MC 4309
New York, New York 10027

Dear Acting President Shipman:

As president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, I was disturbed to read of an anti-Catholic incident that took place at Columbia. The victim is Daniel Di Martino, Ph.D. candidate in Economics. The victimizer is Columbia University.

Mr. Di Martino was summoned to appear before "investigators" from the Office of Institutional Equity because of his professed belief in Catholic teachings. He was told that by posting on social media comments such as, "God does not teach us that we can change our gender," he was engaging in "conduct that could be considered discriminatory harassment." He was also told that what he did could be interpreted as "creating a hostile environment."

It would be more accurate to say that Columbia is creating a "hostile environment" for Catholic students. Indeed, most practicing Jewish, Muslim and Protestant students would agree with Di Martino's post.

It must also be said that there is a profound difference

between conduct, such as taking over a campus building and stopping Jewish students from going to class—this is not protected under the First Amendment—and speech that in no way threatens public order (this is protected by the First Amendment).

Columbia boasts that it promotes “Inclusion & Belonging,” saying they “are essential elements of a welcoming campus. At Columbia, all members of the community—students, faculty and staff—are expected to participate in creating a culture of inclusion.”

That culture of inclusion was violated when staff members created a “hostile environment” for Daniel Di Martino, and others like him. To be specific, interrogating Catholics for publicly supporting their religion creates a “chilling effect” on their speech. Therefore, I respectfully ask that this incident be investigated by agents from outside the Columbia community.

I noticed that in the “Inclusion & Belonging” section under “University Life” that it lists support for students who are Arab and Palestinian, Asian and Asian American, Black, Jewish, Latinx/e/a/o, LGBTQIA+, Muslim, Native American and Indigenous, and People with Disabilities. Why is there no support for Catholic students at Columbia? There is obviously a need.

In 2002, Columbia President Lee Bollinger personally apologized to me after a bigoted incident on campus. It involved an obscene anti-Catholic stunt committed by a band announcer at a football game against Fordham. This is more serious—it gets to the issue of thought control. Please take the necessary steps to rectify this problem.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

cc: Laura Kirschstein, Vice Provost for the Office of
Institutional Equity

Daniel Di Martino

Erin Mersino, Esq., Thomas More Law Center

Linda McMahon, U.S. Secretary of Education