



CATHOLIC LEAGUE

*For Religious
and
Civil Rights*

May 22, 2017

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Chancellor James B. Milliken
City University of New York
Office of the Chancellor
205 E. 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017

Dear Chancellor Milliken:

On June 1, Linda Sarsour is scheduled to be the commencement speaker at the CUNY School of Public Health graduation. I stand with my Jewish brothers and sisters by respectfully urging you to withdraw the invitation.

The primary purpose of higher education is the pursuit of truth. For Americans, there is one foundational truth that towers over all others: our inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Those who find this goal objectionable are welcome to their view, but they should never be given a prestigious platform to advance their politics. That would certainly include Linda Sarsour.

Sarsour is a proponent of totalitarianism. Her preference is not fascism or communism—it is Sharia law. For example, on February 18, 2015, she went on TV to complain about state bans of Sharia law. It is no wonder that Muslim civil rights advocate Hirsi Ali says, "She is a defender of Sharia law." Ali adds that there is "no principle that demeans, degrades, and dehumanizes women more than the principle of Sharia law."

In real life, what Ali said underestimates the horror of Sharia law. Just a few weeks ago, on May 1, a news story reported on the fate of a Muslim turned atheist. "A Saudi Arabian man who renounced Islam and made disparaging remarks about the prophet Muhammad has been sentenced to death." The nation that did the sentencing is Saudi Arabia, a showcase of Sharia law.

On May 17, AP reported that "An Islamic Shariah court in Indonesia...has sentenced two gay men to public caning for the first time." The men, 20 and 23, "would each be subjected to 85 lashes for having sexual relations."

This is what Sarsour defends, and she does so with passion. She cannot logically object to killing atheists and beating gays and at the same time defend Sharia law: Sharia authorized the violence.

One of Sarsour's heroes is Rasmea Yousef Odeh; they recently appeared together at a public event. Odeh is a convicted terrorist. She spent ten years in an Israeli prison for her role in two terrorist bombings; two students were killed in one of the bombings while shopping for groceries. When she was released, she managed to become a U.S. citizen, though she did so on false grounds: it was later shown that she lied to American officials about her past.

Sarsour has no mercy on her critics, especially if they are women. For example, two of her most vocal critics are Brigitte Gabriel and Hirsi Ali. Sarsour said she would like to cut out their vaginas.

On March 8, 2011, Sarsour tweeted the following: "Brigitte Gabriel = Ayaan Hirsi Ali. She's asking 4 an a\$\$ whippin'. I wish I could take their vaginas away—they don't deserve to be women."

Sarsour calls herself a feminist though she vigorously defends Sharia law which treats women like dirt. Moreover, her idea of women's rights does not extend to Jewish women who defend Israel or Catholic women who are pro-life.

In January, Sarsour was one of four women who coordinated the Women's March on Washington. When asked if there was room for women who support Israel, she said, "There can't be in feminism." When asked if pro-life women could march—many of whom are Catholic—she said, "If you want to come to the march you are coming with the

understanding that you respect a woman's right to choose." She made good on her pledge: all pro-life units were banned.

There are many patriotic Americans who are justly offended by Sarsour. As a veteran, I do not take kindly to those who say the U.S. was founded on genocide and slavery, especially when those making the accusation are proponents of Sharia law. Yet that is exactly what Sarsour said in her tweet of August 21, 2015 to Senator Ted Cruz. She also said the would-be underwear bomber was a CIA agent.

Ayman El-Mohandes, the dean of the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, defends the invitation to Sarsour on free speech grounds. He says "a diversity of viewpoints and an open exchange of ideas is at the heart of our country's strength, and our university's strength."

Higher education, as I said, is about the pursuit of truth; it is not about advancing a "diversity of viewpoints." That is why those who believe in a flat earth are not given prestigious platforms: there are some ideas that are settled, and they are settled because they are grounded in truth.

One of the "self-evident truths" that Americans agree on is the pursuit of liberty. Those who promote totalitarianism obviously think this basic tenet of the American Creed is wrong. They are entitled to voice their position, but this is not the issue. The issue is honoring someone who defends modern-day slavery and gives succor to terrorists.

Please reconsider the invitation to Linda Sarsour.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "William A. Donohue". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" being the most prominent part.

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President