

May 23, 2024

Dr. Minouche Shafik
President
Columbia University
202 Low Library
535 West 116 Street
MC 4309
New York, NY 10027

Dear President Shafik:

I write to urge you to refund Columbia students for the thousands of dollars of tuition and fees they paid Columbia University while you allowed lawless, pro-Hamas rioters to stop your institution from fulfilling its most basic obligation: providing a quality education.

As you know, on April 17, 2024, protestors established encampments in South Lawn, at the center of Columbia's campus, to "stand in solidarity" with Hamas, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. Your administration initially responded prudently, requesting the New York Police Department (NYPD) to disband encampments and establish peace. Yet, the moment you faced criticism from left-wing activists, you reversed course, refusing to request further assistance from NYPD as protestors returned to campus.

The situation at Columbia predictably devolved into chaos. Riots ensued, and so did violent and antisemitic behavior, which threatened the safety of hundreds of students and robbed countless others of the education they paid for. Mobs harassed Jewish students and shouted racial slurs. One rioter pointed toward Jewish students while holding a sign that read "Al-Qasam's (sic) next targets," effectively calling on Hamas' military wing to attack these students for their race and religion. Other rioters shouted "Hamas we love you. We support your rockets, too." These violent acts were met with hollow condemnations, offers by your administration to "negotiate," and requests for protestors to voluntarily disband.

It wasn't until rioters stormed and occupied Columbia's Hamilton Hall on April 30th—nearly two weeks after you allowed protestors to re-occupy Columbia's campus—that you finally invited NYPD to respond and clear the rioters. Yet, by this time, safety threats on campus had become so severe that you were forced to cancel Columbia's undergraduate commencement ceremony and cancel in-person final exams.

These preventable atrocities not only made Columbia University a hotbed for antisemitic activity, they deprived thousands of students, who did not participate in illegal rioting, the quality education they had paid for. It is no secret that a Columbia education is costly. Even in an era of skyrocketing educational costs, your university's \$68,400 price tag—per year—for

undergraduate tuition and fees places it squarely on the list of the most expensive colleges in the nation.

Yet, despite Columbia's extraordinary expenses, your failure to respond to illegal rioters caused many Columbia undergraduates to miss three weeks of in-person education. You canceled in-person classes and programming on April 23rd, urged professors to cancel final exams the second week of May, and canceled Columbia's undergraduate commencement ceremony on May 15th, citing safety concerns. Considering these interruptions, I urge you not to compound damage by forcing those students who did not partake in these shameful protests that espouse terrorist views, to pay for the three weeks of education your university failed to provide. Instead, you should issue a partial refund to account for students' lost opportunity to attend classes and participate in other vital educational activities. Columbia's spring academic semester lasts approximately sixteen weeks, excluding spring recess. Basic calculations suggest a \$6,400 per student refund would offset for a three-week interruption in Columbia's services. Of course, students should only be eligible for such a refund if they did not participate in the protests that led your campus to shut down.

Unfortunately, no actions will undo the damage Columbia students incurred when your administration failed to prevent terrorist sympathizers from wresting control of your campus. However, you still have an opportunity to ensure that students, at the very least, are not forced to pay for educational services they never received.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', is centered below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator