

Out of respect for those who have already signed this letter, PLEASE DO NOT ALTER THIS LETTER IN ANY WAY. IF YOU WISH TO SIGN IT, PLEASE ADD YOUR NAME AT THE BOTTOM OF THE TEXT.

April 6, 2014

Dear President Lawrence,

We are writing to urge you to rescind immediately the invitation to Ms. Ayaan Hirsi Ali for an honorary doctorate, a decision about which we are shocked and dismayed, owing to her virulently anti-Muslim public statements.

We further urge you to reinstitute the past practice of a faculty committee that vets potential honorary degree recipients. Such a committee would surely have warned you about the horrible message that this sends to the Muslim and non-Muslim communities at Brandeis and beyond.

A few of many examples will suffice. David Cohen quotes Ms. Hirsi Ali as saying: "Violence is inherent in Islam – it's a destructive, nihilistic cult of death. It legitimates murder. The police may foil plots and freeze bank accounts in the short term, but the battle against terrorism will ultimately be lost unless we realise that it's not just with extremist elements within Islam, but the ideology of Islam itself....Islam is the new fascism" (London *Evening Standard*, 2-7-07). Rogier van Bakel quotes her as follows: "Jews should be proselytizing about a God that you can quarrel with. Catholics should be proselytizing about a God who is love....Those are lovely concepts of God. They can't compare to the fire-breathing Allah who inspires jihadism and totalitarianism." Van Bakel notes religions' ability to bring about change for good: "Do you think Islam could bring about similar social and political changes?" Ms. Hirsi Ali responds, "Only if Islam is defeated." Van Bakel asks, "Don't you mean defeating *radical* Islam?" To that she responds, "No. Islam, period." (*Reason*, 11-07)

We are filled with shame at the suggestion that the above-quoted sentiments express Brandeis's values.

The University bestows honorary degrees, in part, to “identify the University with the values expressed through the work and accomplishments of the honoree” and “draw positive attention to the University as an institution that respects and encourages such values and the manner in which those values are expressed.”

We are saddened that Brandeis would choose to honor such a divisive individual at commencement, a moment of unity for the Brandeis community. Her presence threatens to bring unnecessary controversy to an event that should rightly be about celebrating Brandeis' graduates and their families.

Please know that, like Ms. Hirsi Ali, we fully recognize the harm of forced marriages; of female genital cutting, which can cause, among other public health problems, increased maternal and infant mortality; and of honor killings. These phenomena are not, however, exclusive to Islam.

The selection of Ms. Hirsi Ali further suggests to the public that violence toward girls and women is particular to Islam or the Two-Thirds World, thereby obscuring such violence in our midst among non-Muslims, including on our own campus. It also obscures the hard work on the ground by committed Muslim feminist and other progressive Muslim activists and scholars, who find support for gender and other equality within the Muslim tradition and are effective at achieving it. We cannot accept Ms. Hirsi Ali's triumphalist narrative of western civilization, rooted in a core belief of the cultural backwardness of non-western peoples.

We call upon you to act immediately and to select another individual who is deserving of an honorary degree from Brandeis, someone who truly meets the standards and upholds the values of this university.

Sincerely,

1. Karen Hansen, SOC, WGS
2. Dian Fox, ROMS, WGS
3. Daniel Bergstresser, IBS
4. James Mandrell, ROMS
5. ChaeRan Freeze, NEJS, WGS
6. Bernadette J. Brooten, NEJS, WGS, PRS, CLAS, SQS
7. Mary Baine Campbell, ENG, COML; Assoc. Faculty WGS
8. Jytte Klausen, POL
9. Aliyyah I. Abdur-Rahman, ENG, AAAS, Affil. WGS
10. H. Michael Coiner, ECON
11. Nader Habibi, ECON, CROWN, IBS
12. Sue Lanser, COML, ENG, WGS, MACH, Affil. HOID, ROMS
13. Gary Jefferson, ECON, IBS
14. Catherine L. Mann, IBS, ECON
15. Ulka Anjaria, ENG, SAS
16. Jens Hilscher, IBS
17. David Powelstock, GRALL, COML, HOID
18. Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, CLAS, ANTH, FA, Italian Studies, WGS
19. Jane Kamensky, HIST, WGS
20. Harry Mairson, CS
21. Sarah Lamb, ANTH, WGS, HSSP, SAS, PRS
22. Mitra Shavarini, WGS, SOC
23. Ellen Schattschneider, ANTH, WGS, PRS, EAS, IGS
24. Wendy Cadge, SOC, WGS, PRS
25. Marion Smiley, PHIL, WGS
26. Richard J. Parmentier, ANTH, GS
27. Eric Chasalow, MUS, FTIM
28. Guy Antebi, NEJS
29. Laura J. Miller, SOC
30. Bulbul Chakraborty, PHYS
31. Javier Urcid, ANTH
32. Elizabeth Brainerd, ECON, WGS, IBS

33. Janet McIntosh, ANTH, AAAS
34. Caren Irr, ENG, FTIM, ENVIS
35. Jordan Pollack, Computer Science
36. Sabine von Mering, GRALL, WMGS
37. Jonathan Anjaria, ANTH, SAS
38. Dawn Skorczewski, ENG
39. Adrianne Krstansky, THA
40. Chad Williams, AAAS
41. Govind Sreenivasan, HIST
42. Jane Hale, ROMS
43. Peter Conrad, SOC, HSSP
44. Rasha Azoni-Hannigan
45. Joseph Lombard, NEJS, IMES, HOID, PRS
46. Gordon Fellman, SOC, PAX, IMES, Ethics Center
47. Leslie Zebrowitz, PSYC
48. David Cunningham, SOC, SJSP, Affil. HS
49. Paul Monsky, MATH
50. Edward K. Kaplan, ROMS, PRS, Affil. NEJS
51. Matthew Fraleigh, GRALL, COML, EAS
52. Ellen Kellman, NEJS
53. Paul Morrison, ENG
54. Jennifer Cleary, THA
55. Carl El-Tobgui, NEJS, IMES
56. George Ross, Hillquit Professor Emeritus, Soc, Pol, Global Studies
57. Debarshi Nandy, IBS
58. Robert Sekuler, PSYC, NEUR
59. Sara Shostak, SOC, HSSP
60. Harleen Singh, GRALL, WGS, SAS
61. Donald Hindley, POL, EAS, LALS
62. Kanan Makiya, NEJS, Crown Center
63. Ana Villalobos, SOC
64. Thomas King, ENG, SQS, WGS
65. Paul Jankowski, History

66. Gregory L. Freeze, History, IGS
67. Lenny Muellner, Classical Studies
68. Matthew Headrick, PHYS
69. Aparna Baskaran, PHYS
70. Albion Lawrence, PHYS
71. John Wardle, PHYS
72. Gabriella Sciolla, PHYS
73. Raymond Knight, PSYC
74. Sophia Malamud, Linguistics, COSI
75. David H. Roberts, PHYS
76. Christine M. Thomas, CHEM
77. Allan Keiler, MUS
78. Marya Levenson, Education Studies
79. Kelley Ready, SID
80. Nina (Cornelia) Kammerer, Heller PhD Program
81. Robert Meyer, PHYS, emeritus
82. Wellington Nyangoni, AAAS
83. Talinn Grigor, FA, SAS, GS
84. David Sherman, ENG
85. Richard Gaskins, AMST, LGLS
86. David Karjala, NEJS, IMES
87. Patricia A. Johnston, Classical Studies