



February 10, 2023

Dear President Jenkins, Provost McGreevy, Dean Appleby, Dean Mustillo, and Professor Carbonaro:

It has come to the attention of the American Sociological Association (ASA) that Tamara Kay, Professor of global affairs and sociology in the Keogh School of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame, has been facing harassment and threats related to her scholarly work on reproductive health.

As you seek to navigate this situation and meet your responsibility to support and protect your faculty, we encourage you to engage the values articulated in ASA's statement "[Communicating Across Difference: Free and Responsible Speech](#)" which says:

Attacks on the speech of students, faculty, and visitors on college campuses have a long history. Not only are such attacks continuing, but social media has generated a climate in which campaigns of intimidation can be organized quickly and easily and the current political climate seems to have released the reins of restraint. Particularly troubling has been the disproportionate number of targets of intimidation campaigns who are scholars from historically marginalized populations, including people of color and members of the LGBTQ community.

The American Sociological Association takes public positions on issues that affect the intellectual and professional lives of sociologists and the production of sociological knowledge. Attacks on speech and speakers fundamentally jeopardize the intellectual heart of sociology and, in several cases, the wellbeing of sociologists. Therefore, ASA affirms the critical value of speech rights, irrespective of whether some might object to the content of the speech. ASA condemns, in the strongest possible terms, efforts intended to threaten, harass, and silence those exercising their speech rights.

Freedom to speak is reflected in the first amendment to our constitution and remains one of our core American values. Such freedom is particularly salient in the academic context. The very nature of the educational work we do on campuses—generating and disseminating knowledge—is predicated upon the assurance that our institutions of higher education serve as strong and safe forums for the free exchange of ideas. Importantly, we recognize that speech rights come with responsibilities. Pursuit of understanding and truth cannot happen without responsible debate, deliberation, and dialogue.

If Notre Dame faculty are unable to rely on their administration to recognize, affirm, and fight for their academic freedom, irrespective of content, it will quickly become clear to top scholars—especially women and scholars from underrepresented groups—that Notre Dame is not a viable place of employment.

Sociologists study some of the most pressing and divisive social issues of the day and often engage in related public advocacy based on their expertise. This is especially true for sociologists working in schools of public policy for whom it is expected that policy implications will be drawn from their scholarship. Certainly all scholars appreciate that debate about public issues must be informed by relevant expertise, and it is the role of universities to ensure that such expertise is valued, disseminated, and protected.

It is appalling that people threaten the fundamental safety of scholars who share the results of their research in public forums. While we recognize that institutions of higher education do not have the power to stop this from happening, academic institutions can and should defend academic freedom and take all steps possible to protect their faculty from these appalling actions. This is an ethical imperative. If leaders of our academic institutions fail to exert true leadership when their faculty are under attack, the fundamental value of academic freedom will become aspirational rather than enacted and serious scholars will seek other places to work where they can engage with ideas with integrity.

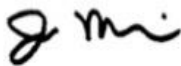
Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

The Executive Committee of the American Sociological Association



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President



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