



GSOC-UAW LOCAL 2110

MAKING A BETTER NYU SINCE 1998

The Union for Graduate Employees at New York University

The Graduate Student Union of NYU expresses its support and solidarity with two academics at the University of Michigan, [John Cheney-Lippold](#) and [Lucy Peterson](#), who have refused to write letters of recommendations in accordance with their commitment to BDS. As a result, these scholars and educators are being harassed, accused of professional misconduct, and institutionally penalized by their university.

Having [resolved](#) in 2016 to endorse the movement to Boycott, Divest and Sanction Israel for its ongoing colonization of the Palestinian people, we firmly support Cheney-Lippold and Peterson's right to deny letters of recommendation for students who wish to study in Israel. As letters of recommendation are personal endorsements, academics always have the right to reject students' request for letters, especially on political and principled grounds.

Cheney-Lippold and Peterson are being expected to put their politics aside. Not only is this impossible, it is antithetical to education. These faculty's refusal to endorse study abroad programs in the Apartheid state of Israel recognizes that their students' requests were *already* political. The faculty were then faced with a choice between affirming or abstaining from participation in the normalization of Apartheid. As educators our role is to cultivate and provoke critical and independent thinking, and hope that it leads to principled choices and action. Cheney-Lippold and Peterson have led by example, taking a stand as educators and as principled individuals.

Emboldened by a strong alliance with the Trump Administration, Israel has expanded its use of lethal force against the unarmed Palestinian demonstrations of the Great March of Return, killing [at least 205 protestors](#) and wounding and maiming [more than 18,000](#) since March. In the United States, campaigns against anti-racist, feminist, and socialist scholars have become all too familiar. As [a letter](#) from scholars in the American academy has pointed out: "[Betsy] DeVos and [Kenneth] Marcus have made it clear that the current US administration will ignore principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech in order to repress all criticism of Israeli state policies."

It is incumbent upon anyone who opposes racism, colonialism, mass incarceration, and nationalism to support the Palestinian people's struggle for life, dignity, and freedom. This requires adhering to the Palestinian civil society's call to Boycott, Divest and Sanction Israel until their [demands](#) for freedom, justice and equality are met. It also means that we stand in solidarity with our educator colleagues when their principled actions are met with false accusations and the threat of disciplinary action by their universities.

We urge the University of Michigan to stand behind their employees, and support Lippold-Cheney and Peterson's right to refuse to participate in the normalization of Israeli colonialism and Apartheid. We also renew our own call for New York University to end its study abroad programs in Israel, and on our

colleagues, advisors and students to adhere to the BDS guidelines, that we may soon see an end to the occupation and a free Palestine.

Yours in Solidarity,
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