LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Responses to "A Word from… Abigail Thompson"

Thank you to all those who have written letters to the editor about "A Word from… Abigail Thompson" in the December 2019 *Notices*. I appreciate your sharing your thoughts on this important topic with the community. This section contains letters received through December 31, 2019, posted in the order in which they were received. We are no longer updating this page with letters in response to "A Word from… Abigail Thompson."

—Erica Flapan, Editor in Chief

Re: Letter by Abigail Thompson

Dear Editor,

I am writing regarding the article in Vol. 66, No. 11, of the *Notices of the AMS*, written by Abigail Thompson. As a mathematics professor, I am very concerned about ensuring that the intellectual community of mathematicians is focused on rigor and rational thought. I believe that discrimination is antithetical to this ideal: to paraphrase the Greek geometer, there is no royal road to mathematics, because before matters of pure reason, we are all on an equal footing. In my own pursuit of this goal, I work to mentor mathematics students from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds, including volunteering to help tutor students at other institutions. Their success, despite their non-traditional backgrounds, is a great confirmation of my belief that great mathematicians can come from anywhere, and that we must help those whose histories have left them at a disadvantage compared to more stereotypical mathematics students.

I am nonetheless in complete agreement with Dr. Thompson that demands for ideological conformity are just as antithetical to the ideal of reason to which we mathematicians strive. We must remain free to hold our own ideologies, as well as to debate policies and methods for implementing those ideologies. This includes allowing professors of mathematics to debate how best to ensure that our community can be fair, open, and welcoming to people of all backgrounds, and not requiring that everyone subscribe to the same ideas without question. Thompson is correct to say that the UC system's policies are troubling. I am grateful for her letter.

Sincerely,
Blake Winter
Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Medaille College

(Received November 20, 2019)

Letter to the Editor

I am writing in support of Abigail Thompson's opinion piece (AMS *Notices*, 66(2019), 1778–1779). We should all be grateful to her for such a thoughtful argument against mandatory "Diversity Statements" for job applicants. As she so eloquently stated, "The idea of using a political test as a screen for job applicants should send a shiver down our collective spine." It is especially pleasing to find her article grounded in the history of a similar incident and so generous to those who feel differently.

In addition, I thank Erica Flapan for publishing this article. Avoiding troubling issues is always the easiest path. It is good to see the *Notices* willing to explore controversial topics that are of great importance to the mathematical community and to academia in general.

Well done!

—George E. Andrews
Past President, American Mathematical Society

(Received November 21, 2019)

Abby Thompson's opinion piece

To the editor:

I applaud your running Thompson's piece about the 'diversity criterion' in hiring.

I am not yet sure of my position on this matter: I can see several ways of looking at the issue. But I find Thompson's essay thought provoking and well reasoned, and it will contribute to my understanding of the issue.

**We invite readers to submit letters to the editor at* `notices-letters@ams.org`.

I know that certain segments of academia will disagree with Thompson's view. That is not at issue. I know too that certain segments will disapprove of Thompson's opinion being aired in the *Notices*. I write to let you know that my feeling is otherwise. Whatever one's opinion about the 'diversity statement' issue, it is important to hear reasonably argued opinions other than one's own.

Is there a need to balance Thompson's piece with an 'equal and opposite' piece? Not necessarily, unless such a piece contributes in the same way to the discussion. It is enough to call the question, as Thompson does.

I thank you for keeping the *Notices* fresh and useful in the field.

—Mark Saul, PhD
Executive Director, Julia Robinson Mathematics Festival
A program of the American Institute of Mathematics

(Received November 21, 2019)

Letter About Abby Thompson

To the editor:

I applaud Professor Abby Thompson's principled stand against mandated diversity statements (AMS *Notices*, 66(2019), 1778–1779), and I also want to congratulate the *Notices* for publishing her opinion piece. *Loyalty Oath Redux*, in the form of mandated diversity statements, will not advance the cause of either higher education or social justice.

—H. Wu
Professor Emeritus of Mathematics
University of California at Berkeley

(Received November 22, 2019)

Abigail Thompson's piece in the December *Notices*

Dear editor,

I am appalled and greatly disappointed by the AMS's decision to publish Abigail Thompson's piece in the December *Notices*. You have greatly damaged the respectability and credibility of the entire AMS by bestowing its imprimatur on a piece whose main argument is flat-out fear mongering, by building a false equivalency between certain debatable hiring practices and McCarthyism.

To make matters worse, the apology offered on the AMS' twitter by the *Notices*' Editor-in-chief reveals a deep lack of understanding of both the issue at hand and the responsibilities of her position. The issue is not that "[the] piece could be interpreted as representing the views of our professional society," but rather that by choosing to publish it, the *Notices* (and the AMS at large) is effectively endorsing if not its content, at the very least its tactics.

Of course the *Notices* should be a forum for discussion of all sorts of issues that affect us as mathematicians, but said discussions ought to be conducted in a professional manner. I expect the *Notices* to NOT give a platform to ad hominem attacks and other similar logical fallacies often used to mask the lack of substantive arguments. Thompson's essay does not pass this simple test, as it is very much centered on an attention-grabbing comparison that many people will find obscene instead of reasoning and facts that would support the author's point.

I expect the AMS to take responsibility for the misguided decisions that allowed this to happen, and also take the opportunity to improve the editorial practices at the *Notices*.

Respectfully,
Alejandro Chávez-Domínguez
Assistant Professor
Department of Mathematics
College of Arts & Sciences
The University of Oklahoma

(Received November 22, 2019)

The math community values a commitment to diversity

We are a group of concerned mathematicians writing in response to AMS Vice President Abigail Thompson's editorial, invited by the AMS for publication in the December 2019 edition of the *Notices*. In this editorial, Dr. Thompson states her personal opinion against the mandated use of faculty diversity statements in hiring decisions and compares such requirements to McCarthyist loyalty oaths.

We are all members of many mathematical societies, including the American Mathematical Society. Some of us serve on committees in these societies or are chairs of committees in these societies. Some of us are or have been chairs of departments, some of us are or have been chairs of search committees, and some of us have written or reviewed diversity statements as part of search processes. We have all thought deeply about the role of diversity statements and related tools, such as student success statements.

We are compelled to write because the AMS leadership's actions have harmed the mathematics community, particularly mathematicians from marginalized backgrounds. We are writing because we support diversity statements as one tool to encourage a more inclusive and equitable mathematics profession. We are writing because we wish to correct the misleading impressions readers might have of such statements from Thompson's editorial: Thompson's opinion does not represent the opinions of many other members of the mathematics community. We are writing because not everyone is in a position to raise their voice. We are writing because it matters how our community and its leaders talk about diversity, especially in our profession's most prominent publication. We are writing because we are disappointed by the editorial decision to publish the piece which contradicts the AMS's commitment to diversity affirmed in its own diversity statement (`www.ams.org/diversity`). Clearly, this is something that people needed

to talk about, but the AMS has chosen to spark this conversation by giving its imprimatur to a piece that undermines productive discussion and causes real danger and burden to the marginalized members of our community.

Diversity statements are widely used in academic hiring as one component to assess candidates' qualifications for the job. Each statement one requires as part of a hiring process—research, teaching, mentoring, service, or diversity—helps paint a picture of how a candidate will contribute to the work of an institution. Increased use of diversity statements reflects a growing recognition in higher education that faculty contribute in positive ways to the campus community by acknowledging, appreciating, and collaborating with groups of students, staff, and fellow faculty who are diverse along varied axes. In acknowledgment that this is part of the work of a faculty member and of the hiring process, we recommend that graduate programs explicitly prepare their graduates to contribute to this work and to write and talk about it meaningfully, and we commend the programs already undertaking this work.

There are plenty of legitimate questions about how to use diversity statements effectively and how (more broadly) to create diverse and supportive faculties. In order to reduce bias in the evaluation of candidates, hiring committees evaluate statements according to criteria that indicate evidence of these important contributions, grounded in the missions of higher education in general and their institution in particular. Asking for and evaluating diversity statements are not quick solutions to the complex challenge of justice and inclusion in higher education, but they can help hiring committees to evaluate candidates' skills in doing this portion of our professional work.

Diversity statements help assess a candidate's ability to effectively teach a diverse group of students. If our goal as mathematicians and educators is truly to reach as many students as possible, thinking about diversity and inclusion is necessary. Good teaching is necessarily inclusive. If we willfully ignore an important area of pedagogy that demonstrably helps more students succeed in math, then we will continue to reproduce systems of inequity, and we will do a great disservice to our students. We will therefore not be effective teachers.

Suggesting that actively attempting to include more students in mathematics is equivalent to the Red Scare is ignorant (about both history and the present) and dangerous. Claims of "reverse racism," which equate critiquing privilege with oppressing the privileged, have a long and unsavory history in and beyond higher education. Without understanding the history in which these discussions are rooted, it is possible to profess support for the ideal of equality while acting in ways that lead to exclusion and inequity.

While Dr. Thompson attempts to spin this issue with partisan wording, diversity statements are a small yet necessary step towards creating a more equitable and inclusive community. Higher education in the US is shifting; student populations we serve are changing, and our understanding of how to better serve all students is advancing. We need a rehumanization of mathematics that can affirm students' cultural funds of knowledge while examining and combating its own roles in supporting power structures. We need leadership at all levels, from professional societies to presidents, boards, deans, and chairs, to recognize this reality, advocate for students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds, and move us forward.

Dr. Thompson's preface that the letter is her "personal opinion" does not alleviate our concerns, nor does the fact that she seems to be referring primarily to the use of these documents at the UC system. The fact remains that the *Notices* made an editorial decision to give Thompson's essay a national (indeed, international) platform, and in a prominent position within the publication. *Notices* is a publication of the AMS, and Dr. Thompson is identified as an AMS officer in her byline. According to *Notices* editor Erica Flapan, Dr. Thompson's position in the AMS leadership led the AMS to solicit her letter. These contextual details send a message to the profession about how diversity is viewed by those with power and responsibility in the AMS and a major university department. The AMS and *Notices* bear responsibility for amplifying views that fly in the face of research-based practices and that falsely equate evidence-based approaches to teaching and professional practice with the blacklisting of people based on political ideology, all in direct contradiction of the AMS's stated commitment to diversity.

AMS's own diversity statement claims, "The American Mathematical Society is committed to promoting and facilitating equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the mathematical sciences... We reaffirm the pledge in the AMS Mission Statement to 'advance the status of the profession of mathematics, encouraging and facilitating full participation of all individuals,' and urge all members to conduct their professional activities with this goal in mind." While merely publishing Dr. Thompson's letter demonstrates the AMS's lack of commitment to this statement, the fact that it was written by and credited to an officer of the AMS raises even more serious questions about the statement's sincerity.

We strongly disagree with the sentiments and arguments in Dr. Thompson's editorial, and we hope that the AMS will reconsider the way that it uses its power and position in the mathematics communities in these kinds of discussions. However, we primarily write this letter to our fellow mathematicians and students of all kinds who might have wondered if inclusion work is valued in our community. **We want students and faculty, especially those with multiple identities that are minoritized in mathematics, to know that many mathematicians see this inclusion work as integral to our community and identity.**

Signed,
Aaron Kaestner, North Park University
Aaron Weinberg, Ithaca College
Abba Gumel, Arizona State University
Abeer Hasan, Humboldt State University
Adam Avilez, Mesa Community College
Adam Castillo, Florida International University
Aditya P. Adiredja, The University of Arizona
Adriana Salerno, Bates College
Ahsan Chowdhury, Virginia Tech
Aida Alibek, University of Illinois at Chicago
Aisha Mechery, Bryn Mawr College
Ajeet Gary, New York University
Alejandra Rincón Hidalgo, ICTP
Alexander Diaz-Lopez, Villanova University
Alexander Halperin, Salisbury University
Alexander Hoover, Assistant Professor, University of Akron
Alexander Rasmussen, Yale University
Alexander S. Moore, Virginia Tech
Alexandra Newlon, Colgate University
Alexis Byers, Youngstown State University
Alice Mark, Vanderbilt University
Alice Nadeau, Cornell University
Alicia Prieto Langarica, Youngstown State University
Alison Lynch, California State University, Monterey Bay
Alison Marr, Southwestern University
Alissa Crans, Loyola Marymount University
Aliza Steurer, Dominican University
Allison Henrich, Seattle University
Amanda Hattaway, Wentworth Institute of Technology
Amanda Knecht, Villanova University
Amanda Ruiz, University of San Diego
Amber Rosin, Cal Poly Pomona
Amber Verser, Bowling Green State University
Ami Radunskaya, Pomona College, Claremont
Amie Wilkinson, University of Chicago
Amy Beth Prager, NCWIT
Amy Ellis, University of Georgia
Amy Ksir, United States Naval Academy
Amy Parrott, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Amy Velchoff, Texas State University
Amy Wehe, Fitchburg State University
Amzi Jeffs, University of Washington graduate program
Ana Caraiani, Imperial College London
Ana Rita Pires, University of Edinburgh
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Andrea Arauza Rivera, California State University, East Bay
Andrea Heald, University of Washington
Andrea Young, Ripon College
Andres Mejia, University of Pennsylvania
Andrés R. Vindas Meléndez, University of Kentucky
Andrew Bernoff, Harvey Mudd College
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Angie Hodge, Northern Arizona University
Anil Venkatesh, Adelphi University
Anila Yadavalli, University of Minnesota
Anita O'Mellan, Youngstown State University
Ann Clifton, Cedar Crest College
Anna Haensch, Duquesne University
Anne Catlla, Wofford College
Anne M. Ho, University of Tennessee
Anschel Schaffer-Cohen, University of Pennsylvania
Anthony Bonato, Ryerson University
Anton Dochtermann, Texas State University
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Aram Dermenjian, York University
Areeba Ikram, Colorado School of Mines
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Ben Blum-Smith, The New School
Ben Ford, Sonoma State University
Benjamin Braun, University of Kentucky
Benjamin Coté, Western Oregon University
Benjamin Dickman, The Hewitt School (NY)
Benjamin Gaines, Iona College
Benjamin Levitt, Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program
Berit Givens, Cal Poly Pomona
Bianca Viray, University of Washington
Bill Rosenthal, CUNY (retired)
Blake Farman, Lafayette College
Bradley Elliott, Emory University
Brandy S Wiegers, Central Washington University
Breeanne Swart, The Citadel
Bret Benesh, College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University
Brian Birgen, Wartburg College
Brian L. Walter, The Evergreen State College
Brian Lindaman, California State University, Chico
Brian P. Katz, Smith College
Brittany Stephenson, Lewis University
Brittney Miller, Coe College
Brooke Shipley, University of Illinois at Chicago
Bruce Reznick, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Bruce Yoshiwara, Los Angeles Pierce College, retired
Caglar Uyanik, Yale University
Caitlin Beecham, Georgia Institute of Technology
Calvin Jongsma, Dordt University
Cameron Byerley, University of Georgia
Cameron D Hill, Wesleyan University
Carla Cederbaum, University of Tübingen, Germany
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Carrie Muir, Whatcom Community College
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Christina Eubanks-Turner, Loyola Marymount University
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Christopher Miles, Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences (NYU)
Christopher Natoli, CUNY
Christopher Perez, University of Illinois at Chicago
Christopher R. Lee, University of Portland
Christopher Yakes, Salem State University
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Dagan Karp, Harvey Mudd College
Dana C. Ernst, Northern Arizona University
Daniel Freeman, St Louis University
Daniel Groves, University of Illinois at Chicago
Daniel Pollack, University of Washington
Daniel Reinholz, San Diego State University
Danielle Champney, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
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Dany Waller, Morehead State University
Darren Glass, Gettysburg College
Dave Jensen, University of Kentucky
Dave Kung, St. Mary's College of Maryland
David Brown, Ithaca College
David Clark, GVSU
David desJardins, MIT Corporation
David Dynerman, Chan-Zuckerberg Biohub
David Freund, Harvard University
David Futer, Temple University
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Devlin Mallory, University of Michigan
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Diana Thomas, United States Military Academy
Diane Henderson, Penn State University
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Dominic Canzanese, Villanova University
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Douglas Norton, Villanova University
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Dustin Ross, San Francisco State University
Dylan Poulsen, Washington College
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Eileen Murray, Montclair State University
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Elisa Celis, Yale University
Eliza Gallagher, Clemson University
Elizabeth Beer, IDA/Center for Computing Sciences
Elizabeth Gross, University of Hawai'i at Manoa
Elizabeth Kersey, University of Northern Colorado
Elizabeth Munch, Michigan State University
Elizabeth Niese, Marshall University
Elizabeth Thoren, Pepperdine University
Ellen Gasparovic, Union College
Ellen Goldstein, Boston College
Ellen Veomett, Saint Mary's College of California
Emek Kose, St. Mary's College of Maryland
Emerald Stacy, Washington College
Emilie Hancock, Central Washington University
Emilie Wiesner, Ithaca College
Emily Braley, Harvard University
Emily Cilli-Turner, University of La Verne
Emily Clader, San Francisco State University
Emily Olson, Millikin University
Emily Riehl, Johns Hopkins University
Emily Winn, Brown University
Emma Gargroetzi, Stanford University
Eric "Rico" Gutstein, University of Illinois at Chicago
Eric Eager, Pro Football Focus
Eric Kuennen, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Erica R. Miller, Virginia Commonwealth University
Erica Shannon, Pierce College
Erika Roldan, The Ohio State University
Erin Angelini, University of Washington
Erin Meger, Ryerson University
Erin R. Moss, Millersville University (PA)
Erin Wolf Chambers, Saint Louis University
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Ernesto D. Calleros, UC San Diego & San Diego State University
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Federico Ardila, San Francisco State University
Feng Zhu, University of Michigan
Francis Su, Harvey Mudd College
Frank A. Farris, Santa Clara University
Frederick Peck, University of Montana
Fumiko Futamura, Southwestern University
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Gabriel Sosa Castillo, Colgate University

Gabriela Hamerlinck, University of Florida
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Gail Tang, University of La Verne
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Gloria Mari Beffa, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Gulden Karakok, University of Northern Colorado
Hanna Bennett, University of Michigan
Hannah Highlander, University of Portland
Hassan Rafique, The University of Iowa
Hayley Milbourne, University of San Diego
Heather Zinn Brooks, UCLA
Henry Adams, Colorado State University
Hillary Einziger, University of Cincinnati
Holly Swisher, Oregon State University
Hong Qin, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
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Iian Smythe, Rutgers University
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Jaco Stroebel, University of Pretoria
Jacqueline A Hall, Longwood University (Ret)
Jacqueline Coomes, Eastern Washington University
Jacqueline Jensen-Vallin, Lamar University
James Álvarez, The University of Texas at Arlington
James Conway, UC Berkeley
James Sheldon, University of Arizona
Jan Cameron, Vassar College
Janice Sklensky, Wheaton College
Janine Wittwer, Westminster College (UT)
Japheth Wood, Bard College
Jared Holshouser, University of South Alabama
Jasmine Foo, University of Minnesota
Jason E. Miller, California State University Channel Islands
Jasper Weinburd, Harvey Mudd College
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Jennifer Bowen, The College of Wooster
Jennifer Danae Berg, Fitchburg State University
Jennifer Kenkel, University of Kentucky
Jennifer Schaefer, Dickinson College
Jennifer V. Jones, Fairleigh Dickinson University
Jenny Switkes, Cal Poly Pomona
Jeremy F Alm, Lamar University
Jeremy F. Strayer, Middle Tennessee State University
Jess Ellis Hagman, Colorado State University
Jessalyn Bolkema, Harvey Mudd College
Jessica Deshler, West Virginia University
Jessica M. Libertini, Virginia Military Institute
Jessie Oehrlein, Columbia University
Jianzhong Su, University of Texas at Arlington
Jieun Seong, Georgia Institute of Technology
Jill Bigley Dunham, Chapman University
Jill Shahverdian, Quinnipiac University
Jim Hartman, The College of Wooster
Jo Hardin, Pomona College
Joanna Wares, University of Richmond
Jodi McWhirter, Washington University in St. Louis
Joe Moeller, University of California, Riverside
Johanna Franklin, Hofstra University
John F. Gibson, University of New Hampshire
John Golden, Grand Valley State University
John H. Johnson Jr., The Ohio State University
John Meier, Lafayette College
John Nardini, NC State University
John Rock, Cal Poly Pomona
John Ross, Southwestern University
John Zobitz, Augsburg University
Johnny Guzman, Brown University
Jonas D'Andrea, Westminster College (UT)
Jonathan Alcaraz, UC Riverside
Jonathan Beardsley, Georgia Institute of Technology
Jonathan Dunbar, St. Norbert College
Jonathan J. White, Coe College
Jonathan K. Hodge, Grand Valley State University
Jordan Kostiuk, Brown University
Joseph E. Hibdon, Jr., Northeastern Illinois University
Josh Laison, Willamette University
Joshua Batson, Chan Zuckerberg Biohub
Joshua Cooper, University of South Carolina
Joshua Holden, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
Joshua Mundinger, University of Chicago
Joshua Wiscons, California State University, Sacramento
Juan B. Gutierrez, University of Texas at San Antonio
Juan Villeta-Garcia, Emory University
Juanita Pinzón-Caicedo, MPIM/ University of Notre Dame
Julia Webster, University of North Carolina Asheville
Julian F Fleron, Westfield State University
Julianne Vega, University of Kentucky
Julie Rana, Lawrence University
Julie Seitz, Youngstown State University
Julie Theoret, Northern Vermont University
Julien Paupert, Arizona State University
Justin Dong, Brown University
Justin Lanier, Georgia Institute of Technology
Justin R. Peters, Iowa State University
Justin Troyka, York University
K G Valente, Colgate University
Kameryn Williams, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Kamuela Yong, University of Hawaii - West Oahu
Karen Clark, The College of New Jersey
Karen Thomas, Edgewood College
Karoline Pershell, Association for Women in Mathematics
Kate Owens, College of Charleston
Kate Poirier, City University of New York - NYCCT
Katherine Kinnaird, Smith College
Kathi Crow, Salem State University
Kathryn Leonard, Occidental College
Kathryn Link, University of Utah
Kathryn Van Etten, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Katie Ansaldi, Wabash College
Katrin Wehrheim, UC Berkeley
Katrina Morgan, Northwestern University
Katrina Piatek-Jimenez, Central Michigan University
Kay Kirkpatrick, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Kayden Mimmack, University of California, Davis
Kayla Gibson, University of Iowa
Keith M Jones, SUNY Oneonta
Keivan Hassani Monfared, AMS member
Kelly Black, University of Georgia
Kelly Bubp, Ohio University
Kelly MacArthur, University of Utah
Kenan İnce, Westminster College (UT)
Kimberly A. Roth, Juniata College
Kisun Lee, Georgia Tech
Klaus Volpert, Villanova University
Komal Agrawal, University of Georgia
Krista Bresock, West Virginia University
Kristin Kuter, Saint Mary's College (IN)
Ksenija Simic-Muller, Pacific Lutheran University
Kyle Besing, Kentucky Wesleyan College
Kyle Ferendo, Brown University
Kyle Petersen, DePaul University
Lateefah Id-Deen, Kennesaw State University
Laura Lopez Cruz, CUNY Graduate Center
Lee Worden, UCSF
Leonardo Javier Rodriguez Gutierrez, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Lewis Sloter, College of Central Florida
Lily Khadjavi, Loyola Marymount University
Lindsey Bosko-Dunbar, St Norbert College
Lior Pachter, California Institute of Technology
Lisa Bromberg, Springfield College
Lisa DeMeyer, Central Michigan University
Lisa Marano, West Chester University
Lola Thompson, Oberlin College
Lori Ziegelmeier, Macalester College
Lorraine Franco, Gwinnett County Public Schools
Lou Matthews, UrbanTeachers
Luiza Coelho, California Institute of Technology
M. Drew LaMar, William & Mary
Maarten McKubre-Jordens, University of Canterbury
Maddie Schroth-Glanz, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Madeline Brandt, University of California, Berkeley
Maeve L. McCarthy, Murray State University
Maia Averett, Mills College
Makeda Brome, Math Educator
Malena Espanol, Arizona State University
Marcella Gomez, University of California, Santa Cruz
Marco V. Martinez, North Central College
Margaret Morrow, SUNY Plattsburgh
Maria Basterra, University of New Hampshire
María Cumplido, Heriot-Watt University
Maria G Martinez, Arizona State University
Mariah Birgen, Wartburg College
Marianne Korten, Kansas State University
Marie Snipes, Kenyon College
Mario Banuelos, California State University, Fresno
Marissa Kawehi Loving, Georgia Tech
Mark Beering, El Sausal Middle School
Mark Branson, Stevenson University
Mark Daniel Ward, Purdue University
Mark W. Ellis, CSU Fullerton
Marko Budisic, Clarkson University
Marla Williams, University of Nebraska
Marta Civil, University of Arizona
Martha Byrne, Sonoma State University
Martha Precup, Washington University in St. Louis
Martha Shott, Sonoma State University
Mary D. Shepherd, Northwest Missouri State University
Mary E. Pilgrim, San Diego State University
Mary K. Arthur, Washington State University
Mary K. Porter, Saint Mary's College (IN)
Matilde Lalin, University of Montreal, Canada
Matilde Marcolli, Caltech, University of Toronto, and Perimeter Institute
Matt Davis, Muskingum University
Matthew Ando, University of Illinois
Matthew Cathey, Wofford College
Matthew Dahlgren, University of Michigan
Matthew G. Jones, California State University Dominguez Hills
Matthew K Voigt, University of California San Diego
Matthew Salomone, Bridgewater State University
Matthias Beck, San Francisco State University
Matthias Kawski, Arizona State University
Max Lahn, University of Michigan
Megan Breit-Goodwin, Anoka-Ramsey Community College
Megan Cream, Lehigh University
Megan E. Sawyer, Southern New Hampshire University
Megan Selbach-Allen, Stanford University
Melanie Brown, Champlain College
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Melissa Sutherland, SUNY Geneseo
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Letter to the Editor

To the American Mathematical Society:

We write with grave concerns about recent attempts to intimidate a voice within our mathematical community. Abigail Thompson published an opinion piece in the December issue of the *Notices of the American Mathematical Society* (`https://www.ams.org/journals/notices/201911/rnoti-p1778.pdf`). She explained her support for efforts within our community to further diversity, and then described her concerns with the rigid rubrics (`https://ofew.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/rubric_to_assess_candidate_contributions_to_diversity_equity_and_inclusion.pdf`) used to evaluate diversity statements in the hiring processes of the University of California system.

The reaction to the article has been swift and vehement. An article posted at the site QSIDE (`https://qsideinstitute.org/2019/11/19/diversity-statements-in-hiring-the-american-mathematical-society-and-uc-davis`) urges faculty to direct their students not to attend the University of California-Davis, where Prof. Thompson is chair of the math department. It recommends contacting the university to question whether Prof. Thompson is fit to be chair. And it recommends refusing to do work for the *Notices of the American Mathematical Society* for allowing this piece to be published.

Regardless of where anyone stands on the issue of whether diversity statements are a fair or effective means to further diversity aims, we should agree that this attempt to silence opinions is damaging to the profession. This is a direct attempt to destroy Thompson's career and to punish her department. It is an attempt to intimidate the AMS into publishing only articles that hew to a very specific point of view. If we allow ourselves to be intimidated into avoiding discussion of how best to achieve diversity, we undermine our attempts to achieve it.

We the undersigned urge the American Mathematical Society to stand by the principle that important issues should be openly discussed in a respectful manner, and to make a clear statement that bullying and intimidation have no place in our community.

Signed,
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Baruch Meerson, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Rick Mehta, Former Professor, Acadia University, Canada
Moo Mele, University of Delhi
Anton Mellit, University of Vienna
Paul Melvin, Bryn Mawr College
William W Menasco, University at Buffalo-SUNY
Dean Menezes, UCLA
Loïc Merel, IMJ-PRG Université de Paris

William Messing, School of Mathematics University of Minnesota
Ina Mette
David A. Meyer, UC San Diego
Nicholas Meyer, University of Nebraska — Lincoln
Juan Migliore, University of Notre Dame
Michael Mihalik, Professor of Mathematics, Vanderbilt University
Claudia Miller, Syracuse University
Steven J Miller, Williams College
Willard Miller, University of Minnesota
Chris Miller, Ohio State University
Kenneth C Millett, University of California, Santa Barbara
Michael Mills, Psychology Department, Loyola Marymount University
Jan Minac, Western University
Guido Mislin, Professor Emeritus ETH Zürich
Dorina Mitrea, Baylor University
Boris Mityagin, Professor Emeritus, AMS Fellow; Ohio State University
Boughalem Mohammed, PhD student university Regensburg
Aydin Mohseni
Monica Montano, Case Western Reserve University
Richard Montgomery, UC Santa Cruz, distinguished professor
Warren S. Moore, III, Newberry College
John Morgan, Professor Emeritus, Columbia University
Prof. Yoav Moriah, Dept of Math, Technion Israel
Da'Shawn M. Morris, American Soldier
Evan D. Morris, Prof. Radiology and Biomedical Imaging, Biomedical Engineering, Pyschiatry, Yale University
Henri Moscovici, Ohio State University
Jean-Christophe Mourrat, Courant Institute, New York University
Tomasz S. Mrowka, MIT
Sujoy Mukherjee, The Ohio State University
David Mumford, Emeritus Professor, Harvard and Brown Universities
Julien Murzi, University of Salzburg
Alexander Nabutovsky, Professor of Mathematics, University of Toronto
Bruno Nachtergaele, University of California, Davis
Ramin Naimi, Occidental College
Fedor Nazarov, Kent State University
Nikita Nekrasov, Simons Center for Geometry and Physics, Stony Brook University
Yury Neretin, Pauli Institute, Vienna; Moscow State University
Walter Neumann, Barnard College, Columbia University
Andre Neves, University of Chicago
Eran Nevo, Hebrew University
Nicholas Nguyen, University of Kentucky
Dr. Ngoc Nguyen, Western Kentucky University
Yi Ni, California Institute of Technology
Dennis Nieman
Arjun Nigam
Barbara Nimershiem, Franklin & Marshall College
Leonard J. Nissim, Fordham University (retired)
João Nogueira, University of Coimbra
Emily Norton, TU Kaiserslautern
Jonathan Novak, UC San Diego
Dmitry Novikov, Weizmann Institute of Science
Alexei Novikov, Penn State University
Alan J. Nussbaum, Cornell University
Kevin O'Bryant, CUNY Staten Island and The Graduate Center
Serge Ochanine, University of Kentucky
Crichton Ogle, Ohio State University
Kasso A Okoudjou, UMD/MIT
Andrei Okounkov, Columbia University
Michael Olinick, Middlebury College
Ebenezer de Oliveira, Ohio State University
John Oprea, Professor Emeritus, Cleveland State University
Matthew Osborne, Ohio State University
Victor Ostrik, University of Oregon
Valentin Ovsienko, CNRS, France
Nicholas Owad, Colby College
Peter Ozsvath, Princeton University
Peter Y. Paik, Yonsei University
George Pappas, Michigan State University
Ziho Park, University of Chicago
Jason Parsley, Wake Forest University
Ori Parzanchevski, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Yekaterina Pavlova, Palomar College
Natasa Pavlovic, University of Texas at Austin
Casey Perin, University of California, Irvine
Peter Perry, University of Kentucky
Laura J. Person, State University of New York-Potsdam
Timothy Perutz, UT Austin
Yakov Pesin, Penn State University
Jonathon Peterson, Purdue University
Ina Petkova, Dartmouth College
Yehuda Pinchover, Technion – Israel Institute of Technology
Ross G. Pinsky, Department of Mathematics, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology
Daria Poliakova, Copenhagen University
Carl Pomerance, Dartmouth College Emeritus
Wai Yan Pong, CSU Dominguez Hills
Sorin Popa, UCLA
Serguei Popov, University of Campinas
Erik Postma, Maplesoft
Benedikt Pötscher, University of Vienna
Leonid Potyagailo, University of Lille, France
Filip Pramenković, Univerza na Primorskem
Adam Prenosil, Department of Mathematics, Vanderbilt University
Kenneth Price, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Marina Prokhorova, Technion - Israel Institute of Technology
Jozef H. Przytycki, George Washington University
Elbridge Gerry Puckett, Full Professor, Department of Mathematics, UC Davis
Joshua Pughe-Sanford, Georgia Tech
Jonathan Pyle
You Qi, University of Virginia
Stephen Quilley, SERS, University of Waterloo
Maksym Radziwill, Caltech
Shawn Rafalski, Fairfield University
Surjeet Rajendran
Zoi Rapti, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Alexander Rashkovskii, University of Stavangervanger
Sarah Dean Rasmussen, University of Cambridge
Jacob Rasmussen, Cambridge
John Ratcliffe, Department of Mathematics, Vanderbilt University
Animesh Ray, Professor, Keck Graduate Institute
Margaret A. Readdy, University of Kentucky
Robert Redfield

Charles Reichhardt, Los Alamos National Laboratory
Alan Reid, Rice University
Ben Reid, Lander University
Hanna Reisler, Professor of Chemistry, USC
Kui Ren, Columbia University/University of Texas at Austin
Nicolai Reshetikhin, University of California, Berkeley
Vladimir Retakh, Rutgers University
Ilya Reviakine, University of Washington - Seattle
Lev Reyzin, Department of Mathematics (MSCS), University of Illinois at Chicago
Brendon Rhoades, UC San Diego
Henry Ricardo, City University of New York (Retired)
Donald Richards, Penn State University
Tom Richmond, Western Kentucky University
Bastian Rieck, ETH Zurich
Hans Riess, University of Pennsylvania
Timothy Riley, Cornell University
Igor Rivin, Temple University
Neil Robertson, Emeritus Professor, Ohio State University
Altha Rodin, University of Texas at Austin
Gregory Rodin, Oden Institute, University of Texas at Austin
Federico Rodriguez Hertz, Penn State
Casey Rodriguez, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Claude Roger, Pr Emeritus, Université de Lyon
Dan Romik, UC Davis
Jason Rosenhouse, James Madison University
Joachim Rosenthal, University of Zurich
Hugo Rossi, Mathematics, University of Utah
Paolo Rossi, Università degli Studi di Padova
Raphael Rouquier, UCLA
Colin Rourke, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, University of Warwick
Lev Rozansky, Professor, Department of Mathematics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Daniel Ruberman, Brandeis University
Volodya Rubtsov, Université d'Angers (France)
Mark Rudelson, University of Michigan
Lee Rudolph, Clark University
Andrey Rukhin
David B Rush
Lorenzo Sadun, University of Texas at Austin
Gershon Sageev, UB math. dept.
Abhishek Saha, Reader in Mathematics at Queen Mary University of London
Masahico Saito, USF
Yiannis Sakellaridis, Johns Hopkins University
Michael Saks, Rutgers University
Andrew Salmon, MIT
Philip Carl Salzman, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, McGill University
Wendy Sandler, University of Haifa
Mark Sapir, Vanderbilt University
Martin Scharlemann, University of California at Santa Barbara
B. Schaum, USF
Michael Schein, Bar-Ilan University
Hal Schenck, Department of Mathematics, Auburn University
Wilfried Schmid, Harvard University
Ulrike Schneider, TU Vienna
Jennifer Schultens, UC-Davis
Peter Schumer, Middlebury College
Richard Schwartz, Chancellor's Professor of Mathematics, Brown University
Albert Schwarz, UC Davis, emeritus, AMS Fellow
Peter Scott, University of Michigan
Zlil Sela, Hebrew University
Marjorie Senechal, Smith College
Ambar Sengupta, University of Connecticut
Illya Serdyuk
Vera Serganova, UC Berkeley
Brigitte Servatius, WPI
Cheri Shakiban, University of St. Thomas
Xuancheng Shao, University of Kentucky
Uri Shapira
Daniel Shapiro, Ohio State University
Dmitry Shemetov, UCDavis Graduate Student
Zhongwei Shen, University of Kentucky
Vivek Shende, UC Berkeley
Malcolm Sherman, UAlbany, SUNY
Theodore James Sherman, Professor of English, Middle Tennessee State University
Mikhail Shifman, University of Minnesota
Evgeny Shinder, University of Sheffield
Aleksander Shmakov, University of Georgia
Tatiana Shubin, San Jose State University
Adam Sikora, SUNY Buffalo
Daniel Silver, University of South Alabama
Jim Simons, Simons Foundation
Howard Skogman, SUNY Brockport
Theodore Slaman, University of California Berkeley
Nat Smale, Math Department, University of Utah
Stephen Smale, math (emeritus) Univ of Calif. Berkeley
Roxana Smarandache
David C. Smith, Williams College
Michael Smith, UC Berkeley
Bert Frank Smits
Matthew Snyder
Sergey I Sobolev, retired
Mikhail Sodin, Tel Aviv University
Houshang H. Sohrab, Towson University
Sara A. Solla, Northwestern University
Jake Solomon, Hebrew University
Ronald Solomon, Professor Emeritus, Ohio State University
Jack Sonn, Professor Emeritus, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology
Jenya Soprunova, Kent State University
Alexander Soshnikov, UC Davis Mathematics Department
Kannan Soundararajan, Stanford University
Steven Sperber, University of Minnesota, School of Mathematics
Andrew Staats
Gigliola Staffilani, MIT
Joseph Stahl, UC Berkeley
Alina Stancu, Concordia University
Michael Stay, CTO, Pyrofex Corp.
Joseph Steinberg, University of Toronto
Ronald J. Stern, Prof and Dean Emeritus UC Irvine
Thomas Strohmer, University of California, Davis
Walter Stromquist, Bryn Mawr College
Professor Jeffrey Stuart, Pacific Lutheran University
Benny Sudakov, Professor, ETH Zurich
John Sullivan, AMS Fellow, TU Berlin

Mikael Sundqvist, Lund University, Sweden
Frank Swenton, Middlebury College
Sergei Tabachnikov, Penn State
Thibaud Taillefumier, UT Austin
Ramin Takloo-Bighash, University of Illinois at Chicago
David Talcott, The King's College (NY)
Julie Tannenbaum, Pomona College
Terence Tao, UCLA
Clifford Henry Taubes, Department of Mathematics, Harvard University
Laurence R. Taylor, University of Notre Dame
Scott Taylor, Colby College
Michael Temkin, Chair, Department of Mathematics, Hebrew University
Ivo Terek, Ohio State University
Morwen Thistlethwaite, University of Tennessee-Knoxville
Lola Thompson, Max Planck Institute and Oberlin College
Frank J. Tipler, Professor of Mathematics, Tulane University
Antonino Travia, student at the University of South Florida
Lisa Traynor, Bryn Mawr College
Nancy S True, Professor Emerita, UC Davis
Bena Tshishiku, Brown University
Anastasiia Tsvietkova, Rutgers University, Newark
Henry Tucker, UC Riverside
Alexander Tumanov, Professor, University of Illinois
Alexander Turbiner, AMS member and APS Fellow, National University of Mexico
Victor Turchin, Kansas State University
Ilya Tyomkin, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Nikos Tzirakis University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
John Urschel, MIT
Alek Vainshtein, University of Haifa
Ravi Vakil, Stanford University
Lou van den Dries, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana
Allan van Hulst, Max Planck Institute, the Netherlands
Donald Vandegrift, The College of New Jersey
Yakov Varshavsky, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Monica Vazirani, UC Davis
Daniel Velleman, emeritus, Amherst College
J. David Velleman, Department of Philosophy, NYU
Akshay Venkatesh, Institute for Advanced Study
Oleg Viro, Stony Brook University
Misha Vishik, Department of Mathematics, The University of Texas at Austin
Angelo Vistoli, Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy
David A. Vogan, Jr. Dept of Mathematics, MIT
Vladislav Vysotsky, University of Sussex
Rebecca Wahl, Butler University
Bronislaw Wajnryb, Rzeszow University of Technology, Poland
Kevin Walker, MSQ
Lynne H Walling, University of Bristol (Fellow of the AMS)
Yi Wang, SUNY Buffalo
Zhenghan Wang, Microsoft Station Q and UCSB math
Rachel Ward, UT Austin
Michael S. Waterman, University of Southern California
Paul Wedrich, MPIM
Shmuel Weinberger, University of Chicago
Steven H. Weintraub, Lehigh University
Aaron Weiss, mekaz lev acadamy
Benjamin Weiss, Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem
Hans Wenzl, UC San Diego
Brian White, Stanford University
Steven R. White, MD, University of Chicago
Susan G. Williams, University of South Alabama
Elizabeth Wilmer, Oberlin College
Peter Winkler, Dartmouth College / National Museum of Mathematics
Jeff Witmer, Oberlin College
Curt Wittig, Professor of Chemistry, USC
Gershon Wolansky, Technion, Haifa Israel
Helen Wong, Claremont McKenna College
Mark R. Woodard, Furman University
Hung-Hsi Wu, Univ. of Cal., Berkeley
Jared Wunsch, Northwestern University
Abraham Wyner, UPenn
Eugene Z. Xia, National Cheng Kung University
Dongbin Xiu, Ohio State University
Sergei Yakovenko, Weizmann Institute of Science
Michael Yampolsky, University of Toronto
Deane Yang, New York University
Irina Yaroshevskaya, PhD in Computer Science
Eylem Zeliha Yildiz, Harvard University
Alexander Yong, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Amanda Young, TU Munich
Elena Yudovina, PhD, C.H. Robinson
Svetoslav Zahariev, City University of New York
Labib Zakaria, Undergraduate Student at Oregon State University
Yuri Zarhin, Pennsylvania State University
Vladimir Zbarsky
Ng Ze-An, London School of Economics
Steven Zegas, concerned citizen
Anton Zeitlin, Louisiana State University
Ofer Zeitouni, Weizmann Institute
Shaul Zemel, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
Andrew Zeng
Chao Zhang, University of Southern California
Mengyuan Zhang, UC Berkeley
Yilong Zhang, Ohio State University
Zhenghe Zhang, UC Riverside
Vadim Zharnitsky, University of Illinois
Zvi Ziegler, Technion, Haifa, Israel
Ludmil Zikatanov, Penn State
Gordan Zitkovic, The University of Texas at Austin
Nahum Zobin, College of William and Mary
Alex Zupan, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Artem Zvavitch, Kent State University
Peter Zvengrowski, Professor Emeritus, University of Calgary

A Response to "A Word From…" in the December 2019 Issue of the AMS *Notices*

There is a false equivalence underlying the entire argument behind Abigail Thompson's essay in the December 2019 issue of the AMS *Notices*. Thompson draws a comparison between the loyalty oaths of the 1950s in the University of California system on one hand, and the diversity statements that are currently required by applicants for positions in that same system on the other. Loyalty oaths were an insidious outgrowth of the Red Scare that gripped the nation

at the outset of the Cold War. Public figures like US Senator Joseph McCarthy and California State Senator Jack B. Tenney[1] were capitalizing on the allure of fascist political techniques during an era when citizens had well-founded fears of nuclear war. Their tacit goal was to sow fear of the "other" in order to maintain their own power. The explicit goal of diversity statements is to promote equity in the workplace, in higher education, and in the marketplace of ideas. I fail to see how these are comparable.

Thompson also misrepresents how the rubrics for evaluating the diversity statements are to be applied. Here is what the Berkeley Office for Faculty Equity and Welfare says:

> Consider creating a cut-off score for advancing equity and inclusion, below which a candidate would not move forward in the search process (would be considered below the bar), regardless of their scores in other areas, similar to what would be done for research quality or plans. For example, if 5 points are given for various components of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., understanding 5 points, track record 5 points, and plans 5 points), assign a value below which a candidate would not be considered competitive and would not move forward regardless of their scores in other areas (e.g., any single 0 or 1 out of 5 would disqualify a candidate from further consideration). Set a high bar.[2]

These are stated as recommendations, and it is left to the faculty to decide how important equity and inclusion are to their department. Thompson's approach is to appeal to emotion, and presents no evidence that this is having a negative impact on any actual mathematics department's hiring practices.[3] The AMS editors have failed the membership by publishing a prominent essay by an esteemed officer whose arguments are fallacious and scientifically ill-founded.

Additionally, Thompson asserts, "Politics are a reflection of how you believe society should be organized." No, politics is the exercise of power in service to an ideology. Individual and institutional values are a reflection of how you believe society should be organized. The University of California is displaying its institutional values by requiring a commitment to diversity. It has the authority to promote this vision by recommending that each department utilize a policy of inclusion and equity in their hiring practices. Thompson has opted to politicize this issue by exercising her power in her capacities as chair of the UC Davis mathematics department and Vice President of the AMS.[4]

Racist and sexist policies—both written and unwritten—are obstacles for many Americans who would like to seek higher education and opportunity. This is documented fact, not politics. Professors who are mindful of this fact will present an antiracist and antisexist face for the University of California system. Values, not politics. The UC system is taking an active role in addressing these facts and promoting these values. In doing so, they continue to uphold Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun's words: "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently."[5]

This opinion is my own, and may not represent that of my employer.

—Dr. Xander Faber
IDA/Center for Computing Sciences

(Received November 25, 2019)

In Response to Prof. Abigail Thompson

Dear Sir/Madam,

Abigail Thompson's article which appears in the December 2019 issue of the *Notices of the American Mathematical Society* deserves a thorough airing.

I disagree, very strongly, with, in my view, its very limited sense of the scale and scope of the mathematics community and its conflation of the use of diversity statements in some hiring practices for mathematics jobs with McCarthyism.

I recognize that the AMS has worked and continues to work assiduously to address the issue of underrepresentation. However, the evidence, much of it documented and disseminated by the AMS, makes very clear that the actual outcomes, the results, i.e. are we as a community demonstrably more diverse than we were ten years ago, indicate that much work still needs to be done in order for us to be truly a community of equity and excellence.

In a deep sense, this essay, from a Vice President of the AMS, even though Prof. Thompson makes clear that she speaks for herself and not for the Society the article's tagline prominently identifies her as a Vice President of the AMS, makes a compelling argument for the need for diversity statements in hiring.

For context, consider the following questions: how many tenured African American professors of mathematics are there in the UC system? Closer to my home, how many

[1] *Senator Tenney repeatedly introduced legislation requiring loyalty oaths, which ultimately forced the hand of the President of the UC system.*

[2] *Read Part 1 of the Candidate Evaluation tab at* https://ofew.berkeley.edu/recruitment/contributions-diversity/support-faculty-search-committees.

[3] *By contrast, UC Berkeley has produced an extensive report that documents the effect of hiring with a diversity focus in mind:* https://ofew.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/searching_for_a_diverse_faculty-_data-driven_recommendations.pdf.

[4] *In the published article, the words "This essay contains my opinions as an individual" are jarringly juxtaposed with the heading "Abigail Thompson, a Vice President of the AMS" in larger blue font.*

[5] *Justice Blackmun wrote this while contemplating the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment during the 1978 case* Regents of the University of California v. Bakke.

African American assistant professors do we have on the tenure track in the entire CUNY system in mathematics?

At Medgar Evers College, where I have worked for almost twenty-five years, we have two, yes two, tenured mathematicians of African descent. The pace of change, when viewed from my vantage point is painfully slow. I note, for some perspective, that Black Americans have received just one (1) percent of the doctoral degrees in mathematics granted over the last decade.

How do we change this?

We must become a community that holds, as a priority, for the discipline of mathematics, the critical importance of increasing the number of African American and other mathematicians of color.

How do we do this?

It is evident that we must hire mathematicians who have demonstrated some evidence of their willingness to work on this challenge. I.e., if we are serious, our intent must be accompanied by some supporting infrastructure, an appropriate set of policies and practices aimed at achieving our desired ends. Therefore, requiring that applicants write some form of diversity statement is but a small piece of such an infrastructure. A diversity statement is simply an element of one's Teaching Philosophy. It is not a political identity.

I close by reiterating: research requires new ideas; new ideas come from new people. Excellence in mathematics is a function of diversity. We, the mathematical community, elide this truth at our peril.

Be well.

Terrence

—Terrence Blackman, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Mathematics
School of Science, Health & Technology
Medgar Evers College, CUNY

Visiting Professor
Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Member, Executive Council
The National Alliance for Doctoral Studies in the Mathematical Sciences
—Building a New American Community in the Mathematical and Statistical Sciences
https://www.mathalliance.org

(Received November 27, 2019)

Thank You (Article by A. Thompson)

Dear *Notices*,

Thank you for publishing the article by Prof. Thompson "A word from..." in the December issue. We read it with interest, as it brings readers' attention to a subject of universal (in our opinion) importance. It also demonstrates personal courage of the author and the editor, as the expressed viewpoint was likely to stir a controversy.

We are concerned about the online campaign against the *Notices* and personally Prof. Thompson, following the publication of her article. It is a sad irony that the reaction of Prof. Thompson's online opponents only adds value to her argument that our times share some common features with darker periods in history.

We strongly believe that boycotts and the "cancel culture" have no place in academia. They reinforce fear, shame, and self-censorship, and eventually hinder our ability to search for the truth. Finding an optimal balance between various approaches to improve functioning of the academic institutions, while respecting interests of different groups, as well as individual freedoms and non-mainstream opinions, is not an easy task. We view the article of Prof. Thompson as an important contribution to a civilized discussion on this topic.

Sincerely,

Iosif Polterovich
Université de Montréal

Leonid Polterovich
Tel Aviv University

(Received November 27, 2019)

Supporting Letter

Dear Erica,

I would like to express my gratitude for your courageous decision to publish the opinion article by Abigail Thompson in the recent issue of the *Notices*. And these feelings extend to all who supported you in this decision.

Free expression of opinion, which this article contains, is absolutely crucial in any policy making, and I find it very troubling that some people try to suppress debate by intimidation—something one would expect in a totalitarian regime and not in the USA.

I observed a triple irony in some reactions to Abigail's article.

1. The bullying and intimidating responses only make Abigail's analogy with McCarthyism so much more convincing.
2. The participants in the hounding campaign commit the very offences that they profess to be against, and do so in a much worse way.
3. The campaigners' loudest objection is to the very thing (the analogy with McCarthyism) they themselves are most guilty of.

You and Abigail have my full support and admiration.

With best wishes,
Mark Levi
Mathematics Department
Penn State University

(Received November 27, 2019)

Real and Fake Fight for Diversity

The heated debate in the US mathematical community that followed the publication of the article "A word from..." by Abigail Thompson in the December issue of the *Notices of the AMS* crossed the Atlantic. This short letter is an opinion of an individual from its other side. It is of course difficult to compare the systems and traditions of different countries, but such a comparison could still be useful, especially when the debate also crossed the boundaries of cordiality...

Hiring committees in France never ask candidates for diversity statements, but most of my colleagues (all that I know) participate in a number of different ways in the long fight for inclusion and diversity. There are many programs, such as "Math en Jeans," "Fête de la Science," etc. All of them popularize mathematics in high and elementary schools, one goal of these programs is precisely to attract students from a variety of backgrounds. People are happy to participate in these programs, there are always many volunteers. The administration also contributes. In particular, students pay nothing for their education, and they have a full social security cover. The scientific community vigilantly follows all the changes proposed by the administration and the government, and protests when some parts of this system are threatened.

A mandatory diversity statement in the hiring process does not seem to be an efficient way to improve the diversity. How can a hiring committee see the difference between sincere and "fake" diversity statements, written (or copied from the internet) by a desperate candidate? Isn't it more useful to work with the administration, sponsors, government?

Something tells me that people who do this real work are not the same who write the most compelling diversity statements, or organize a witch-hunt against Abigail Thompson. At least, it is clear that her article in the *Notices* is sincere, it contributes to the real fight for diversity. Respect your future colleagues, spare their energy, and invite them to participate in the real work to improve the diversity, rather than torture themselves with writing statements in stereotyped language!

—Valentin Ovsienko
CNRS Researcher, France

(Received November 28, 2019)

Letter to the Editor, *Notices AMS* on: Diversity

Dear editor,

In my opinion, diversity is an important social and academic value, the pursuit of which can also be an important means for academic excellence. One reason we need to pay special attention to diversity is that there are various mechanisms against it, which in and of themselves are harmful to academic life and excellence, such as dominance and, at times, even bullying by members of majority/power groups. On this and other issues, academic institutions have the right and duty to form academic policies and pursue them, and also the obligation to allow free debate about these policies.

If you feel uncomfortable about making a one-time statement about a policy you disagree with, and I can certainly understand this feeling, think about how uncomfortable it is to be a member of a minority group that cannot freely express her or his views, and who faces unjust judgment, and at times even hostility, on a regular basis.

—Gil Kalai
Hebrew University of Jerusalem and IDC, Herzliya

(Received November 28, 2019)

Letter to the *Notices of the AMS*

In an essay in the December 2019 issue of the *Notices*, Abigail Thompson describes the mandatory "Diversity Statement" (mDS) that mathematics job applicants to UC Schools must submit together with their regular applications. At some campuses, the mDS is evaluated, in various categories, according to a detailed list of criteria (called a "rubric").

If an applicant to Berkeley, for example, merely says that she advocates "mentoring, treating all students the same regardless of background", she merits a score of 1–2 out of a possible top score of 5 in the "track record for advancing diversity" category (see * below). Hiring committees (at UC Davis and Berkeley, in particular), are encouraged by the Administration to use the rubrics, establish a cutoff and eliminate candidates who score below the cutoff as a first step in the hiring process for all hires. In this way Diversity Statements diminish the value of mathematical achievement as the key element in securing a position at a UC Mathematics Department.

Mandatory Diversity Statements undermine Faculty Governance. Should the use of scored diversity statements become required as the first step in the hiring process, this opens the way for Administrators, who have no professional knowledge of mathematics, to exert primary control over the hiring of mathematicians. And indeed, testing the waters, small scale pilot programs have already been implemented at various UC schools requiring the first cut on hiring to be based on such scored diversity statements.

We applaud Abigail Thompson for her courageous leadership in bringing this issue to the attention of the broader Mathematics Community. As she says in her essay:

"Mathematics has made progress over the past decades towards becoming a more welcoming, inclusive discipline. We should continue to do all we can to reduce barriers to participation in this most beautiful of fields.... There are reasonable means to further this goal: encouraging students from all backgrounds to enter the mathematics pipeline, trying to ensure that talented mathematicians don't leave the profession, creating family-friendly policies, and supporting junior faculty at the beginning of their careers, for example."

We agree wholeheartedly with these sentiments. It is important to strive to hire faculty that will make the atmosphere more welcoming to all. It is also important to recognize and help reduce various difficulties still faced by underrepresented groups. But as Abigail says, there are mistakes to avoid: mDS's are one of them.

Finally, we commend the Editorial Board at the *Notices* for opening up the discussion on this very important matter.

Sincerely,
Adebisi Agboola, Michael Aizenman, Noga Alon, Ekaterina Amerik, Nalini Anantharaman, Michael Anderson, George Andrews, Scott Armstrong, James Arthur, Eric Babson, Viviane Baladi, Igor Belegradek, Iosif Bernstein, Roman Bezrukavnikov, Jean-Michel Bismut, Fedor Bogomolov, Lilliane Borcea, Alexei Borodin, Boris Botvinnik, Paul Bourgade, Brian Bowditch, Lewis Bowen, Martin Bridson, Robert Bryant, Inna Bumagina, Oliver Buhler, Leonid Bunimovich, Dimitri Burago, Sylvain Cappell, Erik Carlsson, Gunnar Carlsson, Mei-Chu Chang, Sun-Yung Alice Chang, Jeff Cheeger, Alexandre Chorin, Maria Chudnovsky, Christopher Connell, Alain Connes, Peter Constantin, Kevin Corlette, Christopher Croke, Carina Curto, Xianzhe Dai, Panagiota Daskalopoulus, Percy Deift, Camillo de Lellis, Laura DeMarco, Yakov Eliashberg, Michael Entov, Alexander Eremenko, Anna Erschler, Alex Eskin, Maria J. Esteban, John Ewing, Anna Felikson, Michael Freedman, Susan Friedlander, Eric Friedlander, Hillel Furstenberg, Denis Gaitsgory, Ross Geoghegan, Pierre Germain, Alexander Givental, Eleftherios Gkioulekas, James Glimm, William Goldman, Anton Gorodetski, Fan Chung Graham, Misha Gromov, Benedict Gross, Victor Guillemin, Sinan Gunturk, Matthew Gursky, Ursula Hamenstadt, Qing Han, Dennis Hejhal, Harald Andres Helfgott, Federico Rodriguez Hertz, Helmut Hofer, Elizabeth Its, Alexander Its, Henryk Iwaniec, David Jerison, Svetlana Jitomirskaya, Vaughan F.R. Jones, Vadim Kaimanovich, Ilya Kapovitch, Michael Kapovitch, Svetlana Katok, Jerry Kazdan, David Kazhdan, Thomas Koberda, Carlos Kenig, Olga Kharlampovich, Robion Kirby, Sergiu Klainerman, Abel Klein, Bruce Kleiner, Alexander Kleshchev, Robert Kohn, Janos Kollar, Alex Kontorovich, Maxim Kontsevich, Irwin Kra, Peter Kuchment, Gregory Lawler, H. Blaine Lawson, Claude LeBrun, Francois Ledrappier, Mark Levi, Fanghua Lin, Nati Linial, Darren Long, John Lott, Zhiquin Lu, George Lusztig, Misha Lyubich, Jeremy MacDonald, Fedor Malikov, Eugenia Malinnikova, Leonid Makar-Limanov, Sonja Mapes, Peter May, Howard Masur, Barry Mazur, David McLaughlin, Michael McQuillen, William Menasco, Marie-Louise Michelson, John Millson, Vitali Milman, Yair Minsky, Mahan Mj, Sophie Morel, Richard Montgomery, John Morgan, Henri Moscovici, Thomasz Mrowka, Steven J. Miller, Werner Muller, David Mumford, Aaron Naber, Alex Nabutovsky, Tatiana Nagnibeda, Yury Neretin, Andre Neves, Charles Newman, Alexei Novikov, Hee Oh, Andrei Okunkov, Alexander Olshanskii, Jean-Pierre Otal, Janos Pach, Richard Palais, Dimitri Panov, Raman Parimala, Kirsi Peltonen, Robert Penner, Yakov Pesin, Stefanie Petermichl, Anthony Phillips, Leonid Polterovich, Mihnea Popa, Leonid Potyagailo, Cheryl Praeger, Elbridge Gerry Puckett, Alexander Razborov, Andre Resnikov, Vladimir Rokhlin, Dan Romik, Xiaochun Rong, Regina Rotman, Hyam Rubinstein, Laure Saint Raymond, Michael Saks, Mark Sapir, Peter Sarnak, Wilfried Schmid, Richard Schoen, Jennifer Schultens, Richard Schwartz, Zlil Sela, Vera Serganova, Sylvia Serfaty, Natasa Sesum, Peter Shalen, Julius Shaneson, Jalal Shatah, Steve Shkoller, Alexandra Shlapentokh, Carol Shubin, James Simons, Thomas Spencer, Jeffrey Streets, Catherine Sulem, Gigliola Staffilani, Daniel Stein, Ronald Stern, Daniel Stroock, Tatiana Suslina, Gabor Szekelyhidi, Sergei Tabachnikov, Leon Takhtajan, Clifford Taubes, Michael Taylor, Susanna Terracini, Chuu-Lian Terng, Craig Tracy, Yuri Tschinkel, Alek Vainshtein, S.R. Srinivsa Varadhan, Vlad Vicol, Dan-Virgil Voiculescu, Claire Voisin, Simone Warzel, Wei-Min Wang, Guofang Wei, Shmuel Weinberger, Benjamin Weiss, Brian White, Daniel Wise, Sergei Yakovenko, Paul Yang, Guoliang Yu, Yuri Zarhin, Efim Zelmanov, Zhimin Zhang, Ludmil Zikatanov

* If you insert the following into a google search, the first thing which comes up is a pdf with the rubric for Berkeley: rubric_to_assess_candidate_contributions_to_diversity_equity_and_inclusion-1.pdf

(Received December 5, 2019)

A Letter to the *Notices*

I applaud Abigail Thompson for her thought-provoking and brave essay (December 2019 *Notices*) arguing against mandatory diversity statements from academic job applicants. While we should undoubtedly try to reduce barriers to participation in mathematics, requiring diversity statements is a political litmus test that should have no place in any university that values truth and free expression.

In fact, as Dr. Thompson describes, the rubric used for grading these statements recommends a *low* score to any candidate who merely states they will treat students equally regardless of background; to get a high score on these statements one needs to describe activities "promoting different identity groups" and have a strong "interest in dimensions of diversity that result from different identities." Whatever one's position on promoting people based on the identity group they belong to (as opposed to treating them as individuals) or on the kind of intersectionalism alluded to above, it cannot be denied that this is a political/philosophical stand, and so this rubric necessarily excludes people who may not agree with this stand.

Incidentally, one of the oft-mentioned benefits of diversity is that one needs multiple viewpoints and perspectives to solve difficult problems. However, the term "identity" as used in the context of diversity statements is never interpreted to include political or philosophical identity. This means that the high-scoring applicants, who are therefore likely to get the job, are of a relatively homogeneous political bent, which ironically goes against the very essence of *viewpoint diversity* and negates the benefit mentioned above.

Sincerely,
Abhishek Saha
Queen Mary University of London

(Received December 6, 2019)

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my strong support for your decision to publish Abigail Thompson's piece in the December *Notices of the AMS*.

I am truly dismayed by the vitriolic attacks on her and the AMS for allowing an open exchange of opinions on an important and controversial topic. Please do not cave in to such pressure tactics. In standing up for Abigail's right to express her opinion, you will serve the best interests of your readers, of the AMS, and of academics at large.

Regards,
Victor Vianu
Professor of Computer Science
UC San Diego

(Received December 8, 2019)

Letter to the Editor

Dear AMS editor,

I was saddened to see the reaction from some of our colleagues to Prof. Thompson's opinion piece in the last edition. Though my opinion may differ from hers, I support her freedom to express her opinion publicly. The fact that there is disagreement should encourage us all to have an open and respectful discussion in our community of what are the best strategies to achieve a diverse community. The personal attacks that she has been confronted with are uncalled for. Let's remember that part of diversity is the freedom to have and express diverse opinions.

Regards,
Shachar Lovett
Associate Professor
Computer Science and Engineering
University of California, San Diego

(Received December 8, 2019)

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I was delighted to see the December *Notices of the AMS* publish Abigail Thompson's thoughtful article. I was equally shocked and disappointed to see the subsequent attacks on the AMS. The AMS *Notices* did what it is supposed to do: Promoted then open exchange of thoughtful opinions on an important and controversial topic. Please continue on your mission.

Regards,
Yannis Papakonstantinou
Professor of Computer Science and Engineering
UC San Diego

(Received December 10, 2019)

Letter in Relation to Abigail Thompson's Essay

Universities that want to value diversity are requiring diversity statements as a way to demonstrate this to the applicants. What can possibly go wrong with that? Unfortunately, an unintended and yet pervasive effect of the diversity statements in practice is the normalization and encouragement of the worst sexist/racist prejudices, the very thing they are supposed to fight.

The strongest open sexism I have ever felt in academia happened around diversity statements that we've been dealing with at UCs for over 10 years. People often list writing joint papers with women as their contributions to diversity, something that may have been akin to the "I am not a sexist" declaration in the 70s, but definitely has the opposite connotation at this time and age. Occasionally students even refer to their (prominent) female advisors in this regard! Worse yet, some job-seekers list their collaboration with female peers as contribution to diversity. Regardless of their intent, it definitely hurts the image of young women mentioned that way (as well as, of course, of women as a group) in the community's eyes.

At my university, we also have (not fully mandatory, so far) diversity statements for all our merit actions, happening roughly once every three years. Some faculty do the same, listing collaborating with (often senior!) women, inviting women to conferences, etc as their contribution to diversity. Some list their appointing as editors women who are a lot more distinguished than most of the rest of the editors of that journal as expanding professional opportunities for women. While few people write such insulting statements, what is disturbing is the fact that the evaluators behave as if it is OK, communicating to the broader community that it actually is OK.

Needless to say how humiliating and discouraging it is for women to constantly read things like that even in regards to the highest achievers in the community. I believe people writing those things don't necessarily genuinely believe in the inferiority of women they mention in such

a disparaging way. It is just that few have done real diversity-related activities, and the most impudent ones among the others feel compelled to list something, sometimes also encouraged by the success of their federal support applications, where they routinely include similar things. Then, the clueless ones copy from their successful friends. Luckily, many people never read those statements, but everyone who actually reads them as business as usual, will only get their biases strengthened as a result.

I have always appreciated the inclusive atmosphere of my community in mathematical physics, where I have long felt a sense of belonging. Many people in this community have, directly or indirectly, strongly contributed to the diversity and inclusion through both creating the respectful climate and through their support and encouragement of colleagues, in particular, of me, which has greatly enabled my growth. It is crucial, however, that to them I was never a commodity to be reported upon, as is implicitly encouraged by the diversity statements.

I strongly believe it is important to work on improving climate and inclusivity in general, and some of the steps already made in this direction have been good. For example, I am grateful for the education I received on internal biases. I am someone who would not have had a chance in academia if affirmative action had not existed when I was hired in 1993. Yet, it was at the time when I had already done some very important work, and preferential treatment shouldn't have been needed in my case, in an ideal world without biases. I support efforts that encourage fairness in the hiring process, and in particular open hiring committees' eyes on all sorts of biases (gender, minority, lesser institution...) that could affect their own evaluation as well as some recommendation letters. Unfortunately, the focus on diversity statements only takes attention away from this important topic.

Moreover, I believe that at tenure track hiring, which is largely about promise, the difficulties that affect most women and minorities at the early stages should be taken into account, in a sensible way. It may also be justified to resolve some other ties taking into account the role model considerations. However, I think that the often present push to increase percentage of women beyond what is currently reasonably warranted by merit, only multiplies the biases, is very damaging for the community's perception of women as a group, and thus is very harmful for the climate. As one example, I was recently on a committee to select the winner of an important prize. It went to a female mathematician. I am sure that most people who don't closely know her or her work, when learning the news, thought "of course, they wanted to select a woman". Yet her gender had zero influence on our considerations, there was no push on the committee, and she was selected from all the applications purely on scientific merit according to the prize criteria. The value of this well-deserved prize is not at all the same for her as it would have been if she was a man. As another recent example, I was on a committee that had to select a couple of graduate students. I suggested a student, arguing that she was the most accomplished one on the list. As if not hearing my arguments, a diversity-minded colleague immediately suggested to also add another female student, who was one of the least accomplished. If both were selected, what message would it have sent to them as well as the other students? An unfairness present in some selections inevitably leads to it being multiplied by a large factor in people's perception and viewed as a universal phenomenon, thus to highly increased prejudices. I don't think this is the desired outcome.

I also think it is good to hire people who will not have a negative effect on the atmosphere, those who are supportive to students and colleagues, and not disrespectful, indifferent, or discouraging. Yet, diversity statements are a very poor, if not a counterproductive, tool for making such a distinction. Genuine activities that lead to improved inclusion should definitely be valued, just like any other important service. Yet, if the word comes out that co-authoring papers with women no longer counts, the same people will rush to have some relevant diversity checkmarks. But will a workshop for women run by a person who believes in their inferiority be a positive contribution? In practice, much of the diversity activism it would encourage will be fake or tone-deaf, and ultimately only harmful to the climate.

In my own experience, some of the best contributors to a positive climate have been strong mathematicians who show interest in the work of others. An excellent example is Jean Bourgain. He was interested in good mathematics and showed zero prejudice. He strongly influenced careers of a number of prominent men and women at formative stages. He conveyed respect and always talked in a subtly encouraging way. I knew the fact that I was a woman was irrelevant to him, and all this gave me great inspiration and encouragement. I see him as a great contributor to diversity and an inclusive climate.

People with checkmark diversity activities would pass the UC diversity rubric barrier. Would Jean Bourgain?

—*Svetlana Jitomirskaya*
UC Irvine

(Received December 10, 2019)

Letter to the editor

Dear AMS editors,

I read with interest the letters section of the most recent AMS *Notices*. The three multi-signatory letters about Abigail Thompson's opinion piece in particular caught my attention. One letter applauded the *Notices* Editorial Board for publishing Thompson's piece, and concurred with Thompson's assessment that mandatory diversity statements are a mistake. Another letter criticized an article from the website QSIDE, which was itself critical of the opinion piece. A

third letter expressed disappointment with the *Notices* for publishing Thompson's piece.

If my tally is correct the letters together have over 1400 signatories. It occurred to me that, in light of the remarkably high level of response, it would be interesting to take a look at the demographics of the signatories, and that is what I do below. Let me refer to the letter which supported Thompson's assessment and the letter criticizing the QSIDE article as letters 1 and 2, respectively, and the letter criticizing Thompson's article as letter 3.

I assessed the gender of the signatories of the letters to the best of my ability, but my assessments may not have been perfect, and do not account for the fact that some of the signatories are non-binary. With that caveat, here are my findings. The 678 signatories of letter 1 were 13.7% female. The 217 signatories of letter 2 were 19.8% female. The 620 signatories of letter 3 were 50.1% female.

I also assessed the number of signatories at top-10 universities (Princeton, Harvard, Columbia, MIT, Yale, Stanford, Chicago, Penn, Northwestern, Duke). Letter 1: 6.3%; letter 2: 22.6%; letter 3: 3.1%.

After looking at the websites of hundreds of the signatories, I would also offer the following non-rigorous assessments. The signatories of letters 1 and 2 are on average older, whiter, and more likely to already have tenured research positions at R1 universities. The signatories of letter 3 are on average younger, more ethnically diverse, and have more precarious employment.

If the signatories of the letters are, taken together, representative of our community as a whole, then it seems that, on the whole, the gatekeepers are against this sort of attempt to build a more diverse mathematical community. Those who have been shut out, on the other hand, are much more favourable. I find this rather depressing. Those of us with the power to make academia less exclusionary should be putting our energy into doing so, rather than using our time to sketch spurious analogies between diversity initiatives and McCarthyism, and to cry foul when those on the outside object.

Sincerely yours,
Louigi Addario-Berry
Department of Mathematics and Statistics
McGill University

(Received December 16, 2019)

Strong protest against the article by Prof. Thompson

Dear Editor,

The recent essay by Prof. Abigail Thompson (*A word from…* Abigail Thompson *Notices of the AMS* 66(11):1778-9) presents a view that is extremely detrimental to the mathematics community in general. This article was particularly toxic for multiple reasons. Prof. Thompson does not have the luxury of whitewashing a controversial (and factually wrong) view by simply starting the essay with the sentence *"This essay contains my opinions as an individual."* Prof. Thompson can write a letter to an editor if she wants to present her opinions; the fact that she can express a poorly articulated argument in such a prominent place is in itself the definition of "privilege."

Straight to the substance of the matter. The center of the diatribe by Prof. Thompson is that:

> A typical rubric from UC Berkeley specifies that a statement that "describes only activities that are already the expectation of Berkeley faculty (mentoring, *treating all students the same regardless of background, etc*)" (italics mine) merits a score of 1–2 out of a possible 5 (1 worst and 5 best) in the second section of the rubric, the "track record for advancing diversity" category.

Prof. Thompson expressed bewilderment by the fact that treating all students the same regardless of background is considered a poor response in terms of diversity awareness. I had the misfortune of encountering this worldview repeatedly in the AMS community, and that is why I renounced to be a member of the AMS (after a decade of membership). I have on my desk, as Chair of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Texas at San Antonio, the invitation to have our majors and graduate students join the AMS via an institutional membership. I cannot send, in good faith, my students to the wolves. I also have the invitation to attend the AMS Department Chairs Workshop, but attending would be a tacit acceptance of the AMS' tacit approval of Prof. Thompson's view. I simply cannot sell my soul.

All people are born with the same rights (even Prof. Thompson might agree with that), but not everybody grows with the same opportunities. It is very easy to be born in third-base and go around life boasting that you hit a home run, asking others *"Why have you not achieved what I have… perhaps you have not worked as hard?"* This is the crux of the matter. Inclusivity and diversity in academia (and society in general) is not achieved simply by tapping some source of high performing *"students of color"* that other college recruiters have overlooked. It is achieved, instead, by recognizing that access to opportunity in the US still depends on the circumstances of birth, and this affects who and how starts college. Of course, it is easy to be oblivious of this matter if one attends, let's say Wellesley and Rutgers, as Prof. Thompson did. However, for the vast rest of us, reality is very different. Not recognizing that we cannot treat all students the same results in universities becoming instruments that amplify socioeconomic distances instead of being vehicles for eliminating disparities.

Publishing the article by Prof. Thompson is a failure of the editorial checks at the AMS. It is acceptable to have divergent opinions, and we should be able to discuss those with civility and absolute respect. What is not acceptable is to promote views born in ignorance of the reality of the

society we serve as professors. There are many other disputable statements in Prof. Thompson's essay, but they are too many and I will let other point to those flaws.

Sincerely,
Juan B. Gutiérrez, PhD
Professor and Chair of Mathematics
University of Texas at San Antonio

(Received December 17, 2019)

In support of Dr. Abigail Thompson, academic freedom, and viewpoint diversity

I am writing to commend Dr. Abigail Thompson for her leadership and courage to write a very thoughtful editorial[1] on the use of diversity statements for faculty hiring, and specifically on the politicized rubric[2] constructed by UC Berkeley, and to commend Dr. Erica Flapan for the courage to publish it. In case you missed it, the crux of her argument is that "*requiring candidates to believe that people should be treated differently according to their identity is indeed a political test*," and that should be juxtaposed with the classical liberal viewpoint that every person should be treated as a unique individual. The UC Berkeley diversity score favors one viewpoint over the other, making it a political test. A similar argument, in more extended form, was previously made in a well-researched white paper by Dr. Bruce Gilley.[3]

Hidden in plain sight is the observation that there is nothing for a job candidate to add on top of what can be explained with a cover letter, a curriculum vitae, a teaching statement, and a research statement, since candidates who have a record of diversity-related contributions have the choice to report on them in these other documents. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to surmise that the sole purpose/function of asking for separate diversity statements in job applications, is to frontload them ahead of consideration of the entire application, and use a scoring system to weed out "politically incorrect" candidates, without looking at the entire application holistically. What we are seeing in UC Berkeley is the beta-test for what will eventually be deployed at the national level.

Those of us who have a tenured position will not be off the hook, when frontloaded diversity scoring is introduced in tenure and promotion evaluation and, even worse, in post-tenure review. According an earlier article by Robert Shibley,[4] diversity statements are also being used at UCLA, not only for hiring, but also for faculty evaluation, with the article further explaining how that violates academic freedom and undermines public trust in academia. Our hiring practices and faculty evaluation practices should remain apolitical and meritocratic, focused on recognizing excellence in teaching, research, and service, with the understanding that Mathematics faculty have varied interests, and varied strengths and weaknesses, and a diversity of talent is needed to make the whole strong.

The retaliation attempt to damage Dr. Thompson's career and to bully the AMS towards practicing censorship against one speaking truth to power is frightening, and I unequivocally condemn it. Free speech, academic freedom, and a diversity of viewpoints are fundamental principles of academic life, and speech that we disagree with should be confronted with more free speech, and not with personal attacks, "cancel" culture, and "public shaming." An interesting perspective on the deeper issues that underlie the recent rise of hostility towards freedom of expression is given in the book[5] by Lukianoff and Haidt. The best way forward is to stand for and unify under universal principles of freedom, fairness, and justice applied equally to everyone, and to live by the ideal of servant leadership. An encouraging development in this direction is the adoption of the Chicago principles on free speech[6] by 70 institutions[7] over a short period of 5 years.

Yours sincerely,
Eleftherios Gkioulekas
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

(Received December 23, 2019)

Abby Thompson's opinion piece

The UC system could streamline the vetting process on Diversity and Inclusion. Instead of having candidates write an essay, just add a box on job applications, with the statement "I believe in treating everyone with dignity and respect, without consideration of religion, race, or gender."

By definition, this will exclude folks who discriminate. And the resources that would be spent on expanding the already massive higher education bureaucracy could instead be devoted to providing more scholarships to students, and hiring more faculty.

More troops on the ground, fewer generals.

[1] *A. Thompson,* Notices of the American Mathematical Society ***66****, 1778–1779, 2019*

[2] https://ofew.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/rubric_to_assess_candidate_contributions_to_diversity_equity_and_inclusion.pdf

[3] *Bruce Gilley, "The Imposition of Diversity Statements on Faculty Hiring and Promotion at Oregon Universities," Oregon Association of Scholars, 2017,* https://www.oregonscholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/DiversityStatements_Rev16Mar17.pdf

[4] *Robert Shibley, "UCLA diversity requirement threatens academic freedom, trust in academia," 2018,* https://www.thefire.org/ucla-diversity-requirement-threatens-academic-freedom-trust-in-academia/

[5] *G. Lukianoff and J. Haidt: "The Coddling of the American Mind," Penguin Random House, New York NY, 2018*

[6] https://freeexpression.uchicago.edu/

[7] https://www.thefire.org/chicago-statement-university-and-faculty-body-support/

Kudos to Dr. Thompson for having the courage to call out the budding Berias.

Dr. Hal Schenck
Rosemary Kopel Brown Eminent Scholars Chair
Department of Mathematics
Auburn University

(Received December 27, 2019)

Diversity

I joined the Mathematics Department at UC Davis in 1966 and worked there for 30 years. When I joined it was a good service department but, with the exception of a few individuals, it was mathematically insignificant. Since then it reached unquestionable mathematical prominence. This was achieved by screening faculty applicants primarily for their mathematical ability. If their political views were considered, some may not have been hired. Thus I applaud Professor Abigail Thompson for making it clear in her articles (*Notices of AMS*, Dec. 2019 and *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 20, 2019) that the commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is a political issue that has nothing in common with excellence in mathematics. The response from UC Davis (*WSJ*, Letters, Dec. 27, 2019) was disappointing. I can understand why the vice chancellor for GE&I attaches more importance to such commitment than to professional capability—it may be part of her job description. However, it is most regrettable that the chancellor of the UC Davis shares her attitude.

Washek F. Pfeffer, Professor Emeritus
Tucson, AZ

(Received December 29, 2019)