



December 3, 2009

An Open Letter to the USC Community:

Student Affairs
Michael L. Jackson
Vice President

The University of Southern California has taken many institutional steps to promote tolerance and mutual respect within our academic community. Committees have been created, policies have emerged, and acts of intolerance have been condemned by the USC administration. However, our community is not merely defined by administrative actions. We all must do our part to elevate tolerance and respect for others in our community.

The university strives to provide an optimal learning community with an atmosphere of free inquiry and expression—an environment that fosters the examination of major issues of social, political, economic, ethical and aesthetic importance. Thriving in such an environment means we all encounter differences: different people, beliefs, cultures, religions, ethnicities and values. The manner in which we accept and work with these differences characterizes our individual principles.

Recent events have led members of our community, our Muslim students, to feel threatened, unsafe, and betrayed. The students feel attacked in part by statements made by a speaker at a non-university sponsored event. These statements claim that the USC Muslim Student Union is a terrorist organization with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. The USC MSU is an outstanding student organization that contributes to a welcoming, safe environment for Muslim students to celebrate and share their culture. Further, this organization has never engaged in any campus activities that presented concerns for the university.

The MSU is comprised exclusively of USC students and deserves to be treated with respect. Referring to Muslim students or any other group in derogatory terms will not be tolerated. We are a community of scholars and Trojans; bigoted name-calling has no place here. These past events underscore the importance of each person maintaining a basic respect for the rights of people to uphold their own beliefs and to work, learn, and prosper in harmony within our academic community. We each must pledge to encourage respect for human rights and dignity on our campus, in our society, and in the global community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael L. Jackson", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Michael L. Jackson
Vice President for Student Affairs

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