

# **An open letter to the Planning Accreditation Board, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, and the American Planning Association**

April 29th, 2024.

Dear

Weiping Wu, Ph.D. (PAB Chair) Columbia University,  
Rayman Mohamed, Ph.D. (ACSP President) Wayne State University,  
Angela D. Brooks, FAICP (APA President),

In recent weeks, students enrolled at universities across the United States have staged areas of protest located at the centers of their institutions. In some instances, their professors have joined to form a circle of protection as law enforcement has moved swiftly to perform violent arrests, repressing the speech of both students and faculty alike. Campuses represented are a mix of public and private institutions, both with an equal and direct line to state power that can immediately and physically quell any dissent from the academic community. The Planning Accreditation Board, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, and the American Planning Association has an obligation to speak out against violent arrests and continued threats by our accredited institutions.

The field of urban planning has a complicated legacy. Urban planners, historically and still today, have reinforced exclusionary zoning, enabled uses that have defined frontline communities, and supported unsustainable developments that gutted the urban core of so many cities. However, because our profession has a unique relationship to understanding the built environment as a social and political construct, planners are provided a lens through which they can imagine new ways of being. They should be empowered to intervene when the safety of our communities is at stake.

In *The Urban Revolution*, Henri Lefebvre, urban sociologist and French philosopher famously known for 'Right to the City' said "Whenever threatened, the first thing power

restricts is the ability to linger or assemble in the streets" (1970); We're planners, our business is in the streets. If we are truly to plan through a lens of equity and justice, we have an obligation to intervene in moments that undermine our ability to maximize healthy, safe, and thriving communities. It is not enough to piecemeal equity into our plans and denounce the days of redlining if we are to, in the same breath, remain silent as our accredited institutions violently punish our current and future colleagues.

Planning is inherently political, and as such, requires the public forum. Images of students occupying their university's public spaces as armed men hovered above them with long-range guns is heartbreaking. In 200 days, nearly 85 percent of Gaza's population has been displaced, and over 14,000 children have been killed. There is not a single university left standing in Gaza. Our institutions are intellectually and financially intertwined with the Genocide against the Palestinian people, and for decades, students on campuses in the United States and globally, have been demanding for their universities to Divest from war. This demand should not be controversial. If we are to continue to practice planning that is rooted in democratic participation and equity, we must be clear in denouncing the behaviors of each university that have brought physical violence to members of its academic community and call into question the planning accreditation if their response continues to escalate.

### **Universities of Concern**

Columbia University.

Cornell University.

Hunter College, City University of New York.

New York University.

The Ohio State University.

The University of Texas at Austin.

Arizona State University.

Wayne State University.

University of Southern California.

George Washington University.  
University of California, Los Angeles.  
University of Pennsylvania.  
Harvard University.  
Portland State University.  
University of Illinois Chicago.

Signed,

*If you are a current professional planner or planning student/alumni/professor and wish to sign on, please email [kcaffray@wayne.edu](mailto:kcaffray@wayne.edu) with your full name and affiliation.*

KC Caffray, MUP candidate Wayne State University, ACSP member, APA member, Arizona State University alum.

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Connor J. Pierce, MUP candidate Wayne State University, APA member.

Shannon Gaffney, MUP candidate Wayne State University, APA Student Board Member.

Christina Nicholaides, Wayne State University MUP alum.

Nat M. Zorach, AICP, MBA. The Handbuilt City.

Anya Tipton, MUP Candidate Wayne State University.

sara faraj, Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) Candidate, University of Michigan, APA Member.

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Shreya Bhutani. Harvard MUP 25.

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Evan Kindler

MUP candidate at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Tirzah Khan MUP '26 at Harvard GSD.

Carson Bridges, MUP candidate, University of Washington, APA Member.

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Gabriela Gonzalez

UC Irvine MURP alum, UC Los Angeles Undergraduate alum, APA member.

Jason Lindy, MUP graduate Wayne State University. Urban Planning Chair Detroit Food Policy Council.

Jason Douglas, Los Angeles City Planning, USC Alumnus 2015, APA member.

Dr. AJ Kim, Associate Professor of City Planning, San Diego State University, ACSP member. Department of Urban Planning, UCLA, Ph.D.

Marwah Maqbool Malik

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Jess Shakesprere, Master in Urban Planning Candidate, Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Kaede Polkinghorne, APA New Orleans Metro Chapter Communications Coordinator.

Katelin Penner, Urban Planner and MUP student at Hunter College.

Deyanira Nevarez Martinez, Assistant Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at Michigan State University.

Andrew Lindstrom, MURP Student, Portland State University.

Madeleine Pelzel, Rice University Architecture School Alum.

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