

STATEMENT OF
The Department of Africana Studies
The Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
The Department of Sociology
The Department of Asian and Asian American Studies
The Department of Hispanic Studies
The Center for Changing Systems in Power

In Support of Abena Asare, Josh Dubnau and the Students Arrested

We were informed on May 2, 2024 of the arrest, incarceration, and mistreatment of our colleague Abena Asare, an Associate Professor in the Department of Africana Studies, and a scholar of human rights, state violence, and state racism, for protesting human rights violations, state violence and state racism. She was arrested together with Josh Dubnau, a Professor in the Department of Anesthesiology, and many other students. In the detailed report of her arrest and incarceration, Abena describes the harrowing condition she was subjected to, how she was kept in handcuffs and sitting on a chair for the whole night, and the inhumane treatment she faced at the hands of the University Police Department. A faculty eyewitness reports how faculty and students were thrown to the ground and brutally handcuffed. [There](#) is video and photo evidence of the brutality of the arrests.

The arrest and incarceration of Abena Asare, is particularly appalling to the Department of Africana Studies because it results from an order by President Maurie McInnis, herself an affiliated faculty in the Department of Africana Studies, as this presents the unique case of a brawl between faculty of the same department. Besides, this crackdown on our colleague's fundamental rights is particularly condemnable in light of President McInnis' research interest in the study of slavery as a system of oppression.

More surprising is, in her email report of the events that lead to the arrest of Abena Asare, Josh Dubnau and the students, President McInnis does not mention the arrest and incarceration of our fellow colleagues. Nor does Interim Dean Axel Drees of the College of Arts and Sciences, mention the arrest and incarceration of our colleagues in his note to all chairs.

Abena Asare writes in her report that her cell phone was taken away from her for reasons that remain unclear, reclaim tickets were not handed out to her nor to the students who were in the same situation and also had their cellphones and computers confiscated; and that she was threatened with being suspended from campus.

The Department of Africana Studies strongly objects to the destruction of collegial civility that is set in motion by President McInnis, and short of her disaffiliation from the Department of Africana Studies as there is no formal procedure for such, expresses its contempt for the violence she unleashed on our fellow colleagues and students. We demand that Rick Gatteau, the Vice President of Student's Affairs share the list of the arrested, and suspended students and faculty with the department chairs, as is standard anywhere. Chairs should not have to go underground to know the fate of their students or colleagues.

We can do better: forty years ago, Fred Dube, a professor in the Department of Africana Studies, formerly incarcerated in the infamous Robben Island Prison, encountered the ugly face of Stony Brook University, also around the issue of state racism. He was fired from his job in 1987 and the university has never reckoned with that shameful history nor apologized. While researching the subject for an [article](#) she published three months ago, Abena Asare was asked by Zola Dube, daughter of the now deceased: 'are you not afraid to write about Fred Dube?'

The question is chilling in light of her ordeal on campus. Because we do not want faculty to be afraid to research and write and protest what they deem necessary, we demand that President McInnis communicate directly with Abena Asare and Josh Dubnau to express Stony Brook University's regret and rebuke of the UPD's mistreatment of our colleagues, as professors at Stony Brook University are not enemies but colleagues and should treat each other with respect, whatever the divergence of their point of view.

We demand that the employment of Larry Zaccarese, himself a former NYPD police officer with [numerous charges](#) of police misconduct and a record of racial confrontations, whose lieutenant is recorded on video taunting the students during the protest and then having the UPD assault them, and who as Vice President of Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) and Chief Security Officer at Stony Brook University is responsible for stifling dissent, for the escalation of the military and surveillance infrastructure on our campus, be terminated. Larry Zaccarese must go, and going forward, Stony Brook University must sever its ties with ERM.

Stony Brook University can definitely do better.