Johnson: Free expression guaranteed

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I think that our record shows that I look to every member in this community about this matter. If I had not been active that evening, I believe that I would have been just as active again that I believe it is every person's responsibility, certainly mine, to make sure that free expression is guaranteed for all individuals on this campus. The threats we are now hearing constitute, in my judgement, a most dangerous attack on such basic freedoms of individuals on this campus. The plain fact that in the heart of the university cannot survive for very long in such a climate. No matter what motivations, thoughts, or feelings I know some of those men and their thoughts and feelings are very high indeed. Some are not, some are. No matter what motivations, thoughts, or feelings of those who are giving us such threats and such potential action cannot be condoned and in my judgement must not be allowed to happen on this campus.

I said this as plainly as I could in my letter to the community at the beginning of the term and I'd like to repeat it again here: we cannot allow the force of obstruction against free expression, free access; we cannot allow any part of the institution to be damaged. Physical damage can be repaired, but the psychic destruction that goes on in free minds has its most profound effect on the community's ability to come together at precisely the time when we need to stay together to deal with the very large problems that this institution, I think, has the courage to look squarely in the face. I ask for the serious, informed help of every member of this community faculty and students alike in discharging my responsibility to all of you to make sure that such concrete acts are not allowed to occur on the fourth of November or at any other time. I consider that to be the explicit policy of the Institute and I ask the Faculty to give me the support of our policy.

There is, of course, the question of tactics always, but I'm talking about the philosophy. There is the question of tactics the tactics of those who freely say they want to disrupt and of the actions that may be necessary to prevent it. I say simply that any act by individuals or groups that coerce other individuals or groups from speaking or acting freely I consider to be fascist tactics. We would be acting irresponsibly as an Institute if in the face of such explicit statements, I must say largely by outsiders, we did not prepare ourselves. I am going to try, to my best, to emphasize certain of the kinds of things, the opportunity for people to discuss and consider that we should not tolerate extremes, that we should not tolerate threats, and it would seem necessary to call upon the civil authorities for help if it appears that such action is likely to occur.

No break, push, or stop, in institutions that, unlike the universities, are hierarchically organized, that such policies as I've just explained and such protections of basic principles and freedom to move can be enforced by physical means. The university is not that kind of an institution and it's a sad day when the campus must become an armed camp; it may be that one of the purposes of the people is to turn it into an armed camp. I believe the disciples and groups be
t should be no one in the ranks of our faculty, staff, and student body whose objective is to destroy the basic character of the university. I therefore appeal to the reason and the feelings of those who value education and the prevention of violence so that kind of force that's been found necessary elsewhere, on other campuses, will never be used here. But such action against us continues to be imminent, thus as free men in a free university we must be prepared to resist.

At President D in the responsibility we have a responsibility to these threats. I ask, of course, for your responsible help, knowing that there is a power beyond which I cannot share those responsibilities. But I wish to say today again that I'm going to stay in close contact with this Faculty. I hope that there would always be time to do so, and except in the face of an organized mob, there should be time to do so. I would hope that the office of the President, the Dean, and mine will be open to all reasonable and groups be
t between now and then. Probably we will have another meeting be
to discuss this matter, and we will give all the support we can to groups that wish to convene and discuss our con
cerns and issues, before and after November. It hurts to bring such a serious matter before this Fac
culty, but the issue is there for all to read and hear, and if we miss it we shall have lost the will to be concerned with our whole fabric, and we'll not be able to solve all the problems that we've got in front of us. In short, I say again, I hope you will give me your support and understanding through our difficulty ahead.

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