Penn, Francis should not be singled out

Steven D. Penn G and Ronald W. Francis G should not face charges before the Committee on Discipline for their actions in the March 2 protest. The two were brought before the COD for allegedly interfering with police officers by leading protesters into an elevator. But the surrounding circumstances make it clear that MIT is not interested in punishing violence, but rather in intimidating students who organize anti-administration protests. For this reason, the COD should refuse to punish Penn and Francis for their actions.

Eight students charged into the elevator in the Stata Building, and all are known to the Campus Police. Yet, MIT singled out Penn and Francis for their actions on March 2 but for their status as protest leaders. This type of intimidation should not be allowed on an open university campus.

Additionally, the Committee on Discipline’s lack of procedural safeguards makes it ill-equipped to handle this kind of case. The COD should refuse to punish Penn and Francis for their actions on March 2 but for their status as protest leaders.

To the Wiesner Awards Committee:

I was delighted to receive a Layes and Jerome B. Wiesner Award at yesterday’s Awards Convocation. In connection with my founding and administration of the S. I. Hayakawa Memorial Scholarship Fund, and my arts writing — mainly for The Tech, but also for Technology Review and the Christian Science Monitor.

I feel deeply honored and grateful to the awards committee for selecting me. I cannot say, furthermore, how much I appreciated Dr. Wiesner’s presence at the ceremony. He has been quite unwell lately, and is in considerable pain. I know he wished to present the award himself, but was unable to do so in person.

I was sorry to hear also, that Mrs. Wiesner has been unwell. I wish both these beloved members of our community the very best in quickly recovering.

When I first heard that I had been nominated for this award, I started thinking of the opportunity it might present to make a statement, to say a few of the things I have learned during my lengthy love/hate relationship with MIT and, above all, to do something positive before I leave.

First of all, I could not have this award without all the wonderful musicians, actors and other artists who so plentifully populate this campus. It takes far more talent and effort to put on an artistic performance than it does to scratch out a review. Their creative contribution is immense and of far greater significance than mine. I’d like to let them know that even if I have sometimes given them a less than positive review — part of a critic’s job whose opinion often like it or not — they have earned my stay at MIT and are not unworthy of the criticism I have hurled.

In the first few years of this decade, MIT has launched an appeal, “A farewell or new beginning,” designed to launch the orchestra’s work at the disposal of the members of our community. He has been quite unwell lately, and is in considerable pain. I know he wished to present the award himself, but was unable to do so in person.

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