

The following document was written by Peter Cafiero, President of the Alumni Association, and addressed to members of the Cooper Union Alumni Association.

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I have never been more embarrassed to be an alumnus of the Cooper Union than I was today. To even call this a protest demeans the long history of Cooper Union activism and protest against people who actually owned slaves, who actually discriminated against women and minorities and union organizers, who locked young women in sweatshops- in other words real issues of great seriousness that on occasion warranted actions beyond words and civil discourse.

What has happened here at Cooper today is that, faced with a real, undeniable but not insurmountable challenge, the Board, Administration, Alumni trustees and other alumni and many faculty and staff have been and are diligently working to develop and explore options. No decisions have even been made yet. Almost all of these people involved in this effort want, in good faith, to preserve all or as much as possible of the Cooper tuition philosophy. But all understand the basic immutable facts and reality of the school's finances, and what it takes to operate such an enterprise in 2012 New York City.

The student protests, on the other hand, which started out a year ago both civilly and (I thought) creatively, have now devolved into a core group that shows no respect for anyone else, no understanding of the basics of rules of operation in life and comes across as naïve, rude and spoiled. They are costing the school money it does not have, and wasting time it has little of while distracting us from actually solving the problem they are ostensibly upset about. In short, they are hastening, rather than delaying, that which they are opposed.

They toss around the latest buzzword "transparency" when they really mean "I don't want to hear what you are saying so I will just shout and not listen and maybe I won't hear it anymore". None of these people that I heard today seem to have the most basic knowledge of how to make their case, what their case is, or the realities of the world. In many ways, unfortunately, it echos the uncivil discourse that is even now seen in congress.

If they want to say all this in the Great Hall, which was designed as a center of speech, that would be fine. If they want to print it on Facebook, or in the Pioneer (regular or 'Alumni'), or form a picket line outside the building, those are all appropriate ways of protest and ensuring being heard. We have met with them, and would continue to do so, and Jamshed and TC have been far more accommodating than anyone should reasonably expect in meeting with all comers, but as far as I could tell these people haven't been paying attention. They claim to want to speak and express themselves, but they would not let any other discourse happen. They climbed on top of furniture, blocked and invaded people's space and removed school and other's property. After

the meeting at least one student physically assaulted two senior school officials.

All of this, in any prior generation would have resulted in expulsion from the school. The full scholarship is certainly not a right, it comes with a degree of responsibility. I just made my annual financial contribution to the CU. I would hope that it is funding some of the great students I have met at Cooper, including this past week at various events, and some of the inspiring concepts that the faculty has been working on that would be immensely positive for the school even without the financial potential. I can't see myself funding what at best can be called childish antics that I witnessed today.

I seriously considered resigning right then and there in the middle of all this today, I could not stand to be associated in any way with this nonsense exhibited by people who will claim the same educational degree I have, but I realized that this would be misinterpreted. I absolutely cannot and will not be part of any alumni association statement in support of these actions, and would resign if somehow I were overruled on this. In the meantime I will continue to use my vote on the Board of Trustees to support as much as I humanly can what I see as the only real, rational "way forward"- essentially the effort now embraced by the deans and most faculty and led by Jamshed.

Sincerely,

Peter