

## **A Statement from Members of the Georgetown University Law Center Regarding Attorney General Sessions' 9/26 Visit**

On Tuesday, September 26, U.S. Attorney General Sessions will give remarks at Georgetown University Law Center, at the invitation of the Georgetown Center for the Constitution, which is led by our colleague Professor Randy Barnett. Attorney General Sessions' topic has been announced as "free speech on college campuses." We acknowledge our colleague's right to invite Attorney General Sessions to speak on campus. However, we, the undersigned, condemn the hypocrisy of Attorney General Sessions speaking about free speech.

Attorney General Sessions is a key cabinet member in an administration headed by a President who spent last weekend denouncing athletes engaged in free expression and calling for them to be fired. President Trump calls African-American professional football players kneeling in quiet protest "sons of bitches" and angry, armed white supremacists "very fine people."

Attorney General Sessions' own office is currently prosecuting Desiree Fairouz for unlawful conduct; her alleged crime is laughing for a few seconds during Sessions' Senate confirmation hearings last January and then loudly protesting her unlawful arrest. In August, the Justice Department issued a warrant to a web hosting company named DreamHost to obtain the identifying and contact information of subscribers organizing an online protest of the Trump Inauguration.

These are just three examples of governmental action antithetical to freedom of speech and association for which Attorney General Sessions is either closely affiliated or directly responsible. This kind of government chilling of speech is precisely what the First Amendment to the United States Constitution is meant to prevent. A man who fails to recognize paradigmatic violations of the First Amendment is a poor choice to speak about free speech on campuses.

Attorney General Sessions' positions with respect to other civil rights are just as troubling. He has made clear that his Department of Justice will not pursue federal investigations into police shootings of unarmed black men—the very shootings that athletes are silently protesting. Instead, he dismantled the DOJ agency (Countering Violent Extremism) designed to investigate domestic extremists, like the one in Charlottesville who killed a woman and wounded many others, replacing it with an agency that investigates Islamic Extremists (the agency is now called Countering Islamic Extremism). As a prosecutor, he brought a misguided prosecution of black voting rights activists and continues to this day to perpetrate the myth of voter fraud. He is also the chief architect of the dismantling of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Again, whatever our other objections to Attorney General Sessions' views and positions, we fully acknowledge our colleague's right to invite Attorney General Sessions to speak at Georgetown University Law Center. But we will not be fooled. Adhering to the First Amendment requires more than rhetoric. It requires adherence through action, applied equally and equitably, by the head of the Department of Justice.

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If you are a faculty or staff member of the Georgetown Law community and would like to be a signatory to this letter, please email [aep65@georgetown.edu](mailto:aep65@georgetown.edu).