

March 20, 2024

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to address the matter concerning my personal social media presence and its perceived impact on my professional role. First and foremost, I want to express my unwavering commitment to the values and goals of this organization. It has always been my intention to contribute positively to this team and uphold the professional standards expected of me. That being said, I also believe in the importance of individual expression outside of my professional responsibilities. My social media platforms serve as a personal outlet where I can share my thoughts, experiences, and perspectives on various topics. These expressions are a reflection of my personal views and are not intended to represent or reflect the views of the organization. I understand that the line between personal and professional life can sometimes seem blurred, especially in the digital age where information is readily accessible. It's crucial for me to convey that my social media engagements, especially those involving humor or commentary on sociopolitical issues, are grounded in a context that might not be immediately apparent to all audiences.

I'd also like to address the unique nature of millennial humor, particularly as it manifests on platforms like Twitter, and how it might be misunderstood by individuals not deeply engaged with online communities. Millennial humor often relies on satire, irony, and a rapid-response commentary on current events, cultural trends, and social issues. This form of expression can sometimes appear obscure or unconventional to those not accustomed to the dynamics of online discourse. It's important to recognize that the tone and content of these communications are shaped by a specific cultural context that values playfulness, resilience, and a critical yet humorous examination of society.

While this style of humor is a significant aspect of my online persona, it does not diminish my professionalism nor my capability to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate contexts for certain types of humor. I understand that without the broader context of the online culture and the specific nuances of millennial humor, some content might be misinterpreted. What might seem nonsensical or provocative at first glance often carries underlying messages about societal observations or personal experiences that resonate with a broad community of internet users, like my followers. I assure you that my intentions are always to foster positivity and understanding, and I am mindful of the diverse audience that may come across my social media channels.

Finally, I feel it's important to address the increasing challenges faced by individuals advocating for DEI and social justice on social platforms. Recent times have seen a rise in aggressive campaigns by some far-right groups aimed at undermining these vital efforts, often targeting individuals and organizations that publicly support these causes. Media Matters' Matt Gertz wrote, "This movement's strategy is to identify, exaggerate, or fabricate discrete local instances of alleged left-wing excesses in discussions of race; dishonestly brand them all as 'critical race theory'; nationalize coverage of those stories as part of the broader culture war; and polarize the debate for political gain, at times using the issue as justification for changing laws or policies." Conservative media fearmongered about CRT as a tool for liberal indoctrination and anti-white racism, a campaign that directly targeted schools, teachers, and other staff for harassment, and encouraged viewers to do the same. Right-wing media attacked affirmative action, celebrated the Supreme Court's decision to bar it in higher education, and smeared Black people in positions of power as diversity hires. In 2023, the far right introduced at least 65 bills to limit DEI in higher education in 25 states and the U.S. Congress. Eight bills became law. Anti-DEI activists consistently frame their attack as a strike against "identity politics," and have weaponized the term "DEI" to reference any ideas and policies they disagree with, especially those that address systemic racism or sexism.

Fox News' Hannah Grossman has written nearly 100 articles in the last year that target specific teachers, administrators, board members, or other staff, largely regarding the discussion of gender, sexuality, or systemic racism in the classroom. Multiple educators named in her reporting have been doxxed, harassed, fired, hit with lawsuits, or forced to resign (NATALIE MATHES). Like these individuals, Grossman's article which inaccurately describes my social media presence has led to harassment and threats to my life via my twitter, facebook, linkedin, instagram, personal emails and phone number as well as my parent's. In its attacks on DEI, the far right undermines not only racial justice efforts, violates our right to free speech and free association, but also jeopardizes the immediate safety of those implicated in these attacks.

My goal is to maintain a transparent and respectful dialogue and I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify my position. In fact, I have taken the liberty of going through my 4 year twitter archive (over 10,000 tweets) to not only select the tweets that have been publicly scrutinized by Hannah Grossman at Fox, but additionally, any that may be identified as being "polarizing" or "work related". My engagement in conversations around black liberation and equity stems from a personal commitment to social justice, the successful identification and removal of the forces that promote discrimination, oppression, and poverty, the dismantling of oppressive systems, advocating for the globe's marginalized communities and populations, and creating just systems that offer equitable opportunities for all people. This is the same commitment that led me to apply to my role in the City of College park. My intent is not to represent or implicate the city via my personal expressions and/or online discourse. In fact, I previously thought my personal commitments to be closely aligned with the city's commitments, particularly "Resolution 20-R-16" passed in 2020 which renounced systemic racism, declared support of Black Lives, and called for the ONGOING EXPLICIT AND CONSCIOUS CONFRONTATION OF RACISM.

Despite Grossman's attempts to silence me, I will continue using my voice and public social platforms to explore and critique oppressive ideologies that remain evident in our laws, regulations, social interactions, affiliations, and material conditions. My commitment to this work is ongoing, it is not a destination or a finish line, but a process by which we must constantly be reimagining our advocacy for social change and unwavering in our pursuit of social justice. In this time that my ancestors have earned me, my primary responsibilities remain anchored in my commitments to self, to the people who look like me, to the people whose liberation is bound up with mine, and to the people whose sacrifices are at the heart of what it means to strategize around disposal of the systems that continue to violate us and mobilize toward liberation.

As previously stated, I welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further should there be any concerns or questions about my social media activity and its relation to our shared goals. Thank you for considering my perspective on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Kayla Aliese Carter