



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ERIC L. ADAMS**  
President

February 14, 2020

Richard Carranza  
Chancellor  
New York City Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street, Room #320  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Concerns surrounding the treatment of Brooklyn's Asian community

Dear Chancellor Carranza:

On February 4, 2020, members of Brooklyn's Asian community met with Deputy Brooklyn Borough President Chaplain Ingrid P. Lewis-Martin. The topic of discussion was an email chain in which Brooklyn Community Education Council (CEC) 22 member Dr. Jackie Cody referred to members of the Asian community as "yellow," and the decision of the CEC to suspend Dr. Cody.

After reviewing the email chain, it was clear that Dr. Cody used the word "yellow" in reference to the Asian community. Further review shows that a member of the Asian community also used the word "yellow" as a frame of reference to discuss the overall prevailing issue of testing for specialized schools. During the course of the meeting, they shared that initially their intent was to work in partnership with the New York City Department of Education (DOE), and not to make any public remonstrations. They recounted that it took them close to three weeks to get a response from your office, and when they were finally able to meet with your office's representative, Deputy Chancellor Adrienne Austin, she made it clear that you, as Chancellor, had no jurisdiction over CECs because they operate autonomously.

With this in mind, members of the Asian community pushed to have the CEC board do something punitive to Dr. Cody because she had not apologized for her use of the word "yellow." Finally, after seven weeks, coupled with the media attention surrounding the Asian community's protests, Dr. Cody did apologize. However, members of the Asian community felt that the sentiments were issued because of the aforementioned pressure. Subsequently, they continued to implore the CEC to take some type of punitive action, which, to the relief of the Asian community, they did when they put forth and passed two resolutions to address Dr. Cody's conduct:

- To suspend Dr. Cody; and
- To have her stop violating the CEC bylaws

The resolutions were well received by the Asian community, and the matter would have been laid to rest, but for a ruling issued by your office that subsequently invalidated the suspension of Dr. Cody, according to a group with which my office met.

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I am requesting clarification on the following: If the Office of the Chancellor does not have jurisdiction over CECs, then how does it have the authority to revoke the suspension of Dr. Cody, which was voted on and passed by the CEC board? Further: If your office does have jurisdiction, I would like to know what type of punitive action you intend to levy against Dr. Cody for her offensive and derogatory reference to Asians. If you do not plan any action, I would like to know why.

Another issue, to which I am requesting an explanation, is with regard to a New York Post article dated February 6, 2020, with an accompanying video of the February 5<sup>th</sup> CEC Town Hall meeting, to which members of the Asian community were denied access. Why were members of the Asian community not allowed to attend a public meeting?

Members of the Asian community, many of whom have met with Deputy Borough President Chaplain Lewis-Martin, have expressed frustration at what they consider to be the lack of communication on the part of DOE. They have asked that I join them in their efforts to be heard and for their concerns to be properly addressed. I explained to the group that I first had to outreach to you to determine if their assertions are accurate as well as exactly what your course of action to address this situation has been, or will be.

Given our collective experience as men of color in positions of public authority, you and I know all too well how otherwise innocuous phrases or words can become offensive or pejorative when directed at a minority group member by someone outside of that minority group. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to ensure that all of our city's residents are treated with equal courtesy and respect, in keeping with what is currently acceptable by today's standards. While you and I may believe that no one should use those terms, current social norms tend to dictate otherwise.

I await your favorable and expeditious response to my inquiry.

Sincerely,



Eric Adams  
Brooklyn Borough President

EA/iplm

cc:

Adrienne Austin, Acting Deputy Chancellor, NYC Department of Education  
Jessica Byrne, President, Community Education Council 22  
Yiatin Chu, Member, Community Education Council 1  
Lucas Liu, CEC 3 Multilingual Committee Chair