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October 21, 2021

Dear Members of the Board:

In its University-wide Regulations, Princeton maintains an admirable commitment to the principle of free expression and rightly seeks staff “who will bring a diversity of viewpoints and cultures.” I write to you because in the treatment of Professor Joshua Katz, the Princeton administration has turned these commitments into mere abstractions.

When Professor Katz published an article on July 8, 2020, in *Quillette*, criticizing a list of demands for radical changes in personnel rules and curriculum, members of the administration—including the president and university spokesperson—suggested that his exercise of free speech was an example of his failure to uphold “an obligation to exercise that right responsibly” and that the administration would “be looking into the matter further.” The implication of possible discipline was clear. By using their platforms as official representatives of the university, these administrators created conditions that challenged Professor Katz’s right to free expression and failed to uphold the university’s pledge to allow community members to discuss ideas regardless of how “offensive or disagreeable [they] may be to some members of our community.”

The placement on an official Princeton website of an excerpt taken out of context from his *Quillette* article as an example of his alleged racism is an indication of the hostility and contempt that the Princeton administration now shows for this distinguished professor. Princeton’s image at home and overseas can only suffer from hosting a website that purports to show that this internationally renowned scholar and storied teacher engaged in “race-baiting, disguised as free speech,” and that he does not view his African American colleagues as “persons.” The fact pattern is quite different.

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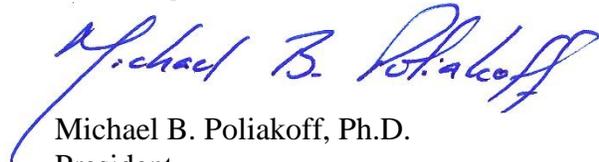
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While members of the Princeton faculty and administration are well within their rights to criticize Professor Katz's statements as individuals, when the administration uses official university platforms to castigate the position of one of its current faculty members, the university disgraces itself, failing to uphold its commitments to free expression and viewpoint diversity. Drawing directly from Princeton's Statement on Freedom of Expression: "It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make [these] judgments for themselves."

The same administration which has taken such callous actions against Professor Katz has cancelled his fall classes, while, presumably, it seeks, as Anne Applebaum pointed out in the August 31, 2021, online edition of *The Atlantic*, to re-litigate a prior violation of university rules for which Professor Katz had been already sanctioned some years ago. It is evident to any objective observer that the animus against Professor Katz comes not from the past violation but from his exercise of the freedom of opinion that the university claims it fosters and protects.

It is of the utmost importance that the Board of Trustees immediately exercise its fiduciary authority and direct the administration to restore Professor Katz to his appropriate status as a distinguished member of the Princeton faculty.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Poliakoff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.
President

cc: Christopher L. Eisgruber, President, Princeton University