

“Protect IU from 202” Press Conference, 8/26/2024

Green Feather Statement

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Good afternoon,

I’m Jeff Moscaritolo, graduate student in American Studies at IU.

In 1954, amid a nationwide clamp-down against free expression led by Senator Joe McCarthy, students at IU started a movement to fight back. Responding to efforts to ban *Robin Hood* from public schools (because it encouraged wealth redistribution), IU students gathered sacks full of chicken feathers, dyed them green, and spread them across campus in the middle of the night, launching a campaign of expressive activities, many of which would have been restricted under IU’s new policy. These student protestors made national headlines, and soon, campuses across the country were joining the Green Feather movement, helping it grow in scope and impact.

This past year, the Green Feather symbol started appearing on campus again. As a student myself, who has been appalled by our administration’s behavior toward free expression, campus collectives like the Green Feathers, the Grad Workers Union, and the Palestine Solidarity Committee, who refuse to be intimidated by IU’s draconian tactics—have given me some hope.

This is a dangerous moment. IU’s leadership and Indiana legislators have been working hard to stamp out free expression, barring professors from working with student political organizations, canceling artists who speak out against injustice, banning books, jailing peaceful demonstrators. And now, these rule-makers think they have delivered a one-two punch. SEA 202 creates a chilling effect in classrooms, and gives administrators greater power to twist the arms of faculty. I teach at IU, and I am already feeling the heightened pressure to avoid important topics in the classroom. This has been magnified with IU’s expressive activity policy, which claims to protect free speech outside the classroom but in fact dramatically restricts it, with new rules about where and when protests can take place, which activities are allowed, and which activities require prior approval.

Commented [JMI]: Is this the correct year?

Think about it: if we want to establish protest encampments—which have been happening at IU for decades—we now must seek approval *from the institution we are trying to change*.

The fact is: speech that's forced out of sight and out of mind is not free speech. The power of free expression resides in its ability to disrupt business as usual. And the fact that Indiana and IU are clamping down in *this* moment is both alarming and illuminating. This wave anti-expressive activity is not just about silencing dissent *in general* (although that is what is happening), it's about using the label of intellectual diversity to strengthen authoritarianism against dissenters, and squashing resistance in the face of a brutal human rights catastrophe that has engulfed Gaza, a catastrophe in which this institution is a major participant.

In this new McCarthy era, we can take a cue from our history: we can speak out, resist, and organize with each other and with our fellow communities at IU, in Bloomington, and nationwide.

So if this grim moment concerns you, if you believe expression and inquiry are crucial pillars in struggles against injustice, then these new policies make it abundantly clear: now is not a time for silence.

Thank you.