



Brandeis University

Ronald D. Liebowitz, President

November 14, 2017

Foundation for Individual
Rights in Education
510 Walnut Street, Suite 1250
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Foundation for Individual Rights in Education:

Thank you for writing.

Brandeis maintains a deep and abiding commitment to freedom of expression and academic freedom. I welcome this opportunity to clarify and correct your understanding of some of the issues in your recent letter related to both.

Michael Weller's play was not "cancelled" and the material was neither "censored" nor "abandoned" by Brandeis University. This is a misrepresentation of facts. Brandeis faculty postponed the play from the fall to the spring and intended to have it performed alongside a new semester-long course that would explore the issues it raises in a rigorous and thoughtful educational venue. The creation of a production committee to plan the play, and intensive work on the new course were underway when, in early October, Mr. Weller decided to have his script performed elsewhere by professional actors in a different venue. The playwright owns the material and Brandeis has no right or authority to use copyrighted material in his possession.

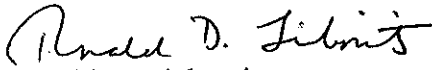
Brandeis has not "defaulted," and is not avoiding or ducking "challenging issues." To the contrary, the spring course will dive much more deeply and explore and analyze much more thoroughly controversial, uncomfortable and provocative issues as manifested in a broad range of artistic genres, including visual art, theater, film, music and literature. A course will allow us to confront difficult topics head on and to provide students with tools with which to engage in contentious conversations. This course will include an important module on the life and legacy of Lenny Bruce with an exploration of and student projects taking place in the Lenny Bruce archives themselves.

The decision to produce the play in the spring and to launch a team-taught course alongside it allows Brandeis faculty to do what they do best -- engage in rigorous, challenging and difficult educational work that requires critical thinking. Consistent with our commitment to academic freedom, the administration did not and should not interfere in these pedagogical matters.

Brandeis is proud to house the Lenny Bruce papers, which are protected and preserved and used for important research and scholarship as well as artistic expression.

Brandeis will also proudly present the Creative Arts Award to Michael Weller on January 23.

Sincerely,


Ronald D. Liebowitz