



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo: Cornell University should condemn ‘reprehensible’ remarks by professor

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO October 17, 2023

| ISSUE: **ISRAEL; HAMAS; TERRORISM, CORNELL UNIVERSITY**

New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-Rome and the ranking member of the state Senate’s Higher Education Committee, today urged the president of Cornell University to condemn the recent **remarks** of a professor who said that the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel were “exhilarating” and “energizing.”

In a letter to Pres. Martha Pollack, Sen. Griffo said that Prof. Russell Rickford should be held accountable for his hateful comments and that he should face consequences for his statements.

The full text of Sen. Griffo’s letter to President Pollack is below:

Oct. 17, 2023

President Martha E. Pollack

300 Day Hall

Cornell University

Ithaca, NY 14853

Dear President Pollack:

I am writing regarding recent comments made by Prof. Russell Rickford in which he stated that the brutal and horrific terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas against Israelis were “exhilarating” and “energizing.”

I recognize that the U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to free speech, that these comments occurred on a university campus where diversity and different points of view abound and that opinions will vary when it comes to this conflict. However, Prof. Rickford’s comments are repugnant, reckless and reprehensible.

In your statement regarding this incident, you indicated that you are “sickened by statements glorifying the evilness of Hamas terrorism. Any members of our community who have made such statements do not speak for Cornell; in fact, they speak in direct opposition to all we stand for at Cornell. There is no justification for or moral equivalent to these violent and abhorrent acts.”

As such, I urge you to strongly condemn Prof. Rickford’s hateful comments and ask that he face consequences for his remarks. If another member of the Cornell faculty or community were to speak in support of racism, I have no doubt that appropriate action would be taken by the university. Prof. Rickford’s antisemitic statements should not be handled any differently.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Griffo

New York State Senator, 53rd Senate District

Ranking Member of the New York State Senate Higher Education Committee