

South Bronx Teacher Banned From School

Press Release

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Karim is a dedicated activist and educator. PLEASE ATTEND IF YOU CAN!!!!

NYPD Repression in South Bronx High School Youth Worker Banned from School for Inviting NYCLU in to Observe Random Scanning Students Exercise Right to Refuse Searches, Face Coercion and Intimidation

WHAT: Youth and Parent Press Conference

WHEN: Thursday, March 29th at 4:30 PM

WHERE: Tweed Courthouse, 52 Chambers Street

An afterschool program coordinator at a South Bronx high school who invited the New York Civil Liberties Union to observe the NYPD's random scanning procedures, was forcibly detained by NYPD School Safety Agents, held for questioning, and then later banned from the school building indefinitely by the Department of Education last Wednesday, March 21st. On the same morning, students from CSSJ who refused to walk through the random scanners, were intimidated and threatened into complying with the scanning procedures.

Although it is written in the School Chancellor's Regulations that students have the right to be refuse to be searched and remain in school, when one student tried to exercise his right, he was taken to the side, surrounded by up to five NYPD School Safety Agents, and questioned and intimidated into going along with it. Another pair of teenaged boys was brought into a side room and questioned, at times without any adult present, about their idea to refuse and who had put them up to it. They were threatened with a week's suspension if they did not agree to the search. For fear of jeopardizing their college careers, the students finally gave in.

Karim Lopez, the program coordinator of a non-DOE community agency, had helped the young people try to organize their refusal action, and also invited the NYCLU to come to the school to observe the more- than forty agents and three metal detectors in operation in the school's lunchroom. Even though the visitors and Mr. Lopez were told to enter the building through the scanning machines, according to the directives of the NYPD agents, once the supervising officers discovered who and what they were, they immediately escorted them out of the lunchroom.

Mr. Lopez was questioned and then taken into what they referred to as a "holding room," (really just the dean's office) and held for more than an hour. The NYCLU staff were thrown out of the building, and were once again told to leave by six officers when they continued trying to take photographs from across the street. By that afternoon, Eric Nadelstern, the CEO of the Office of Empowerment Schools, had demanded that Mr. Lopez be removed from the school building and not allowed to return. He is still employed, but working at the community center. Students at the Community School for Social Justice, where Karim is highly respected by students and staff alike, were enraged not only by the presence of metal detectors in their small school, but by the obvious injustice. Spontaneous demonstrations took place within the school on Thursday and Friday.

On Thursday, March 29th at 4:30 PM, students, parents and others will be holding a press conference to publicize these events and to demand: immediate reinstatement of Karim Lopez into the school building; and an end to the violation of young people's rights and privacy.

Social Action Youth * Uptown Youth for Peace and Justice * Sistas and Brothas United

Kahlil Almustafa

email: kahlilmustafa@gmail.com
phone: (917) 517-9006

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