

Dear Friends and UFT members,  
October 26, 2006

Anniversary Date Commentary:

It's been one year since I was 'reassigned' from my teaching duties at John F. Kennedy High School.

On Wednesday morning October 26, 2005; I handed out flyers announcing that there would be protest parades during Open school night (10/27/05) and Open school afternoon (10/28/05). On the evening of October 27, 2005; I was arrested by school security officers on a false claim of trespass and jailed for over 24 hours (which assured that I would not be present for either protest event). As I held parade permits for all dates mentioned, I am confident that these criminal charges will ultimately be resolved in my favor.

Clearly, this was an administrative effort to quash dissent.

Was it worth it? - to support my students, to defend other teachers, to expose corruption, to refuse to bow down to tyranny, to exercise my constitutional rights? Only time will tell; as an award winning teacher and active JFK UFT member, I could do no less.

My first 'Dear Friends letter' outlines the harassment that I personally experienced by the principal, Anthony Rotunno and his administrators while I was teaching at Kennedy High School. I have made newspaper article reprints available on my website. The articles describe the administration led English Regent's cheating scandal, the protest in support of JFK English teachers, the reassignment of JFK United Federation of Teacher's Chapter Leader, Ms. Colon, the retaliatory excessing of nearly 40 teachers and guidance counselors, and the student riot that resulted from the removal of these JFK HS staff members. Also described is the suppression of a student parade and protest planned during Open School which was pre-empted by Ms. Williams' arrest on the false claim of trespass.

The troubles at John F. Kennedy High School continued,

with the State Assemblyman criticizing Rotunno for the questionable appointment of his Assistant Principal for English. JFK has also been cited as one of the city's most violent schools. Certain teachers at Kennedy High school have been targeted for reprisal and unfairly rated as 'unsatisfactory'. The UFT cites the oppressive retaliation activities at JFK HS as a reason to support 'whistle blower protection' legislation.

To describe in detail all that has happened would require a book; one that ties together many related issues. Such a book might have chapters on the decline in public education, the criminalization of our youth, the targeting of individuals who speak out, and attacks on the teacher's union. The broad reaching concerns of racial politics, challenges to our civil liberties and the assertion of bureaucratic power in the extreme would have to be addressed as well.

The saga of John F. Kennedy High School's recent past has been preserved on my website:  
<http://www.natwilliams.com>.