

Ms. Natalie Williams

Dear Friends, Students and UFT members,

October 27, 2005. I have worked at John F. Kennedy High School for the past 12 years. On, Wednesday October 26th, I taught my last class here. I recently had my teaching program changed and was assigned to teach 'twilight' students in T-4 (the detention room). I taught a lesson on how to read the world map. I then went to the principal's office with a student to inform the administration of her programming issue. When I entered the room, Mr. Rotunno called on his walkie and said "Ms. Williams is in the office right now". He then instructed the student to sit down. I remained standing. I sensed that this was a set-up and began to head for the door. I picked up my bags to leave and was partly through the door when Mr. Rotunno used his hand to press the door shut against my shoulder. He then pressed with his foot and held me there, pinned between the door and the doorframe and insisted that I take a letter. (This was witnessed by the student, Linda Faughn, school secretary and Peter Volkert; AP of Security. I complained loudly and Mr. Rotunno finally released pressure on the door as Mr. Volkert arrived in the hallway. I took the letter with my free hand and was told by Mr. Rotunno that I was to be escorted out of the building. Volkert and I took the elevator down. He walkie talked that "Ms. Williams is leaving through exit 5". He also informed me that my union representative was on her way down. I waited outside, I spoke briefly with Ms. Stillman and then went to the reporting office at One Fordham Plaza; as instructed in the letter. There, a secretary gave me another letter, informing me that I was "under investigation" and that I was "indefinitely re-assigned" to 501 Courtlandt Avenue. I then went to Courtlandt. The 4th floor is otherwise known as the "Teacher Jail". I saw our JFK UFT leader Maria Colón there. The place is packed with others, who like myself are vocal, activist or union. We must sit there during school hours awaiting the outcome of charges that were brought against us.

- I do not know what I have been charged with.
- I have filed harassment complaint against Mr. Rotunno with the Police Department.

I will now study with my colleagues at 'the Goulag'. Let's say that I consider it an opportunity to get some writing done... Will YOU be NEXT? Maria says hello to everyone. She warns everyone that now, the NYC DOE is trying to reverse satisfactory teaching ratings from last year to 'U' ratings. This is a DOE sponsored effort to fire militant teachers and pull their teaching licenses by falsely labeling them as 'unsatisfactory'. Do whatever you can to protect yourself. (Document everything. Write early and often. I myself, used tape and video recordings of my lessons. (Get student and parents to sign a release form first...))

Keep apprised of teacher struggles and DOE shenanigans at www.progressiveactioncaucus.org. Also check www.JFKUFT.org. Please inform my students of what has happened. Feel free to pass on my contact information. Website: www.NATWILLIAMS.com and email: natwilliams@mac.com. Address: P.O. Box 2032 Utica, NY 13503 and phone: (315) 542-5738. The students at JFK have put together their own website: www.jkfstudents.com.

Remember to VOTE NO to the proposed UFT contract on Thursday, Oct. 27, 2005 (elections will be held in the Teachers Cafeteria). If this contract passes, all teachers will lose their rights and be vulnerable to principle dictated firings. (I will be requesting a police escort into the building so that I may vote and retrieve my teaching files).

We should be proud of the fact that a number of JFK teachers were nominated by top students to the Who's Who Among American Teachers list. If you are a 'Who's Who' teacher, I recommend that you order a certificate or plaque in recognition of your achievement. It may be the only 'letter of recommendation' that you will ever get. (Contact whoswho-teachers.com).

To my students: Thank for your letters of support. I am proud to have been your best teacher.

Dear Friends, Students & Union members: know that whatever happens; I will still fight for you!

October 28, 2005. The 50th precinct has refused to process my harassment complaint against Mr. Rotunno. I will be pursuing this matter through the appropriate channels. I succeeded in filing a harassment complaint against Mr. Rotunno through the 30th Precinct late Wednesday night. On Thursday morning, October 27; I called to request a police escort so that I could retrieve my belongings from the school. The request was denied by the 50th precinct. When I entered the school parking lot, I was served with a summons for trespassing by Sergeant Giglavitch. I returned later that evening. I was scheduled to meet with parents for open school night. (I was planning to pass out leaflets 200 feet away from the 4th floor school entrance before Open School Night began). I had posted one sign which read "know your rights". I had another sign which read "Teachers are under attack. Another good teacher gone." I was arrested by 6 school safety officers for trespassing (a misdemeanor); as directed by Ms. W. Shama and Mr. Rotunno – I heard them on the walkie talkie instructing school safety to have me 'picked up'). My signs, leaflets and a video camera. were confiscated by the School Police Unit and I spent the next 28 hours in jail. I was released of my own reconnaissance. Of course, I will be fighting this; as it is my constitutional right to free speech and I held a parade permit for the sidewalk in front of the school. My dates for appearance in Bronx Criminal Court (at 161 st Street) are December 8 and December 23, 2005, both at 9:30 am. Please contact me if you have any helpful suggestions.

November 1, 2005. On Oct. 31 2005. I requested that I be allowed to retrieve my belongings at JFK HS and made a long list of the items that I left there. A Region One lawyer was to fax the letter to Mr. Rotunno. On Nov 1, 2005 I received a letter from the Department of Education stating that I could not contact students by phone or by email. I also received certified letters from the NYC Dept of Education directing me to take a medical evaluation. I will also be subjected to a 'psychological evaluation'. My appointment is for Thursday, Nov. 3 at 9 am at 65 Court Street. In his letter, Mr. Rotunno stated that 'Ms. Williams has been "acting irrationally" to staff; that she was seen distributing the attached flyer in school; that she was "standing inside a dumpster" and that she was seen "in the Boy's bathroom". Mr. Rotunno also notes that Ms. Williams was "previously seen by the medical examiner in 1996". Clearly, Mr. Rotunno is trying to paint me as a crazy woman and intends to use the demand of a medical report as a means of harassment and as an excuse to fire me. Let's keep in mind that this 'directive' comes from a man who assaulted me, and now is busy trying to cover his tracks! (For the record; I have been responding quite logically to the various attacks by the administration against me. I have been writing letters to the administration in response to letters that have been written to me. I climbed into a dumpster full of thrown away school furniture to release the cord of an old film projector that was wanted by a colleague. I passed out blue flyers on 230th Street and Tibbetts avenue; not inside the school; (I even had a parade permit for the event). Some of my teaching materials are stored in a closet next to the Boy's bathroom on the 6 th floor. I suffered from carpal tunnel in my writing hand in 1996 and returned to work with a splint after being evaluated by the Board of Ed. Medical staff.

These intentionally distorted claims by Mr. Rotunno only show his mean spirited intent to remove me from my teaching position by any means available to him; lies and fraud included. I have requested a UFT escort to the medical evaluations and will demand that an independent examiner evaluate me. (I think that in the interest of fair play; Mr. Rotunno should be subject to a "psychological evaluation" as well...)

November 3, 2005. I met with a Department of Education psychiatrist, and explained the circumstances surrounding Mr. Rotunno's demand that I have a psychological evaluation. She reported to me that she finds no psychological problem with me and requested that I get a letter from my physician and an independent psychiatrist stating that I am fit to return to work. Particularly, she would like them to 'please comment on history if any, of psych. diagnosis that would preclude service.'

November 10, 2005. I met with a psychologist today so that I could have an independent evaluation in response to the Department of Education's directive. As she has just met me, the doctor requested that I have teacher friends write a description of me so that she can get an idea of what kind of person I am to assist in her diagnosis. I therefore have asked certain teachers to send her letters which describe me. It is said that when you take a stand, you stand alone. I hope that will not be the case here, but I am ready for whatever challenges that I may face.

November 28, 2005. The UFT membership voted for the sell-out contract in exchange for some chump change. Now principals will have free reign to remove any teachers whom they disapprove of. As for Kennedy High School, by the year 2007; the downsizing plans will reduce current staff and student numbers by half.

My court dates for alleged trespassing are coming soon. I still await written approval before returning to the school to collect my belongings. It's been four weeks for me now in the 'rubber room'. I still have not been informed by the Department of Education of why I was re-assigned, or what I have been charged with. (I guess that they need more time to get their story together...) I am prepared for them; I've got a lawyer and my documents are in hand. I believe that theirs was a desperate maneuver to remove my influence in the school so that the students and the teachers do not have the benefit of my objective honesty and organization. I stand now, relatively free of harassment by the JFK administration. I miss the teachers and my students. You all will have to do without me for now. You have already been radicalized.

The rest is up to you.

In Struggle,
Ms. Natalie Williams, Science Teacher; John F. Kennedy High School