



KUCSC RESPONSE
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PRESS RELEASE RE: 'UNPLANNED' SCREENING AT KING'S

The King's University College Students' Council feels it is necessary to speak out against King's Campus Ministry's event that took place on our campus last week. On Thursday, January 9th, 2020, King's Campus Ministry hosted an event in which they showed the movie *Unplanned*. This film has received immense backlash for its inaccurate depictions of abortion, graphic contents, and misconstrued ideas about the not-for-profit organization Planned Parenthood.

The King's mission speaks to the need for "creating an inclusive and empowering space for students." Similarly, we as a Council seek to provide students with an environment that is welcoming and safe for all. As a result, we feel it is necessary to discuss the harmful effects that an event like this has for not only students but faculty, staff, administration, alumni, and members of the broader King's community. While we recognize the importance of initiating and facilitating difficult conversations, there are many ways to do so effectively. Based on the feedback that we have received from students, there were various measures that were not taken in planning this event to foster an environment that enhances education and understanding.

This event has been disheartening to the King's community. The University is no place to present only one side of an issue in discussions of controversial topics. This creates an environment where people feel that they cannot voice their perspectives. Additionally, the discussion portion of the film screening restricted the right to speak freely about abortion and only allowed for discussion surrounding the contents of the film. The event also did not include consultation with the medical community or experts in the field. While peaceful protests were welcomed by King's Campus Ministry, student protest was restricted to outside of the Student Life Center which made some students feel as though they weren't welcome on their own campus.

No resources were provided prior to the film or afterwards for those in attendance who may find the contents of the film to be harmful or triggering. The decision to not have resources available for students who might find the contents of the film distressing goes against the values expressed in the King's Campus Mental Health Plan: that "King's [...] endeavours to promote mental wellness in all those who live, work, study and play on its campus." Furthermore, comments made prior to the screening of the film alienated and shamed some of the women of King's.

The outcome of this event has been devastating for the King's community. Students are being shamed and have expressed embarrassment about attending an institution like King's. Prior to this event, these students were proud members of the King's community. Since the event, some students have expressed that King's no longer feels like a safe environment for them and especially for the women in our community.

The lack of action taken to truly rectify the negative impacts of this event is upsetting to our community. As a Council, it is our responsibility to advocate for our students, to raise concerns on behalf of the student body, and to work with the College to provide them with a positive experience while they are members of the King's community. In order to ensure that our voices are heard, it is imperative that the student voice is included in future practices surrounding controversial topics.

In light of these events and with the responses from our students in mind, we present King's University College with the following recommendations:

- That King's University College uphold its mission to "engage in the open pursuit of truth" by encouraging open debate and dialogue when controversial topics are brought to campus. Members of the King's community should not be restricted in their ability to respond to controversial events on campus and should not have limits placed on discussions following such events.
- That King's University College creates a policy for controversial subjects that are being brought to campus which would require that both sides of a debate or issue are presented so the topic can be properly engaged with. Following this policy for future events would foster critical thinking in the "pursuit of truth."
- That students' right to freely protest be respected and protected. Students should not be treated with hostility or suspicion when they are protesting on campus. Students should not be prevented from protesting inside the Student Life Center (SLC) provided such protests are not interfering with the use of the SLC by other students.
- That King's University College work with the King's University College Students' Council to develop guidelines on how the College will respond to and treat student protests.
- That King's University College uphold the values expressed in the King's Campus Mental Health Plan, and require groups that are bringing controversial topics to campus to provide mental health resources (such as hotline numbers, information brochures, or access to counselling services at the event) to those attending or who are impacted by such events.

To our students who have been hurt by this event and the aftermath in the week that has followed: we stand with you. We are disappointed by the decisions of members of the King's community that have negatively affected your student experience and your ability to feel welcome, safe, and accepted on your campus. Thank you for the courage you have shown in protesting, raising your voice, and expressing your concerns.

Yours in solidarity,
King's University College Students' Council