

October 15, 2016

Dear colleagues,

I have been perplexed and dismayed over the past weeks to learn that there is a real danger that The Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins University might be closed. I write to you as a concerned senior scholar who has no direct connection with The Humanities Center but who has long regarded it as an institution of fundamental significance in American humanities, asking you to do what you can to maintain and if possible expand it and to reflect on the very negative consequences that would derive from its closure.

For over 20 years I have been a regular visiting member of The Committee on Social Thought at The University of Chicago, and during this time we in Chicago have always regarded The Humanities Center as our only genuinely interdisciplinary and cutting edge interlocutor in America. In a period in which everyone talks about how important interdisciplinarity is, The Humanities Center has been one of the few institutions, besides The Committee on Social Thought, that have found ways to operate successfully outside of the normal divisions of university departments. During these decades, our exchanges on the level of professors and students with The Humanities Center have been close, frequent, and productive. Closing The Humanities Center would produce a chilling effect throughout the humanities across America. At a time when the humanities are under threat, institutions like The Humanities Center need to be protected and nurtured. Johns Hopkins, which has a glorious tradition in humanities research and teaching, would do itself a disservice if it amputated one of its best-known and most distinguished limbs. The Humanities Center made Hopkins different from other universities; without The Humanities Center, fewer students and faculty will have a reason to come to Baltimore.

I do hope that you will reconsider this matter. Best wishes from gwm

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