

*To the Reed Student Body,*

We are the members of the Reed student body who oppose the tactics currently employed by Reedies Against Racism.

On September 26, 2016, RAR responded to Isaiah Washington's call for black people to boycott racial injustice --"no work, no school, no shopping"--by staging a walkout during that day's Humanities 110 lecture. Some professors chose to call off classes, others did not. RAR wrote and published a list of demands, which you can see on the RAR website: <http://reediesagainstracism.tumblr.com>.

Demand #13: "The required freshman course should be reformed to represent the voices of people of color..."

Every Hum 110 lecture since September 26th has included a RAR protest. During the 2016-2017 school year, this involved protesters sitting silently in the well and holding signs while the lecturer spoke. RAR initially claimed that they cleared their presence in the well with each lecturer; however, when lecturers objected, RAR showed up anyway. One lecturer asked that the protesters not protest her lecture due to past trauma. The protesters did not go to the well, but held signs in the audience and performed a silent walkout during her lecture. After the lecture she was surrounded and verbally abused by a group of students associated with the protest. When another lecturer's request for no protesters was ignored, he went to the steps outside Vollum and gave his lecture there. The protesters also staged a sit-in at the admissions office and the College Relations office for several days in November 2016, effectively shutting down admissions activity during that time.

During this time, an anonymous survey suggested that these protests were having a chilling, self-censoring effect on the student body (<http://bit.ly/2w0KWWJ>). Nearly half of the students responding to the survey said their answers would have changed if the survey had not been anonymous, and no respondent whose opinion differed significantly from RAR felt comfortable expressing an opinion.

The faculty and administration responded to these ongoing protests by: accelerating the decennial review of the Hum 110 curriculum; dedicating a Hum 110 lecture period to small group discussion of the issue; forming a committee of students and faculty intended to discuss ways to reform the curriculum; organizing a mediated session between students (RAR and otherwise), faculty, and staff; and more.

**Despite the fact that the accelerated Hum 110 review is being conducted right now**, this year, RAR has continued to protest and has pursued even more aggressive tactics during Hum 110 lectures. They have verbally interrupted lectures; they have screamed at students; they have made the Hum 110 faculty uncomfortable enough that two of three lectures have been relocated or cancelled entirely.

Protests, we are often reminded, are supposed to make people uncomfortable. However, what is happening in Hum 110 this fall goes far beyond discomfort. Lectures have been cancelled by faculty who are so distressed that they cannot effectively teach in the environment that has resulted as a consequence of RAR protests. Students have reported panic attacks during the loud confrontations of the past week, and students with ADHD and similar disabilities are the most affected in their ability to concentrate on the lectures that do occur. Reedies are united in love of learning, yet Hum 110 has not been a place of learning. There has not been a conversation in Hum 110 about the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, nor has there been a meaningful conversation about the syllabus. Instead, there has been confusion, chaos, and the silencing, whether intended or not, of dissenting opinions.

When a group, through passion for their sincere beliefs, adopts tactics that do not allow for debate, conversation becomes impossible. **We believe that RAR's tactics of protest effectively silence debate, encourage self-censorship, threaten academic freedom, and greatly impede the education of the class of 2021.** We do not approve of the way freshmen who have questioned the protests have been shouted at and intimidated by some protesters, nor do we approve of the disrespect shown to faculty.

To that end, **we ask RAR to reconsider their tactics and stop protesting within Vollum during Hum 110 lectures.** We suggest, as alternatives: Q&A sessions for freshmen and others, which RAR has already arranged; protests outside of the classroom; signs around campus; or any other means of spreading their message without actively disrupting other students.

While RAR considers this request, **we ask that the administration, faculty, and RAR make immediate arrangements for students with anxiety, PTSD, ADHD, and other similar conditions.** These students are most adversely impacted by these ongoing protests. We suggest setting up a **safe room** near Vollum lecture hall where students can sit until after vocal protest has subsided, as well as creating a 3-5 minute gap between when the protesters become silent and when the lecture begins. Students can arrive early, set down their backpacks on the chair in Vollum they wish to sit in for the lecture, then go to a safe room. They would then be notified when the protests end so that they can re-enter the lecture hall.

Although the undersigned have many different opinions on the validity of the Hum 110 syllabus, we are united in our support for conversation and debate on the subject. We do not believe that the issue is closed, and we want the opportunity to make up our own minds. We hope that RAR will consider our request, and that we can come together for a conversation in which there is space for all the viewpoints held by members of the Reed community.