

# NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

July 7, 2020

Dr. Bryan Johnson, Superintendent  
Hamilton County Schools  
3074 Hickory Valley Road  
Chattanooga, TN 37421

Re: DayOnna Carson's Speech at Central High School

Dear Dr. Johnson:

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of 57 national non-profits, including literary, artistic, religious, educational, professional, labor, and civil liberties groups. We promote freedom of thought, inquiry and expression for all Americans, including K-12 students, teachers, and staff.

We have read that the public address system used at the Central High School graduation ceremony was turned off before DayOnna Carson concluded her valedictorian address. According to press reports, the attendees were unable to hear DayOnna say, "No justice, no peace."

While we accept the District's explanation that cutting off DayOnna's speech was inadvertent, we are sure you agree that it is important that the views of young people are expressed and heard, particularly during the current national conversation regarding racial justice. We also believe that it is important that schools and other institutions go out of their way to make clear to students, families and the public that they support the rights of all students to express themselves, regardless of their views.

We are writing to inquire about the steps that the District is taking to provide Ms. Carson the opportunity to communicate her entire message to the student body of Central High School. Given that the District in its June 30 statement described Ms. Carson's speech as "timely" and as having "addressed some of the most important issues of the day," perhaps her entire speech could be re-recorded and presented to the student body on the opening day of the upcoming school year.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

## NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association  
AICA-USA  
American Association of  
School Administrators  
American Association of  
University Professors  
American Association of  
University Women  
American Booksellers for Free Expression  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Ethical Union  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Jewish Committee  
American Library Association  
American Literary Translators Association  
American Society of Journalists & Authors  
Americans United for Separation of Church  
& State  
Association of American Publishers  
Authors Guild  
Catholics for Choice  
Children's Literature Association  
College Art Association  
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund  
The Creative Coalition  
Directors Guild of America  
The Dramatists Guild of America  
Dramatists Legal Defense Fund  
Educational Book & Media Association  
First Amendment Lawyers Association  
Free Speech Coalition  
Freedom to Read Foundation  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and  
Social Justice  
International Literacy Association  
Lambda Legal  
Modern Language Association  
National Center for Science Education  
National Communication Association  
National Council for the Social Studies  
National Council of the Churches  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Teachers of English  
National Education Association  
National Youth Rights Association  
The NewsGuild-CWA  
PEN America  
People For the American Way  
Planned Parenthood Federation  
of America  
Project Censored  
SAG-AFTRA  
Sexuality Information & Education Council  
of the U.S.  
Society of Children's Book Writers  
& Illustrators  
Student Press Law Center  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Union of Democratic Intellectuals  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
United Church of Christ  
Office of Communication  
United Methodist Church,  
United Methodist Communications  
Women's American ORT  
Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance  
Writers Guild of America, East  
Writers Guild of America, West

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Finan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher Finan  
Executive Director  
National Coalition Against Censorship