

Sunday, July 29, 2012, 2:19 pm ET

*Small correction: Andrew J. Imparato (Andy Imparato) appeared before the Faculty Student Staff Alumni coalition (FSSA) at Gallaudet on Saturday, May 6, 2006 (not Sunday, May 7). Date corrected in Re-release below.*

*Special note: [Imparato abruptly resigned](#) from his position as CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) in late October 2010. See also the January 19, 2009 PRWeb [press release](#).*

## **RE-RELEASE**

### PRESS RELEASE

Friday, December 22, 2006

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## **1) Commentary on censorship and Irving Jordan's spying activities on the protesters**

Commentary:

The long octopus arms of oppression belonging to Irving Jordan continue to operate, apparently. A recent post on the DeafDC.com blog that was critical of Jordan and accused him of spying on protesters and disrupting their activities has been censored by DeafDC personnel.

The post, written by this commentator, was added to the DeafDC blog at 6:51 pm Eastern on Tuesday, December 19, 2006 and read as follows:

QUOTE:

Brian Riley  
(#53808) | 2006-12-19 18:51:41

Neil,

Jordan sent stooges in to disrupt the protesters' activities.  
Be wary of what you read and don't make any assumptions.

UNQUOTE

This was in response to a previous post that inquired about a protest Web site and whether suspicious changes had been made on the site.

The post (above) was censored by DeafDC personnel and is no longer present on the DeafDC blog, as of Thursday, December 21, 2006.

The current thread can be read here:

<http://www.deafdc.com/blog/shane-feldman/2006-12-19/fssa-threatens-gallaudet-board/>

Here is a pdf file which records the original thread, as it existed at 6:52 pm Eastern, on December 19, 2006 (See page 6 of the pdf file to see the post before it was censored and removed):

<http://gallyprotest.org/deafdc.pdf>

This is not the first time that Jordan has pressured people to censor posts on blogs. Many other incidents of censorship similar to this have occurred since last May.

As for the question of whether or not Jordan spied on the protesters, we wish to extend the proper benefit of the doubt to specific people, yet at the same time, certain of them must be called on to account for irregularities in their behavior.

Reference the case of the irregular behavior of Andrew J. Imparato, the President of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD).

According to AAPD's own Web site, Irving Jordan was a founder of the organization:

<http://www.aapd-dc.org/docs/info.php>

#### QUOTE:

AAPD was founded by these five key disability rights activists and leaders: Justin Dart, former Chair of the President's Committee; Dr. Sylvia Walker of Howard University; Paul Hearne, President of The Dole Foundation; John D. Kemp, President & CEO, Very Special Arts; and I. King Jordan, President of Gallaudet University.

#### UNQUOTE

On the afternoon of Saturday, May 6, 2006, Imparato appeared as a "mystery guest" before a group of protesters meeting in the first-floor conference room of Fowler Hall. He was introduced and then acted as an adviser to the group. He gave advice as to how the protesters should call for greater transparency in a new presidential search process and also gave advice on related issues.

Imparato avoided mentioning that he was connected to Irving Jordan. We find it highly inappropriate that he appeared before the protest group without mentioning that Jordan was a founding member of the organization that he (Imparato, as the President) represented, i.e., the AAPD.

Also, no mention was made of the fact that one of Jordan's high-level special assistants, Fred Weiner, was a member of the AAPD Board. As of December 21, 2006, Fred Weiner is still a member of the AAPD Board of Directors. Neither was any mention made of the fact that the self-purported protester who pushed the "mystery guest" on the protest group (claiming that Jordan would intervene and block the guest's appearance if he found out) was a long-term friend of Jordan's.

On May 6th, Imparato also made arrangements to help the protest group in further ways, at some point offering to help the protesters with more of their specific activities.

Three days later, unbeknownst to the protesters, Imparato appeared, via telephone, on WBUR, the Boston affiliate of National Public Radio, on the morning of Tuesday, May 9, 2006. The program was broadcast on approximately 45 radio stations nationwide.

Here is a transcript of the interview:

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## **2) Transcript of Andrew J. Imparato interview on the “Here and Now” program, May 9, 2006**

ROBIN YOUNG (host): They debated for the past week at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, the nation’s only liberal arts college for the deaf. Last week the Board of trustees appointed Provost Jane Fernandes as President over the objections of student protesters. And last night, Fernandes received a vote of “no confidence” from faculty. Well, is it her leadership abilities? Or, are some also upset that, while Fernandes has been deaf since birth, she reads lips and speaks, and only later in life began to use sign language?

The controversy has once again focused attention on what the outgoing President of Gallaudet calls “identity politics” in the American deaf community. Joining us on the line is Andrew Imparato. He is President of the American Association of People with Disabilities. He’s been closely following this issue at Gallaudet. Welcome Andrew.

ANDREW IMPARATO (speaking on the telephone): Thank you. Thanks for having me.

YOUNG: And we understand that despite the faculty vote of “no confidence” last night, the trustees are today backing Fernandes, and she’s also saying she won’t resign. But what else are you hearing? What are students saying?

IMPARATO: Well, you know, I think that it’s important to recognize that a lot of people on the campus, students, faculty, staff and alumni, who are expressing concerns, are not saying that the primary issue is that she’s not deaf—culturally deaf enough—or that she grew up speaking. What I’m hearing people say is that she’s not competent as an administrator, that she lacks the vision and the capacity to lead Gallaudet and make it the best university that it can be. So, I know that she and the president of the university are both saying that this is about the fact that she’s not culturally deaf enough, but that’s not what I’m hearing from the students, faculty, staff and alumni who are protesting.

YOUNG: We understand that there are those that feel that there were better, stronger candidates, but let's go back to that point that Jane Fernandes makes, that she believes she's perceived as "not deaf enough." What does that mean in the deaf community? Tell us about this controversy between people who can and do speak, and those who sign.

IMPARATO: Well, you know I think it's complex. In the deaf community, people who grow up in a family where both of their parents are deaf tend to be more culturally deaf, in part, because they grow up in an environment where American Sign Language is the language that everybody uses. So it becomes, you know, very much a part of their culture from the moment they start to acquire language as a young child. There are, you know, lots of different forms of hearing loss, you know. If you think about people that you might know who are, you know, over 70, or over 80. A lot of them experience hearing loss, but they're not a part of the Deaf culture—

YOUNG: Right. And Jane Fernandes says that there's a perception that there's a kind of "perfect deaf person" who is, as you said, born deaf to deaf parents, learns sign language, goes to deaf schools, marries a deaf person. But what do you think? Do you think that there is a little bit of that in this debate, because the outgoing university President, I. King Jordan, also says that what's underlying this is a refusal to accept change.

IMPARATO: Well, from my perspective, I think that the protesters certainly are concerned about the kind of change that a President Fernandes would represent. But I don't know that that means they're opposed to just any type of change. What I hear them arguing is that they want to, you know, increase the academic standards of excellence at Gallaudet, they want, you know, morale to be better. They want the community to come together, and they see her as a divisive presence, as somebody who was autocratic in her role as Provost, and as somebody who's not going to bring the community together.

YOUNG: Do they worry that, you know, someone who *can* speak might be more inclined to, oh, take part in other, new things happening for the deaf community, for instance cochlear implants—devices that enable the deaf to hear—technology where the deaf can use computers? How dramatically is new technology changing the deaf community, and perhaps does she represent some of that, too? I don't know. Just asking.

IMPARATO: You know I think all of those issues are real issues within the deaf community, and they're much broader than one university. I mean, those are issues around, you know, Deaf culture, and how, you know, medical interventions interact with the Deaf culture, and that that's a debate that has been going on for a while, and as the medical interventions get more sophisticated, I think that the debate is only going to increase.

YOUNG: Is there a concern that American Sign Language, so precious to so many deaf people, might be dying out because of people speaking, as Jane Fernandes does, or using this new, modern technology?

IMPARATO: Yes, I mean, I don't know if this is a perfect analogy, but I would analogize between the concerns about preserving Deaf culture to the concerns that I hear from a lot of Jewish people who want their children to marry other Jewish people, in part, so that the Jewish culture can continue.

YOUNG: Hmm. It's called "identity politics" by the current, and soon to be outgoing, President, I. King Jordan. I remember seeing recently a documentary on this issue, and deaf parents were profoundly affected by the children's choices. In one scene, sobbing, you know, feeling betrayed, because their children chose cochlear implants, something that made them feel cut off, you know, from their children. Could you try to communicate how emotional these issues are.

IMPARATO: Well, you know, I think they're very emotional. They do go to, you know, a strong feeling of how, you know, one's culture is important and you want to preserve your culture. But I have to say, you know, when I was with the protesters this weekend, what impressed me from the protesters were how unified they were, and how there didn't seem to be lines between the people who are, you know, quote-unquote "perfectly deaf," or you know, an integral part of Deaf culture, and folks who are outsiders to that.

YOUNG: Andrew, it sounds as if you are sympathetic to the student protesters and the faculty who also voted "no confidence" in Jane Fernandes. It sounds as if—Do you think the trustees made a bad choice?

IMPARATO: You know, I don't feel like I have enough facts to take a position like that. I'm sympathetic to both sides, and my primary interest here is to, you know, try to help resolve what seems like an irreconcilable conflict right now. Because I don't think it's in the interest of either side to have the conflict bleed into the summer and into the academic year in the fall. And I'm afraid that if, you know, people don't come to the table and really try to negotiate in good faith *this week*, the result is going to be more protest, starting in August.

YOUNG: Let me ask you this, you said you're hearing criticism of Jane Fernandes' leadership abilities and her style, what are the trustees saying in her support?

IMPARATO: Well, I think that the trustees would point to the fact that this is not a popularity contest. They're looking for a leader who's a very strong manager and has a strong vision for the future of the university. And I think a lot of them believe in their hearts that her unpopularity has to do with the fact that she's had to make some tough decisions in her 11 years at Gallaudet, and some of those decisions alienated key people on the campus, and that those folks are kind of instigating this protest. I also think that Board of Trustees is concerned that the people leading the protest are

so aggressive and so well respected within the deaf community that even people who might not agree with them are too intimidated to speak out.

YOUNG: That's Andrew Imparato, he's President of the American Association of People with Disabilities. They're based in Washington, DC. We'll continue to follow this story.

[End radio interview.]

AUDIO ONLY:

[http://www.here-now.org/shows/2006/05/20060509\\_9.asp](http://www.here-now.org/shows/2006/05/20060509_9.asp)

(Commentary, continued from Item 1, above:)

Clearly, in the opinion of this commentator, Andrew Imparato had been in communication with Irving Jordan within the days leading up to this interview. This is evident in his reference to the protest supposedly being instigated by "key people on the campus," as he (Imparato) said in his interview. Even though he claimed that he was conveying a viewpoint that came from the Board of Trustees, we can safely assume that Imparato is actually conveying the opinion of Irving Jordan.

Jordan tried to convince Board members that there was a "cabal" (his term) of six professors who "threatened" students with having their grades lowered if they did not participate in the protest, and that (according to Jordan's bizarre, invented scenario) the student involvement of the protest was artificially created by those six professors and was not genuine. Later events proved Jordan wrong, because virtually the entire Americo-Canadian deaf community rose up in righteous anger in support of the protesters, thus, forcing the Board's hand.

Imparato's comments in the radio interview, by this commentator's opinion, reflect Jordan's efforts to inculcate his (Jordan's) invented view (about the "key people on the campus") into the public's consciousness. Further evidence that Imparato was participating in a Jordan-led publicity campaign is given by that fact that Jordan was appearing before the National Press Club on the same day. Clearly, Jordan was pulling out all the stops in order to influence public opinion, with the ultimate goal of impressing upon the Board of Trustees the inevitability of a Fernandes presidency.

As these events were taking place, on Tuesday, May 9, 2006, the protesters were finishing up a letter intended to be presented to Members of Congress. Here is an excerpt of the letter:

### **3) Proposed letter to Congress by the FSSA Committee on Congressional Relations and Research (Excerpt, May 9, 2006)**

We, the joint Faculty-Student-Staff-Alumni Committee of Gallaudet University (FSSA), being co-equal Americans and supporters of the American ideals of freedom and self-determination, call on you, our members of Congress, to investigate and take action on the matter of the recent selection of Jane Fernandes to be the next president of Gallaudet University—a choice which is completely unacceptable to us and is inimical to the purpose of Gallaudet University—an institution of higher learning where the pursuit of excellence must rightly be the number one goal.

Jane Fernandes has shown by her actions over the past six years as our university provost that she does not share that same ideals of excellence that we possess. Under her tenure as provost we have seen academic standards falling and expectations being lowered—all of which is completely unnecessary and preventable. But it came about because of her backwards attitude and her inability to truly understand who we are. It is true that she is deaf herself, but deafness itself—though the experience does have certain influences—deafness itself is not the defining characteristic of one's outlook on life—nor should it be.

We simply cannot accept the Board of Trustees' decision that she, as an individual, is the best candidate for the job. We beseech you to not misunderstand us and mistakenly think our protest represents a minor internecine conflict within the deaf community. To think along those lines is to fall victim to diversionary tactics.

Gallaudet, as a quasi-public agency, was established by an act of Congress in 1864, with the articles of incorporation being revised by the Education of the Deaf Act of 1986. Even if Gallaudet's Board of Trustees has followed all of the rules of articles of incorporation correctly (in hiring Fernandes), when any decision made by the Board of Trustees is recognized as being inimical to the best interests of Gallaudet University, and hence also inimical to the interests of the American people, it is the responsibility of the American people, including its deaf citizens, to call on their elected representatives in Congress to take action to rectify the situation. As stakeholders in the success of Gallaudet, we simply cannot passively accept the decision of our Board.

We are exceedingly grateful to the American people for their vote of confidence in us and their willingness to fund the lion's share of our university's budget. We do not wish to appeal to any sense of entitlement or demand. We hope our fellow American citizens will agree with us that once the decision has been made to grant the funds, a spirit of fairness and equity should accompany the implementation of plans and projects which are so enabled.



Let us not get distracted by terms which convey multiple layers of meanings, as propounded by fringe academic theorists and fringe political activists. When we declare that the presidential search committee of Gallaudet did not consider a sufficiently diverse group of candidates, we simply mean to use the term in its best possible sense and appeal to a sense of fair play and equal treatment.

Likewise, the term “multiculturalism” has been often used in the particularist sense, and has been seen as a call to cultural separatism. Instead, we use the term in the pluralist sense as a way to describe our vision of being a part of the whole of American culture, while still cherishing those cultural characteristics that are dear to us.

We realize that the mission of Gallaudet is to serve all types of individuals with varying abilities in the use of American Sign Language and varying abilities to speak and hear. We find that we must speak out now...

[End excerpt]

(Commentary, continued from Item 2, above:)

After four days of work involving several protesters, the letter to Congress was completed on the evening of Tuesday, May 9. However, a power shift had taken place within the organization over the course of the preceding four days, beginning on the day of Imperato’s appearance before the group. As part of the power shift, Imperato had managed to insert himself into the decision-making process.

When a prominent protest leader attempted to make an announcement to the residents of Tent City about plans for a trip to Congress the next day (Wednesday), this leader was informed by the new protest power players that Imperato must first give his approval. This commentator, being a member of the protest committee that drafted the letter, then proceeded to contact Imperato by telephone. Imperato gave his e-mail address, and the letter was immediately e-mailed to him for his approval. Shortly thereafter, the new power players had this commentator ejected from the campus without having any legitimate reason to do so whatsoever. An embargo was placed on the letter to Congress, the trip the next day was canceled, and the letter was never delivered.

In this commentator’s opinion, we can easily assume that Imperato forwarded the letter straight to Irving Jordan, who then told Imperato how he wished him to proceed. How do we know? No direct evidence is available and will probably not become available until such time that a proper Congressional investigation turns up more clues, but for now it suffices to note that in his radio interview, Imperato portrayed himself as being a mediator between the protest group and the Jordan-Kunkle-Fernandes troika. Here is the language he used:

## QUOTE

I'm sympathetic to both sides, and my primary interest here is to, you know, try to help resolve what seems like a irreconcilable conflict right now.

## UNQUOTE

Clearly, Imperato's appearance before the protest group, in this commentator's opinion, was disingenuous. At no time during the meeting of Saturday, May 6, 2006 did Imperato present himself as being any type of mediator. For him to claim that he was a sort of mediator three days later in a radio interview is outrageous and unacceptable behavior (for which he might very well be called into account in front of Congress.)

Strategy-wise, it would make sense for Jordan to push for pretended "negotiations." Either Fernandes would be sworn in as President in January, or not. There would be no middle ground. Any movement in the direction of "negotiations" could only benefit Jordan and Fernandes. Once Fernandes was sworn in, then all bets would be off and all prior agreements with the protesters could easily be distorted in their original intent and put off into oblivion—the sort of tactics with which Jordan is very familiar.

**4) “Has Jane K. Fernandes become a symbol of SCARE (Social Injustice, Coldness, Audism, Racism and Egocentrism)?”**

By Barbara Di Giovanni

LINK:

<http://deafprogressivism.blogspot.com/2006/11/has-jane-k-fernandes-become-symbol-of.html>

*Addendum (July 29, 2012):*

Note: In Barb DiGi's editorial, the reference to the Laurent Clerc Center teacher and staff members' open letter is in reference to this open letter:

<http://clerccenterprotest.blogspot.com/2006/10/our-letter.html>

Also, in Barb's editorial, when she mentions David O. Reynolds interviewing Fernandes (during the noontime forum on Monday, May 8, 2006), it was in reference to the video included in this blog post (click on photo in blog post to view video):

<http://indyforfssa.blogspot.com/2006/10/jkf-respect-asl-as-language-not.html>

Alternate video links: <http://blip.tv/file/get/Jkrieger-JKFBiBi113.wmv>

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<http://blip.tv/file/get/Jkrieger-JKFBiBi113.wmv>

[http://saveourdeafschools.org/reynolds\\_v\\_fernandes.wmv](http://saveourdeafschools.org/reynolds_v_fernandes.wmv)

*Second addendum (Sept. 11, 2018):*

See also:

[http://saveourdeafschools.org/coming\\_home.pdf](http://saveourdeafschools.org/coming_home.pdf)