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AN OPEN LETTER TO GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Dear Warden, Senior Management, and Members of Council,

We, as a Working Group specialising in Queer History at one of Europe's leading research universities, are writing to unequivocally condemn the decision made to close the MA Queer History at Goldsmiths. We call for the threat of redundancy made to our colleagues to be revoked immediately as well as a commitment to protect and support the future of the Centre for Queer History.

It is with a very heavy heart that we learnt of the impending closure of the MA Queer History due to the threat of redundancy to colleagues such as Dr. Justin Bengry, who has devotedly spent the last five years establishing this essential master's programme alongside founding the groundbreaking Centre.

Closing such a master's programme for alleged cost reasons shows above all a social phenomenon: when it benefits them, people and institutions will adorn themselves with the 'other'. Supporting the otherised groups makes institutions appear progressive, but as soon as it comes to protecting marginalised communities or standing up for them, this is perceived to be too costly and the 'other' must disappear again. Turning against your own 'progressive' flagship for cost reasons shows how much conservative values still guide and direct your managerial decisions regarding the humanities.

We are especially heartbroken to see our fellow researchers impacted by this incomprehensibly destructive management decision. The research conducted by the specialist historians of Queer History at Goldsmiths has been of global significance to the field and as scholars we have had the joy of meeting and learning from them.

As a Working Group made up of Master's, PhD, as well as Post-Doctoral Researchers we have benefited directly from Dr. Bengry's intellectual generosity when he visited us at the European University Institute (Florence, Italy) this academic year. Dr. Bengry gave valuable input to early career researchers in the spirit of international research collaboration which is essential to the development of the burgeoning field of Queer History and beyond.

All people involved in Queer History research do valuable work that not only unveils the past but also greatly influences the present. Especially in times like these, when intolerance and soaring levels of hatred are on the rise again, research like this is of the utmost importance. Closing the master's now not only emboldens reactionary voices, but stands in the way of intellectual progress, fought so hard for by so many, in a developing field that still has much research to conduct to address historical inaccuracies and gaps. It is not merely about 'adding' examples of queerness to historical research, something which could just be delegated to anyone with a history degree - Queer History completely reframes historical understandings and warrants specialist knowledge for teaching at the level of higher education.

The redundancies close the centre - there is no Queer History without the specialist historians working in this field. Closing the master's in these times is backward, incomprehensible, and wrong for an academic institution meant to cultivate innovative new research. It does not help to counteract the resurgent hatred in our society for everything that is 'other' but supports this abhorrent development by depriving academics of their basis for socially relevant research. By depriving this socially significant work of any basis for existence, you are also morally contributing to the aggravation of the social climate as well as impeding the field's development by obstructing researchers as well as the education and training of future researchers.

Goldsmiths' institutionalisation of the MA was an achievement that gave space for progressive academics to conduct vital research. It took this work out of the precariousness that often burdens academics, especially those working in marginalised fields. It is precisely this precariousness that you are suddenly sending these academics back to, after reaping the benefits of their hard work and innovation. That is a disgrace.

Not only do the scholars who so conscientiously established this programme face precarity but also, and perhaps even more so, the students who were thriving in this precious research space only to have it taken away from them so brutally. The decision to jeopardise the MA programme and its staff is completely disconnected from Goldsmiths' own student body, and prospective students. There is a hunger and enthusiasm for queer, feminist, Black and intersectional histories that universities are failing to provide for in a sustainable way. Goldsmiths appeared as a pioneer, only to let both faculty and students down with its recent decisions.

We are equally appalled that Goldsmiths has also made redundant academics integral to the MA in Black British History and Black British Literature which, like the MA in Queer History are groundbreaking in their contribution to global research and the cultural

understanding of historically marginalised groups. These degrees, and research centres, set an example for exciting new research possibilities much needed in universities, and all of this is now being destroyed because of policies (at government and college management level) that are focused on economic rather than societal interests, and which therefore expose the humanities in general to clear-cutting. In this way, it is increasingly impossible to develop ways in which contemporary societies can learn to deal with difference and diversity in a respectful and democratic way.

The destruction of the MA in Queer History, as well as the MA in Black British History and Literature, is a disaster for us all and we call upon Goldsmiths to revoke their decision to implement these redundancies.

Queer and Feminist Working Group, European University Institute