

Dear President Brooks,

Pursuant to your instructions, I respectfully request an appeal hearing by the national NAACP Board of Directors regarding the suspension on false grounds of my presidency of the New Jersey Youth and College Division of the NAACP which was issued on Dec. 4, 2015.

Due to Rev. Gill Ford's many failures to respond to my emails requesting guidance during the course of my term as YC President and his refusal to provide my team with officer training in a timely fashion despite our many heartfelt appeals, which resulted in the legitimacy of the leadership of YC's officers being called into question, I have no confidence in the reverend's ability to fairly oversee my suspension appeal. Therefore, I respectfully request an alternate to be appointed to handle my appeal's oversight.

Please also note that Carolyn Ann Powell, cc'd in the letter of suspension, has not been our advisor since leaving the State of New Jersey and her position as NJ NAACP State Conference Treasurer on November 1, 2014. Our advisor is Mr. James E. Harris <jharrisnaacp@yahoo.com> .

This is my rebuttal to the Article X charges which have resulted in my suspension:

1.

PROG Training was not funded by the NAACP, so I did not misuse NAACP funds. PROG was funded by another agency, which set aside seats for youth from social/environmental justice communities. All attendees appeared to have been attending on a scholarship basis. I was the only youth from New Jersey who attended; I was not reimbursed for the full costs of my travel to and from the event; and I was not told that there would be no air conditioning or fans – and little ventilation in the housing, either – at the camp in which the training was located in the Umstead State Park in North Carolina.

I found the training abysmally bad and the trainers, often verbally abusive to participants. They were incensed upon their facts being questioned by participants, including myself. Several of the older participants saw little merit in the training and left earlier than I did. I had planned to leave early on the last day of training but was approached by a staff member who told me that two young women were uncomfortable because I sometimes removed my shirt (to cool down) and suggested that I leave early because of their discomfort.

I believe I acted within my legal rights and accepted social norms, in removing my shirt. However, I agreed to leave because the training was so little valuable to me that I welcomed the opportunity to leave early.

For the edification of those interested in this matter, I have attached the personal notes I jotted down when I returned from SPROG about my unhappy experience there.

2.

It is not true that I have failed to attend meetings of the New Jersey State Conference, although it seems true that the adult State Executive Committee wishes to create the perception that I am derelict in my duties as state president.

I have been seen at state meetings by a number of people, including colleagues whom have accompanied me; and some adult members who are aware of my team members' personal financial circumstances, who have paid the \$15 per person meetings fees when adult Executive Committee or Youth Works Committee members blocked myself and other youth from joining the meetings because we lacked the meetings fees.

My team was intentionally excluded from state convention planning meetings in both 2014 and 2015 by the adult Executive Committee and convention planning committee chair.

As for PROG, I was not asked to submit a statement about my experience with PROG and saw no reason to submit one – to any organization. I have complied with my obligation to submit other written reports as outlined in Article VII (DUTies of Officers of Units) in the Youth & College Division Guidelines section of the bylaws.

I was asked by the adult NJ State Executive Committee to submit quarterly written presidents' reports, and I have done this. To my knowledge, the Presidents' reports I sent to Secretary Vivian Darkes in advance of State Executive Committee and Quarterly meetings have not been shared with the general membership. I have also never seen any request for information I have asked Ms. Darkes to send out to the general membership, forwarded to them – or received a response from a member indicating that he or she had received information contained in a report I have sent to Ms. Darkes.

Since the NJ Youth and College Division was not provided with funds of our own or a bank account to collect funds in, there hasn't been any need to provide Treasurer's Reports, which are also called for in Article VII. Some of the 2014 conference expenses for our group were paid out of pocket by my brother, State Treasurer Luís Ariel Lopez Wei, whom the State Executive Committee has refused to reimburse out of a grant the Youth & College Division secured from the NJ Education Association (NJEA), which the adults have insisted on "holding" for us.

Since the State Executive Committee did not allow me to present my YC 2015 President's Report at the 2015 NJ NAACP State Convention, please find it attached.

3.

I have not yet reached my 25th birthday, and am attaching a copy of my passport as proof. I will turn 25 on January 31, 2016.

List of the documents attached to this rebuttal (can also be viewed at <http://j.mp/IvanWeiDocs>).

1. Jacqui Patterson's forward of SPROG training announcement (showing that this was not an NAACP funded training)
2. My statement about the SPROG training (how bad it was)
3. My YC 2015 President's Report
4. Copy of my Passport



Respectfully Submitted,

Jorge Ivan Gomez Wei  
(suspended) NJ Youth and College Division President

Additionally, I would like to append the following comments to my rebuttal. (Documentation referred to in these comments is also posted at <http://j.mp/IvanWeiotherdocs>)

First, I would like to state that I am in debt for \$20K in student loans – and most of what I have spent that money on is doing the work of the NAACP. This was my choice, but I find it despicable that I have spent so much time and effort to serve an organization that not only doesn't care about me, but whose members have openly slandered me, demeaned me and the national leadership of which has taken no action to protect, assist or guide me – and instead, has condemned me without providing me an opportunity to respond to egregious charges based on false information.

- Once again, the NJ State NAACP has attempted to disrupt my scholarly success by making it necessary for me to contest during college finals week, their bogus assertions in the Article X document which has led to my suspension as NJ Youth and College Division president. The adult NJ State Conference Executive Board's exclusive aim as regards YC Division leadership, appears to consistently be that of disrupting and blocking our Executive Committee from functioning as leaders of the youth and college NAACP units across New Jersey; and they appear to have a specific and special animosity towards me, which they have manifested both publicly and privately.
- Although based on bogus claims, this Article X suspension achieves the ends to which Pres. Smith has been vindictively and personally committed for over a year: removing me from office as President of the NJ YC Division and casting aspersion upon me as an individual; an NAACP member and a state NAACP leader.
- Pres. Smith has stated his commitment to a personal agenda of vengeance against me in retaliation for writing the letter from September 12, 2014 that I sent to Pres. Brooks last year, detailing some of the problems my Executive Committee and I have encountered as state YC leaders – many of which are difficulties with Pres. Smith and his Executive Board. Pres. Smith and his Executive Board made their position very clear during the impromptu emergency meeting they called on September 14, 2014 following a State Convention planning meeting to which they compelled the attendance of myself, State YC Treasurer (and my brother) Ariel Lopez Wei, State YC Assistant Secretary Nora Figueroa and my mother, Kimi Wei, who had accompanied us to Trenton that day. I would like to note that this meeting – although it was impromptu for my team, appeared to have been carefully planned in advance by the adult leadership; and it lasted for two hours. I had notified the Executive Board by email on September 12, 2014 that my team would have to leave the meeting by 5pm due to some of my team members' early class schedule the following day; and when my team got up to make our departure is when Pres. Smith left his seat at the front of the room and beckoned us to an impromptu meeting with him and the Executive Committee in a private room, where they proceeded to harangue me for 2 hours.
- I would like to note that although the adult Executive Board has made many complaints against me as NJ YC Division President, they have never provided any statement of what expectations they have for me or the YC Executive Committee.
- The adult Executive Board members and the physically imposing Pres. Smith seem to have made it their specific business to intimidate members of the Youth and College Division Executive Board and those youth NAACP members associated with us. This has caused grave consequences to our ability to function effectively as a division and has even adversely affected our scholarship and personal self-confidence.
- There is ample evidence that members of the NJ State NAACP Executive Board and other unit presidents and members closely aligned with them, have slandered me and members of the YC Division and have attempted to block me from fulfilling my duties as YC President in order to create the perception that I am derelict in my duties.
  - a. Jacqui Patterson, Director of the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program, was present at the 2014 state convention when Richard Smith blocked

me from delivering my president's report at the closing plenary gathering and then proceeded to make accusatory statements about me to the membership and demand my resignation.

- b. Adult State Conference Executive Committee and Youth Works Committee members, while calling my presidency and YC Division's legitimacy into question by claiming that I, or we, are not compliant state YC leaders for one reason or another, have reached out to form relationships with leaders of other YC units and have helped several new branches become established. They have excluded me from assisting with these efforts, have refused to share contact information for the leadership; and are refusing to aid with the establishment of the Ramapo College branch, which is my present school.
- c. Refused to provide a list of known and/or compliant youth and college units in New Jersey. Pres. Smith kept challenging my request for information about YC chapters across the state, demeaning me for wanting that information. When I came up with my own list, Richard's team took that information and used it to contact chapters.
- d. In 2014 I was blocked by Richard Smith from giving my president's report at the closing plenary session and in 2015 I was not put on the agenda to deliver my report.
- e. State adults have refused to provide YC with the information needed to open a bank account, including IRS documentation and letters of identification as requested by our financial institution.
- f. Richard Smith has never returned one phone call or responded to one email I sent him asking to discuss NAACP matters.
- g. At the November 14 2015 meeting Youth Works committee meeting that took place after the State Executive Board meeting, Crystal Darkes, Pres. Smith and Rev. Scott said that I was no longer acting president because YC elections had not been held at the 2015 State Convention. I contested this assertion by pointing to the statement in the bylaws which clearly states that the YC president remains in office until the new president is installed or until s/he ages out of office at age 25 (see passport page included in the response to my suspension of Dec 4 2015). This is just one of many instances where the adult State Executive or Youth Works Committees have attempted to undermine my position as State YC President and prohibit me from performing my duties.
- h. Although the State Executive Board refused to fund YC activities or expenses, help us to establish a bank account for the purpose of fundraising or collecting dues from YC units across the state and appropriated funds given to YC Div by the NJEA; and even though we have made them aware that our members are mostly indigent, full time college students – and it is an extreme hardship for us to pay meeting fees – and even to pay travel expenses – out of our own pockets, adult Executive Board members have forced YC Division Executive Committee members to pay to attend quarterly state meetings. Youth Works Committee

members Crystal Darkes and Rev. Ken Scott are two of the members who have blocked our entry to meetings if we could not pay.

- i. Soon after NJ YC officers were elected, the State Executive Board claimed that our treasurer, Luis Ariel Lopez Wei, could not serve as treasurer because he is my brother.
- Rev. Gill Ford seems to have colluded with Pres. Smith to prevent myself and the YC Executive Committee from fulfilling our roles as YC leadership. Specifically:
    - a. Rev. Ford refused for many months to provide training for the YC Executive Committee. We missed the general training because it was a busy time for our Executive Committee members, but the flyer advising of the training said that it could take place at a later date; and veteran NAACP members told us the same thing. However, several dates that were proposed for the training to take place were cancelled either by the State Executive Committee or national office staff. Although we expressed a willingness to national office staff that we were willing to travel to Maryland to get trained, we were not offered a date and were told to wait until trainers could come to New Jersey. Not having official training was held out for many months as one of the ostensible reasons our YC Executive Committee was told by Pres. Smith and State Executive Board that we could not fulfill our duties as the YC leadership.
    - b. Rev. Ford has refused to acknowledge our choice of Mr. James E. Harris as advisor to replace Carolyn Ann. Carolyn Ann Powell is cc'd as YC Advisor on the Article X suspension sent to me on Dec 4 2015 although the national office has been advised that our Executive Board selected Mr. James E. Harris as our advisor; and although there should be a record on file with the national office of Carolyn Ann resigning as NJ State Conference Treasurer and ceding her position as YC Advisor when she left the state of New Jersey and moved to Texas, on November 1st, 2014. As stated elsewhere, the national office was also advised of our selection of Mr. Harris as replacement advisor; but he is not cc'd. We also sent multiple emails to Sammie Dow, Rev. Ford and Pres. Brooks to confirm we did this properly, but to no avail.
    - c. Ford supposedly authorized the decision to not hold YC Division elections at the 2015 state convention. YC Division elections were also not held at the 2014 state convention.
  - The State Conference Executive Board has taken unwarranted, aggressive action against myself and the YC Executive Committee on several occasions including:
    - a. At the beginning of the YC Executive Committee's term, Carolyn Ann told us we had to attend a "mandatory (phone) meeting" with Richard Smith
    - b. Demanded my resignation at Sept 14 2014 impromptu meeting
    - c. Demanded my resignation at the closing plenary of the 2014 state convention
    - d. President Smith has publicly shunned myself and YC Division members by refusing to shake our hands or look at us when we have greeted him
    - e. State Executive Board and Youth Works Committee members have attempted to bar us from attending state meetings

- f. Rev. Ken Scott stalks me at state meetings
  - g. YC Division members and YC unit members are often treated with a wall of hostility and disrespect by adult state leaders during phone meetings and at state meetings and state conventions. George Correa, a member of the BCC NAACP, stated last week about encountering this hostility, "It shouldn't be this difficult to do a good thing."
  - h. Richard Smith carried out an attack on Ivan's character at 2014 convention and asking for his removal, but NAACP members pushed back and requested an investigation, for which purpose an ad hoc committee was established over the objections of Pres. Smith. When Smith's team tried to give a false report of what the committee came up with at a later state meeting, Jesse Butler and other June Dungee stated that the committee had not agreed to recommend my removal and that the actual recommendation was to work with youth and help them get more organized - which no attempt was made to do. Joyce Molineaux points out that this was an illegal attempt to remove me from my position.
  - i. Bruce Morgan, at the stated direction of Pres. Smith, blocked Ari & Nora from voting at the 2015 state conference although they are both members of a compliant unit.
- Rev. Ken Scott, claims to be the NJ YC Advisor, and acts in this capacity, although he was not selected by the YC Executive Committee to fulfill this role.
  - Rev. Ken Scott has inappropriately acted in the role of YC Advisor in NJ, although he is not authorized to fulfill this role.
  - The YC Secretary Dominique Banks, whose mother has a close relationship to State Executive Board member Loretta Winters as a member of her chapter, has refused to communicate with me or other members of the YC Executive Committee since I wrote a letter to Pres. Brooks last year asking for help working through difficulties YC has experienced with the adult NJ State Conference leadership (see letter, attached)
  - The State Executive Board asked me for my plan to lead the Youth and College Division; made it impossible for me to execute this plan by blocking (or creating uncertainty about) my presidency; and have been executing the plan themselves. One key component of my plan (see Vision and Goals Statement attached) calls for bringing youth and college branches into compliance across the state and helping to charter more branches. Apparently, Richard Smith has paid fees (and/or dues) to assist certain branches with becoming compliant
  - However, Pres. Smith has refused to provide the letter needed to charter a branch at Ramapo College, where I am currently a student. I also asked Bergen County Branch President Anthony Cureton four times via email for the letter I also need from him and he refused to acknowledge my request for his letter to open up the college chapter. (see attachments)
  - The Youth Works Committee has attempted to control the Youth and College Division, which is not their function as set forth in the bylaws.
  - Former YC Advisor Carolyn Ann attempted to control YC Executive Committee meetings and our operation by taking the floor during meetings and refusing to yield it to me as

president, or to anyone else who wished to speak; by naysaying proposals we made to organize and educate the state youth.

- Former YC Advisor Carolyn Ann did not fulfill her obligations as our advisor. Specifically:
  - a. She did not instruct us in the proper paperwork filing procedures
  - b. She did not instruct us to file an annual report
  - c. She did not make us aware that the NJ YC Division was incompliant for multiple years under my predecessor Tony Conover, who was also advised by Carolyn Ann
  - d. She did not connect us with staff at the national office who can provide us with information as we needed it
- The YC Division was not provided records, minutes or other assets from the previous Executive Committee, whose term ended in 2014 when our present team was installed – although the outgoing team’s advisor and secretary became our advisor and assistant secretary – so these assets should have been made available. We made requests for these items to the adult State Conference President, the YC Assistant Secretary (who became our Secretary) Dominique Banks and our advisor, Carolyn Ann Powell. Among the items we asked for repeatedly but which were not provided were:
  - a. Meeting minutes
  - b. Bank account, financial records and treasurer’s reports
  - c. IRS documentation to open a bank account
  - d. A list of NAACP youth and college units in the State of New Jersey, whether compliant or not
  - e. A list of compliant NAACP youth and college units in NJ and their leadership team’s contact information
  - f. Additionally, the previous Executive Committee did not file annual reports with the national office or submit scheduled annual payments

As separate but related issues, I would like to comment on these additional concerns:

1. In regards to membership matters:
  - a. The national office has made a complete hash out of handling membership filings or renewals. Ivan Wei and Ariel Lopez Wei, for example, have not received new membership cards although our membership dues were covered by our tickets to the Morristown NAACP Freedom Fund in October 2015 (see attached email). Our previous membership dues were covered by tickets to the Bergen County NAACP Freedom Fund dinners but new cards are not always issued to those of us that attend.
  - b. It is unclear whether members’ membership term commences when they pay their dues – whether this is handled as a cash transaction by a unit or as an online renewal; Or, when the national Membership Office issues a membership card – an event which may occur several months after membership forms and payment have been submitted.
  - c. Some members who renew online do not get reassigned to membership in the chapter of previous affiliation.



- d. The unit's portion of dues paid online may never be paid to the unit of affiliation.
  - e. Mistakes are often made in the spelling of members' names on membership cards and sometimes a card with the correct spelling is never issued.
2. In regards to financial irregularities at the state level
- a. I learned that Mr. Thomas Reynolds resigned from his position as State Treasurer after the unauthorized withdrawal of several thousand dollars from the State Treasury for his personal use. I am unaware of the repayment status of these monies.
  - b. Carolyn Ann Powell, who replaced Mr. Reynolds as State Treasurer, did not submit regular financial reports. Previously, she was treasurer of the NJ YC Division.
  - c. The adult NJ State Conference leadership did not provide funds they promised to the YC Division to be used on behalf of the state's youth – even though in their fundraising efforts they hold forth youth programming and support as one of the reasons donors should contribute to the NJ NAACP.
  - d. The adult NJ State Conference leadership refused to make available to YC members – including the NJ YC President and other Executive Committee members – funds for state or national convention expenses
  - e. The adult NJ State Conference leadership appropriated funds given to the NJ YC Division for its exclusive use
  - f. The adult NJ State Conference has refused to give to the NJ YC Division, access to the funds granted to it by the NJEA
  - g. I have heard that the expenses for the 2015 NJ State Convention exceeded the amount of funds raised for it; however, a report of revenue and expenses has not been furnished by the adult NJ State Treasurer or Executive Committee
3. There was a seemingly unnecessary and very costly contingent of armed security guards at the 2015 NJ NAACP Convention. Some youth found it intimidating and disturbing.
4. The national office has declined to provide us with:
- a. A dedicated national staff liaison for New Jersey
  - b. A Region II Youth Advisor
  - c. A top-tier administrator to resolve discrepancies and provide guidance when needed. Please note that Rev. Ford has never answered in writing even one of our requests for clarification of a procedural question or issue
  - d. A redress procedure for resolving issues that we are unable to resolve at the state level. Please note that youth NAACP leaders from other states we have connected with identify this as a common issue
5. A number of youth NAACP leaders from other states share our concern that too many local adult leaders seem to view NAACP youth units as being either:
- a. A cash cow to help them raise money
  - b. Entities which disturb the adults' established way of doing things – even when the way they do things violates the bylaws

Attachments to these comments:

(Documentation referred to here is also posted at <http://j.mp/IvanWeiotherdocs>)

1. Ivan's Vision & Goals Statement
2. Letter of Sept 12, 2014 to Pres. Cornell Brooks asking for help
3. Letter to Smith requesting Ramapo College formation letter, which was not answered
4. Anthony Cureton emails showing he declined to respond to 3 requests for Ramapo recommendation letter
5. Letter from Smith announcing Carolyn Ann Powell's departure from New Jersey on Nov. 1, 2014
6. Letter to Ford asking for help with protocol for electing new NJ State Y&C advisor
7. YC Div Jan 11 2014 minutes showing election of James Harris as advisor