

November 27, 2019

Dear Notices,

Thank you for publishing the article by Prof. Thompson "A word from..." in the December issue. We read it with interest, as it brings readers' attention to a subject of universal (in our opinion) importance. It also demonstrates personal courage of the author and the editor, as the expressed viewpoint was likely to stir a controversy.

We are concerned about the online campaign against the Notices and personally Prof. Thompson, following the publication of her article. It is a sad irony that the reaction of Prof. Thompson's online opponents only adds value to her argument that our times share some common features with darker periods in history.

We strongly believe that boycotts and the "cancel culture" have no place in academia. They reinforce fear, shame and self-censorship, and eventually hinder our ability to search for the truth. Finding an optimal balance between various approaches to improve functioning of the academic institutions, while respecting interests of different groups, as well as individual freedoms and non-mainstream opinions, is not an easy task. We view the article of Prof. Thompson as an important contribution to a civilized discussion on this topic.

Sincerely,

Iosif Polterovich (Université de Montréal)  
Leonid Polterovich (Tel Aviv University)

PS. Feel free to distribute this letter in any form you find appropriate.