



AUTO(NOMOUS) BODY SHOP VANBASSADORS

theautonomousbodyshop.com ♦ @abs.student.vanbassadors ♦ abs.studentprogram@gmail.com



The Auto(nomous) Body Shop Student [Vanbassadors](#) report from our time at CMU:

Our experience at CMU was overall very positive and fun! We were delighted to be hosted by the CMU Health Promotion team for our first events on campus. [We connected with many students, shared resources, had exciting conversations, and made ~100 safe sex kits.](#) However, our presence seemed to trigger a larger conversation about the [Freedom of Expression Policy](#) and the handling of [Expressive Activities](#) on CMU's campus, and we want to give a brief recap on what went down, especially since there have been some inaccurate reports coming out.

On Wednesday, February 12th, the CMU police and Expressive Activity Task Force were concerned about our abortion access messaging on the van but especially focused on our poster that stated "Free Palestine, End the Genocide." After about 1.5 hours in the cold, various attempts to find a problem with our permit, constant disruptions wasting the time of the CMU Student Health Services staff, and multiple side conversations that could have been had together at once for efficiency, the CMU police left (saying "this is a waste of our time") but the Expressive Activity Task Force remained. They ultimately informed us that this whole situation came about because someone had complained about the poster. They said that it didn't align with what our permit stated (that we would be distributing reproductive health, abortion care, and harm reduction info and supplies). It is very clear to *us* that genocide is a Reproductive Justice (RJ) issue and we handed them a [flier explaining it as well](#) (which we also had on the van). Unfortunately, the administrative staff at CMU failed to recognize how the bombardment, slaughter, and destruction of the Palestinian people and their infrastructure connect to Reproductive Justice. They additionally argued that our sign in support of Palestine was too far away from the fliers on the van to show the connection. They then asked us to remove the sign and left. Our keffiyeh and fliers about Palestine + RJ remained, with the poster resting inside the door, but still visible.

Afterwards, there were multiple emails and meetings about our events, including questions from CMU's Office of General Council. The administration moved the meeting space we had booked for our February 14th Lunch and Learn session at the last minute. We were also informed that there would be CMU police stationed outside of the building for the duration of the event, which seemed to stem from learning that the [founder](#) of ABS was assisting with the event.



AUTO(NOMOUS) BODY SHOP VANBASSADORS

theautonomousbodyshop.com ♦ @abs.student.vanbassadors ♦ abs.studentprogram@gmail.com



Despite all of this, the Auto(nomous) Body Shop Vanbassadors had an incredibly successful turnout for the Lunch and Learn. It is obvious that the students at CMU welcome discussions and workshops around the complex and intersectional issues we are facing today, and have an understanding that **genocide violates the 3rd basic tenant of Reproductive Justice:**

1. The right to have a child
2. The right to not have a child
3. **The right to raise your children in a safe and healthy environment**

Our experience with CMU policy has raised questions that other concerned individuals in the CMU and Pittsburgh community are grappling with:

- *What does “expressive” mean, and how does CMU define what content constitutes “expressive”?*
 - It seems to us that, at least in this situation, “expressive content” meant any content about Palestine.
 - With the amount of international students at CMU, it is concerning that any event mentioning Palestine could be deemed “expressive” and [threaten their visas](#).
- *How does CMU fairly enforce the expressive policy? Will the expressive policy be weaponized to target marginalized students and students organizing for justice?*
 - We feel that we were targeted due to our information explaining how genocide is an RJ issue.

Bottom Line

[The Auto\(nomous\) Body Shop](#) and the [ABS Student Vanbassadors](#) extend our love and support to those at CMU who are challenging administrative policies that restrict speech and suppress student expression. Here is a [petition](#) for those who want to learn more and take action.

As the genocide in Palestine continues under a new administration pursuing increasingly draconian forms of repression, it is as important as ever to speak out about how institutions of higher learning continue to be complicit through their silence on this issue.

We will continue to align ourselves with organizations and individuals who are fighting against fascism, genocide, and the erosion of our rights. We are not alone in this stance, as evidenced by the overwhelming support & signatures for the recent [Not On Our Dime](#) campaign (which we endorsed) and the continuous commitment against the status quo from university orgs (like [Students for Justice in Palestine at Pitt](#), [Pitt Apartheid Divest](#), and [CMU Free Speech](#)). We welcome collaboration and partnerships with community members working to advance any and all forms of justice.