

**SAN JOSÉ STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

September 14, 2011

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library

Office of the Dean

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Professor Jonathan Roth  
San José State University  
History Department  
BT 561  
One Washington Square  
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Dear Jonathan:

I am writing in response to your request that an art print entitled "Free Palestine" be removed from the art exhibit, *Prints for the People; the Art of Melanie Cervantes and Jesus Barraza*, now on public display on the fifth floor of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library. I have taken your request under serious consideration and have made the decision not to remove the art work in question from the exhibit.

My decision is guided by two documents: The American Library Association (ALA) Library Bills of Rights, 2011; and San José State University (SJSU) Presidential Directive 2009-01 Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression: The Rights and Obligations of Speakers, Performers, Audience Members, Co-Sponsors, Campus Guests, and Protesters at San José State University. The ALA Bill of Rights affirms that libraries should challenge censorship and that libraries making exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public should make them available regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of the groups or individuals requesting space. The SJSU Presidential Directive reaffirms the university's commitment to freedom of speech and artistic expression.

I understand your objection to the work of art in question but because of the library's commitment to freedom of artistic expression and freedom of speech, I cannot order it removed based upon the artistic expression or view point contained in it. Libraries and universities must remain committed to freedom of artistic expression and speech for everyone, even when that artistic expression or speech may be objectionable to someone else. In the spirit of Presidential Directive 2009-01, I encourage you to make use of the library's art gallery and meeting spaces for an exhibit or

program of your own. All points of view and opinion are welcome in the library, where the exchange of ideas is integral to life long learning.

Although this has been a difficult decision, I am happy that you raised this important issue with me. As a result of my conversation with you, I am initiating a review of the policies and procedures regarding all exhibit spaces in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library. Special attention will be focused on the criteria for the approval of an exhibit for display regardless of where that space is located in the library. I want you to know that your input regarding the criteria for approval is welcome and encouraged. The University Library Board will be asked for input as well, and the final policy and procedures will be approved by the Director of the San José Public Library and me as University Library Dean.

All libraries are forums for the discovery of information resources, reflection on important ideas and the open exchange of opinion regarding world issues and events. San José State University's King Library advances the university's mission of expanding knowledge through research, instruction and scholarship. Providing space for programming and exhibits is just one way in which the library further supports that mission. Jonathan, I look forward to your continued active participation and input to the work of the library. University community members such as you who actively engage with the library, help make it a strong support for the university's academic departments, student learning and faculty research; as well as a place for life long learning for the entire community. I appreciate your contribution to the work of the library greatly.

Sincerely,



Ruth E. Kifer  
University Library Dean

cc: Dr. Gerry Selter, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs;  
Kathryn Blackmer Reyes, Librarian Director, Cultural Heritage Center;  
Jane Light, Director, San José Public Library