

UCSC Alumni Letter to Chancellor Blumenthal Re: Angela Davis and Antisemitism to Celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

To: <chancellor@ucsc.edu>

Subject: **Davis and Anti-Semitism to celebrate MLK?**

Date: January 22, 2015 at 5:56:34 AM PST

San Diego, California
January 21, 2015

Dear Chancellor Blumenthal,

We are twenty-two Jewish UCSC alumni who are outraged by the selection of Angela Davis as Martin Luther King, Jr., Convocation speaker, as well as by her inflammatory topic, "Racism, Militarism, Poverty: From Ferguson to Palestine."

Given the importance of the annual MLK event for UCSC, we can only assume that in carefully reviewing the possible speakers for this event, the members of your selection committee, constituted under UCSC's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, were well aware of Angela Davis' history of vicious Israel bashing, which often meets the U.S. State Department's definition of antisemitism:

- Davis has openly condoned terrorism against Israeli citizens, [praising](#) armed violence as "resistance to Israeli apartheid" in an interview in September 2014.
- Davis' talks, writings, and endorsed statements about Israel are replete with unscholarly, false, and defamatory statements about Israel and its supporters, the sole purpose of which statements is to demonize and delegitimize the Jewish state and promote its elimination. For example, she has [declared](#) that "Zionism is racism," [compared](#) violence against Jews in the Holocaust to Israel's treatment of Palestinians, [accused](#) Israel of horrifying "brutality," "gender and racial violence," and "massacre," and [charged](#) "the Zionist Lobby in this country" with suppressing information about the Palestinian struggle.
- Davis is a major proponent of the anti-Israel boycott, divestment, sanctions movement (BDS), which is being directed by Palestinian organizations that include the terrorist groups Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and whose ultimate goal is the destruction of the Jewish state. [Declaring](#) "support BDS, and Palestine will be free," Davis has endorsed numerous calls to boycott the Jewish state economically, culturally and academically, and within the last few years she has promoted BDS and other anti-Israel propaganda in talks on college campuses across the the country, including on many California campuses such as UC San Diego, UCLA, UC Riverside, University of Southern California, and San Francisco State University.

Moreover, given Davis' public [statements](#) about the need to inject "the struggle for a free Palestine into all progressive agendas," the selection committee should not have been at all surprised at the inflammatory topic of Davis' talk, which implicitly links the African American struggle for Civil Rights with efforts to destroy Israel.

The topic of Davis' talk is not only deeply offensive to us and many in the Jewish community; it is a perversion of the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In stark contrast to Angela Davis, who has declared Israel an evil, illegitimate state and condoned violence against its citizens, Dr. King committed his life to non-violence and was an avowed Zionist who, only 10 days before his assassination in 1968, proclaimed:

"Peace for Israel means security, and we must stand with all our might to protect its right to exist, its territorial integrity. I see Israel as one of the great outposts of democracy in the world, and a marvelous example of what can be done, how desert land can be transformed into an oasis of brotherhood and democracy."

Ironically, the UCSC Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which oversaw the selection of Davis as speaker at the MLK event, states on its website that the Office's initiatives and activities

“are designed to cultivate a climate in which all students, staff and faculty are treated fairly and able to thrive and succeed; and everyone including current affiliates, alumni, supporters and community members is welcomed.”

We — UCSC Jewish alumni, supporters, and community members — do NOT feel welcome at this event. Nor do many current Jewish students.

We do not believe that the profound insensitivity shown to Jewish concerns is unique to this event. University-sponsored anti-Israel events are well-documented at UCSC, as is the distress felt in response to such events by Jewish students, who have reported feeling a sense of alienation, marginalization, and anti-Jewish hostility.

If UCSC continues to sponsor anti-Zionist and antisemitic events without any consideration for the impact of these events on Jewish students and the Jewish community, why should we Jewish alumni continue to support UCSC?

Sincerely,

Stephanie Altneu Schriger (College Five, UCSC 1979)
David Amkraut (Merrill College, UCSC 1973)
Robert N. Amkraut (College Eight, UCSC 1979)
Daniel Ben Moshe (Merrill, UCSC 1988)
Gabriel Brahm (PhD, UCSC 1999)
Sharon (Eisenberg) Mullowny (Porter College, UCSC 1980; MA, 1983)
Eli Eisenpress (College Eight, UCSC 1984)
Guy Herschmann (Stevenson, UCSC 2013)
Svetlana Kagan Goldenberg (Merrill College, UCSC 2002; Masters 2004)
Alexander Keyfes (Kresge College, UCSC 2005)
Robin Kopit (College Eight, UCSC 1994)
Naya Lekht (Cowell College, UCSC 2005)
Nicolas Lippa (College Eight, UCSC 2010)
Polly Mackoff (Cowell College, UCSC 1977)
Rena Nogid (College Eight, UCSC 2006)
Gideon Rappaport (Cowell College, UCSC 1970)
Sharon Rappaport (Cowell College, UCSC 1978)
Gil Stein (Stevenson College, UCSC 1971)
Karen Sylvan (Stevenson College, UCSC 1972)
Isaac Traynis (College Eight, UCSC 2005)
Johanna Wilder (College Ten, UCSC 2010)
Joel Younger (Stevenson College, UCSC 1973)

Cc: UC President Janet Napolitano
UC Regents
UCSC Associate Chancellor Ashish Sahni
UCSC Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Herbert Lee
UCSC Assistant Campus Diversity Officer Sheree Marlowe

Bcc: For wide circulation