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The Townsend Center for the Humanities in is a strong proponent of free and open dialogue at U.C. Berkeley. The Center's Forum on the Humanities and the Public World, for instance, is devoted to sponsoring speakers who bring together the concerns of the humanities and those of the public at large. The Center does not endorse political agendas but rather provides space for open conversation.

The October 26 MECA event is marked as "co-sponsored" by one of the Townsend Center's working groups ("Muslim Cultures and Identities"). To place this in context, there are approximately 50 such groups at the Center, all of which are funded at the level of approx. \$750 per year. These groups are comprised mostly of graduate students, though with faculty involvement. They set their own agendas and are not monitored in their activities except for annual reporting purposes. The connection between this Townsend working group and the MECA event is in fact quite marginal. There is no financial or organizational involvement, no intellectual contribution, and no endorsement of views. The co-sponsorship has served for the purposes of publicity and is a reflection of the interests of graduate students.

Townsend Center Director Anthony J. Cascardi has spoken with the individuals responsible for the activities of the working group in question and has received every assurance that the Muslim Identities and Cultures group is not endorsing any position that could be construed as hateful of any religious or ethnic group. The Townsend Center itself is committed to this position and would not fund any group that might act other than in a spirit of intellectual openness. The Center is ecumenical in its outlook, tolerant in its practices, and adherent to the protection of free speech and liberal understanding in its policies. The Center has a long history of sponsoring and announcing activities of interest to Jewish and Muslim groups alike, and hopes to continue to play a role in fostering free and open debate.