

AMCHA Initiative Letter to UCLA Chancellor Block Re: Anti-Israel Bias and Title VI Funding

From: Tammi Benjamin
To: UCLA Chancellor Block

Date: September 30, 2014

Dear Chancellor Block,

As you know, our non-profit organization, AMCHA Initiative, recently released [a study](#) which tracked antisemitic discourse and anti-Israel bias in all of the audio- or video-recorded, Israel-related public events sponsored by CNES, 2010 - 2013. The study was designed and supervised by one of us, Leila Beckwith, who is Professor Emeritus at UCLA and a well-respected faculty member with more than 30 years of research experience.

During the period under investigation, CNES received nearly \$1.5 million from the Department of Education under Title VI of the Higher Education Act, a statute which stipulates that its recipients must demonstrate that all Title VI-funded programming reflect "diverse perspectives and a wide range of views." The results of our study indicate that CNES' programming has a troubling anti-Israel bias, which distorts its scholarly and educational mission and is a violation of its federal funding requirements.

In particular, our study found:

- **CNES Israel-related events had an overwhelmingly anti-Israel bias:** Of the 28 Israel-related events analyzed, 93% were anti-Israel, as identified using a systematic and objective definition of bias;
- **Most CNES Israel-related events contained antisemitic content:** Of the 28 events, 75% contained antisemitic content, as identified using a systematic definition of antisemitic activity based directly on the definition of antisemitism used by the U.S. State Department;
- **CNES had a disproportionate focus on Israel:** Of all the public events pertaining to significant Middle East political conflicts, 61% focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict, significantly more than on any other conflict, including the "Arab Spring" uprisings and the Iranian nuclear threat. In addition, events were held about 14 Middle East countries. Of those countries, 27% of the events were about Israel, four times more than any other country except Iran;
- **CNES favors speakers who engaged in antisemitic activity:** Of the 31 speakers at the CNES Israel-related events, 84% have engaged in antisemitic activity, including the demonization and delegitimization of Israel, denying Jews the right to self-determination, comparing Israelis to Nazis and condoning terrorism;
- **Each CNES director had engaged in anti-Israel and antisemitic activity:** All three CNES directors from 2010-2013 publicly opposed the UC Israel Abroad Program, despite touting that program as part of the center's fulfillment of its Title VI funding requirement. In addition, each of the directors has endorsed boycotts of Israeli universities and scholars, and one is the founder of the U.S. Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel. Besides revealing their personal anti-Israel biases, these three directors' actions to subvert UCLA students' educational opportunities in Israel and to boycott Israeli academic institutions and scholars are in direct violation of their charge as directors of a Title VI Center, which includes "maintain[ing] linkages with overseas institutions of higher education and other organizations that may contribute to the teaching and research of the Center."

We are aware that in response to the release of our study, the UCLA media relations office issued a statement claiming that the university "remains dedicated to complying with all federal laws and

respecting the free and open exchange of ideas representing diverse viewpoints.” However, UCLA's statement nowhere addressed the extensive data we had collected showing that the egregiously anti-Israel public outreach events of CNES clearly violated the Title VI stipulation that the center's programming reflect “diverse perspectives and a wide range of views.”

We believe that our study warrants careful review by your office, and we urge you to forthrightly address the serious problems we have raised regarding CNES.

Sincerely,

Leila Beckwith
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Professor Emeritus, UCLA

Tammi Rossman-Benjamin
Co-founder AMCHA Initiative
Lecturer, UC Santa Cruz

Cc: UC President Janet Napolitano
UC Regents
California State Senator Holly Mitchell (District 26)
California Assembly Member Sebastian Ridley-Thomas (District 54)