

23 Organizations Write to UCLA Center for Jewish Studies Director Re: Cornel West

April 24, 2015

Dear Professor Presner,

We represent 23 organizations with hundreds of thousands of supporters and members who are deeply concerned about the alarming rise of antisemitism on campuses across the country, including at UCLA. We wish to add our collective voices to the growing number of organizations and individuals who have expressed outrage that Cornel West has been invited by the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies to be the keynote speaker at a conference honoring the late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

Our distress at the invitation to Cornel West is based on his past statements which have had the effect of demonizing and delegitimizing the Jewish state, and his affiliations with groups that seek Israel's elimination. For example:

- West is a major proponent of the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, whose founders have advocated an elimination of the Jewish state. Campus-based BDS campaigns have been closely correlated with acts of anti-Jewish bigotry at dozens of universities across the country, including at UCLA.
- In his writings and speeches, West has used false and inflammatory rhetoric about Israel and its leaders. West wrote on [Facebook](#) that “the Israeli massacre of innocent Palestinians, especially the precious children, is a crime against humanity!”; he [called](#) Israel’s Prime Minister a “war criminal” who promotes “annihilation”; and he accused the Israeli government of “ugly forms of murder of Arabs and Palestinians.” In a recent [press release](#) condemning Cornel West’s participation in the upcoming conference, UCLA Hillel Rabbis Chaim Seidler-Feller and Aaron Lerner referred to statements about Israel that West had recently made at Princeton and Stanford as “libelous incitement.”
- West is on the [advisory board](#) of the Global March to Jerusalem (GMJ), an initiative undertaken by more than two dozen Palestinian NGOs committed to the elimination of the Jewish state, whose organizers include individuals with ties to Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the regime in Iran. The GMJ organizes yearly marches to Jerusalem, with the expressed [aim](#) of “liberat[ing] the holy city of Jerusalem from the illegal Zionist occupation” and “end[ing] the Zionist policies of apartheid, ethnic cleansing and Judaisation.”

In light of West's history, inviting him to be a keynote speaker at an event honoring Rabbi Heschel is an affront to Jewish students and faculty at UCLA, as well as to the community members and organizations that support them. It is also a horrible perversion of the memory of Rabbi Heschel.

Sincerely,

Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)

AMCHA Initiative
American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists
Americans for Peace and Tolerance
BEAR: Bias Education, Advocacy & Resources
CUFI on Campus
David Horowitz Freedom Center
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)
Hasbarah Fellowships
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel
Iranian American Jewish Federation
Israeli-American Council (IAC)
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)
National Conference on Jewish Affairs
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East
StandWithUs
Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism
The Israel Christian Nexus
The Israel Group
The Lawfare Project
Training and Education About the Middle East (T.E.A.M.)
Zionist Organization of America

Cc:

David N. Myers, Professor and Robert N. Burr Chair of History
Alan D. Leve
Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, Executive Director Hillel at UCLA
Rabbi Aaron Lerner, Incoming Executive Director Hillel at UCLA
Jay Sanderson, CEO Jewish Federation of Los Angeles