



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
9500 GILMAN DRIVE
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0503
OFFICE: (858) 534-4410
FAX: (858) 534-7315

February 24, 2015

Mt. San Jacinto College
Diversity Committee
1499 N. State St.
San Jacinto, CA 92583

Re: Invitation to Miko Peled

To the Esteemed Members of the Mt. San Jacinto College Diversity Committee:

It has come to my attention that the Diversity Committee at Mt. San Jacinto is reconsidering the terms of its invitation to author Miko Peled to speak to the College community on the topic of the Israeli / Palestinian conflict and his experiences as a Jewish Israeli citizen. I am writing this letter to offer the Committee some insight on this matter from my own experience teaching a class at UC San Diego on this topic, and inviting Mr. Peled to address my students.

I have been teaching my course, "Representations of the Israeli / Palestinian Conflict" to undergraduates for the past five years. I strive, above all, in this course to introduce students to the different perspectives and arguments on both sides of the conflict. On two occasions, I invited Miko Peled to the class to provide students with a perspective on the conflict and Israeli society that they seldom, if ever, encounter.

What students in my class heard from Mr. Peled was an impassioned account of his own personal transformation from an ardent Zionist, to an outspoken critic of the dominant Israeli narrative about the longstanding conflict with Palestinians. Indeed, it is a riveting personal story, somewhat similar to my own, that at the same time provides students with new and different ways of looking at this highly charged issue. Based on feedback from the students themselves, Peled's presentation was one of the most enlightening moments of the course. It provided them with a rare opportunity to raise difficult questions with the speaker, and engage critically with someone with a very different point of view about the politics of the conflict.

I have also seen criticisms levelled at Miko Peled's book, *The General's Son* as somehow not scholarly and therefore inappropriate in a university setting. I strongly disagree with this characterization. The book is a well-researched personal memoir, indeed an important "representation" in terms of the current literature on the conflict, and as good a source as any for introducing the uninitiated student to a complex and controversial subject.

Sadly, I have also witnessed very crude efforts to discredit Mr. Peled by claiming that he is an anti-Semite. Such spurious claims, seemingly made to derail serious discussion of the conflict, are an insult to the principle of academic freedom and, have absolutely no basis and no place in academic discourse.

In closing, let me emphasize what a rare opportunity you have to hear Miko Peled in person. He is a terrific speaker and an engaging lecturer. It will be an event not to be missed.

Best Regards,

Gary Fields
Associate Professor

cc: Professor Shahla Razavi