



Los Angeles

February 26, 2015

Dear San Jacinto College Diversity Committee,

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is an organization inspired by Jewish tradition to work for equality, human rights, respect for international law, and a US foreign policy based on these ideas. We have offices in New York and California, over 200,000 online supporters and chapters in over 60 cities across the country. We also have a rabbinic council, an academic council, an artists and cultural workers council, and an advisory board comprised of numerous prominent Jewish thinkers and artists. JVP supports nonviolent efforts here and in Israel–Palestine to end Israel's Occupation, expand human and civil rights, and implement a US policy based on international law and democracy.

We launched JVP Los Angeles in 2010, with 2 missions—to break the blockade on honest discussion about Israel–Palestine and to partner with a community of diverse activists and organizations who share our goals and strategies to achieve them. Additionally we are committed to fighting Islamophobia and McCarthyite censorship of debate and misuses of the charge of anti-Semitism, especially in the Jewish community. We are proud to be part of a broad coalition of Peace and Justice, Interfaith, anti-War, and Equality organizations working together to fight bigotry and end the occupation.

We have worked with Israeli peace activist Miko Peled, who has been invited to address an audience at your college, for several years and know him to be deeply committed to working for a just end to the Israel–Palestine conflict resulting in full civic equality for all the people who live there. We have proudly sponsored events where Mr. Peled has spoken before audiences that included many who support his views as well as some who do not, and fascinating open dialog has been the result.

There is currently a nationwide attack on the academic freedom of faculty, academic departments and student organizations, which sponsor speakers who are supportive of the nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and sanctions movement. This extends to those that affiliate with academic associations that adopt positions on important issues with which they disagree. It is unfortunate that there are groups and individuals here in the United States who seek to limit honest discussion about Israel–Palestine, the history of the region and the devastating realities of the 48+ year occupation of the Palestinian people and lands. It is very disturbing to see the price authors, academics, students, and others who disagree with those that seek to support the status quo of the Israeli occupation and growth of the illegal West Bank settlements have to pay when, as in this case baseless personal attacks are the tactic used.

Colleges and universities are supposed to be places where there is a free flow of diverse ideas and perspectives. Few of us would object to administrators protecting students, yet most of us, I believe, see through the pretense of these acts of McCarthyism, which cynically affix "anti-Semitism" to all those who dare to protest Israeli state policies.

In so doing, they impinge upon the academic freedom of students, teachers and faculty members as well as create a chilling and repressive climate on campus and trivialize actual incidents of anti-Semitism.

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We do hope that San Jacinto College Diversity Committee, will support the campus remaining a place where important world events and differing perspectives on them can be presented, discussed and debated freely and openly on the merits as you continue to educate the next generation and encourage them to be critical thinkers.

Sincerely,

Estee Chandler
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Judith Butler
Maxine Elliot Professor of Comparative Literature, University of California, Berkeley

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Southern California Organizing Committee for Peace in the Middle East

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