

Racism, Militarism, Poverty: From Ferguson to Palestine

We support and congratulate UC Santa Cruz on their selection of Angela Davis for UCSC's 31st annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Convocation

The undersigned organizations write in support of UC Santa Cruz Chancellor George Blumenthal for his office's selection and sponsorship of the Black feminist theorist and activist Angela Davis, a luminary of our movements and our region, who delivered a speech on "Racism, Militarism, Poverty: From Ferguson to Palestine" at UCSC's 31st annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Convocation. The event was attended by 1,000 people with 500 more spilling outside, and closed with a standing ovation. This gathering's great appeal is indicative of the growing power of movements resisting state violence – from communities challenging prisons and policing to those fighting imperialism and global repression.

In particular, we congratulate the chancellor for not bowing to the pressure of the Amcha Initiative – an organization that exists to attack and attempt to silence professors, students and others who dare speak out in support of the Palestinian cause. Amcha uses unscrupulous and relentless tactics to advance its racist program: attacking professors for establishing academic relationships with Palestinian institutions and accusing Palestinian student activists of being tied to "terrorist" organizations. Amcha has a long history of harassing student activists at UCSC in particular, and its 2011 Title VI complaint alleging anti-Semitism at UCSC (which was declared unfounded by the Department of Education) had a chilling effect on student and faculty speech.

We write specifically in support of the movements and individuals, like Angela Davis, who are exposing the role of the U.S. government and its partnership with Israeli state agencies and corporations to police. This partnership has expanded repressive policing, which criminalizes Black, Brown, immigrant, poor, queer and transgender communities. The U.S. wields the world's largest and most powerful military, which it employs to gain access to resources and geopolitical influence, targeting Third World people. It trains police and militias around the world in order to monitor and repress populations and movements, and funds and supports the state of Israel to do the same. Israel has developed its military and surveillance infrastructure through its repression of Palestinians and the colonization of their land; in turn, Israel markets its products and shares its repressive tactics and technologies with the United States, Europe, and regimes across the Third World/Global South, bolstering its militarized economy and geopolitical stature.

The United States and Israel work together on targeting communities of color/Third World people in order to maintain U.S. economic and political power globally and to support Israel's occupation and colonization of Palestine. In one example of this U.S./Israeli partnership, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) – an organization promoting support for and collaboration with the Israeli state in numerous sectors across the U.S. – and the U.S.-based Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) have facilitated Israeli military training of more than 14,000 U.S. law enforcement officials. The "counter-terrorism" and "population control" techniques U.S. police departments learn are used to target communities and repress popular protest. These partnerships build up Israel's capacity for the repression of Palestinians as well as its military and surveillance industries. Those trained by Israel include the former St. Louis County Police Department chief (whose jurisdiction includes Ferguson), the New York and Oakland Police Departments. In fact, ADL defended the St. Louis police in their murder of Michael Brown and the NYPD in their murder of Eric Garner.

The ADL/JINSA Law enforcement training in a time of alarmingly repressive and racist police forces is one of many examples that show the crucial necessity for exposing the links between state-sponsored

violence against Black people here in the United States, and the repression of Palestinians by Israeli state forces, as Angela Davis so eloquently did in her speech. We find it necessary to highlight the increasingly hostile role of ADL, which also contributes to the chilling effect on Palestinian organizing and Palestine solidarity activism on campus by labeling speech criticizing the state of Israel as “anti-Semitism.” At UCSC, ADL was involved in attempting to defeat the democratic student government resolution supporting divestment from multinational corporations profiting off of the occupation of Palestine; in a maneuver designed to confuse students, ADL published reports grouping together actual anti-Semitic incidents on campus with political activities by Students for Justice in Palestine and other groups that do not engage in anti-Jewish acts. By falsely accusing student-led Palestine solidarity movements of being “anti-Semitic,” groups like ADL lie in order to gain institutional and popular support and power.

Therefore, as organizations working across communities to build up grassroots movements against racism, policing and repression and for justice, civil and human rights, we support the critical leadership of Angela Davis and others who are making these connections and reminding us that attacks on and repression of any people and movement enables attacks on and repression of others. Indeed, as James Baldwin once wrote to political prisoner Davis more than three decades ago, “we must fight for your life as though it were our own ... for if they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night.” We are reminded of the centrality of Black struggle to all of our movements that envision a transformed world in which we can live without fear, but with dignity, well-being, and a sense of justice fulfilled.

Signers

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network
Arab Resource and Organizing Center
Haiti Action Committee
Palestinian Youth Movement
Bayan USA
Gabriela USA
American Muslims for Palestine
Anakbayan
Sin Barras
Xicano Moratorium
Eastside Arts Alliance
California Coalition of Women Prisoners
Transgender Gender Variant Intersex Justice Project
Hella Organized Bay Area Koreans (HOBAK)
Filipino/Filipina Studies Collective
Arab and Muslims Ethnicities and Diasporas Initiative, SF State University
Freedom Archives
Middle East Children’s Alliance
NLG Police and Prison Committee
NLG Free Palestine Committee
Students for Justice in Palestine – UC Berkeley
US Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
Art Forces
Jewish Voice for Peace
Global Women’s Strike
Women of Color in the Global Women’s Strike
Payday Men’s Network, NLG Los Angeles Chapter
ANSWER Coalition – SF
Women in Black