



Department of English

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May 28, 2017

President Joseph Castro

California State University, Fresno

CA 93740

Dear President Castro,

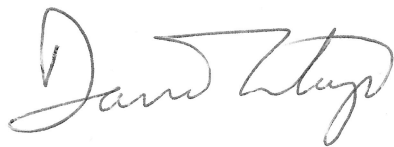
In Fall 2015, I was honored to be invited to give one in a series of lectures at CSU Fresno commemorating the late Palestinian intellectual Edward Said. At the time, I was highly impressed with the vigor and openness of debate and the interest expressed by faculty, students and members of the public in the issues that we discussed.

It is with great sadness therefore that I am now writing to express my deep concern at the recent and startlingly sudden cancelation of the almost completed search for the Edward Said Professorship chair at CSU Fresno. Given the advanced state of the search at the time of its cancelation, and the fact that—like the late Edward Said—the finalists were Palestinian and worked, appropriately enough, on the region, the only possibly conclusion is that the claim of procedural violations is a mere cover for caving in to the pressure of external groups. This would be a serious and entirely disreputable violation of the academic freedom of your faculty and of the candidates alike.

Having witnessed similar campaigns, usually egregious and defamatory in nature, at other campuses including my own, I am all too aware of the nation-wide assault on academic freedom that has been undertaken by small but well-funded pressure groups on the pretext that criticism of the state of Israel is tantamount to anti-Semitism. They pretend that their own version of extreme Zionism is fully representative of their communities and do not shy away from tactics of intimidation and defamation, or from such direct assaults on academic freedom. Their intrusions on faculty governance have everywhere had deleterious effects on the atmosphere of freedom and inquiry that is essential to the pursuit of knowledge and the effectiveness of instruction. It involves an insidious politicization of the curriculum and of regular procedures of hiring, tenure and promotion. Its consequences are devastating for the trust of faculty that their interests, their research and their teaching are protected by their administrations.

Imagine, if you will, that a hiring in African American or in Chicano Studies had been challenged by external groups with, say, a white nationalist agenda, which protested that the candidates were of those ethnicities and worked on those fields. The notion that they should be able to influence the conduct of such searches would be self-evidently preposterous and, moreover, immediately recognized as racist and discriminatory. That is no less the case in this instance and the cancelation of the search should be repudiated forthwith and the process reinstated, allowing the committee to consider the finalists it had selected in accord with the due processes of your APM and as approved by your administrators. Any other outcome will seriously damage the reputation of your campus for fairness and equity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David Lloyd". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

David Lloyd

Distinguished Professor of English

cc. Chancellor Timothy White

Provost Lynnette Zelezny

Dean Saúl Jimenez-Sandoval