

From: **Randa Jarrar**

Date: Tue, May 30, 2017 at 11:26 AM

Subject: A Plea Regarding the Edward Said Professorship Search

To: Joseph Castro <[josephcastro@csufresno.edu](mailto:josephcastro@csufresno.edu)>, Lynnette Zelezny <[lynnette\\_zelezny@csufresno.edu](mailto:lynnette_zelezny@csufresno.edu)>, "Sanchez, Rudy" <[rjsanchez@csufresno.edu](mailto:rjsanchez@csufresno.edu)>, [csu-chancellor@calstate.edu](mailto:csu-chancellor@calstate.edu), "Jimenez-Sandoval, Saul" <[sjimenez@csufresno.edu](mailto:sjimenez@csufresno.edu)>

Dear President Castro, Provost Zelezny, Chancellor White, Dean Jimenez-Sandoval, and Mr. Sanchez,

I am writing today to make a plea to you, and with concern about the recent and sudden cancellation of the search for the Edward Said Professorship in Middle Eastern Studies.

I am a Fresno professor of English and Middle Eastern Studies, and a Palestinian woman who has been denied entry into Israel, even though I am also American. My family and I lived in Kuwait for 12 years before the Iraqi invasion, and after the Gulf War, we were denied entry back into Kuwait because we were Palestinian. So much of my life has been spent in reaction to, and as a result of, my family's dispossession, migrations, and the multiple ways in which we have been refugee-ed. I have written and published, to wide acclaim, two books about this.

I came to Fresno State in 2010. Out of all the universities I had visited, Fresno State was the only university that did not make a fuss around my ethnicity. The Dean at the time, Vida Samiian, was an instrumental member of this community, and the reason I decided to accept the offer at Fresno State. I knew that I could teach my Arab-American women's literature class, my graphic novel class, and my many fiction workshops, practicums, and form and theory classes without the threat of censorship or insidious attacks on me because of my ethnicity.

In 2012, when Ilan Papé, an Israeli scholar critical of Israel, came to visit, there was an uproar from members inside and outside the community who wanted our campus to withdraw the invitation, and preferred to silence those who wanted to talk about Israel's occupation of Palestine, which is illegal and breaks UN resolutions. The Chancellor and President at the time signed an incredibly courageous and beautiful letter, saying they refused to shut down the freedom of speech on CSU campuses. That letter is one of the reasons I have stayed at Fresno State for so long. I had never, in all my years in academia, felt so supported in my position. I had never seen such a show of solidarity from administrators.

In that letter (attached below) President Welty and others wrote: "Universities are charged with teaching students how to think for themselves. This includes accessing and processing knowledge and ideas and considering, discussing and debating them. . . . There is no danger to a free society in allowing opposing views to be heard. The danger, instead, is in censoring them. It is easy to support free speech when we agree with what is being said. The real test is when we are asked to defend the expression of views with which we disagree."

I am writing today to ask you to make a similar stand. Please, consider re-instituting this search and completing it with the current hiring committee. Please, do not allow censorship to win. Please, continue CSU's tradition and show students and faculty of all backgrounds that you do not condone racial profiling of candidates, that you support freedom of expression, and that we at CSU allow all views to be heard. Any other outcome will be unfair to the finalists in the search, will alienate faculty like myself, and will severely damage our campus's reputation across the world.

Sincerely yours,

Randa Jarrar  
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