

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

Curriculum and Instruction (MC 147)
College of Education
1040 West Harrison Street
Chicago, Illinois 60607-7133

June 15, 2017

President Joseph I. Castro, Ph.D
California State University, Fresno
Fresno, California 93740

Dear President Castro,

I write to express my alarm at the April cancellation of the search for the Edward Said Professorship at Fresno State. As I understand it, the search was effectively completed and four qualified finalists were ranked and recommended for on-campus interviews by the search committee at the time the administration abruptly cancelled the search. All finalists were of Middle Eastern ethnicity, and it's hard to see the cancellation as anything but an action based on hostility toward the scholarship and/or the national origin, racial and ethnic background of the finalists. The procedural justification appears to be nothing more than a pretext.

If the action was taken in good faith, then the procedural problem should be addressed and remedied—a relatively simple fix—and the search reopened with the search committee intact, and the finalists in place. The administration should explain to the university community what happened and why, and reaffirm in no uncertain terms its commitment to the principles and legal obligations of academic freedom and the first amendment. Anything less will be an ongoing blemish on the reputation of your university, and a signal to faculty and students that the university is not a site of inclusion, fairness, and free and open debate.

Sincerely,

William Ayers
Distinguished Professor and Senior University Scholar (retired)