

May 22, 2023

Dear President Peñalver, Center for Ecumenical and Interreligious Engagement (CEIE)
Leadership and Advisory Council:

We, Seattle University students, alumni, and faculty, Seattle-area Jewish community members, Muslim community members, and local social justice advocates and organizers, write to urge you to cancel your participation in the upcoming Jonathan Greenblatt keynote at the 42nd Annual Clergy Institute for Interfaith Learning. As community members who care deeply about resisting antisemitism and all forms of oppression, we inform you that partnering with the ADL is counterproductive and damaging to the real and urgent work of interfaith solidarity and allyship. While the ADL presents itself as a champion of Jewish values and “just and fair treatment to all,” it is in fact controversial, divisive, and destructive both within and outside of Jewish communities. For this reason, we are concerned that the CEIE’s support of this event will alienate the Jewish communities with whom it hopes to ally and partner, as well as weaken social justice alliances more broadly. We write to you in the spirit of Seattle University’s stated commitments to anti-racism and social justice to share why co-sponsoring this event, or supporting the ADL at all, actively violates those ideals.

While the ADL claims to be a civil rights organization, in practice it regularly attacks and harms progressive Jews and Black, Arab, Muslim, and queer communities. The ADL focuses [extra vitriol on students of color](#) who engage in political activities it disagrees with, and faculty who teach about racism and colonialism. Since 2019, the Movement for Black Lives (the national coalition of core groups of the Black Lives Matter movement) and over two hundred other national and community-based anti racist organizations have [called on allies](#) to stop working with the ADL. Jews and non-Jews have been working together for years, locally and nationally, to advance an authentic and principled campaign against antisemitism, racism, and colonialism that stands in stark contrast to the ADL’s divide and conquer politics.

We offer just a few examples of the ADL's harmdoing. While communities across the US have been working urgently to stop police violence, particularly against Black communities, the ADL has used its national platform to [blatantly disregard racist police violence](#), defend police against criticism by Black-led organizations, and advocate for increasing police militarization. The ADL funds and facilitates training by the Israeli military for US police forces, [including the Seattle Police Department](#), to improve on surveillance tactics, protest repression, and racial profiling. As groups working to stop police violence have pointed out, these trainings deepen [militarized, racialized policing](#), treating low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, and social justice protests as counterinsurgent “[human terrain](#).” A [leaked memo](#) last year showed that ADL officials understood its own program could contribute to police violence and that there was no reason for US police forces to train with the Israeli military.

The ADL [actively participates in Islamophobia](#) and has targeted organizations that seek to defend Muslim communities from repression and surveillance. It has been a strong partner in

the Department of Homeland Security's anti-Muslim "[Countering Violent Extremism](#)" strategy (now called [CP3](#)), in which the US government surveilled Muslim communities and identified potential "radical" behavior by [religious clothing or concern about human rights violations](#) in countries invaded by the US military, both of which constitute racial profiling. As Muslim social justice groups have denounced such surveillance, the ADL has called to [expand it](#). At the same time, the ADL has attacked Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab [elected officials](#), denouncing them as "radicals" or "antisemites" when they decry violence against their communities, or pursue open debate about the implications of US support for Israel. These attacks are part of the ADL's long history of [portraying Arab Americans as agents of various foreign agendas](#) rather than an American constituency.

The ADL's pattern of targeting students and faculty—especially Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Palestinian, and Jewish—who criticize Israel or attempt to study the colonization of Palestine, should be especially worrisome to a university. Jonathan Greenblatt has specifically [declared the ADL will target student groups](#) who advocate for Palestinian rights. *Indeed, [the ADL smeared the Seattle University chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine \(SJP\) for an image that was approved by the University](#)*. It has weaponized Jewish Studies scholarship to make those claims, over the objections of Jewish scholars.

In addition to the many kinds of harm detailed here, perhaps most cynically the ADL's focus on Black, Arab, Muslim, and progressive Jewish social justice activists and scholars distracts from the real sources of antisemitism in the US today: white Christian nationalism. Its activity provides cover for well-organized supremacist forces surging in federal and local government, the military, and militia. In seeking to sow division among multiracial, multifaith movements for justice, the ADL silos antisemitism from other oppressions, which further isolates Jews, especially BIPOC Jews, undermining the solidarity we need now more than ever.

Jonathan Greenblatt has been at the forefront of these efforts. He regularly appears on national television, posts on social media, and [speaks at events](#) denouncing the very communities whose rights the ADL claims to support. Endorsing an event featuring him would alienate progressive Jews, Muslims, and others within and beyond SU who hope to collaborate with CEIE in the pursuit of substantive interfaith social justice activity. Indeed, to actively support the ADL is to work against Seattle University's mission of empowering leaders for a just and humane world. To build that world, we believe Seattle University must make informed, principled decisions in pursuit of genuine allyship and solidarity.

With institutional values of diversity, care and leadership, Seattle University's CEIE must not collaborate with those who threaten student and community social justice efforts. We urge you to cancel your participation in the upcoming Jonathan Greenblatt keynote. We ask you to find alternative ways of engaging in this important conversation. We would be eager to discuss other educational resources and speakers to support the critical work of fighting antisemitism and building multiracial, multifaith movements for justice. We look forward to working together to build a more just and humane world.

Thank you for your consideration,

[affiliations listed for identification purposes only]

Rabbi David Basior, Kadima Reconstructionist Community, Seattle;
Kohenet Zoh Lev Cunningham, Jewish Ritual Leader, Instructor, University of Washington School of Social Work;
Kohenet Traci Marx, Jewish Prayer Leader;
Dr. Wendy Elisheva Somerson, Somatic healer and founder of the Seattle chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace;
Rev. Osagyefo Sekou, Pastor for Theology and Arts, Valley and Mountain Fellowship UMC;
Dr. DeAnza Spaulding, Pastor of Congregational Care & Table Turning;
Stefanie Fox, Executive Director, Jewish Voice for Peace, Seattle;
Diana Dvora Falchuk, Anti-antisemitism and Antiracism educator and consultant, Seattle;
Alice Rothchild, MD retired, Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Harvard Medical School, Jewish Voice for Peace, Health Advisory Council;
Abby Brook, Kadima Reconstructionist Community Shabbat School Teacher;
Shelby Handler, Kadima Reconstructionist Community Shabbat School Teacher;
Eitan Isaacson, Former Staff Sergeant IDF, Member Jewish Voice for Peace Seattle;
Natalie Cisneros, Associate Professor, Philosophy, Seattle University;
Joseph DeFilippis, Associate Professor, Social Work, Seattle University;
Amelia Derr, Associate Professor, Social Work, Seattle University;
Danieli Evans, Assistant Professor, Seattle University School of Law;
Jabril Hassen, Professor, Criminal Justice Department, Seattle University;
Sonora Jha, Professor, Communications, Seattle University;
Hye-Kyung Kang, Professor, Social Work, Seattle University;
Rachel E. Luft, Associate Professor, Sociology, Seattle University;
Tayyab Mahmud, Professor of Law, Seattle University;
David Neel, Associate Professor, Mathematics, Seattle University;
Huy Nguyen, Adjunct Professor, Seattle University School of Law;
Kate Reynolds, Program Coordinator, College of Arts and Sciences, Seattle University;
Nova Robinson, Associate Professor, History and International Relations, Seattle University;
Dean Spade, Professor, Seattle University School of Law, member Jewish Voice for Peace Seattle
Danya Al-Saleh, Associate Professor, Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington;
Angélica Cházaro, Professor, University of Washington School of Law, Seattle Solidarity Budget;
Nada Elia, PhD, Teaching Professor, Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Western Washington University, Advisor, Arab American Studies Minor, Affiliated Faculty, Program in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies;
Nikkita Oliver, Adjunct Professor, Seattle University School of Law, Executive Director, Creative Justice;

Chandan Reddy, Professor, University of Washington, Massage Parlor Outreach Project, Formerly Incarcerated Group Healing Together (FIGHT) Seattle;
Selma Al-Aswad, Palestinian Feminist Collective;
Erin Alberts, Seattle University, Class of 2019;
Juju Aldaher, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2015;
Seth Alexander, Attorney, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2020;
Zachary Andrews, Seattle University Class of 2022; Seattle University Students for Justice in Palestine;
Gray Ankcorn, Seattle University Department of Gender & Sexuality Studies, Class of 2023;
T.K. Anney, Seattle University School of Law Class of 2024, National Lawyers Guild;
Majd Baniodeh, Seattle University, Class of 2011;
Calvin Burnap, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Seattle University Matteo Ricci College, Class of 2000;
Peter Condit, Defend the Defund, Seattle Solidarity Budget, Seattle Abolition Support;
Will Darling, Seattle University, Class of 2016;
Diana DeForest, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2023;
Max Delsohn, Seattle University, Class of 2015;
Kennedy Dresh, Seattle University, Class of 2019;
Hallie Evans, Seattle University Class of 2022; Seattle University Students for Justice in Palestine;
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Randi Fleming, Seattle University, Class of 2019;
Gabby Goeglein, Seattle University, Class of 2016;
Mariam Gohar, Seattle University, Class of 2026, Seattle University Students for Justice in Palestine;
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Heidi Hinterberg, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2019;
Emma Jensen, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2024;
Ben Jones, Communications + Digital Director, 350 Seattle;
Devon Knowles, Washington Appellate Project;
Alon Lapid, Students United for Palestinian Equality and Return (SUPER-UW), Resist US-Led War Seattle;
Susie Lepow, University of Washington, Class of 2025, Students United for Palestinian Equity and Return (SUPER-UW);
BJ Last, Seattle Solidarity Budget;
Adrien Leavitt, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2022;
Rae Levine, King County Jews Against Antisemitism;

Jen Marlowe, founder, Donkeysaddle Projects, Seattle;
Nicky Manlove, Seattle University, Class of 2018;
Molly Mattingly, Seattle University, Class of 2019;
Kelsey McGarry, Seattle University, Class of 2015;
Michael McTaggart, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2025;
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Mariana Molina Beltran, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2022;
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MP Piper, Seattle University, Class of 2019;
Kameron Powell, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2023;
Judas Reinl, Seattle University, Class of 2019;
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LéTania Severe, Community Response Network, Seattle Solidarity Budget;
Emily Silver, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice;
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Pateece Spence, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2023; Shutdown KCJ;
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Abiel Woldu, Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2024;
JM Wong, Massage Parlor Outreach Project, Puget Sound Sage;
Melanie Zahn, Seattle University School of Counseling, Class of 2026