



Deborah Abbott <dabbott@ucsc.edu>

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## Israel Event

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**Marcia Ochoa** <marcia8a@ucsc.edu>  
To: Deborah Abbott <dabbott@ucsc.edu>

Mon, Jan 26, 2015 at 3:24 PM

Hey Deb,

I was really surprised to see the Cantú Center sponsoring an event promoting Israel, especially given the horrible human rights situation in Gaza. Can I ask what prompted this event? I am tempted to write a letter with other queer faculty and students expressing my opposition, but I wanted to check in with you first.

Thanks,

Marcia

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Dr. Marcia Ochoa  
Associate Professor and Chair  
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University of California - Santa Cruz  
1156 High Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Office: [831.459.4356](tel:831.459.4356)

*Queen for a Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens, and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela*, Duke University Press, May 2014.  
<http://www.dukeupress.edu/Queen-for-a-Day/>

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**Deborah Abbott** <dabbott@ucsc.edu>  
To: Marcia Ochoa <marcia8a@ucsc.edu>

Mon, Jan 26, 2015 at 9:38 PM

Marcia,

Here are some of my bleary-eyed thoughts. Please do not broadcast this email. Can we talk about it in the morning?

I agreed to this event because I think it's good to have dialogue and cultural exchanges of all kinds here on campus.

As I see it, the U.S. government has been and is responsible for some of the world's most pervasive horrific human rights abuses and torture. We also have some good things happening in our country; our *government* even does a few good things, in spite of their multitude of ongoing heinous foreign and domestic policies/actions.

I recognize that many U.S. citizens and non-profits deplore and work to oppose abuses by our government. And that the educational/activist work we do here and around the world is an attempt to build bridges and create healing between people in spite of the U.S. government's continued violent policies. I think that work is legitimate. And I'm thinking there's legitimacy in Israeli citizens doing the same.

I am hoping there is room at UCSC for cultural understanding and respectful dialogue between Israeli and US queer people. Should I shut down this event and the learning that could happen inside it? Should we ban speakers/programs from Uganda and Russia and all of the other countries committing atrocities against queer people? Against women?

I will not allow this program to promote or condone Israeli government violence against Palestine. It will be focused on talking about LGBT lives in Israel and the U.S., sharing Israeli foods, and learning about study abroad programs.

I value your perspective on this so I hope we can talk in the morning.

Deb

[Quoted text hidden]

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*NOTE! If I do not respond to your email within two business days, kindly re-send. The Cantu Queer Center has had significant staff reductions. I am working to my fullest capacity and greatly appreciate your understanding.*

Deb Abbott, M.A., M.F.T., Director  
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**Marcia Ochoa** <[marcia8a@ucsc.edu](mailto:marcia8a@ucsc.edu)>  
To: Deborah Abbott <[dabbott@ucsc.edu](mailto:dabbott@ucsc.edu)>

Mon, Jan 26, 2015 at 10:22 PM

Thanks Deb,

Let's definitely talk tomorrow morning. I have a meeting with [REDACTED] from 9:30-10:30, then a meeting with my TAs at 11 and class from 12-1:45. We could talk early in the morning (between 8 and 9:30am) or after class at around 3pm (I have another meeting at 2pm).

The problem with the event is that Israel promotes LGBT tolerance at the expense of Palestinian lives. This is called "pinkwashing" and it's something FMST students are particularly passionate about. The situation right now is very much the way the apartheid situation was with South Africa in the late 80s. There are cultural and academic boycotts of Israel, several of which I've signed on to. Angela Davis is also quite visibly at the forefront of the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) movement. Mind you, this is not a critique of Judaism, but rather of Zionism and its active colonizing project in the West Bank and Gaza. There are many Jewish faculty on campus who have also led the way on this response.

By the way, I am equally opposed to any representation that promotes the US as a liberal place for LGBT people as a way to make it seem more progressive or modern than other places. I have already seen some grumbling about the event on Facebook and wanted to let you know what was up and work with you to channel student concerns in a productive way.

So yes, let's check in! Feel free to call me on my cell: [REDACTED].

Take care,

Marcia

[Quoted text hidden]

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28 January 2015

Deb Abbott, Director  
Cantú LGBTQ Center  
University of California at Santa Cruz  
1156 High St.  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Dear Deb,

We write as faculty who have come together to express our concern about your event, “Queer in Israel,” which was held on Tuesday, January 27 at the Cantú Center. For a long time, Israel has put forth a media campaign in the United States to portray itself as a country that supports gay rights and therefore can be considered a democracy. This event is part of that effort, and it promotes a study abroad that supports the displacement and colonization of Palestine.

“A Wider Bridge,” the organization you are hosting, engages in single-issue politics that present gay and lesbian issues as completely separate from other social justice issues in the societies in question. Thus, they can argue that “Israeli LGBT communities and their progress in the struggle for equality and inclusion” are somehow completely separate from the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This move represents an LGBT politics that actively hides the conditions of violence on which our lives are based, namely occupation, colonization and genocide. These are active processes that we can either recognize and struggle against, or decide to live with and benefit from. Presenting this speaker is not creating an opportunity for dialogue, it’s sanctioning this way of doing politics, and it’s creating an unsafe and unwelcoming space for Palestinian students, faculty and staff on campus, thus denying their rights as full members of the UCSC community.

Within the debate over LGBT conditions in Israel, even those criticisms that pinpoint problems with gay rights there nonetheless do not generally address the overarching problem here: the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, the ongoing siege of Gaza, the lack of full equality for Palestinians within Israel, and the refusal of the right of return for Palestinian refugees who were forced out of their homes by the Israeli government. In the latest assault on Gaza in July 2014, the Israeli government killed over 2,000 Palestinian civilians and bombed 141 schools. With the occupation, the Israeli government also denies basic rights to education for Palestinians. They have repeatedly bombed, closed, and militarily occupied Palestinian universities. Birzeit University in the West Bank, for example, has been closed for a total of seven years out of the last twelve. Israeli

universities also discriminate against Palestinian students and have less than one percent of their faculty that are Palestinian.

Our university should not be supporting or colluding with this enormous violation of human rights. We hope you brought the issue of occupation to the attention of your audience. We hope you will bring the issue of racism within Israel to the attention of students who participate in Cantú Center activities. We hope you allow a discussion of the ongoing campaign of boycott, divestment and sanction against Israel until it complies with international human rights law. We hope in the future you will invite Palestinian lesbians and gay men (there are several organizations) as well as Israeli and non-Israeli Jewish queers who are actively struggling to end the occupation to speak about their experiences.

Respectfully,

Lisa Rofel

Marcia Ochoa

Gail Hershatter

Neda Atanasoski

Felicity Amaya Schaeffer

Christine Hong

Carla Freccero

Irene Gustafson

Felicity Amaya Schaeffer

Anjali Arondekar

Emily Honig

B. Ruby Rich

Deborah Gould

Boreth Ly

Gina Dent

Karen Barad