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Glen S. Lewy, President

August 9, 2021

Michael V. Drake, M.D.
President, University of California

Dear President Drake,

We write to you today, extremely concerned about the UCLA's Asian American Studies Department's [Statement](#) of Solidarity with Palestine from May 21, 2021. Reports suggest that Chancellor Block is awaiting guidance from your office on how to proceed. The statement makes many problematic claims and biased assumptions, including blaming the outbreak of violence in May solely on Israel and questioning Israel's right to exist. This is not the only academic department in the University of California system to release such a statement.

ADL is a strong advocate of free speech and we do not seek to censor or stifle opinions in the university community. We have a long history of fighting for the ideals of individual expression and the free exchange of ideas, even when we disagree with the ideas being exchanged. However, we are concerned that the Asian American Studies Department statement isolates Jewish and non-Jewish students and faculty who are supportive of the state of Israel, and for whom a connection to Israel is part of their Jewish identity and will have a devastating impact on campus climate.

Students look to academic departments for guidance. It is important that the Asian American Studies Department realizes the real world implications of their concepts and language used in this statement. No matter what the beliefs or intentions are behind these complex issues, there is a group of students that will no doubt feel marginalized and that a core part of their identity is under attack.

At a time of surging incidents of antisemitism, within a broader trend of historically high levels of hate targeting the Jewish community, it is incumbent upon UC system officials to issue a public statement distancing itself from the Asian American Studies Department statement.

Now is the time for the University of California leadership to use your voice to speak out and offer support to all students who may be affected by the recent conflict in Israel and Gaza. It is long overdue for universities to send a clear message: they will prioritize the needs of their entire student body ahead of politics.

ADL stands at the ready to be a resource for campus administrations, faculty and students by fostering awareness and providing the proper tools to navigate these challenging situations. We look forward to engaging with you on this issue and to continuing our work toward a more just and equitable world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Greenblatt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director