



January 11, 2019

VIA EMAIL

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Karin Peterson, Ph.D.
Interim Provost, University of North Carolina-Asheville
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Dear Chancellor Cable and Provost Peterson:

We write on behalf of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the oldest and one of the largest pro-Israel organizations in the U.S., dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism and Israel-bashing. We urge you to rescind the invitation to Tamika Mallory to be the keynote speaker at the university's upcoming Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. week of activities beginning on January 19.

North Carolina Hillel has already posted a compelling [statement](#) explaining why the invitation to Mallory is offensive and wrong. Mallory has engaged in and condoned anti-Semitism. She has denied the right of the Jewish state of Israel to exist, calling it a "[human rights crime](#)" and falsely claiming that Israel "[takes the lives of people who were there first](#)." She is an enthusiastic fan of Louis Farrakhan, a vicious anti-Semite, homophobe and misogynist. Among Farrakhan's many deplorable comments are his description of Adolph Hitler as "[a very great man](#)" and his [comparison of Jews to termites](#). When Mallory was criticized for supporting Farrakhan, she failed to condemn and distance herself from him.

In justifying the invitation to Mallory, you issued a [statement](#) that focused on the university's commitment to free speech and open dialogue. You also noted Dr. King's work with "diverse and sometimes opposing groups to overcome intolerance." But the invitation to Mallory is not a free speech issue. She may have the right to express her views, but she has no right to a visible and honored platform as the keynote speaker at a celebration of Dr. King. Dr. King may have tried to work with bigots to overcome intolerance, but he never would have

exalted bigots by giving them a podium to legitimize and promote their views. We do not believe you would ever justify a speaking invitation to former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke at this celebration of Dr. King as “freedom of thought and expression” that are “central to our mission as a university.” It would be an insult to Dr. King and everything he stood for.

Dr. King’s own words reflect that Mallory’s views and values are an affront to his own:

- Unlike Mallory, Dr. King was an ardent Zionist and a friend to the Jewish people. He appreciated and cherished the existence of the State of Israel, [saying](#), “The whole world must see that Israel must exist, and has the right to exist, and is one of the great outposts of democracy in the world.”
- Unlike Mallory, Dr. King [understood](#) that Israel is a beacon of democracy with the need – and the right – to protect its people: “Peace for Israel means security, and we must stand with all our might to protect its right to exist, its territorial integrity. I see Israel as one of the great outposts of democracy in the world, and a marvelous example of what can be done, how desert land can be transformed into an oasis of brotherhood and democracy. Peace for Israel means security and that security must be a reality.”
- Unlike Mallory, Dr. King [abhorred anti-Semitism](#) and other forms of bigotry: “I solemnly pledge to do my utmost to uphold the fair name of the Jews – because bigotry in any form is an affront to us all.”
- Dr. King understood that people who – like Mallory – deny Israel’s right to exist are veiled anti-Semites. In 1968, he [said](#), “When people criticize Zionists they mean Jews, you are talking anti-Semitism.”

It is a betrayal of Dr. King’s values and legacy to have Tamika Mallory deliver the keynote address at the university’s upcoming Dr. King celebration. We urge you to rescind the invitation to Mallory. Please choose someone whose record reflects an abhorrence of anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry, and a respect and regard for Israel, which will truly honor Dr. King’s enduring values of tolerance and social justice for everyone.

Very truly yours,



Morton A. Klein
National President



Susan B. Tuchman, Esq.
Director, Center for Law and Justice