



June 1, 2021

Ms. Myart-Cruz:

As LAUSD parents, we are writing to call for an unequivocal apology for the anti-Semitism and intolerance coming from you and the union you lead. Especially in the wake of the recent spike in attacks on Jews¹, your anti-Semitism is not only offensive, it endangers thousands of teachers, parents, and especially children in the LAUSD and beyond. Additionally, we call for an immediate investigation into potential civil rights violations related to racial profiling.

During the pandemic -- when we should all be coming together around common purpose and common humanity -- you and your union have doubled down on these attacks even as you have blocked our children from receiving a quality public education for the last 18 months. Last week's UTLA vote calling for the complete de-funding of Israel unfortunately follows in the context of a growing body of evidence that eviscerates the fine line between being anti-Israel and anti-Semitic.

On May 20, 2021, UTLA Chapter Chairs overwhelmingly voted to end all United States aid to Israel. The leadership of the union representing our children's teachers has no business singling out one country and its people, especially a people who have been victims of discrimination, persecution, and genocide for generations. The position of the union you lead has thrown gasoline on the fire of what was already a volatile, unsafe, and increasingly frightening environment for Jews. Last Friday, you stated: "As educators, it is our job to create nurturing, safe environments for all of our students." But your rhetoric rings hollow when UTLA's actions have the opposite effect for Jews and other historically oppressed groups trying to work, educate, and learn in the midst of this horrifying new normal.

Even if UTLA's vote to defund Israel were not laden with obvious anti-Semitism, it would still be wildly misguided and inappropriate during the biggest inflection point in modern education

¹ The Anti-Defamation League has documented a recent spike in disturbing anti-Semitism on multiple platforms -- from Facebook and Twitter to Tik Tok and Instagram -- with messages including explicit praise for Hitler, promoting tropes about Jewish control and demonizing all Jews. Extreme anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist content can be found across a wide variety of channels calling for the destruction of the Jewish state, including posts that state: "GAS THE KIKES RACE WAR NOW." An analysis of Twitter in the days following the recent outbreak of violence showed more than **17,000 tweets** which used variations of the phrase, "Hitler was right" between May 7 and May 14, 2021. ADL has also documented an increase in on-the-ground activity that demonizes Israel that has crossed the line at times into antisemitism, including in Los Angeles. Over this past Memorial weekend, the LA Times reports that a vandal hurled concrete slabs at the windows of a West Los Angeles Synagogue and a nearby Kosher restaurant in the heart of Los Angeles' Jewish community.

history. In the wake of 14 months of shuttered schools, truncated zooms, and tragic learning loss that continues to this day for hundreds of thousands of LAUSD student -- especially low income children and children of color -- it is absurd for the union representing the teachers of our children to take official stands on complex American foreign policy issues before passing resolutions supporting a full fall reopening, embracing parents as equal members at the table, or endorsing quality public education as a right not a privilege.

Even in a vacuum, UTLA's anti-Israel vote would be deeply troubling on pedagogical as well as social justice grounds. But, sadly, none of this is surprising or new. UTLA as an organization and you, Ms. Myart-Cruz as an individual, have a disturbing history of promoting insensitive and potentially illegal and anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish LAUSD families.

Recent examples of such racism, bigotry, and intolerance include:

On February 19, 2021, UTLA employee and purported "Research Specialist," Albert Lowe, sent an official email to a parent of an LAUSD student on behalf of UTLA stating, in pertinent part, the following:

"My name is Albert Lowe and I work for the United Teachers Los Angeles. I'm working on a research project on who speaks on LAUSD issues in the *LA Times* and coding for race and class. You are quoted twice in the last eight months. In coding, my rubric is self-identification within the article, self-identification found elsewhere or using the last name index on the census for all names with at least 1000 results. [Redacted] is not in that index and I have not found any statements by you about your own self-identification. I know that [redacted] is a common Iranian name, but I will not make any assumptions without a legitimate method. Could you tell me how you racially self-identify or point me to a citation on your identity?"

In his email, Mr. Lowe said the quiet part out loud. He openly admits to creating an official UTLA racial profiling database on parents who make comments about UTLA to the media.

It is worth noting that UTLA's racial profiling database is funded by the taxes of the parents it is profiling. Parents pay taxes that fund the salaries of our mostly wonderful teachers, but before the money gets to our teachers, LAUSD withholds about \$1000 per teacher per year to transfer directly to UTLA and its affiliates. That's how UTLA racially profiles public school parents by using our own tax dollars against us.

As LAUSD parents, we demand to know the moral as well as the legal justification for such a database. What exactly is the "legitimate method" of data collection to which Mr. Lowe refers? For how many years has UTLA been conducting racial profiling research on parents? Does UTLA also track the races of African American, Latinx, and Asian parents, or does it only track Jewish and Middle Eastern parents? Finally, what exactly does ULTA leadership believe a name

and/or surname reflects about a person's race and/or ethnicity in a city as wonderfully diverse as Los Angeles?

On behalf of the above-referenced parent whom UTLA attempted to bully and racially profile and all other parents who have in the past or at some point in the future may be racially profiled for your database, we demand (a) an explanation and justification of your data collection methodology, (b) an explanation and justification of your data collection purpose, (c) answers to all the questions listed above, and (d) a copy of all the data you have collected pursuant to UTLA's "research project" to date. Additionally, we demand a full disclosure of the legal basis for which UTLA justifies this obvious violation of the civil rights of the parents and children it purports to serve.

On January 17, 2021, you posted on Facebook: "I read this and said right on! We (UTLA) have fielded voicemails, emails, stalked on social media by wealthy, white and middle eastern parents, in regards to opening schools."

This is an overtly racist statement. You are characterizing parents who vocally advocate for their children's education as "stalkers" of a particular race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Certainly, each parent who reached out to your office did not voluntarily identify his/her race, ethnicity, and income level before leaving a message. So, how did you verify this information? Did you ask everyone? And, if so, why? Was your Facebook post based on UTLA's racial profiling database?

Moreover, as parent stakeholders, we request clarification as to whom you were referring when you said "wealthy, white and middle eastern"? Based on the demographics of Los Angeles and your personal exposure to the West Los Angeles community due to your tenure at Emerson Middle School, many have perceived this statement as a thinly veiled reference to Jews, specifically Persian Jews. As you may know, one of the many tropes historically used to oppress Jews is that they are "wealthy." Based on the demographics of middle easterners at large, others have perceived it as a thinly veiled reference to Muslims. As you may know, Islamophobia and attacks on Muslims spiked under the Trump Presidency² and continue to this day. Whether you intended your statement to be anti-Semitic or Islamophobic, it is expressly intolerant of "middle eastern parents." On behalf of all these minority communities, we demand that you identify the community to which you were referring and make an unequivocal public apology to them.

² Incidents of anti-Muslim bias spiked 94% from 2014 and 2017 in the wake of President Trump's election according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

On April 13, 2021, the UTLA Human Rights Committee³ sponsored an Ethnic Studies Curriculum Zoom event. Two of the five panelists included Palestinian Youth Movement activist Celine Quissny and yourself. During the Zoom, many problematic assertions were made by the several panelists. Below are the highlights (or more accurately, the lowlights):

- Ms. Quissny identified The Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance as “attacking” Ethnic Studies.
- Ms. Quissny stated that “we know how strong a relationship there is between LAUSD and Museum of Tolerance,” as if that were something undesirable.
- Ms. Quissny characterized the field trips to, and training and workshops received from, the Museum of Tolerance as something she unwillingly endured as an LAUSD student.
- When a Zoom participant inquired on the chat, “MOT is not on our side?” You responded: “No they are not!”
- When a teacher inquired on the chat if she should stop taking her students on field trips to the Museum of Tolerance, you did not clarify that LAUSD educators should, indeed, continue to go on field trips to this global human rights institution, renowned for its work in Holocaust and genocide education, combating anti-Semitism, and fighting all faith- and race-based hate. Instead, you remained silent.

To be clear: as LAUSD parents we fully support a robust Ethnic Studies curriculum for our children. We strongly support a curriculum that teaches our children the facts about American slavery, the 1619 Project, institutional racism, and the oppression of people of color that still manifests throughout all aspects of American society today -- including within the LAUSD which still forces thousands of children of color to attend schools that continue to fail generations of families without consequence. However, such pedagogy must obviously be devoid of hate, intolerance, bigotry, and misinformation. We support a curriculum that teaches our children to organize across difference to build a better world – something today’s leaders have clearly failed to do. But how can we teach our children with a straight face that racism, bullying, and intolerance are bad when you and your union, as the official representative of our children’s teachers, resort to those very same tactics?

To say that your comments and selective silence vis a vis the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance are offensive and disturbing is an understatement. To say they are surprising would be

³ It is no small irony that the so-called “human rights” arm of UTLA hosted an event whose panelists maligned and disrespected the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance, an institutional vanguard of human rights the world over. The Museum of Tolerance was founded in honor and remembrance of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust so that such a monstrosity could never happen again.

a lie. The examples in this letter are only a few instances we highlight today in the interest of (relative) brevity.

We respectfully request that you issue an unequivocal apology to all students and families within LAUSD who identify as Jewish⁴, students and families within LAUSD who have experienced genocide of their people, persons who are Holocaust survivors and descendants thereof, Muslims and Middle Eastern parents, and all students and families within LAUSD who have experienced faith- and race-based hate.

To date, **not a single public official** has called for an investigation or even a condemnation of UTLA's actions. We are not naïve about why: UTLA and its affiliated teachers unions spend more money on politics and lobbying than all other special interest groups in California, including more than all oil companies combined.⁵ But we believe basic issues of human rights and human dignity should trump power and money. We demand our public officials stand with the parents of Los Angeles against blatant intolerance and bigotry. That is why we have copied all LAUSD school board members, LAUSD Superintendent Beutner, Interim Superintendent Reilly, Mayor Garcetti, LA City Council members, the presidents of CTA, CFT, NEA, & AFT, Governor Newsom, Secretary Cardona, as well as City Attorney Feuer, District Attorney Gascon, Acting US Attorney Wilkison, the FBI Public Corruption Unit, LAUSD Inspector General Stern, the California Public Employment Relations Board, and the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. We call upon these public officials to speak truth to power and condemn your pattern and practice of anti-Semitism and intolerance. In addition, we call for an official investigation and criminal probe into acts by UTLA to bully, intimidate, and racially profile public school parents who advocate for the interests of all children.

We await your response.

Sincerely,

California Students United

⁴ Your statement last Friday before a holiday weekend in the wake of blowback from your Jewish members condemning anti-Semitism and “oppression in all forms” would be laughable if it were not so offensively inadequate. We are glad to see you acknowledge the existence of anti-Semitism. Acknowledging this obvious reality is a small positive step. However, that is not the point of our letter. We respectfully request a full and unequivocal accounting and apology for UTLA's and your many anti-Semitic attacks and statements, an explanation for the methodology and legal basis for your racial profiling of LAUSD parents including “middle eastern parents,” and a direct condemnation of all official positions taken by UTLA or their officers acting in their official capacity calling for the defunding of Israel.

⁵ UTLA's affiliated union CTA spent \$2.85 million on lobbying during the first quarter of this year, which was more than any other special interest group in California and over twice as much as the second and third ranking special interests groups combined which are both large oil companies.