

OPEN LETTER TO JEWISH VOICE FOR PEACE

January 9, 2024

To Jewish Voice for Peace:

We, the undersigned, supporters of Palestinian liberation, express our outrage and deep disappointment at the effective removal of Ann Menasche, a lesbian, and a long-time socialist, feminist, Green Party member, and anti-war activist, from San Diego's Jewish Voice for Peace chapter and her exclusion from its activities. Ann was removed from the active JVP Signal group and excluded from a 12/7/23 Hanukkah protest to demand a permanent ceasefire, a protest that she had initiated and was centrally involved in organizing. JVP leaders even went to the great length of a last-minute change in location of the Hanukkah event—risking a lower turn-out and loss of press coverage—to prevent Ann from attending the event.

The de-facto expulsion had nothing to do with San Diego JVP's assessment of Ann's quality as an activist. One of the JVP leaders involved in this action against her described Ann as "a clearly powerful and seasoned organizer." Rather, the sole reason for Ann's removal and exclusion was her gender critical views, which were never even expressed within JVP, including her support for the rights of women and girls based on sex, the rights of lesbians based on sex/sexual orientation, and her leadership in a left-wing, multi-issue radical feminist group called Feminists in Struggle. The JVP leaders labelled Ann's views "anti-trans." She was told she would be excluded from the chapter unless she recanted and apologized for those views. Ann declined to do so.

The entire process involving two leaders of the San Diego chapter and Ann took place on Signal behind the backs of the rest of the chapter members. Ann was given no opportunity to defend herself and appeal their decision to local membership nor to any national JVP body.

San Diego's two JVP leaders wrote, "For the safety of our trans members who plan to attend Thursday's action, we're asking that you do not attend, unless you agree to engage...on this thread and/or over the phone to discuss a repair process that would involve publicly apologizing for these and any other public statements

denying trans rights, and affirming trans rights and liberation are inextricably linked to Palestinian rights and liberation.”

Ann explained that she supports “the right of trans people and all gender nonconforming people, gay or straight, to dress and express themselves as they like, be free from violence and harassment and from discrimination in employment and housing.”

“What I have a problem with,” Ann continued, “is claims to rights that run up against the rights of women as a sex and the rights of lesbians as a sexual orientation.”

Ann asked the two JVP leaders to clarify what trans rights they were referring to and what specifically she was required to believe. They failed to answer her questions. Instead, the two leaders insisted that Ann could only rejoin the chapter “once repairs are made,” i.e., if she renounced her views.

We are frankly baffled by JVP’s claim that the safety of trans JVP members is placed at risk merely by being present in the same crowd as Ann, peacefully protesting together against the ongoing genocide against the people of Gaza. Excluding people like Ann for her gender critical views from JVP events makes no more sense than excluding members of the Muslim community who may not support same sex marriage with the claim that their presence is “unsafe” for lesbian and gay JVP members. Both harm the ability to build JVP as a force to be reckoned with.

In addition, not only are the topics that Ann has opined on outside of JVP entirely irrelevant to the pressing need to stop a genocide, but they are also a matter of legitimate debate within the Left. There is worldwide discussion in left wing, progressive, feminist, and LGBT circles of gender identity issues including medical transition for minors, the right of lesbians and gay men to socialize with and date only those of the same sex, and the impact of self-ID policies on the rights of the female sex to safety, privacy, and equal rights and opportunity. Liberal countries such as Sweden have begun to severely restrict child medical transition as having risks exceeding the benefits.¹ In the UK, the Labour Party no longer promotes self-

¹ <https://www.euronews.com/next/2023/02/16/as-spain-advances-trans-rights-sweden-backtracks-on-gender-affirming-treatments-for-teens>

ID.² The Prison Service under the liberal government of Scotland just issued a policy that transwomen who have hurt or threatened women and girls will no longer be placed in women's prisons.³ That members of JVP would have a range of views on this and other topics is only reasonable.

Moreover, there is an urgent need to build a mass, united movement in the U.S. that could not only end this current catastrophic war against the civilian population of Gaza and save many thousands of Palestinian lives, but end U.S. military and political support of the apartheid state of Israel altogether. That would be a huge step forward for the Palestinian liberation struggle.

Like the targeting of communists in the McCarthy era, witch-hunts against and expulsions of left-wing activists from movement groups because they hold dissident views on gender only serve the enemies of the struggle. Such witch-hunts divide our forces and deprive the movement of some of its best activists and leaders. The time to end these destructive authoritarian practices is now.

SIGNERS:

Note that all organizations & affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.

Adriane Bracciale, San Diego tenant's rights attorney and socialist feminist

Carol Bouldin, Member of Green Alliance for Sex Based Rights, Feminists in Struggle, & San Bernadino County Green Party

Beth Chopp, retired Civil Engineer, feminist and environmental activist

Chris Hedges, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author

Cindy Sheehan, anti-capitalist, anti-empire, anti-war activist, California

Dan Kovalik, human rights lawyer, Pittsburgh

² <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/08/uk-trans-rights-labour-party/674944>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/dec/05/trans-inmates-with-history-of-violence-against-women-to-be-mostly-kept-out-of-female-scottish-jails#:~:text=Transgender-Trans%20inmates%20with%20history%20of%20violence%20against%20women%20to%20be,out%20of%20female%20Scottish%20jails&text=Transgender%20inmates%20with%20a%20history,except%20in%20%E2%80%9Cexceptional%20circumstancevs%E2%80%9D>.

David Keil, Boston May Day Coalition

David Morrison, County Council, Green Party of San Diego County

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Katherine Acosta, Wisconsin filmmaker and feminist writer

Kathy Scarbrough, NJ, member of Feminists in Struggle, co-editor of
MeetingGroundOnline.org.

Laura Kamienski, Pennsylvania socialist feminist, paralegal student, and expert in
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Laura Wells, Green Party of California

Linda Thompson, Green Rainbow Party of Massachusetts

Lowell B. Denny III, member, Black Alliance for Peace, former chair, Hawaii Club-
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Martin Eder, life-long socialist, college educator, School of Education graduate
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Romi Elnaga MLIS, Louisiana resident, member, Green Alliance for Sex-Based
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Steve Bloom, New York State Green Party, founding member Organizing Committee for a Democratic Revolutionary Left

Tina Beacock, retired VP, Chicago Teacher's Union

Thano Paris, member of Black Alliance for Peace, former member of Atlanta Palestine Solidarity, and Movement to End Israeli Apartheid, Georgia.

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Vanessa Beck, former Coordinating Committee and Research Team Co-chair of Black Alliance for Peace; founding member of BAP Baltimore branch