

Why UIUC Made the Right Decision on Salaita

Recently the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Board Of Trustees voted against approving Professor Steven Salaita for a tenure track position in the Native American Studies department. While some argue that this violated academic freedom, the truth is that the University of Illinois Board and administration did the right thing. Here's why:

Salaita was not fired; the Board voted against endorsing his candidacy for a tenure track position.

- It is common for large universities to require several layers of approval before tenure track offers are confirmed. Universities protect the academic freedom of those already with tenure, not those it is considering for a position.¹

Salaita's record of hate speech justified UIUC's concerns.

- Salaita promotes defamatory stereotypes about the people of Israel, while alluding to Israel's demise. For example, "I think of all the pain Israelis have caused, their smugness, their greed, their violence, and yet I smile, because it's all only temporary." – *Steven Salaita, Twitter*²
- Salaita demonizes Israelis and Zionists. For example, "Understand that whenever a Zionist frets about Palestinian violence, it is a projection of his own brute psyche." (*Tweet May 20, 2014*)³

Salaita has endorsed violence against Israelis.

- After three Israeli teens were kidnapped and murdered, Salaita expressed support for violence against all Israelis who live in the West Bank: "I wish all the fucking West Bank settlers would go missing."⁴

Salaita promotes bigotry against Jews.

- Salaita claims that those who support the rights of the Jewish people to self-determination (aka Zionists) have been, "transforming 'antisemitism' from something horrible into something honorable since 1948."⁵
- Reviewing ADL leader Abe Foxman's book, *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*, Salaita implied the ADL's own operations prove the existence of a mythically powerful Jewish lobby.⁶

Professors are expected to respectfully engage with opposing viewpoints, but Salaita demeans and disrespects people he disagrees with.

- Salaita repeatedly insults those with differing views. He wrote, "if you're defending Israel right now you're an awful human being."⁷ It was not clear that he could facilitate a healthy learning environment for the students at UIUC.

No student should have to consider avoiding a class because the professor has publicly attacked that student's nationality, ethnicity, religion, race, or other type of identity.

- Salaita expresses open hostility and prejudice against Israelis and Jews. Had he been hired, many Israeli and Jewish students would have had to consider this before taking a class in Native American Studies. UIUC should be commended for giving Jews and Israelis the same consideration and respect that all minority groups deserve.

While the right to free speech should be unassailable, universities must not reward those who engage in hate speech. Salaita's rejection was a step towards a more inclusive Illinois, and an important moral stand against bigotry in academia.

Israel and indigenous rights



"Who can challenge the rights of the Jews to Palestine? Good lord, historically it is really your country."

- Yusuf al-Khalidi, Palestinian Arab Mayor of Jerusalem, 1899



"[Jews] are indigenous people of the region. And whatever rights the Arabs have, Israel also has."

- Zubeyir Aydar, President of the Kurdistan People's Conference



"Israel is rooted... in a simple and profound idea: the idea that people deserve to be free in a land of their own."

- President Barack Obama

¹ Cary Nelson, "An Appointment to Reject," *Inside Higher Ed*, Aug. 8, 2014 at <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2014/08/08/essay-defends-university-illinois-decision-not-hire-steven-salaita>

² <https://twitter.com/stevesalaita/status/459722797481476096>

³ Cary Nelson, "An Appointment to Reject," *Inside Higher Ed*, Aug. 8, 2014 at <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2014/08/08/essay-defends-university-illinois-decision-not-hire-steven-salaita>

⁴ <http://legalinsurrection.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Twitter-@stevesalaita-I-wish-all-the-fucking-West-Bank-settlers-would-go-missing-e1407358583507.png>

⁵ <http://legalinsurrection.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Twitter--stevesalaita-Zionists-transforming-into-something-honorable.png>

⁶ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2014/09/03/steven-salaita-more-than-just-an-obnoxious-tweeter/>

⁷ <http://legalinsurrection.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Twitter--stevesalaita-Lets-cut-to-the-chase-If-defending-Israel-horrible-person.png>