



January 23, 2020

President Seth Bodnar  
Office of the President | University of Montana  
University Hall 109  
Missoula, Montana 59812

Dear President Bodnar:

We write to you as chair of the Advisory Board, Executive Director, and Deputy Executive Director, respectively, of the [Academic Engagement Network \(AEN\)](#), an independent and non-partisan national organization comprised of over 730 faculty members on more than 235 campuses across the United States. AEN seeks to counter the delegitimization of Israel on campus, helps to defend campus free speech and academic freedom, promotes robust discussion of Israel and the Middle East in the academy, and responds to antisemitism on campus when it occurs. Prominent university leaders and distinguished scholars serve on AEN's Advisory Board, including Deborah E. Lipstadt, Steven Pinker, Lawrence H. Summers, and Stephen Joel Trachtenberg among others.

We write to express our admiration for your strong denunciation of an [antisemitic email](#) that was sent to hundreds of members of your campus community this past weekend ahead of Martin Luther King Day. In our judgment, the campus-wide statement that you released was exactly right. You stated clearly and forcefully what needed to be said in condemning this hateful email, which directed recipients to view speeches of the antisemitic leader of the Nation of Islam hate group, and included a link to the group's offensive book *Jews Selling Blacks*—a vile volume that traffics in anti-Jewish conspiracies and falsely claims that Jews dominated the transatlantic slave trade. This antisemitic canard has been rejected by reputable scholars as a deplorable misuse of history and the *American Historical Association* has long [denounced the allegation](#) that Jews played a disproportionate role in the Atlantic slave trade and in the exploitation of slave labor.

We commend you for alerting your campus community to the falsehoods contained in the email, for unequivocally noting that it contained “ideas that are against everything Martin Luther King, Jr. stood for” and for rejecting the missive as counter to the “shared UM belief in the dignity of every person.” We also admire your commitment to “speak out against hate”, to “respond appropriately and in a timely manner” to any future acts of hatred on your campus, and to fully support those affected by them.

Thank you again for your strong statement and its message of tolerance and inclusivity. Your powerful words ensure that the University of Montana will move forward as an academic institution that honors free expression while ensuring that all individuals and communities feel valued, welcomed, and respected. We also would like you to know that we are available to share with you our expertise and the best practices that we have developed for countering antisemitism while promoting academic freedom and free speech on campus. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely yours,



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