

Dear Mayor Murray,

My name is Dean Spade and I am a professor at the Seattle University School of Law. I am a trans activist and lawyer and I have worked for the last fifteen years in LGBT movements in the United States on issues related to LGBT youth, LGBT low-income people and LGBT prisoners.

I am writing because I saw that you are listed as a speaker at an upcoming conference being put on by A Wider Bridge in Tel Aviv gathering LGBT leaders. I have some serious concerns about this event. There is a broader context to the work of A Wider Bridge, Aguda and this conference that I want to make sure you are aware of.

Over the last several years, Israel advocacy organizations like A Wider Bridge have engaged a new kind of Israel advocacy that is focused on using queer and trans rights discussions to promote an image of Israel as a progressive country in order to cover over its brutal human rights violations. This is part of Israel's well-documented "Brand Israel" campaign, through which Israel had tried to change its public image, promoting itself as a "modern democracy"--projecting a "LGBT friendly" image is just one part of this. LGBT people all over the world who are concerned about Israel's human rights violations have named this strategy "pinkwashing." Pinkwashing has included sending Israeli Consulate-sponsored delegations of Israeli LGBT activists to the US and Canada, Israel funding films that portray Israel as a safe-haven for LGBT people and portray Palestinian culture as homophobic, and it has included the work of groups like A Wider Bridge that aim to cultivate good will toward Israel among LGBT Americans through tours and other events. It has also included marketing Israel as a gay tourism destination, which Aguda has been involved in. All over the world, LGBT people have been protesting pinkwashing as a state propaganda strategy that demeans LGBT movements and our struggles with homophobia and transphobia in order to promote a false image of a government that is facing negative public opinion because of its brutality and racism.

I am concerned to see you listed as a participant in the upcoming 40 Years of Pride conference because I do not want to see you or the City of Seattle drafted into pinkwashing. I am also aware that you recently supported the boycott of Indiana, and want to make sure you are aware that there is a global boycott movement against Israel in which speakers, artists and cultural workers are refusing to perform and speak in Israel in order to put pressure on the government regarding its violations of international law and its brutality. I urge you to learn more about this boycott and I urge you to honor it and to remove yourself from the program of the 40 Years of Pride conference. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak more about these concerns in a face-to-face meeting. I have included a short list of resources below where you can find out more information about the boycott of Israel, Brand Israel and Pinkwashing. I can provide more resources to answer any questions you may have. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,
Dean Spade

Resources:

Jasbir Puar, "[Israel's Gay Propaganda War](#)," The Guardian, July 1, 2010.

Nathaniel Popper, "[Israel Aims to Improve Its Public Image](#)," The Jewish Daily Forward, October 18, 2005.

Sarah Schulman, "[Israel and Pinkwashing](#)," The New York Times, November 22, 2011.

Katherine Franke, "[Dating the State: The Moral Hazards of Winning Gay Rights](#)," Columbia Human Rights Law Review, 2012.

Jason Ritchie, "[How Do You Say 'Come Out of the Closet in Arabic'? Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine](#)," GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 2010.