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OPINION | LETTERS

Holocaust Museum Responds: We Didn't Ban Florida's Gov. DeSantis

The event would have posed security concerns and taken up too much space, says the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks in Miami, Feb. 1.

PHOTO: REBECCA BLACKWELL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Elliott Abrams and Eric Cohen's op-ed "[Persona Non Grata at a Holocaust Memorial](#)" (May 6) misstates the decision of the Museum of Jewish Heritage to decline to host the Tikvah Fund's conference. This was not about banning or canceling Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a proposed speaker at the event. Messrs. Abrams and Cohen leave out that Tikvah, their organization, took months to provide details about its event, and when it finally did, it was clear it would have been too disruptive for the museum.

Tikvah reached out in January about renting our space. For months we sought details. Our charter does not allow rentals for purely political or religious reasons, and this is made clear to anyone who requests to rent our space. In late April, when Tikvah came back to us, it presented a plan that would have required using more of our public space and resources—and requested additional police security—that presented logistical challenges on what is normally our busiest day. The museum must consider the safety of visitors and staff.

We immediately informed Tikvah about those concerns. It then quickly signed the contract and sent it to us, so it could say it had a signed contract when we declined. Had

Tikvah notified us back in January about the details of the event, we would have rendered the same decision out of security concerns and to ensure the museum was accessible to the public on the proposed date.

When we declined to host the event, Tikvah resorted to threats, saying we had created an enemy. Tikvah knew that this was not about banning anyone from speaking but decided to make the false claim anyway. We will not respond to such political bullying.

We repeat our offer to Mr. DeSantis and any elected official who wants to bear witness to the horrors of the Holocaust. Please come tour the Museum of Jewish Heritage when our new exhibition "The Holocaust: What Hate Can Do" opens this summer.

Jack Kliger

President and CEO

The Museum of Jewish Heritage

The decision to ban Mr. DeSantis from speaking at the museum for a conference is a sad mistake that borders on cancel culture. Providing a platform to an organization doesn't mean you endorse the speakers to the event or their views. And even if you think it does, Mr. DeSantis—whatever you make of his other views or actions—is no anti-Semite or Holocaust denier. Sadly, this politicizes a precious institution dedicated to remembering and teaching the lessons of the Holocaust.

Abraham H. Foxman

Bergen County, N.J.

Mr. Foxman, a Holocaust survivor and former board member of the Museum of Jewish Heritage, was national director of the Anti-Defamation League (1987-2015).

I helped raise funds for the Museum of Jewish Heritage in the 1990s, and it saddens me to learn that the institution has lost sight of its purpose. Like the ACLU that many of us once supported—even as it defended neo-Nazis' right to march in Skokie, Ill.—wokeness has hijacked the brand. The museum's CEO should know that his denial of Tikvah makes it more comfortable for me and fellow supporters to file his next contribution solicitation into the garbage pail.

Philip Gotthelf

Closter, N.J.

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