

Note from Ted Swedenburg

I see that my colleague Mohja Kahf has spoken to your colleague David Koon. I don't have much to add. I would want to reiterate the point that what we three asked for was, first, for an additional speaker at the conference, and when that was said to be impossible logistically, we asked that Middle East Studies withdraw its support for the conference. We at no time called for Chesler to be disinvited. If she had spoken I would have been in attendance and asked some tough questions.

I would also underline, again, that our concerns are largely scholarly. Chesler is not a student of Middle East Studies, not trained in the languages, etc. She claims academic publications on honor killings, but these are largely published in *Middle East Quarterly*. This sounds like an academic publication, but it is in fact a think-tank publication, put out by the Middle East Forum, which is run by Daniel Pipes. There are academics on the editorial board, but its articles have only been peer-reviewed. He is notorious/controversial in our Middle East Studies circles, the founder of Campus Watch in 2002, which keeps track of academics who he and Campus Watch feel are "soft" on radical Islam, mix political advocacy and scholarship, etc. It used to publish dossiers on Middle East scholars who it disapproved of, and for this was widely accused of McCarthyism. Among them were the most prominent scholars in the field. The head of Campus Watch, Winfield Myers, wrote an article on Daily Caller about the Arkansas conference and Chesler's disinvitation (<http://dailycaller.com/2017/04/27/academic-malfeasance-u-of-arkansas-disinvites-phyllis-chesler/>).

I think as scholars of the field we were simply doing our job when we questioned the appropriateness of using our program's resources to sponsor such a speaker. We were not consulted in the planning of the event, and if we had been, would have suggested other possible speakers, whose approach to the subject of gender-based violence in the Middle East is scholarly and not sensationalistic. All three of us teach about gender and gender based violence; none of us are apologists for honor killings, quite the contrary; Dr. Kahf is the one of the three who has published on the subject. She would have been a much more appropriate speaker on the subject than Chesler.

I have attached a recent article by one of the preeminent scholars of gender in the field of Middle East Studies, Lila Abu-Lughod, a professor of Anthropology at Columbia University. Not much academic attention has actually been paid to Chesler and her work on honor killings, because so few of us really consider it to be scholarly, but Abu-Lughod provides a very good reading of what Chesler is all about on the subject.

Some sense of Chesler credibility, and her affinity to the style of

argumentation that is characteristic of more notorious figures in the far-right/Islamophobic field, can be gauged from some of what she says in her piece for Israel News about the Arkansas events (<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/20439>). She states that "These professors...all hate Jews" -- it's clear who is meant here, Abu-Lughod and Khalidi and Bashi, probably. But maybe the three of us? I know Abu-Lughod and Khalidi well and they are not Jew haters, and of course neither are the three of us (one of us is Jewish). In addition, Chesler claims that the three of us 'threatened violence,' and that the violence in fact happened. What is the evidence that we threatened violence? We never did. Plus there *was* no violence. There was a broken window at Tom Paradise's house, probably caused by a rock flying from a lawn mower. (I've never been able to figure out why this non-fact got circulated.) We are also accused of threatening that Muslim students would protest and riot. Again, we never said such a thing, and no student group made any such threats or ever even said anything about the event. Finally (there is more here that could be picked apart but I will leave it there), Joel Gordon was not on Mohja Kahf's dissertation committee. All of these twistings of truth and falsities are typical of the discourse that is characteristic of the figures and outlets Chesler is affiliated with: Breitbart, Richard Spencer, Bruce Bawer, David Horowitz, etc. How can she claim to be a scholar if her mass media commentary is so lacking in factual credibility?

The other pieces about us that have appeared on various blogs are equally full of falsehoods, and at some point I hope to address them.