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October 11, 2023

Honorable Phil Murphy
Governor
State of New Jersey
PO Box 001
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Dear Governor Murphy,

I am respectfully requesting that you immediately seek a return of State taxpayer funds appropriated to "City of Newark – Mayor's Brick City Peace Collective" that may have been used in support of an event this past Saturday honoring an artist who had advanced an antisemitic conspiracy theory about 9-11 and that provided a platform for organizations or people who have been identified by the Anti-Defamation League as advancing or excusing antisemitism. I am additionally asking that the remaining \$6.5 million of the \$8 million earmarked in the State budget for the organization be impounded until there are assurances the funds won't be used for similar purposes. The misuse of State tax dollars cries out for immediate action by you, especially after the antisemitic terrorism that has unfolded in Israel in recent days.

On Saturday, October 7 – the same day people, including children, were being murdered and kidnapped by Hamas - the City of Newark and the Mayor's Brick City Peace Collective was holding an event that was billed as [honoring Amiri Baraka](#).

As you may recall, Amiri Baraka was stripped of the honorific position of New Jersey Poet Laureate in 2003 by then Governor McGreevey and the full Legislature upon enactment of PL 2003, c.123. The law was enacted shortly after Amiri Baraka penned *Somebody Blew up America*, a poem widely panned as antisemitic for, among other reasons, spreading a conspiracy theory that 4,000 Israeli World Trade Center workers were given advance warning of 9-11 attacks. The bipartisan law had an unprecedented 12 prime sponsors and 70 cosponsors from across the political spectrum. [Speakers before the Senate State Government Committee](#), including former Senator Byron Baer (a Freedom Rider and champion of civil rights) and other prominent civil rights leaders noted the bill was needed to prevent State funds from being spent to honor someone who peddled bigoted conspiracy theories -- as well as other "poetry" that exalted violence.

Sadly, more than 20 years after Amiri Baraka was appropriately stripped of an undeserving State title and a \$10,000 taxpayer-funded honorarium, Amiri Baraka is once again being put on a pedestal and glorified -- with State taxpayer dollars.

Perhaps equally disturbing as Amiri Baraka being honored the same day as terrorist attacks in Israel, the first seminar at the Newark event was billed as “reimagining public safety” and bestowed the honor of “panelist” to organizations or people who have been identified by the Anti-Defamation League as advancing or excusing antisemitism.

One panelist (Zellie Imani) was identified by the Anti-Defamation League in 2022 [as glorifying or excusing terrorism against Israelis](#). Ironically while Hamas’ terrorism attacks were unfolding (just hours before the seminar began) and for several days thereafter, Mr. Imani’s Twitter account (@zellieimani) was retweeting praise for Palestinian extremists and gaslighting Israel for the terrorist attacks.

Another panelist (Minister Abdul Haqq Muhammad) at the October 7 event is a minister at the Newark headquarters for the Nation of Islam – a national group the [Anti-defamation League documents as antisemitic](#). The panelist has [publicly advocated](#) against integration and for the establishment of a separate black state in America. And his chosen name is that of a past leader of the Nation of Islam who was convicted of [various crimes of violence](#).

The antisemitism built into Newark’s event appears to have been funded by State taxpayers. The City of Newark – as an event sponsor -- receives more than \$100 million in State taxpayers’ money. As noted above, the Mayor’s Newark Peace Collective received a special \$3 million grant in the budget last year and another \$5 million special grant this year. No spending plans have been shared by the Administration despite past requests. \$6.5 million remains in state accounts.

Again, I respectfully request that you seek a return of every cent of taxpayer dollars that may have been spent in furtherance of this event and that you impound the remaining \$6.5 million in taxpayer-funded appropriations to the Mayor’s Brick City Peace Collective until there are clear spending plans that assure State funds will not be used to honor, or give platforms to, antisemitic people or organizations -- or their apologists.

Sincerely,



Senator Declan O'Scanlon

C Anti-Defamation League