



4 October 2017

Anita Bromberg, JD
Director of Advocacy and Engagement
Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies
5075 Yonge Street, Suite 902
Toronto, Ontario M2N 6C6

Dear Ms. Bromberg,

Director John Malloy has asked me to respond to your recent letter regarding the Toronto District School Board Islamic Heritage Month resource guide. We share your goal of fostering understanding and inclusion, and it was with these in mind that this Resource Guide was developed by the Islamic Heritage Month planning committee.

To address the concerns you express, my staff and I have reviewed the sections identified in your letter. I would like to provide some context around the decision to include this information within the Resource Guide. Specifically with respect to the Nation of Islam, occurring within a section explaining that there exist offshoots of the broader Muslim Community, this reference is included as simply one example of these. It is presented as historical fact only, and is in no way intended as an endorsement of that organization.

Similarly, as regards the mention of Malcolm X, we absolutely recognize that he was a polarizing historical figure. Nevertheless, as a Black, Muslim man, Malcolm X played a central role in the U.S. civil rights movement, and this is taught about in schools across North America. While any reprehensible comments Malcolm X made during his life must be condemned outright, it is our understanding that his views changed over time and that he publically denounced such comments made in his youth as not having been reflective of his true feelings.

Overall, in developing this Resource Guide, the Islamic Heritage Month Committee felt it was important to highlight the work of Muslims who stood up for equity and inclusion, and to include individuals who spoke out against all forms of hate (including Anti-Semitism). Respectfully, in light of this, we do not believe that recalling the Resource Guide for further review at this time is required.

Having said that, I thank you for your letter, as I truly believe these are important conversations for us to have, and help us move toward our shared goal of fostering deeper understanding and inclusion. As always, we remain open and committed to receiving feedback, and will continue to seek input from our communities in order to serve our schools and students in the most equitable and inclusive manner possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jim Spyropoulos'.

Jim Spyropoulos
Executive Superintendent
Equity, Engagement and Well-Being