



# HoCoJAG

Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group

June 17, 2024

Dear Mr. MacInnes,

On behalf of Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group (HoCoJAG) we write to express deep concern regarding the “Umbrella Art” display at the Columbia Festival of the Arts this weekend. We are troubled that the Columbia Association used the event to display anti-Israel sectarian propaganda and imagery that many will find antisemitic. This seems egregiously inappropriate for a non-political event meant for the general public, particularly one targeting young children.

The umbrellas, donated by the Aya Montessori school, do not appear to be the work of 3-6 year olds (which they should have been according to the contest rules); they seem to reflect the work of adults advancing anti-Israel propaganda. Providing these adults a public forum from which to spread their sectarian messaging to children seems counter to the inclusive vision of James Rouse and the mission and values of the Columbia Association. Many Jewish parents, expecting to have a lovely day at the Lakefront, were horrified to find their children at an anti-Israel, antisemitic exhibit.

We ask that you investigate why your team selected this display and consider responding to the shocked parents whose children were subjected to it. If it is not apparent why this was hurtful and problematic, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the wave of antisemitism that has swept across Howard County since October 7th. Hate crimes against Jews have surged 750% in Howard County with Jews being victimized at a much higher rate than any other group.

We hope that CA will return to the founding Columbia values of civility and inclusion and that your organization will take clear corrective action to prevent CA events from being used to spread sectarian hatred in the future. Columbia should be a community where hate has no home and where **all** children can feel safe, welcome, and included.

Sincerely,

David Albert  
Member - Board of Directors  
Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group (HoCoJAG)

