

# ‘CAN THE UNIVERSITY STAND FOR PEACE?’ OMAR KHADR, HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE QUESTION OF HOSPITALITY

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DAVID CLARK

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The extra-legal incarceration and torture of the Canadian citizen and former child-soldier, Omar Khadr, stands as an indictment of the nation's myth of itself as a haven of peace, order and good government. As Senator Romeo Dallaire memorably said in the Senate Chamber in 2012, the treatment of Omar Khadr “taints this government, as well as this country and all of its citizens.” What is the responsibility of the Canadian university—the Canadian *public* university—in the case of Omar Khadr and, more broadly, in the perilous labour of affirming peaceableness, reconciliation and humane understanding? How might university senior administrators be encouraged to join students in improvising a public sphere whose objective is the robust critique of militarism and analogously toxic forms of belonging? David L. Clark shares his experiences in the struggle to answer these questions, which now seem more pressing than ever. After Susan Searls Giroux, he asks: “Can the university stand for peace?”



SPEAKER

**David L. Clark** is Professor in the Department of English & Cultural Studies, Associate Member of the Department of Health, Aging and Society, and a member of the Council of Instructors of the Arts & Science Program at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. He has published research on a wide range of subjects, from critical animal studies to German Idealism to British Romanticism, and from Immanuel Kant to Jacques Derrida to Francisco Goya. Recently published work includes “What Remains To Be Seen: Animal, Atrocity, Witness,” in *Yale French Studies*, and “Goya’s Scarcity,” in *Constellations of a Contemporary Romanticism*, eds. Jacques Khalip and Tres Pyle. He was George Whalley Visiting Professor in Romanticism at Queen’s University in 2013 and Lansdowne Visiting Scholar at the University of Victoria in 2014. He has published several op-ed pieces in *Truthout*, including “Ann Coulter and Blowhard Politics: Canadian Universities and the War on Thought.” He is the founder of *The Hospitality Project: Five Hundred Letters of Welcome to Omar Khadr*.