



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, March 28, 2019 Meeting  
4:45pm-7:00pm in Memorial Room, Willard Straight Hall

### I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. V. Devatha called the meeting to order at 4:45 pm.
- b. Roll Call:
  - i. *Present:* M. Adeghe [0], J. Anderson [0], D. Barbaria [0], C. Benedict [0], U. Chukwukere [1], V. Devatha [0], O. Din [2.5], J. Dominguez [0], O. Egharevba [2], S. Harshvardhan [2], C. Huang [0], A. Jain [0], K. Kebbeh [1], S. Lim [0.5], N. Matolka [0], G. Park [1.5], I. Pavlov [0.25], M. Shovik [2.25], J. Sim [0], M. Smith [0], M. Stefanko [1], F. Uribe-Rheinbolt [0], B. Weintraub [1], K. Wondimu [0]
  - ii. *Absent:* S. Iruvanti [2], U. Mustafa [2], E. Shapiro [0], V. Xu [0.75]
- c. V. Devatha asked if the Title IX presenters were present.
- d. They were not present.

### II. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 minutes – approved.

### III. Open Microphone

- a. V. Devatha said that any discussion regarding the BDS resolution should be reserved for later, and that the current open microphone should be reserved for any non-BDS topics.
- b. No speakers at the open microphone.

### IV. Announcements and Reports

- a. D. Barbaria said that the Appropriations Committee (henceforth AppsCom) approved \$1300 for the Alpha chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha for their Miss Black and Gold event by a vote of 7-4-2.
- b. B. Weintraub asked why 4 people voted against the allocation.
- c. D. Barbaria said that those who voted against recommended another set of values that failed. He added that there was concern over what constituted a “special project”.
- d. V. Devatha asked if there was any dissent to the allocation.
- e. There was none.

### V. New Business I & Business of the Day

- a. Resolution 35: Approval of Amendments to the Women's Resource Center (WRC) Constitution and Changing the Organization's Name to the Gender Justice Advocacy Coalition (GJAC)
  - i. D. Barbaria said that this resolution is very similar to all other constitution change amendments that the SA evaluated this semester, but that this one also contains a change in name for the organization in question. He added that every time a byline-funded organization makes changes to its constitution, it needs to go through the SA. He proceeded to go through the changes in the resolution.
  - ii. B. Weintraub asked if it matters if they approve this before or after spring break.
  - iii. D. Barbaria said that it shouldn't matter.
  - iv. O. Egharevba asked whether this was fundamentally a name change or if the changes affect the purpose of the organization.
  - v. D. Barbaria said that it broadens the scope of the organization, in addition to the name change.
  - vi. K. Wondimu asked why the organization changed its name, and whether it was to accommodate all genders or for some other reason.
  - vii. D. Barbaria said that he thinks that if they go too far into that question, they'll get into the question of what feminism is, but that there was always confusion over the Women's Resource Center vs. the organization associated with it, and that this makes it clear that the organization, not the center. He added that there are many students who might need the services that the organization offers, but do not identify as women, which makes this more inclusive.
  - viii. There was a motion to move this resolution to Business of the Day – moved.
  - ix. Motion to vote on Resolution 35 – approved 23-0-1.
  - x. John Hannan asked whoever had their phone at the Assembly tables to come and get it.
  - xi. V. Devatha said that the phone is used for recording by the Daily Sun.
  - xii. J. Hannan expressed his embarrassment.
  - xiii. V. Devatha said that due to a scheduling error, the representatives of the Title IX Office would arrive at 5:15 pm, and moved to recess until that time.
  - xiv. O. Din asked what time the discussion of Resolution 36 would therefore begin.
  - xv. V. Devatha said that the Title IX representatives will arrive at 5:15 pm and present for 30 minutes. He added that anyone present regarding Resolution 36 does not have to be present until about 5:40 pm.
  - xvi. The meeting recessed until 5:15 pm.

## **VI. Presentation**

- a. Title IX Office
  - i. Mary Opperman, Lauren Johnston, and Chantel Cleary made their presentation.
  - ii. K. Wondimu asked for clarification regarding the procedures of freedom of speech and sexual assault.
  - iii. M. Opperman said that in the past, when a complaint was filed against a faculty member, the faculty member had the right for it to be reviewed as a

matter of academic freedom, and that this now happens earlier in the process than it once did.

- iv. I. Pavlov asked if the presenters could elaborate more on the differences between personal and administrative misconduct.
- v. M. Opperman said that interpersonal situations are primarily sexual harassment and misconduct, and that those will follow the procedures that they had just outlined. She added that matters of protected status will follow a version of the current procedure following a co-investigator model, and that this is frequently a matter of the misconduct of a person in their employment status.
- vi. D. Barbaria asked if the Title IX Office has any further procedures that will be reviewed next.
- vii. M. Opperman said that this is the last major review of the procedures that fall under Title IX, and that they are waiting for the Trump administration's final decisions in these areas. She added that if they do make major changes, they might have to come back and edit things to comply with federal law.
- viii. F. Uribe-Rheinbolt asked if people can only report incidents up to three years after they happened.
- ix. M. Opperman said that that timeline is an extension from one year, and that if it comes after three years they will do their best to look into it. She added that such situations become harder to look into the further away the incident is, but that they will do their best in such a situation.

## **VII. New Business II**

- a. Resolution 36: Resolution Urging Cornell to Divest from Companies Profiting from the Occupation of Palestine and Human Rights Violation
  - i. V. Devatha said that he is going to clarify procedure before they begin, and that they will start with a presentation from the sponsors, and then into a community speaking time. He added that there will be one line for speakers in favor of the resolution, and another for speakers against the resolution, and that each community member will have two minutes to speak. He also said that anyone who wishes to speak and is neutral should stand in the middle and they'll figure it out.
  - ii. D. Barbaria said that there are people at the table who aren't sponsors, and asked if they are being added as sponsors.
  - iii. V. Devatha asked those people at the table who are not sponsors why they are at the table.
  - iv. O. Din said that they have put a lot of work into the resolution and are deeply invested in the resolution, and that they are there to best answer informational questions.
  - v. D. Barbaria asked V. Devatha if they will be allowed to speak.
  - vi. V. Devatha said that those people at the table who are not sponsors should introduce themselves with their name and their year.
  - vii. O. Din introduced himself as a senior.
  - viii. Adam Khatib introduced himself as a junior.
  - ix. O. Din thanked everyone in attendance for coming, and said that there are hours and hours of hard work in the resolution that they are presenting today. He added that they'll go through the resolution and what's in it, and

that given the unique nature of the resolution, it is important that they go through it as a collective. He asked if there will be questions from assembly members.

- x. V. Devatha said that assembly members will ask questions next time, and that this meeting is focused on community members.
- xi. O. Din, M. Shovik, and Max Greenberg went through the resolution.
- xii. V. Devatha said that, as he said before, this meeting will be dedicated to community members, and that each individual will be given two minutes of speaking time. He began with the “against” side.
- xiii. Community member Jay Sirot introduced himself as a senior in ILR, and said that he has previously spoken about how BDS is a false choice and does not promote peace. He added that they have seen how members of SJP have threatened to derail an assembly member’s campaign if they didn’t hold an email vote, and that people have seen how this process involves delegitimizing Israel and makes no call for peace. He also said that SJP does not wish for peace, and that BDS will not bring it, as well as the fact that they know that President Pollack will vote this resolution down if it passes. He added that they know that BDS will hurt Palestinians, as Mahmoud Abbas said, and asked why they are therefore here. He also said that this resolution has nothing to do with helping Palestinians, and that its only goal is to delegitimize and put a double standard on Israel. He added that they should work to improve Israel and Palestine at the same time, and get the SA back to what it should be doing, which is focusing on helping students, not dividing them.
- xiv. V. Devatha said that he would give a warning tap of the gavel at 30 seconds and at 5 seconds remaining in each community member’s speaking time, and that he would appreciate if the audience held their applause until the entire night is over.
- xv. A community member said that they just want to question those against divestment, and said that there are people waking up every day to the atrocities that Israel commits, and asked why they are so against this. They also asked why they are turning a blind eye to this when 22 student organizations have realized this, and that they claim a voice for all people yet ignore a call for justice from them. They added that there are people at this institution who believe that this has nothing to do with their communities, but that this is not true, and that they will stand with their oppressed people on this campus because their struggles are shared, and that this falls well within the colonial tradition of divide and conquer. They also said that these are shared realities from a shared experience of colonialism and racism, and that they stand with the solidarity of the Palestinian community, and asked why they can’t see this.
- xvi. O. Din said that he appreciates the applause, but that he requests that they abide by the requests of the chair.
- xvii. V. Devatha said that this will also help people get more speaking time.
- xviii. A community member said that this should be shot down because it has created an unsafe environment and has made people feel unsafe for being Jewish, especially considering what happened last time a BDS campaign was brought here. They added that they should all vote “no” to take a strong

stance against this, because it opens the opportunity for more harm on this campus, and that there have been even more anti-Jewish incidents on this campus since 2014. They also said that unfortunately, Jewish students and allies have already felt in danger, such as when Jillian Shapiro was directly targeted in a Facebook post and had to go to CUPD for safety reasons which is unacceptable. They added that it is also unacceptable that students have been removed from Facebook chats for refusing to sign on with SJP, and that they have been called “Jewish bootlickers” and “white supremacists,” which is extremely problematic, and is erasure. They also said that this would be divisive and sends a terrible message for Jewish students and prospective students, and that students have signed a petition for understanding and peace. They added that they have the responsibility to shoot down this resolution which makes students feel personally attacked and unsafe.

- xix. V. Devatha requested that members of the community speaking state their name and year.
- xx. Community member Samir Salih introduced himself as a senior and said that this resolution is not BDS, nor is it connected to the BDS movement, and that this is a clear example of how the opposition is unwilling to listen and engage in dialogue. He added that the encourages everyone to listen to what is being done, and that this shows that they are clearly unwilling to engage in dialogue. He also said that he is a Sudanese immigrant, and that he knows firsthand what colonialism can do to a population, and that these people do not support Hamas or ask for war, but that they do wish for dignity. He added that the apartheid wall and the blockade of Gaza means the dismantling of family and disengagement from freedom of movement, and that this is not a derecognition of Israel, because it is not mutually exclusive to support Israel’s right to exist and to support this resolution. He also said that this is a complicated issue, but that as international citizens, they cannot ignore the plight of the Palestinian people, and that he will not stand by while Cornell funds human rights violations, and that this goes against his personal, religious, and Cornellian values. He added that it hurts him to know that his education is supported by companies complicit in human rights violations, and that people should make judgments based on the contents of the resolution, rather than what they’ve heard about the resolution.
- xxi. A community member asked why they are here today, and said that M. Greenberg said in the Daily Sun that SJP effectively supports the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state, and asked why SJP’s narrative is so wildly inconsistent. They added that this is a BDS movement, and that SJP just want this assembly to condemn Israel, and that it doesn’t care that Abbas stands against BDS because it hurts Palestinians and that Arabs in Israel are among the richest in the world. They also said that SJP doesn’t care about Palestinian attacks on Israel, and that it doesn’t care that they have refused Israel’s peace offer, and that this is a blatant attempt to condemn Israel for its existence. They added that this resolution’s supporters want no Jewish state to exist, and that this is a referendum on whether there should be a Jewish state, and that everyone should vote “no” on this resolution.
- xxii. Two community members said that Gandhi said that Palestine belongs to the Arabs the same way that England belongs to the English, and that since that

time, India was the first non-Arab state to recognize Palestine as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. They added that India opened its representative office in Gaza, and that India has always played a proactive role in the Palestinian cause and sponsored a draft resolution to the self-determination of the Palestinian people and against the separation wall of Israel. They also said that Pakistan fully supports the creation of an independent Palestinian state, and that Bangladesh has been a consistent supporter with no relations with Israel. They added that the South Asian Council is an organization that has not forgotten the pain of British imperialism even more than 70 years after Britain's departure, and that they are proud to support this resolution.

- xxiii. Community member Samara Jacobson introduced herself as a junior in ILR, and said that any member of the SA voting in good conscience must vote "no" on this resolution if they seek peace for both sides, and that this does nothing to further peace, and that Israel time and time again has gestured for peace, such as by forfeiting the Sinai Peninsula and offering full Palestinian statehood which the Authority declined. She added that in 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and was rewarded with 15,000 rockets since then, and that M. Greenberg's assertions in the Daily Sun earlier this week are ahistorical and dangerous. She also said that this resolution makes no mention of why divestment furthers the common goal of peace, and that this is no accident, and that the divestment campaign has refused to suggest any solutions, while their campaign has been steadfast in their quest for peace.
- xxiv. A community member said that, on behalf of himself and his college, and on behalf of the president emeritus of the Men of Color Council, his family could not stand military oppression in the Dominican Republic, and so that neither will they. He added that this is a cry for peace, not a derecognition of the Jewish state.
- xxv. A community member said that they pose the question of who is responsible for the suffering of the Palestinian people, and that money has been invested in weaponry, rather than development for Palestinian citizens. They added that Hamas shoots rockets, uses human shields, and calls for the murder of Jews, and that Israel has offered peace and that all of its actions are in defense. They also said that if Palestinians laid down their weapons there would be peace, but that if Israel did the same, there would be no Israel, and that this demonizes the Jewish people and does not seek peace, and that they trust that those voting on the resolution will make the right decision and strike down the resolution.
- xxvi. A community member said that they would like to address false narratives why their community supports this, and that this isn't a grudge match between Muslims and Jews, but that it is a fulfillment of their civic and moral responsibility. They added that it is their job to oppose injustice regardless of whether they are of their faith, and that Palestinians are systematically brutalized and oppressed, and that the question here is one of complacency. They also said that it has been said that the SA isn't the place for this or that it impedes dialogue, and that this has been said for decades and creates more complacency, and that as global citizens, they must take the necessary steps against the ongoing injustice and cannot stand by while people's rights are

violated. They added that the university's investments are far from apolitical, and that this is a political and economic campaign, but a moral question.

They also said that they want to share a statement from their prophet:

“Whoever sees an act of evil or injustice, let him change it with his hand, and if he's unable, with his tongue, and if he's unable, with his heart, but that is the weakest of the three,” and that assembly members' actions are not meaningless, and that they can choose to be complacent or compassionate.

- xxvii. Community member Adam Shapiro introduced himself as a junior in the School of Hotel Administration, and that in 1943 in Budapest, people were told that they had to put a Jewish star on, and that his grandmother had to do this because they were Jewish, and that Hungarians had been told that Jews were to blame for the losses in World War I, and that it was only right that they boycott Jews. He added that this resolution is targeting the only Jewish state in the world and is targeting Jewish businesses, and asked if this would be effective. He also said that it looks to make divisions, and that he feels sorry for the SA members who have been thrown into a geopolitical conflict that they shouldn't be part of. He added that there are 100 U.S. senators, of whom not one supports BDS, and that they are all against this anti-Semitic movement that seeks to target the Jewish people.
- xxviii. O. Din raised a point of order, and asked if he could correct something stated that was factually incorrect.
- xxix. M. Greenberg said that the previous speaker mentioned Jewish businesses, but that they are not Jewish businesses, nor are they being singled out for being Jewish or Jewish-owned, but rather for illegally operating in the West Bank.
- xxx. Community member Della Keahna Uran introduced herself and said that she was at the meeting as herself and as a representative of NAISAC, and that all five ALANA umbrella organizations signed onto this because they recognize this pain and recognize this situation all too well. She added that she believes that Cornell taking part in this is not neutral, and that they are making a killing on a killing, which is not neutrality. She also said that divestment is the way to neutrality and is the only way they can have open and honest dialogue from all sides.
- xxxi. Community member Josh Eibelman introduced himself, and said that he wants to thank the SA for allowing them to speak on this, and that SJP has brought a resolution which calls on the university to divest, which is not how SJP is marketing this resolution to the Cornell community. He added that on Facebook, they called for their supporters to come to the SA meeting to “Tell the SA: Divest from Israel,” and that he'd like to put up this banner for each assembly member to see. He also said that while Cornell SJP tells this assembly that Resolution 36 will end Cornell's complicity, they are telling the broader community that it will divest from Israel, not against the occupied territories, but against Israel. He added that their words speak for themselves, and that this does not belong on campus, and that he strongly urges the assembly members to reject this duplicitous resolution.
- xxxii. Community member Hamed introduced himself, and said that he is a Palestinian-American, and that many of the people in attendance know him, and that he has gone to many Shabbat dinners and debates, and that he has a

lot of Jewish and Israeli friends, and that he has nothing against Jewish or Israeli people and that he was not brought up that way. He added that his experience is not representative of Palestinians, but that of American Palestinians, and that his family is from East Jerusalem, and that he goes there to visit his grandparents, and that last year when Trump said that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, he thought about his family. He also said that Arabs in Jerusalem don't get citizenship, but an ID card and require permission from the government to leave, and that they are recognized as "citizens of Jerusalem". He added that he has to go through Israel checkpoints, and that one time, Israeli soldiers were looking for someone with a similar name to his father, and so they were held in jail and went through his phone and made him take off his clothes like he was an animal. He also said that once they finally made it to Tel Aviv, they had to take a car to East Jerusalem where they had to stop at a new checkpoint at every city, with soldiers with guns questioning them, and asked those in attendance to imagine their parents training them not to say that they're Palestinian or speak Arabic, and that he has been trained his whole life to hide his identity. He added that if he says he's Palestinian, it starts a debate, and that he can't just be himself without bringing politics into it, and said that he has the pleasure of knowing many people in the audience, and that for the person who called him a terrorist for wearing a keffiyeh, this is a symbol of his heritage.

- xxxiii. Community member Nicole introduced herself, and said that aside from the issues previously mentioned, SJP's tactics were offensive and unacceptable on this campus, and that SJP kept this under close supervision instead of announcing this campaign publicly so that those against the resolution would fall behind. She added that they threatened a member's candidacy for reelection, and that if they pass this resolution, they send a message that coercion and threatening is okay, and that if they were confident in their argument, they would not have to rely on deception and deceit. She also said that positive dialogue is never the consequence of a BDS campaign, but that even they did not expect this to devolve into what it has become, and that Cornellians of conscience should vote against this.
- xxxiv. O. Din asked what the average timespan of a resolution's passing is before it is released to the public.
- xxxv. V. Devatha said that it is released to the public via the agenda.
- xxxvi. O. Din asked if this timeline is different.
- xxxvii. V. Devatha replied in the negative and said that this is because it was passed at Exec this week. He added that there are ten minutes left in the meeting.
- xxxviii. Community member Ezra Stein introduced himself and said that he grew up in a Jewish family and went to synagogue and Hebrew school, and that he thinks he knows why people feel uncomfortable, and that in Hebrew school, they did not give them all the facts. He added that they didn't tell them about UN resolutions or about Jews supporting BDS and Palestine around the world, including in Israel, and that it is necessary to separate Judaism from Zionism. He also said that he would like to address that BDS isn't a religious issue, and that someone can be Jewish and pro-Palestine, and that these charges of anti-Semitism, and that his family knows what anti-Semitism is,

and that his grandfather lost his entire family in the Holocaust. He added that calling them anti-Semitic erases real anti-Semitism that happens every day, and that being pro-Israel is not pro-Jewish, and that being anti-Israel is not being anti-Jewish.

- xxxix. Community member Annie introduced herself as a freshman, and said that she is from a Jewish family who went through the Holocaust, and that a small faction of the student body believes the university should divest, and that this resolution is fundamentally wrong, stifles and divides people, and alienates Jewish students. She added that this singles out the sole Jewish state and makes it out to be the sole source of injustice in the world, and that this makes people like her feel alienated, and that the Tree of Life incident is but one case where Jews were targeted. She also said that when applying to colleges, she only looked at universities where she would feel safe, and that she felt unsafe at Columbia where there had been a surge in anti-Semitic activities at that campus following a similar resolution, and that the implications of this resolution are antithetical to the safety of Jews on campus. She added that many of those present can agree that cis individuals do not define transphobia, and asked why Jews therefore can't be the definers of anti-Semitism, and that this eliminates the possibility of a nuanced conversation, and asked that people consider what this does to a large group of students on this campus and how it makes them feel unsafe and unwelcome. She also said that if the SA wants to support all students, it should foster dialogue, not isolation.
- xl. Community member Naomi introduced herself as a junior, and said that she is present to ask the question of peace or responsibility, and asked if their current conceptions of peace are predicated on violence. She also asked if this creates division, or if it is just that there are conversations not being had, and said that any peace agreement should recognize that the status quo is predicated on human rights, and that they are discussing the loss of human lives, and that someone said that SA members shouldn't have to deal with this which is not true. She added that they need to decide what they stand for and with, and that she asks if the SA is willing to stand for human rights and human dignity, and that she thinks that is fundamentally at the heart of the issue. She also said that they must consider if there are conversations they aren't having and why that is the case, and that she thinks that currently there is a disregarding of the teach-ins SJP has been having, and that there are educational initiatives accompanying this. She added that they need to consider the discussion and the dialogue, as well as what they stand for.
- xli. V. Devatha said that there are time for two more speakers.
- xlii. Community member Jeremy introduced himself as a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences, and said that genuine concern is legitimate, and that they can lobby the American and Israeli governments to improve their conditions and donate to charity without calling into question the right of a Jewish state to exist. He added that BDS doesn't care about this, or about the ten states in which people can be killed for being gay or where ethnic cleansing can happen, and that no one says that China should stop existing, but that they do say that for Israel. He also said that he wants to be abundantly clear that these notions of white colonialism whitewash the diverse

history of the Jewish people, and that it conflates their founding with that of countries in the Americas, and that it erases the history of the Jewish people in the Middle East. He added that with this inconsistent reasoning, their country was created legally by the UN, and that the UN said that eliminating the US and the UK would be futile.

- xliii. Community member Laila introduced herself as a senior, and said that someone from the other side said that Palestinians laying down their arms would lead to peace but that Israelis doing the same would lead to there being no Israel, and that this notion is extremely racist. She added that when an oppressed people are given rights, they don't act against their former oppressors, and that such a fear is never in justification, and that they paint Arabs such as her as being savage people who need to be controlled. She also said that the notion of singling out oppressors is a decades-old tool that paints the oppressors as being oppressed, and that their argument is "Why me? They're killing people too," which is ridiculous, and that Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid since World War II, and that they have been given billions in aid which is put toward their military. She added that the U.S. shields Israel from accountability, and that Desmond Tutu once said that the West places Israel on a pedestal, and that this resolution will take Israel off that pedestal. She also said that it has been said that they won't be neutral if they divest, but that that is not true, and that doing one thing is political because they only invest in one side right now.
- xliv. A community member said that they would like to speak.
- xlv. V. Devatha said that he already determined the cutoff, so it would be unfair for the community member to speak, and that they can speak the week after next when they reconvene, but that there will be a focus on SA members at that meeting.
- xlvi. There was a motion to overturn the chair's decision.
  - 1. O. Din and M. Shovik dissented.
- xlvii. V. Devatha thanked everyone who came to the meeting for coming and speaking their mind.
- xlviii. There was a motion to table the resolution – **tabled**.

## VIII. Adjournment

- a. V. Devatha adjourned the meeting at 6:34 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*John Hannan*  
Clerk of the Assembly