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SPRING 2012

The Olive Tree Initiative has officially expanded our experiential education approach to areas outside of the Middle East. Our newest branch started about a year ago with weekly student meetings to discuss **Turkey-Armenia** tensions. The student-led group organized, raised funds, and created an extensive 11-day agenda that focused on diversity of views addressing Turkey-Armenia relations.

The purpose of the Olive Tree Initiative Turkey-Armenia trip is to educate students, faculty and community about the historical and contemporary tensions between the two countries. The group was composed of diverse students, faculty and community members, which included Turks & Armenians

Highlights from the trip include students meeting:

- **Ambassador Reha Keskintepe**, director of US and Europe desk at Foreign Ministry
- **Noyan Soyak**, Turkish Armenian Business Development Council
- **Cengiz Akta**, academic and journalist who is a leading figure in the apology campaign
- **Barcin Yinanc**, previously editor in chief of Hurriyet Daily News (previously Turkish Daily News), currently Special Projects Editor of Hurriyet
- **Vardan Marashlyan**, Armenian Deputy Minister of Diaspora
- **Aram Manukyan**, President of the Armenian National Movement
- **Arshak Banouchyan**, Armenian National Congress
- **Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan**, Eurasia Partnership Foundation

Students were asked if their personal experiences in applying the OTI experiential learning model to the Turkey-Armenia relations had changed their perspective on the issues. Here are some responses:

*"By engaging in **direct conversations** with speakers, I developed a better understanding of causes and consequences of the tensions between Turkey and Armenia."*

Armenia. I gained a better awareness of the ways that each side is working toward greater reconciliation and resolution.

*"The current relationship between Armenia and Turkey and all of the historical political and social factors **cannot be adequately understood unless you actually go to these places and speak with the major players involved....** As a member of the Armenian Diaspora, [because of this trip] I am in a much better position to begin working towards a solution.*

Historically, the Olive Tree Initiative has focused solely on the Middle East, primarily in Israel, the West Bank and Jordan, exposing students, community and faculty to diverse points of view on the Middle East Conflict. The success of the Turkey-Armenia trip has created future opportunities for OTI to expand into different conflict zones.

*"**OTI is evolving.** We are now looking at trips outside of the Middle East in order to give students, community members and faculty a direct experience with different conflicts around the world. The Turkey-Armenia trip which took place from March 24th until April 3rd was the first OTI trip outside of the Middle East,*

"We hope to apply the OTI philosophy and conflict resolution model to different conflict zones in the near future.

[Daniel Wehrenfennig, Executive Director]



Students, faculty and community members from the 2012 Turkey-Armenia Olive Tree Initiative trip.

RECENT HAPPENINGS

OTI reports back to the United Kingdom

In early February, Dr. Daniel Wehrenfennig and OTI President (UCLA) Corey Feinstein were invited to the UK to visit a range of different universities. On their trip, they visited with students, administration and faculty members of SOAS, LSE (London School of Economics & Politics), UCL (University College London), LCU (London City University), King's College, and Oxford University (where OTI alumni Megan Braun is studying as a distinguished Rhodes Scholar).

Due to the proximity to Northern Ireland, many UK universities have strong programs in conflict resolution, but they have expressed interest in learning about the experiential education opportunities that OTI offers University of California students. In addition to the universities, the leadership met numerous faith and community lay leaders to understand the community dynamics in the UK in order to prepare a comparative report to our climate in the US.

The trip was extremely successful and OTI's model was very well received by all communities throughout the UK.

OTI community gets more active

The Olive Tree Initiative, while primarily still remaining a student based initiative, is also expanding in its community activities. After many years of community presentations and other activities, the recently formed **OTI Women's Group** started to meet regularly. Women from all different faith traditions and politics meet (mostly in Orange County) and discuss their different traditions and identities. A new OTI community trip is also in the making. For more information on the OTI community event and/or the OTI community trip, please contact Susan Seely (sseely@uci.edu).



OTI faculty and community members on the robust OTI Trip to Israel, the West Bank and Jordan in March 2011.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Update from OTI @ UC Irvine

The chapter at UC Irvine has been very busy in the last couple of months. In the winter quarter the groups organized weekly "**public forums**" following and discussing the events of the Arab Spring. There were also a number of guest speakers and other events organized by the group, which attracted many new students to the chapter.

The focus of the OTI group at UC Irvine this year is on **education**.

The UCI OTI chapter started a 32-week course in winter quarter, which will last until the fall trip to the Middle East. Every Monday a one-hour long educational seminar is conducted at Irvine and is posted on livestream to be viewed by all other campus chapters. The education sessions are lead by graduate students and faculty with guest lecturers from the community. This course will serve as the primary OTI education tool this year, teaching all OTI participants the needed background and context to make the experiential learning through the summer/fall trips more successful.



*One of the recent program highlights of OTI at UC Irvine was **OTI Week**.*

The Olive Tree Initiative Week began Monday, April 30th and lasted until Friday, May 4th. The student-led events were participated by hundreds of people and culminated with a large "welcome back" ceremony for students returning to UC Irvine from the first OTI Turkey-Armenia trip. Students, faculty and the UCI community participated in a week of activities with the focus of showing presence on campus. A daily booth on the main campus road featured activities ranging from picture shows and information sessions on the Middle East to free teach-ins for Hebrew and Arabic and debates on Islamophobia and Antisemitism. Furthermore, a Middle East Narratives presentation, a Community Forum on Intervention in Iran and a One State - Two State student debate attracted many students and community members in the afternoon/evenings. *For more information on other events, click [here](#).*

For more information on our OTI Week press release, click [here](#).

Update from OTI @ San Diego State University

San Diego State University students have formed a new branch of the Olive Tree Initiative on campus. The student organization started small, but a dedicated group of officers and members have already contributed to the diverse student life activities by holding an event with One Voice Israel and Palestine. They continue to work toward building a solid foundation for future Aztecs who are also vested in elevating student interactions with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. SDSU's OTI has worked very hard in a short amount of time to reach out to the student population through the use of the college radio, the student newspaper, and public outreach.

For more information, click [here](#).

Update from OTI @ UCLA

At UCLA, many OTI students have taken part in numerous exciting events over the past couple of months and are currently attending new courses on conflict resolution. For instance, a brand new Honors Collegium course under Professor Alexandra Lieben is

now a focal-point of **Chancellor Gene Block's new focus on conflict resolution at UCLA**. While it is being offered in conjunction with several fiat lux seminars, Lieben's Honors 125 is the first (and only) course at UCLA to offer a broad overview of conflict resolution theory. The course is broken into two parts: a study of theoretical conflict resolution, followed by a research project in which small groups study a particular conflict and determine a practical means of resolving it. The course is filled with weekly plenaries given by veteran conflict resolution experts (General Wesley Clark, Senator George Mitchell, and Daniel Wehrenfennig, to list a few), to develop a truly valuable course for any student concerned with international affairs and conflict resolution.



OTI @ UCLA student, Taylor Braun '12, pictured above talking with Senator George Mitchell.

UCLA students also attended some stellar meetings in the past few weeks.

OTI students met with Ambassador **Dennis Ross** for an in-depth discussion on the current geopolitical situation with the government of Iran.

In addition, many OTI students engaged Special Envoy **George Mitchell** who was at UCLA to give the 2012 Bernard Brodie Distinguished Lecture for *The Burkle Center of International Relations*. In tandem with the course mentioned above, Mitchell answered questions from UCLA students about his diplomatic efforts to solve the conflict in Northern Ireland, as well as his experience working as Obama's Special Envoy to Middle East Peace. The past few months have inspired many at UCLA to take a hard look at conflict analysis and resolution, and OTI aims to continue to inspire the university's brightest students to pursue studies to solve the many issues they may encounter in our global future. For more information about OTI at UCLA, click [here](#).

Update from OTI @ UC Santa Cruz

The OTI chapter at UC Santa Cruz has been very active in educating the campus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In cooperation with faculty, three OTI **students have designe**

a class "Israel and Palestine: Pathways to a Deeper Understanding" and are teaching the important issues they learned on the OTI trips to their peers. OTI faculty and graduate students are helping out with this fabulous effort by serving as occasional guest speakers for the the class. The first feedback from students is overwhelmingly positive, making this a model for other OTI chapters to implement.

If you want to learn more about the course, click [here](#).

Update from OTI @ UC Santa Barbara

The OTI group at UC Santa Barbara is in transitional phase with most of the older leadership leaving and new people joining the group. The group has been focused mostly on holding weekly meetings and discussions and to reach out to faculty on their campus.

Update from OTI @ UC Berkeley

For the first time ever, the Olive Tree Initiative has taken root at UC Berkeley and is already receiving overwhelming interest on campus, expanding its membership, and putting together a strong group of 8 students for this summer's trip to the Middle East. In addition, the OTI team at Cal just successfully completed its first inaugural OTI week from April 21-24. The week kicked off with a hilarious performance by **The Sultans of Satire: Middle East Comic Relief**, engaging cultural and political difference through comedy and and uniting students in laughter. For more information, click [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

OTI @ UCLA's Month of Ideas



A MONTH OF IDEAS
-PRESENTED BY- **UCLA ORL RESIDENTIAL LIFE**

Funded by the Campus Programs Committee of the Program Activities Board
USAC UCLA ORL RESIDENTIAL LIFE
Associated Students UC

[Open Discussions/Teach-Ins every Thursday in May: 6pm-7pm in Haines A76]

TUE | 5.08 | 8-10 PM
Comedy Show: *The Sultans of Satire*
Northwest Campus Auditorium

THU | 5.10 | 7-9 PM
Film Screening: *My So-Called Enemy*
Northwest Campus Auditorium

“perspectives on partition”
[A 1-STATE VS. 2-STATE DEBATE]
Pt. I - TUE | 5.15 | 7:30 PM | HUM 169
featuring **REZA ASLAN & HUSSEIN IBISH**
Pt. II - TUE | 5.29 | 5:30 PM | HAINES A44
featuring **RABBI CHAIM SEIDLER-FELLER**
DAVID SUISSA, & ARIEH SAPOSNIK

TUE | 5.22 | 6:30-8 PM
Fruits of Discourse: Turkey-Armenia
De Neve Private Dining Room

WWW.OTIATUCLA.COM | WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/OTIATUCLA

OTI at UCLA is proud to present the 1st Annual **MONTH OF IDEAS**.

Throughout the month of May, OTI at UCLA will be hosting a whole range of interesting events to educate, entertain, and inspire students to learn about the international world conflict.

The month includes intimate **Thursday open discussions/teach-ins** about conflicts in the Middle East, Turkey-Armenia, Armenia-Azerbaijan and even India/Pakistan.

For some entertainment, there will be a **Middle East Comedy Show** with "The Sultans of Satire", as well as a **movie screening** of the award-winning documentary "My So Called Enemy".

The capstone event, entitled, "***Perspectives on Partition***" is a debate in two part about proposed solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Part 1 will feature world renowned scholars and regular commentators on CNN and *The Daily Show*, **Reza Aslan** and **Hussein Ibish**.

Part 2 will follow with some wonderful discussion with acclaimed Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, Dr. Arie Saposnik, David Suissa, and others.

We hope to see you out there! Click [here](#) for more details.

For more information on upcoming programs at the various OTI chapters and in the OTI community, please visit our updated website, click [here](#).



IF YOUR CHURCH, SYNAGOGUE, MOSQUE, FEDERATION, SCHOOL, ORGANIZATION, OR COMMUNITY CENTER WOULD LIKE TO HOST A PANEL OF EXPERT STUDENTS, PLEASE WRITE TO SUSAN SEELY (sseely@uci.edu) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

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