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Dear Friend,

The Olive Tree Initiative has had many action packed and very successful weeks since our return from the region at the end of September. We're happy to report that our welcome back event at UC Irvine was very well attended and received and since then OTI students have been very active with community presentations and other activities, both on and off campus. We certainly hope that this newsletter will provide you with a better sense of what we've been up to!

We hope to see many of you at our Holiday Party this Sunday, December 5th!

The Olive Tree Initiative

Student Spotlight



Name: Nesma Tawil

Year: Junior

Major: Political Science and Public Health Sciences

Hobbies: Dancing, writing, drawing.

Why is OTI important to you?: OTI has given me the opportunity to question both what I hear as well as what I believe.

November 2010

U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy Award Given to OTI



(Left to right) OTI Advisory & Community Board Member Larry Kugelman, UCI Emeritus Vice Chancellor Student Affairs Manuel Gómez, OTI Director Dr. Daniel Wehrenfennig, OTI Academic Advisor Professor Daniel Brunstetter, OTI

It is because of OTI that I have gained a greater appreciation for the various narratives and opinions that exist among those living in the region and throughout the diaspora.

Advisor & Community Board Member Dulcie Kugelman, UCI Interim Vice Chancellor Student Affairs Thomas Parham, OTI Academic Director Professor Paula Garb, OTI Student co-Founder Omar Bustami, OTI Advisory & Community Board Member David Rosten.

The Olive Tree Initiative received its first very prestigious international honor at a U.S. Summit for Citizen Diplomacy in Washington this November. The Olive Tree Initiative was awarded by the U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy (in cooperation with the State Department) as one of the TOP TEN nation-wide programs in Higher Education.

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The Olive Tree Initiative received high praise from many of participants and participating organizations. We were surprised to find that the Olive Tree Initiative beat out some incredible programs to get chosen as one of the TOP TEN programs in higher education. The conference organizer in cooperation with NAFSA (Association of International Education, the biggest NGO in higher education) provided us with a publication featuring all the selected programs but also the programs who were not selected. We were chosen over programs from American University, Brown, Columbia, Duke, Emory, George Mason, UC Berkeley, Northeastern, Michigan, UC San Francisco, Virginia Tech just to name a few.

We not only receive amazing praise from governmental, non-governmental, corporate and other educational institutions, but also some concrete interest to expand the initiative to other campuses. Georgetown University, Duke University, Yale are very interested and we already had some preliminary talks with administrators there. We are very optimistic to expand OTI to the East Coast and internationally (e.g. we have some serious talks with universities in the UK) in the near future.

Olive Tree Initiative on Campus



UCI Homecoming Event - October 21st

On Thursday, October 21st, OTI hosted its annual welcome back event with over 350 people in attendance. At our homecoming event, each of the 30 participants from the various chapters (UCI, UCLA, UCSB, and UCSC) gave a 2-hour presentation reflecting their recent trip to Israel/Palestine and Jordan. The program included a slide show and short video introducing the students of the Olive Tree Initiative, a presentation split into three sections, and a question and answer session where members of the community could pose questions for the OTI students. Our conversations continued well after the official program at the homecoming reception, where OTI students had the opportunity speak face to face with many of the community members at the event. All in all, the event was a great success!

Presentation with Marquez Equilibrium - October 25th

On Monday, October 25th our group met with Marquez Equilibrium, Conciliation Specialist, Community Relations Service (CRS) at the U.S. Department of Justice. Mr. Equilibrium has been working in the field of community conflict resolution for the last 6 years.

Presentation with Professor Menachem Hofnung - October 27th

Professor Hofnung from Hebrew University is a visiting scholar for one year at Irvine. On Wednesday, October 27th, our group met with Professor Hofnung to learn more about his experiences in Israel, his involvements in the region, in addition to his academic interests.





One Voice Student Activists Visit UC Irvine - November 9th

Student activists from One Voice visited UC Irvine on Tuesday, November 9th during their nation-wide speaking tours to meet with students and to share the experiences with OTI. One Voice is an international grassroots movement that amplifies the voice of mainstream Israelis and Palestinians, empowering them to propel their elected representatives toward a two-state solution. OTI Students met with One Voice representatives in the region as well.



Presentation with Non-Violent Peace Activist George S. Rishmawi November 22nd

This particular presentation hosted by OTI has been the source of much confusion in the past two weeks. George S. Rishmawi, who is a Palestinian non-violence

peace activist from Beit Sahour (near Behlehem), has been inaccurately identified as George N. Rishmawi in some emails circulating around the community. Many community members and students listened to George speak at three different presentations throughout the day.

OTI student alumni responses addressing the concerns about this speaker can be found by clicking [here](#). Anyone who may have any further questions or concern about the event is encouraged to contact the OTI Director, Daniel Wehrenfenn by clicking [here](#).

Olive Tree Initiative in the Community

UCLA's OTI Welcome Back/Kick-Off Event (November 2nd)

This past quarter was an exciting one for The Olive Tree Initiative at UCLA. After sending two of students on OTI 3, OTI at UCLA is busy building a community on their own UCLA's campus. On November 2nd, UCLA hosted their Kickoff Event where 6 students from UC Irvine joined to share OTI's vision with an audience of over 60 UCLA students and faculty members. Outside of our Kickoff Event, OTI at UCLA has hosted The OneVoice Movement, as well as a panel discussion with Israeli and Palestinian Entrepreneurs. Watch them grow by visiting UCLA OTI chapter online at www.otiatucla.com.



"New Generation" Show on KIRN Radio (November 3rd)

The Olive Tree Initiative at UCLA & UC Irvine were featured on KIRN (AM670) Radio's New Generation show with Suzi Khatami. Check out the commercial and audio from the interview [here](#).

"Activism for Amateurs" Talk Show with KUCI (November 5th)

UCI's Olive Tree Initiative's Soraya and Matan share their experiences in cities

Israel/Palestine and Jordan as they investigated the Israel-Palestinian conflict straight from the source. Listen to the entire interview [here](#).



Center for New Diplomacy Gala in Israel (November 6th)

The Olive Tree Initiative was featured at the annual Gala of the Center for New Diplomacy, one of our key partners in the region. OTI Director Daniel Wehrenfennig (middle) was accompanied by OTI Advisory & Community board member Nina Berman (left), OTI co-founder and student alumnus, Issac Yerushalmi (second from left) and OTI community supporter Professor Emeriti John Graham (second from right).

Cousins Club of Orange County (November 17th)

The Cousins Club of Orange County was formed in 1988 by Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, and others to promote dialogue and action concerning the ongoing conflict between the Palestinian and Israeli people. The group meets monthly to educate themselves, sponsor public educational meetings, counter clichés and misinformation in local newspapers, and to give legislators a reasoned view of Middle Eastern affairs.



Heritage Point Retirement Home in Mission Viejo (November 29th)

A filled room of about 40 elderly men and women listened to three OTI members during this presentation and asked "tough" questions about world politics, the situation at UCI and the future of the initiative. The largely Jewish members of Heritage Point embraced the OTI students and loved the conversation with them as Loretta Modelevsky (one of the organizers at Heritage Point) expressed in a follow-up email: "The residents were so happy to learn about this project. They were buzzing with conversation about it."

Upcoming Events

OTI Holiday Party and Fundraiser Sunday, December 5th - 3 to 6pm

Join us this Sunday at the home of Hal Smith (630 Harbor Island Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660) for a fun-filled afternoon with the students and friends of the Olive Tree Initiative. We're excited to celebrate a fantastic year for OTI with you. Please RSVP by clicking [here](#).

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