



An Evaluation of The Report to the Executive Board **by The Task Force on AAA Engagement on Israel-Palestine**

Compiled by Harvey E. Goldberg

In Consultation with *Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine*

April 13, 2016

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Recognizing the severe anguish and human tragedy resulting from the political and military violence in Israel and Palestine, and the ongoing Occupation of Palestinian lands and population by Israel in violation of the international consensus favoring a two-state settlement along the pre- 1967 borders, Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine ([ADIP](#)) promotes the use of our discipline's critical theories and methods in working towards peace and social justice in Israel/Palestine.

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A Critical Evaluation of: The Report to the Executive Board by The Task Force on AAA Engagement on Israel-Palestine (herewith TFR)

Compiled by Harvey E. Goldberg (April 13, 2016)¹

Summary

This in-depth review reveals a number of compounded shortfalls in the TFR:

- Neglecting its original task of having "productive conversations" using a "diverse set of lenses" that might enhance members' understanding of "complexities," the TFR ends up as an **unbalanced, one-sided document**. It reduces this Middle Eastern conflict to a string of accusations towards Israel. Surely a document representing a discipline like anthropology could be expected to be more nuanced and to refrain from oversimplified assertions.
- This shift is premised on **choosing a single paradigmatic frame** (Israel as a "settler colonial state") as the report's linchpin. As a consequence, the history of Israel and Palestine is represented in **shallow and misleading terms**. To support its bias the TFR makes selective use of references and sources.
- The critique which follows illustrates **this bias** with regard to two main fields: Israeli health services for Palestinians and Palestinians' access to higher education. It demonstrates how TFR's treatment consistently misrecognizes crucial data, de-contextualizes the discussion, empties it of real historical validity, and **shapes it as a series of stereotypic and erroneous images**.
- The relationship between the TFR and AAA's leadership remains fuzzy throughout the Report. Its subtext is replete with unwarranted claims for the moral high-ground. These, compounded by the glaring misfit **between the report and the pro-boycott resolution passed by AAA's Business Meeting in November 2015**, make for a **shaky, incoherent field of action which does the discipline and the association a disservice**.

Based upon this Evaluation, ADIP strongly urges AAA members to **vote NO** on the boycott resolution on the spring electronic ballot. Some alternative approaches to the difficult issues of Israel and Palestine are outlined in ADIP's "[about us](#)," and also in a recent [letter](#) from the President of the AAA.

¹ Prepared in Consultation with *Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine* ([ADIP](#))

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Preliminary

Time-Line Related to the Task Force Report

End of April, 2014: A statement by the AAA Executive in *Anthropology News* (AN) entitled "Towards an Informed AAA Position on Israel-Palestine." Among other plans, it stated that the AAA is "considering organizing a task force" to report back to the Executive Board and the AAA membership.

August 1, 2014: Formation of a 6-member *Task Force on the AAA Engagement on Israel/Palestine* (TFIP), hereafter "the TF." The TF is charged to submit a report by October 2015, hereafter the TF Report, or the TFR (at times referred to as [TFRIP](#)).

December, 2014: After the AAA meeting in Washington, DC, the formation of a network of anthropologists: *Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine* ([ADIP](#)).

April 30, 2015: AAA announced that TF Chair Don Brenneis cannot continue. After correspondence, that included ADIP pointing out that the first-named replacement was a supporter of anthropologists' boycotting Israeli academe, the AAA announced that the AAA Executive Secretary would be the coordinator of the TF.

May 2-11, 2015: Rapid Assessment visit to Israel and Palestine by three members of the TF. They met with anthropologists and other scholars working at Israeli universities and in other places around the country, partially based on suggestions by the *Israeli Anthropological Association* ([IAA](#)). They also met with Palestinian anthropologists and other scholars at Palestinian universities. Some of us learned through conversations with TF members that they also visited the headquarters of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Ramallah, and met with BDS Palestinian activists and officials in the West Bank.

October 2015: [TFR](#) submitted to the AAA Executive, and made available to the AAA membership.

November 2015: AAA members attending the 2015 Annual Business Meeting voted to place a resolution, to boycott Israeli academic institutions, on the association's spring 2016 election ballot. The TFR is cited within the proposal of the resolution.

March 17, 2016: AAA President Alisse Waterston posted a letter, ' [Before You Vote](#) '. It distinguishes between the spring 2016 vote and other "actions the Association may take on Israel-Palestine." The letter also presents the results of a working group established to review, evaluate, and consider such actions. The working group outlined eight "courses of action" which the AAA believes "can contribute to the enrichment of the health and welfare of all citizens in the region; increased circulation of anthropological scholarship; eased restrictions on scholars' travel; increased freedom of expression for Palestinian and Israeli anthropologists; and the development of ways to de-politicize the use of research results."

Foreword

At the end of April 2014, *Anthropology News* (AN) unveiled a plan to move "Towards an Informed AAA Position on Israel-Palestine." This step included a concentration of panels at the 2014 Annual Meeting which focused on a possible boycott of Israeli academic institutions. It also announced that

the AAA Executive Board, in collaboration with the 2014 Annual Meeting Executive Program Committee, is: "Considering organizing a task force. Our membership has considerable expertise on the Israel/Palestine issue, and on related questions."

A task force was formed and it submitted a [report](#) in October 2015. Appendix A of that report outlines the "Task Force Charge," which shows **changes in orientation**: both a revealing addition and an omission when compared to the original AN announcement. The Task Force (TF) is to explore how the AAA "might contribute –as an Association –to addressing the issues that the Israel/Palestine conflict raises." But the word 'conflict,' or the related terms that the TF Report suggests, appeared nowhere in the April 2014 announcement!

On the omission side, the members of the TF are described as "having expertise in conflict and historical memory, issues of identity, and the use of anthropology / archeology in political efforts." The earlier mention of "expertise on Israel / Palestine"—or the Middle East more generally—disappears! Instead it is acknowledged that "the Task Force members, like most AAA members, **do not have a deep history of expertise in the region.**" In addition, Appendix B—"A Brief Historical Outline"—further constricts the focus of the TF: "What we offer here is a brief outline of events and actions that pertain to the current experiences of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and in East Jerusalem..." With this definition, the history of Israeli Jews, and of Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, are bracketed out of any serious consideration.

After thorough and repeated consideration of the TF report as it actually emerged, [Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine](#) have reached the conclusion that this putatively anthropological effort is deeply flawed, both in its framing and in its execution. In the pages that follow, this Evaluation will provide extensive evidence for that conclusion.

This Evaluation is issued in response to the TFR so that AAA members might truly have an "anthropologically informed perspective on the region" when considering the forthcoming vote on the boycott resolution. We consider a **NO vote to the resolution** to be the only proper response for the discipline and the association. At the same time we point to a recent [Before You Vote](#) letter from the AAA president that outlines possible courses of action irrespective of a boycott vote. AAA members are advised to examine, consider, and discuss these ideas in the spirit of the knowledge and the questioning upon which this Evaluation is built.

Part I: Introduction

Background to this Evaluation

When the AN published the association's decision to seek and focus on "an Informed AAA Position on Israel-Palestine," anthropologists working in Israel were concerned. The announcement appeared online at the end of April, when the program for the 2014 Annual Meeting already had been set. It would have been simple for the AAA executive, or the program committee, to have contacted anthropologists linked to Israeli institutions when the program was developing. About 25 such people were in the AAA records but no such outreach took place.

Further, a letter to the AAA executive by the Israel Anthropological Association, sent at the end of August 2014, noted that arguments for an academic boycott represented "a kind of armchair anthropology that doesn't resonate with our discipline." During the Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. that year, anthropologists from Israel communicated their opinion that the work of the Task Force ought to include a site visit to Israel and Palestine.

There were some glitches in putting together the Task Force (see Part IV, "Responsibility"), but a rapid site visit by three of the TF members eventually took place. They met a range of Israeli anthropologists and other academics, as some of us experienced directly, and also Palestinians of different backgrounds. They seemed to listen attentively at times, but on some important occasions seemed less engaged, especially when explicitly challenging questions were raised. Often answers were given in the form of quoting the views of pro-boycotters, rather than through direct engagement. We were eager to see the results of the final TF report in which both their visit and their other efforts at inquiry would be reflected.

The resulting TFR is a 98-page document, plus introductory material and four appendices. Those of us who were directly interviewed by members of the TF hardly found our concerns, opinions, knowledge and questions addressed within it. True, with a close search one can find an example, or at least a hint, of whatever one wishes. However, if one considers the centrality of *context in anthropological analysis*, the principle of looking at a question from *various perspectives*, or the importance of an *informed comparative perspective*, these are *sorely missing*. Material is cited selectively, background is absent or minimized (to say nothing of fundamental information), and misleading conceptions are reinforced. Instead of an instrument of education, the TF Report materialized as the tool of a political program.

ADIP had hoped that things would be otherwise. The AN statement of 2014 uses the term 'dialogue' five times. This orientation is hardly reflected in the way the report was composed. The authoritative voice of the report simply and quite bluntly ignores alternatives accounts.

The process of preparing the Report, and its substance, carry implications, as considered in Part IV of this Response. The AAA Executive Board did not warn members against the possibility of misusing it, or being misled by problematic reliance on its contents. Consider p. 66: "The Task Force repeatedly asked supporters of a boycott for specific examples of active anthropological complicity with the conflict / occupation. In the end, the Task Force could find almost no examples of such active collaboration," Yet the Resolution passed in Denver in 2015 assumes that academic "complicity" exists. The AAA executive did not point out this contradiction, that is, the assumption of 'complicity' in the resolution versus the TF's finding that there is, in fact, no evidence of complicity.

Another example: The discussion of an academic boycott (pp. 80-82 and elsewhere) points to many problems with taking this step and reaches no final conclusion, yet there was no reference to such caution in the AAA 2015 Business Meeting, and the boycott resolution put to member's vote at the time admitted of no such complexity.

The AAA executive seems to want to have it both ways: to rely upon the existence of the report as evidence of its own neutrality and fair-mindedness on the one hand, and to ignore the TF findings when these do not align with the direction in which the executive is heading.

Notwithstanding the AAA leadership's support of the final product, the Task Force Report itself emerges as a biased and disappointing document. This claim is explored in detail in the pages that follow. We turn to anthropology colleagues with a straightforward question: Do you wish to have this problematic TFR and its impact enter the legacies of the discipline and the AAA?

From "Having a Conversation Well" to a Charter for Accusation

Several significant shifts took place as the AAA statement of intentions became concretized as the TF Report. The initial AN announcement stated: "It is also important to take the time to have this conversation well," but there is ample evidence that achieving this goal was derailed. This may be seen in the (1) framing of definition and main focus of the TFR, (2) epistemological assumptions on who might provide relevant data and insights, and (3) a retreat from the promise of "dialogue," that at first was seen as part of the initiative. These shifts may be seen by close examination of the AN announcement in 2014 and the subsequent TF document.

A Narrowing Politicized Framework

It is worth examining development within the opening AN announcement itself (April 2014). While only two-and-a-half pages long, it is divided into sections. The first introductory section has no title, while the second, longer, section is labeled *Background Information*. The introduction sets out the premise that: "The debate over Israel/Palestine is historically important and anthropologically relevant." It thus should provide an opportunity to "gain an anthropologically informed perspective on the region and on the *broader questions* it raises" (*italics added*). The word *boycott* only appears once in that section, towards the end.

In contrast, when moving on to *Background Information*, 'boycott' quickly becomes the sole leitmotif. There it is mentioned close to twenty (20) times! This shift is further signaled by attention to the term "conflict." In the *Executive Summary* that introduces the TFR, we read: "The Task Force was charged with helping the Executive Board consider the nature and extent to which AAA might contribute – as an Association – to addressing the issues that the Israel/Palestine *conflict* raises" (p. vii; *italics added*). Nowhere, however, in the AN statement from April, does the term 'conflict' appear! The discussion turns to focusing on "the occupation" rather than on "conflict." The discourse thus moves, subtly but definitely, from providing a broad perspective on the region, to a Palestinian-leaning orientation, with "occupation" and "boycott" serving as its central themes.

Does this portrayal examine language too closely? We think not, if one also pays attention to the information provided. Within the background section, one of the first topics considered is other academic associations that have adopted a boycott. We first learn that: "On December 4, 2013, the American Studies Association (ASA) National Council proposed a resolution on the academic boycott of Israel; a membership vote involving nearly 25% of ASA's 5,000 members voted 66%-34% in favor of the boycott." It then goes on to list other associations which have taken boycott votes. Yet this summary conveniently ignores that at the same time—the end of 2013—the Executive Council of another large association, the American Public Health Association (about 25,000 members), voted down a pro-boycott proposal by a ratio of 3 to 1. Thus, the AAA mobilization to look into a topic that is "historically important and anthropologically relevant" takes a slanted direction from the outset.

Is this the only path that could have been taken in creating the report? It is not news that the Middle East, including Israel and Palestine, is historically important and has many sites today of inequality, suffering, and loss of life. But if anthropological lenses are to be trained on the region should this not be done with a broad perspective? Selecting the boycott proposals as the major axis

of inquiry severely narrows the questions addressed. Among other things, it highlights political oppression and harm resulting from Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories while referring minimally to harm or discrimination directed *toward* Israelis. These range from the systematic military targeting of Israeli civilians to prohibiting the presence of Israelis in Palestinian academic institutions. The supposedly "anthropologically relevant" report morphs into a political campaign taking cover under an anthropological umbrella. Basic principles like providing ample context, or attending to a wide field of interaction, are abandoned.

Evasive Epistemology: Minimum Experience as an Advantage

The turn away from anthropology may be seen in other shifts, only subtly noticeable in the AN and the TFR. As noted above, in the former, members of the AAA are informed that the Executive is "considering organizing a task force. Our membership has considerable expertise on the Israel / Palestine issue, and on related questions." At the beginning of the Report, however, it is acknowledged that "the Task Force members, like most AAA members, *do not have a deep history of expertise in the region*" (p. 2; italics added). The same statement appears in a side-comment by the Executive Director (p. vii). It is almost as if the typicality of the TF's *lack of knowledge* is offered as a virtue!

What accounts for this shift, in which non-specialists (who also are linguistically unequipped for the task) play a major role in informing other anthropologists about Israel and Palestine? A clue may be found in a letter of then-President Heller to the Israeli Anthropological Association on 6 September 2014. There we learn: "we have sought established scholars with a reputation for open-mindedness, rather than people who are known to represent entrenched constituencies on these issues." Did the Executive conclude that among the AAA membership who had "considerable expertise on the Israel/Palestine issue" according to the AN statement, there was no one without an "entrenched consistency," or was this odd path to anthropological enlightenment determined in advance? Being forthright with AAA members on this critical decision would be important, and more in tune with the norms of our discipline than the hidden road actually taken.

What Happened to Dialogue?

The development just described fits well with another shift: the dilution of "dialogue." This term—which usually carries positive connotations—appears *five* (5) times in the short (one-page) introduction in the April AN, and is put forth as a major goal of the AAA getting to know Israel-Palestine. It is complemented there by other admirable phrases like "exchange of perspectives." When one comes to examine the 98-page TFR, however, 'dialogue' appears *less than* ten (10) times, including quotes of how it is mentioned by other associations! Other examples refer to dialogue within the AAA or to potential dialogue of Palestinian scholars with a wider international community. Does that community include Israeli scholars too? This possibility is totally ignored in the report. The idea that there ought to be *more* exchange between Palestinian and Israeli anthropologists, or scholars in other disciplines, receives little if any attention.

Along these three interrelated axes, then, there is a *transformation of the AAA goal of becoming "informed" about the complexities of Israel-Palestine to a narrow focus on the justification of, and pros-and-cons concerning, a boycott of Israeli academe*. This is presented as the outcome of an open and "democratic" process. In the AN introduction, the signatories state: "We will not pre-empt activities our members might want to propose, but we also want to offer some of our own." Was there no room for the AAA Executive to suggest some simple parameters, such as: *whatever inquiries are made with regard to Israel also should be directed to the Palestinian Authority and Hamas*? It is obvious that Israel—in terms of *realpolitik*—is the more powerful actor in the field. But do anthropologists need to be reminded that there are no situations in which interaction is uni-directional? The authors of the TFR seem to have forgotten this.

Part II: A Tendentious Template

The TFR argumentation assumes a highly specific direction by using several rhetorical/editorial mechanisms, three of which are outlined here. Historians, political scientists and other scholars have suggested a range of concepts to understand the emergence of Zionism and the development of Israel. Section 1 follows that the Report selected one analytic focus—Colonial Settlerism—and points to the failings of this restricted choice while all alternatives were ignored. Section 2 examines Appendix B of the Report that purports to offer a "historical summary." That summary offers a caveat that "It is beyond the scope of this report...to do full justice to the divergent interpretations of key events." The promise to provide "a diverse and rich set of lenses" (p.1) is totally avoided. Section 3 highlights the bias built into the report by the selective list of citations on which it bases many of its findings.

Section 1:

Twisted Perspectives: The TFIP Report and Israel as a "Settler-Colonialist" State

The TFIP Report on AAA Engagement in Israel-Palestine has been depicted as an academic statement—but a cursory reading shows it to be a political document. The Report's political slant is made clear by packaging its discussions in the "settler-colonialism" frame. Introduced early (p. 7), it is the central concept suffusing the entire document.

As the anthropologist-authors of the Report candidly emphasize, choosing a conceptual framework structures and colors the ways in which "the data" are organized and expressed. In their view, these selected concepts or frames are entirely subjective—depending upon the anthropologist's tastes, motives and intentions—and thus the choices become political. Moreover, it is considered positive and necessary that anthropologists should adopt a political stance. The authors announce:

"the production of knowledge can never again be thought of as autonomous of its political foundation and implications, and anthropology should deconstruct the inequities of everyday social life and anything less entails a complicity with power and oppression." (p.7)

For the TF authors, anthropology, once proudly conceived as the "the study of man," is to be reduced to a single dimension: "the inequities of everyday life." With the hubris of religious absolutists they pronounce anything (and anybody) else to be no less than "complicit" with social evils.

Continuing in this spirit, they come to educate us that

"the very language we use to characterize the issues is fraught with political meaning. In a divisive context such as Israel/Palestine, language itself is deeply politicized. It is especially effective as a political tool in that it can subtly orient towards one perspective while excluding or downplaying other perspectives."

Nowhere do they consider that their own claims should be viewed in this same light.

Embracing "settler colonialism" as the preferred frame of analysis—and also an implied accusation—obviates careful attention to the complex historical as well as present day relationships between Israelis and Palestinians. Israel as a "settler-colonial state" becomes the fulcrum around which the entire Report is constructed.

This politically motivated selection poses questions. What is meant by the term "settler- colonial state"? What evidence is offered for its greater explanatory power in comparison with others? Most importantly, since it is acknowledged that a conceptual framework will largely determine subsequent

analysis and conclusions, how has choosing the "settler-colonial" paradigm shaped (or warped and distorted) the TFR and its interpretation of the complexities of Israel-Palestine?

Is Israel a Settler-Colonial State?

The TFR claims that Israel is a "settler-colonial" state but does not provide a justification or even a definition of what that means. Despite considerable literature regarding the concept as a general historical type, and vigorous discussions and debates among historians and sociologists—with specific reference to Israel—regarding its explanatory power, we are left without an explanation. Instead, the TFR presents a brief list of what it calls "settler-colonial states," and then assumes or intimates that Israel fits this supposed type. Citing a single unknown source ("one interlocutor"), the authors state:

"in the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and Rhodesia, a group of settlers established themselves and, moving toward military, political and demographic dominance, sought to take over land from the people who were already there, using a mixture of force, treaty negotiations and legal instruments to marginalize previous inhabitants and push them into progressively smaller and less desirable islands of land." (p. 12)

Assuming for the moment that this off-hand selection and phrasing has any analytic power, where is the evidence that these processes actually took place historically in Palestine-Israel and that Israel belongs to this category? Since neither evidence nor informed discussion is provided, we must closely examine the Report's efforts to insert Israel into this category.

To begin, the total lack of clarity regarding place and time should be noted. Does "settler-colonial" refer to the 1920s in the Mandate period, to the post-state 1950s, or to the period following the 1967 War and occupation of West Bank territories, or to all of the above? Similarly, is the model meant to refer to the State of Israel, to the West Bank and Gaza, or to both? Are the TFR's authors being deliberately vague?

Consider page 14 where we are informed that "the Israeli system of settler colonialism can be seen as a single unified system stretching from Tel Aviv to Gaza and Ramallah." "Can be seen" by whom? Furthermore, what is the justification of the use of this term other than undermining the political and moral basis of Israel to exist as an independent state? To make things even more complicated (and confusing), on the same page the TFR later claims: "We do not want to understate the important differences between the circumstances of Palestinians in Israel and in the Occupied Territories." So, in fact, there *is a difference* between Israel in its pre-1967 borders (which included the so called "1948 Arabs," Palestinian citizens of Israel) and Israel thereafter, which occupied the West Bank and Gaza and—especially since the mid-1970s—settled Jews within them!

To reiterate, these different statements are both unclear and contradictory. In what sense is "settler colonialism" a feature of both Tel Aviv and Ramallah, when their contexts are so thoroughly different? What is gained, or lost, by joining them as presumed elements in a "unified system?" This can hardly be serious scholarship, but is best seen as a political tool, bluntly favoring a certain Palestinian perspective and minimizing the actuality of the extant Israeli state.

Let us go back in time. When some Jews migrated to and settled in Ottoman Palestine was that "settler colonialism?" Or was Jewish immigration to Mandate Palestine a project similar to Great Britain's colonization of Canada, Rhodesia and New Zealand? Most Israeli Jews and many others around the world who are familiar with the history of Zionism and of Israel/Palestine would find this a strange portrayal of Jewish immigration. Political scientist Johannes Becke summarizes the substantial arguments against this claim:

"The Zionist movement had no metropole; Zionist settlement did not aim at economic enrichment; Jewish immigrants did not politically control the territory; support by imperial powers shifted (in the end, Jewish independence had to be imposed *against* colonial Great Britain); the Zionist movement neither exploited local labor nor intended to spread any *mission civilatrice*; and of course,

unlike British settlers in *Aotearoa* (New Zealand) Jewish immigrants could point to centuries of cultural, religious, economic, and migratory ties to the Land of Israel." (p. 5)²

This is a stark rebuttal of the simplistic model of "settler-colonialism." At the very least it makes clear that there are sharply diverging interpretations of Israel's history, which the Report explicitly *avoids* presenting (p. B-1).

Furthermore, the fact that most Jews who arrived after the 1948 War were *refugees*, from World-War II Europe and from Muslim countries, also challenges the settler-colonial thesis. A wide-ranging article by historian Derek Penslar, "Zionism, Colonialism and Postcolonialism,"³ elaborates these points, while also bringing the issues of later periods into focus. With regard to the pre-1948 period, Penslar concludes that:

"[Zionism] was not, in and of itself, a form of colonial practice. Due to myriad historical and ideological factors, Zionism sought to realize itself in the Middle East, in an area not chosen for its strategic value, natural resources or productive capabilities, but solely because of the Jews' historic, religious and cultural ties to the area known to them as the Land of Israel. Because Zionism's *mission civilisatrice* was directed almost entirely inward, to the Jews themselves, Zionism lacked the evangelical qualities of European colonialism in North America, Asia and Africa, where conversion of the heathen to Christianity served as a justification, consequence and at times a partial cause of colonial expansion." (p. 96)

While rejecting the "settler-colonial" understanding of the pre-1948 context, Penslar argues that relationships between Israelis and Palestinians later underwent deep changes. "As a result of the 1948 war", he writes, "Israel became an independent state, which, like a great many postcolonial states, oppressed an indigenous national minority... but such policies were not necessarily a form of Western colonialism." (p.97) Moving to more recent events, Penslar is clear that following the 1967 War and the occupation of the West Bank "Israel's relationship with the Arab minority [changed] to a genuine form of colonialism."

"The speed with which the Palestinian labor force and market became tools for Israeli economic exploitation, the harshness of the Israeli military occupation and the sheer numbers of Arabs brought under Israeli control quickly created a colonial regime in the occupied territories." (p. 97)

This is a cogent critique of the uniform claims of the "settler-colonial" model: the pre-1948 nationalist Zionist movement differed fundamentally from European colonization in Africa, Asia or North America. In contrast, the post-1967 imposed military regime and Jewish settlement in the West Bank may be seen as an Israeli colonial project.

These basically separate phases in a complex history clearly explain why Israel should not be considered a "settler-colonial state" and why it should still be criticized for the specific Jewish settlement in the occupied territories. We cite Penslar's concluding caveat: "Scholars would be well served to consider the importance of ruptures as well as continuities within the fabric of Israeli history when evaluating the relationship between Zionism and colonialism." (p.97). Viewed in this light, it is ironic that anthropology—which in recent decades has stressed discontinuities and fissures—should opt for a seamless understanding of the development of Zionism and Israel.

At the very least, the "settler-colonial" model is controversial, and other concepts or models might have been selected. Different frames of analysis have been adopted by Israeli, Palestinian, and other scholars. Examples are "a conflict of opposed nationalisms," or an "ethno-national conflict", that

² Johannes Becke, "Towards a de-Occidental perspective on Israel: The case of the occupation." *Journal of Israeli History* 2014, 33:1, 1-23.

³ Derek J. Penslar, "Zionism, colonialism and Postcolonialism." *Journal of Israeli History* 2001, 20:2-3, 84-93.

usefully have been employed by some social scientists and historians.⁴ Why has the TFR privileged the "settler colonial" perspective?

The answer is made plain on page 76 of the Report, in an extraordinary sentence:

"Anthropology has a particular responsibility that no other discipline has to oppose settler-colonialism and modes of social domination that mobilize categories of race/ethnicity/culture that earlier generations of anthropologists were complicit in constructing."

This heavily-packed sentence demands attention at several levels. First, it becomes crystal-clear that the "settler-colonial" choice is entirely political: it was chosen because it conforms well to the authors' academic-political world view. The argument is perfectly circular. Anthropology is understood to oppose "settler colonialism," so once this label is attached to Israel it must be condemned. Another model of analysis, like "conflict between opposed nationalisms," would not support the claim that "Anthropology has a particular responsibility" to oppose it.

Second, the sentence carries an authoritarian or even religious flavor.⁵ Since when are anthropologists charged with a "particular responsibility" to think or act in one way or another? Within a discipline that prides itself in revealing complexity and nuance, how can the authors' insist upon such simplistic formulations?

Third, what exactly are the evils that "earlier generations of anthropologists were complicit in constructing?" What precisely is the meaning of this scandalous innuendo?⁶ The TFR authors may believe that they have a special claim upon Truth, but it takes a certain arrogance to assert that previous scholars ("generations" no less!) in one's own academic discipline lacked moral insight, understanding and commitment. The implication is that the larger task of the "Task Force" seems to be to transform anthropology itself—thus far a respected scholarly discipline—into a conformist political project.

Consequences of Selecting the Settler-Colonial Model

The authors of the TFR did note that their selection of "settler colonial" would shape their presentation. Nowhere is this clearer than on page 15, in "History Denied." Their selection of terms is quixotic if not bewildering: the section most certainly is a denial of history, but not in the way they intended.

What we learn in this section is that there was a war in 1948, and its sole consequence was the *Nakba*, the Palestinian people's tragedy. This is a fine illustration of "History Denied"! What events

⁴ For example: Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Struggle of the Palestinian People For Statehood*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006; Baruch Kimmerling, *Clashes of Identities: Exploring Israeli and Palestinian Societies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008; Benny Morris, *One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel-Palestine Conflict*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

⁵ See an essay discussing the AAA boycott resolution, entitled "US Anthropology: Political, Professional, Personal, Imperial," which opines: "Where anthropology ceases to be simply a domain of inquiry, and becomes fused with a personal state of being, it risks turning into a cult, led by dubious gurus marshalling opinion in favour of the appointed crusade of the moment." *ZERO ANTHROPOLOGY*, accessed 28 February 2016, <http://zeroanthropology.net/2016/01/07/us-anthropology-political-professional-personal-imperial/>

⁶ In another passage (p. 77), the last sentence in the paragraph beginning: *An obligation...*, the Report intimates that former AAA presidents have worked against adopting what they consider the right political position. This is another instance of a thrashing technique.

led to the 1948 War? Were there casualties among the Jewish population? How might this lengthy, bloody war have influenced the behaviors and policies of both Arabs and Jews in the decades that followed?

These are only a few of the questions that might be asked—but none appear under the rubric "History Denied." To make things clear: a 1947 General Assembly resolution, affirmed the recommendation to establish two separate states; it was accepted by the Jewish leadership but rejected by the Palestinian leadership and Arab states. Armed conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine then broke out, becoming outright war when Britain left the country in May 1948. Following Israel's establishment, the Egyptian Army advanced into southern Israel and the Jordanian Army seized control of West Bank areas and Arab Jerusalem. Thousands of Israeli Jews and Palestinians died. There certainly was a Palestinian disaster—dozens of villages were destroyed and about 700,000 Palestinians became refugees—but to present the *Nakba* as the *sole* consequence of the 1948 War is a total twisting of history.⁷

This politically-slanted feature of the TF Report obviously conforms to its "settler-colonial" frame of reference. In this rendering of history there was no bitter conflict between opposed national or ethno-national groups living in and claiming the same small territory. Instead, "settler-colonial Jews" marshaled strength, dispossessing and then oppressing the tragically overwhelmed Arabs. Given this one-dimensional "analysis," the TFR ignores Israeli casualties in the war for its very existence (more than 6,000 Israelis—roughly one percent of the Jewish population—were killed in the 1947-49), and does not consider short- and longer-term Israeli outlooks and policies as consequences of the war.

The pattern is repeated throughout: succeeding sections of the TFR supply biases, abuses, denials, and prejudice presumably leveled in one direction only: by Israeli Jews against Palestinians. History and context for the "data" are absent. One would hardly know about major wars in 1967 and 1973 (initiated by hostilities from Arab states) resulting in thousands of casualties, or that during the 1990-2000s hundreds of Israeli civilians were killed by so called Palestinian suicidal (murderous) bombers, or that in 2014 thousands of rockets launched from the Gaza Strip killed and wounded Israeli civilians, both Jewish and Palestinian. Neither would one learn of repeated diplomatic attempts and negotiations aimed at lowering or ending hostilities between the sides. The one-sided reduction of history is not only because the story is "long, complex, and richly disputed" (p. B-1). Rather, the "settler-colonial" frame encourages both extreme partiality and denial, leaving a one-dimensional view of a seemingly never-ending Israel-Palestine conflict.

Finally, as pointed out by Herbert Lewis, in their "settler-colonial" version TF authors consistently portray Palestinians as devoid of agency.⁸ Palestinians have been historically active in pursuing their interests and opposing Israeli policies, but the "settler-colonial" frame reduces them to near-passivity. It does no justice to the lengthy struggle of the Palestinian people for rights within Israel, and a separate state of their own, and makes no mention of their own responsibility for advancing toward peace and seeking social justice. Paradoxically, by selecting this frame, the TFR does not provide an anthropologically coherent analysis of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and fails to comprehend, or give proper voice to, the active ways in which Palestinians in both Palestinian territories and in Israel have continued to seek their independence or full citizen rights. There are ample anthropological concepts to relate to these developments, but the "settler-colonial" mantra condemns them to irrelevancy.

In sum, by using the "settler-colonial" paradigm, the TFR papers over a crucial distinction between pre-1967 Israel and Jewish settlement in the Occupied territories subsequent to them. No clear

⁷ Some researchers in Israel have discussed the *Nakba* perspective. See, for example, Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, "Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba: disruptive empathy and binationalism in Israel/Palestine." *Journal of Genocide Research* 2014, 16:1, 77-99.

⁸ See <http://blog.americananthro.org/2015/10/05/final-report-task-force-on-aaa-engagement-on-israel-palestine/> accessed 10 March 2016.

distinction between Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians living under Israeli occupation is offered and sustained in the document. Hence, like the BDS movement, the report fails to draw a clear line between criticizing Israeli policies and actions and challenging Israel's very existence. The biased paradigm allows readers to feel that opposition to Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands engenders questioning its very legitimacy as an independent state.

Section 2:

On TFR Appendix B ("Historical Summary")

Part of the justification offered by AN for considering debate over Israel/Palestine is that it is "historically important." Yet Appendix B of the Report, which offers "A Brief Historical Outline," immediately provides a disclaimer by notifying readers that the "history of relations between Palestinian Arabs and Jews is long, complex, and richly disputed. It is beyond the scope of this report to synthesize this history comprehensively..." We must ask, therefore, whether the brief outline it does include answers the call of being "anthropologically relevant?" Errors of omission, and also of commission, make a positive answer dubious.

The 8-page Appendix (including maps and one table) follows a time-line beginning in 1916 and ending in 2002. Its focus is on geo-political events and dates, interspersed with detailed matters of law and international documents that have long been subject to fierce political and legal debates. It lacks a basic demographic perspective which any person—and certainly an anthropologist—seeking to become "informed" on the region ought to know. Notably too, the Appendix mainly provides a Palestinian orientation. Hence, we provide here some additional basic information and a perspective emphasizing some missing Jewish-Israeli components. This also entails criticizing selectivity within the political-legal summary.

By picking a starting point of 1916 and the eminently imperialist Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France, the Appendix starkly cuts out issues of history and demography. No mention is made of the fact that Jews, while a minority, had lived in the area for centuries within the Ottoman Empire (we skip here the additional issues of the Middle Ages and Antiquity which, politically and morally, should also be deemed relevant), and that their number increased throughout the 19th century due to natural growth and immigration, mainly from European lands but also from the Middle East. That Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe were leaving the same oppressive conditions that drove hundreds of thousands to the West, and fed into the revolution in Russia in 1917, also is passed over in silence. The same holds for the fact that early in the twentieth century, the nascent and small Zionist movement began a process of *purchasing* land in Ottoman Palestine.

The first reference to the demography of Jews in Palestine is a brief paragraph marked '1930,' where we read of "increasing Jewish immigration." There, the phrase "Jewish settlers" makes its first appearance. Next we read that 1936-1939 "witnessed the region becoming the place to which many European Jews were exiled as *displaced persons*" (italics added). The retroactive use of "displaced persons" is elusive. The term only became current during and after World War II, and we are *not* informed that from 1933 on the salient immigration from "Europe" was specifically from Nazi Germany.

The paragraph which follows, marked '1939,' focuses on attempts by Britain to handle the sharpening conflict of Arabs and Jews *within* Mandate Palestine. No mention is made of the extermination of Jews in Europe during those years that eventually received the designation of 'the Holocaust.' The term Holocaust appears only twice in the TFR, in a section that also discusses resistance within Israel to recognizing the Palestinian *Nakba*.

The Holocaust and the establishment of Israel in 1948 are critical in grasping Israel's basic demography. From the time that the state was established in 1948 through the end of 1951, Israel's original Jewish population of about 650,000 more than doubled. Half of those arriving were

Europeans who had survived the war and Nazi extermination policies, and the other half was from Middle Eastern countries. Iraq, Libya, and Yemen were prominent examples of mass Jewish emigration during that early period. The intensive "Middle-Easternization" of Israel through further immigration continued through the 1960s, and today it is reasonable to depict its Jewish population as roughly half Middle Eastern and half European in their initial provenance. No hint of these crucial processes appears in the TFR.

A few remarks are also warranted about demographic processes concerning Palestinians. During the Ottoman and the Mandate periods, there was significant immigration into the area by Arabs both from the south and the north, which contributed to the growth of the population labeled Palestinian. Even more significantly for the TFR, Appendix B chooses to concentrate, "for those readers who are not familiar with the area," on "current experiences of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and in East Jerusalem." The wider Palestinian Diaspora that figures into the rhetoric and claims of the "right of return," are put aside at this point. Basic facts that complicate the picture, like the fact that only Jordan permitted Palestinians to become citizens, or that Palestinians could work in Gulf States for decades without being allowed to become citizens, are left out of the TFR narrative.

These empirical and demographic realities have been matters for political and moral polemics. Is this a reason to skip over them when seeking to inform members of the AAA about the basics of the area and its dilemmas?

Returning to the more concrete political, diplomatic, and legal information presented in Appendix B, selectivity abounds there as well. For the crucial period of 1947-1948, we learn that the UN General Assembly passed a resolution (# 181), proposing a partition of Palestine and the internationalization of the Jerusalem area. We further are told: "Palestinians and Arab states rejected the partition; Zionists generally accepted it, *albeit not universally*" (italics added). While adding this last scholarly detail, the Report does not note that the *recognized leadership* of the Jewish community in Mandate Palestine accepted the plan, and also omits other "tangential" facts. Among these is the fact after Israel declared its independence it was quickly recognized by the USSR, the United States, and many other countries, and that less than a year later, after an Armistice Agreement was signed, it was admitted to membership in the UN.

As for events closer to the present, the report discusses the outbreak of resistance against Israel in 1987 known now as the First Intifada. It takes no notice, however, of a central development a year later, the founding of Hamas. How even a "brief" historical outline could ignore the Hamas movement is hard to fathom (it appears once in the phrase "Hamas rocket attacks," p. 18). But shouldn't anthropologists new to the region learn a bit about Hamas's deep opposition to the Palestinian Authority, to the recognition of Israel, and even to any movement toward accommodation? (For example, Article 13 of Hamas's charter states: "Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement"⁹). Moreover, ending the Appendix survey 2002, allows it to ignore the 2007 takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas and its political-military history since Israel withdrew forces from within that territory.

An even starker incident of the misleading presentation of historical data occurs in the account of processes leading up to the Oslo Accords between Israel and Palestinians in the mid-1990s. Agreements were formulated that "would lead to independence for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (called for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in 1967) and 338 (called for a ceasefire in the Yom Kippur war and the implementation of resolution 294 in 1973)." The phrase in quotation marks contains *two important errors*. The 1967 UN resolution in question is number 242 and *not 294* (the latter deals with Portugal). That this may

⁹ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

not be a simple "typo" must be considered, because of the incorrect quote provided in the TFR: "Israeli withdrawal from *the* occupied territories in 1967" (italics added). We call attention to this one word precisely because it did *not* appear in resolution 242 (Cf. the Avalon Project: "Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces *from territories occupied* in the recent conflict"¹⁰ [italics added]). Specialists in the history of the region are well aware of the diplomatic haggling that went into reaching that formulation, and the subsequent political polemics surrounding the absent "the." The need for brevity in an Appendix cannot be an excuse for this misrepresentation.

Most generally, ignoring basic information like demography and overlooking the political significance of Hamas within Palestinian life enables the TFR to promote the most un-anthropological of exercises: *to encourage a perception of "Israel" and "Palestine" in binary, essentialized terms.*

Furthermore, in defining the Outline as dealing with "Palestinians in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and in East Jerusalem," the report turns its back on very real differences separating the historical experiences of Palestinians who are citizens of Israel and those who never have had that status. The former do appear in a diffuse manner (with some statistics) throughout the report, typically in critical terms, often as background remarks inserted when necessary. But nowhere are the foundational historical, social, and political parameters that make their experiential trajectory quite different from non-Israeli Palestinians set out clearly. The reader is steered away from questioning the binary presentation of 'Israelis vs. Palestinians.'

In short, here, and elsewhere in the TFR, the term 'Palestinian' assumes a meta-historical status, on which the Israeli state impinges only with baneful outcomes.

The ways in which Palestinians and Israelis have interacted and changed, the ranges of identities within each broad category, and the evolving dynamics of political progress and frustrations, become nothing but a flimsy background to a single schematized theme: Israeli occupation vs. Palestinian suffering. Details of the picture are given little significance, particularly if they blur the stark simplicity of the oppositional structure. *We thus, again, turn to the reader with a question:* Should the sloppy handling and misrepresentation of data on "Israel-Palestine" become the basis of a moral stance by a professional anthropological organization?

Section 3:

Citation Bias

When the Association formed the Task Force on Israel/Palestine, it charged the group with developing "principles to be used to assess whether the AAA has an interest in taking a stand on these issues. This may include providing a comprehensive and neutral overview of arguments for and against a range of specific possible stands (including no action)." Inherent in this charge is the idea the Task Force should adhere to reasonable standards of neutrality. In a situation such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is no end to passionate debate, and the slippery descent into detailed point/counterpoint arguments can be overwhelming. Nevertheless, it is useful to ask to what degree the narrative of the report is shaped by any particular agenda. As noted in the TFR, most anthropologists reading the report are not experts in the Middle East; they would ordinarily rely upon its findings and conclusions to help them form an opinion. Admittedly, the report is not an ethnography, but does claim that it worked "With an ethnographic impulse as our organizing principle..." (p.39). There thus is an expectation that reports created by anthropologists should adhere to basic principles of fair-minded and unbiased investigatory perspectives and methods.

¹⁰ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/un242.asp

Despite these expectations, it is clear that the TF report is marked by citation bias which significantly affects the reliability of its framework, analysis, and conclusions. Citation bias is a form of reporting bias that turns on the selective inclusion or omission of information. In citation bias, the citation or non-citation of research findings and of relevant perspectives can have a profound influence on the results — in this case, the central narrative of the report. We were alerted to this problem early in the report, when we noticed that while the Task Force cited a petition in support of a boycott, it failed to cite a petition signed by other anthropologists in opposition to the boycott. This immediately raised the possibility of citation bias.

Since this is a report written by anthropologists for anthropologists, one issue was whether the contemporary anthropological sources cited by the Task Force were biased in one way or another regarding the issue of academic boycotts. To assess this, we determined whether an anthropologist cited in the TFR was either a supporter or an opponent of BDS. To make this determination we used only public self-declarations, such as whether an author was a signatory to pro- or anti- BDS petitions, or other published statements relating to boycotts of Israeli academic institutions. We did not infer political position based upon the writings themselves.

We also note that the vast majority of articles cited in the report are generally critical of Israel. Thus the entire Task Force report is grounded in a critical political viewpoint, regardless of whether the authors of those articles explicitly support the boycott. As for the specific count, the results for anthropologists cited are as follows:

Anthropological Sources

Author	BDS Supporter	BDS Opponent	Unknown
Abu El-haj, Nadia	X		
Abu-Lughod, Lila	X		
Asad, Talal	X		
Ben Ari, Eyal		X	
Bishara, Amahl	X		
Bornstein, Avram	X		
Bowman, Glen	X		
Davis, Uri	X		
Deeb, Lara	X		
Feldman, Ilana	X		
Furani, Khaled			X
Halper, Jeff	X		
Hammami, Rema	X		
Kaplan, Danny		X	
Kelley, Tobias	X		
Kersal, Morag			X

Lomsky-Feder, Edna		X	
Markowitz, Fran		X	
Rabinowitz, Dan		X	
Sa'ar, Amalia		X	
Shokeid, Moshe		X	
Swedenburg, Ted			X
Weiss, Erica			X
Winegar, Jessica	X		

Of the 24 anthropologists cited in the TFR, approximately 54% were supporters of the boycott, 29% were boycott opponents while nothing could be inferred about the political opinions for 17% of the anthropologists cited.¹¹ Clearly, the overwhelming preponderance of anthropologists cited in the report are supporters of BDS (thirteen). Only seven publically-declared boycott opponents are cited, while another four seem to have taken no public position on the issue.

Turning to the non-anthropological sources cited, there is a similar pattern. Given the scope of the Task Force Report, it is not surprising that the majority of authors cited would not have voiced an explicit opinion about the boycott. Journalists (as opposed to columnists) for the established press, such as the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* are normally prohibited from taking public political positions, even where their articles are highly critical of Israel. But for those who have professed an opinion, 72% of the authors cited (28 of 39) are pro-boycott, while only 28% (11 out of 39) were anti-boycott.

Non-Anthropological Sources

Name	BDS Supporter	BDS Opponent
Abbes, Ahmed	X	
Abunimah, Ali	X	
Azarov, Valentina	X	
Balakrishnan, Radhika	X	
Brahm. Gabriel Noah		X
Chavez, Karma R	X	
Chomsky, Noam.		X
Cohen, Avner		X
Cole, Juan		X
Dworkin, Ira	X	
Ekeland, Ivar	X	
Giacaman, Faris.	X	

¹¹ Three anthropologists cited were eliminated from this list, as these colleagues—Eric Wolf, Raphael Patai, and Henry Rosenfeld—were long-deceased before the emergence of the boycott movement.

Giacaman, Rita	X	
Gordon, Nahida H	X	
Gordon, Neve.	X	
Halileh, Samia	X	
Jacobs, Sean	X	
James, Erica Caple	X	
Kauanui, J. Kehaulani	X	
Keller, Uri Jacob	X	
Khaladi, Walid	X	
Khoury, Rami	X	
Kontorovic Eugene		X
Lewis, Barbara	X	
Nelson, Cary		X
Palumbo-Liu, David.	X	
Pappe, Ilan	X	
Scott, Joan.	X	
Shlay, Anne B		X
Soske, John	X	
Tamari, Salim	X	
Tawil-Souri, Helga	X	
Walzer, Michael		X
Weiner, Justus Reid		X
Weizman, Eyal.	X	
White, Ben	X	
Yemini, Ben-drór.		X
Zink, Valerie	X	

Citation bias is one of the fundamental potential weaknesses in any research, and responsible scholars are fully aware of the ways it can undermine the credibility of conclusions drawn in any research report. In the case of the Task Force Report, citation bias has led to the creation of a document with conclusions that are profoundly shaped by the BDS agenda.

*Each of the previous three discussions illustrates that the very framing of the TFR, both in gathering materials and presenting them, is directed toward a central goal of highlighting Palestinian suffering vis-à-vis Israel while keeping attention away from other information and the complexities of the situation. Other examples could be cited from the assembling of materials during the rapid site visit. Much of the Report discusses Israeli universities, but among the visitor's "interlocutors" (Appendix D), there were no Israeli university presidents (the vague description "Two senior administrators, Hebrew University" appears in the appendix). Another instance concerns libraries. The report concluded—perhaps after discussions with Palestinian academics or boycott officials—that "Books published in Lebanon are not allowed [into West Bank institutions], even though most

publishers of books in Arabic are located in Lebanon." (p. 54) When visiting one of Israel's colleges, however, where both Jewish and Palestinian teachers are trained, they were given a somewhat different picture: that the library seeks to obtain books from Lebanon which can only reach them through West Bank suppliers, but these suppliers refuse to sell books to the college. That slice of data does not appear in the report.

We thus turn, in Part III, to a three topics and examine closely how data regarding them are treated in the Report.

Part III: (Mis) Handling of Data

The biased thrust of the TFR that preeminently highlights features of Palestinian suffering and disadvantage is embodied in the selective and misleading ways that data are presented and interpreted. This will be illustrated in three spheres (and others could be added). Section 1 challenges the claims that under the Israeli occupation the health of Palestinians deteriorated, and shows that the opposite is the case. Section 2 relates to higher education within Israel, where there has been slow advance in the growth of higher education among Palestinian Israelis. The TF Report plays down evidence of improvement, and portrays the situation in a manner devoid of relevant and meaningful context. Section 3 also relates to education, and concerns limitations of freedom of movement in Palestinian areas occupied by Israel. Here too, the presentation of data is selective and one-sided, and ignores restrictions imposed by Palestinian authorities themselves. Beyond the question of the accuracy of the material presented, we underline the blatant utilization of "findings" in ways that serve only to reinforce general conclusions that can be foreseen in advance.

Section 1:

Health in Palestine

In the Report, a subsection titled *Other Effects on Health* is the last one to appear under the general heading of *Human Rights* (pp. 34-39). Neither topic appears in the initial AN announcement in April 2014. The *Introduction* to the report explains that the human rights dimension took on greater prominence during the TF's rapid assessment visit (p.2). The shape of this section of the report is thus a good example of how the TF defined various foci, what sorts of data they chose, what was omitted, and the way a certain selective story was woven around the information presented.

The subsection contains three figures (two graphs and one chart). They refer to patterns of undernourishment, the phenomenon of stunting, and infant mortality. The "hard data" presented and discussed are linked to a single over-arching theme: the harmfulness of the Israeli occupation on Palestinians. We have no doubt that the occupation has baneful consequences, but do challenge the assumption that a partial and de-contextualized presentation of materials relating to public health adds to anthropological understanding.

Figure 20 in the report is titled *Percent of Undernourishment (FAO data from several regional nations)*. It reflects measurements from 1990 through 2011. For two of them (Palestine and Iran), there are data for only part of the period. Five of the "regional nations" exhibit steady percentages over the years, Algeria, Jordan, Iran and Morocco in the lower range (just over 5%), and Yemen which is much higher (around 30%). Two countries show increases in undernourishment: Palestine and Iraq.

Discussion of the graph contains elements of "objectivity," like pointing to critiques of the FAO methodology in general. At the same time, its singular thrust is to underline an increase in

undernourishment in Palestine. For the last years covered, the percentage in Palestine becomes "higher than Yemen and even Iraq." There is no mention, however, that the two cases of growing undernourishment were in areas of endemic conflict, nor any reference to the wrenching changes in regime and internal organization there. This leads to the more general point concerning what is hidden from readers. *Nowhere in this section, or in the Report in general, are we told that from 1994 on the Palestinian National Authority became responsible for health in the region, and set up its own Ministry of Health.*

It is hard to view the omission of this fact as an oversight. In the Historical Summary (p. B-5), we learn that Israel took control of health after the 1967 War. In the subsection preceding *Other Effects on Health*, The Palestinian Ministry of Health is peripherally cited as providing data on Palestinian casualties during the war in the summer of 2014. For a conceptual approach, like the one adopted in the Report, which highlights configurations of power as a guiding paradigm, ignoring that the PA gained control of its own health system (and also that it relinquished control to Hamas in Gaza from 2007 on), is a stark abandonment of anthropological standards in presenting data. Can one say in good faith that "the Israeli occupation" is the only factor in play?

The same *look-in-one-direction-only approach* is continued as the report goes on to consider what *may* be an outcome of undernourishment: changes in growth patterns among Palestinian children. It points to a problem of stunting (low height for age).

Figure 21 brings together data from a number of studies that point to an increased incidence of stunting from 1996 (after the Palestinian health ministry was in charge, we note again) through 2009. The summary statement in the discussion mentions only one factor: Israel's policy regarding the import of food to Gaza (pp. 36-37). But one of the studies cited suggests that other factors may be at work as well. It reports that "rates varied dramatically by specific locality" (p. 36). There is no elaboration on this point, except to stress that figures in Gaza are higher than elsewhere.

But a similar finding, pointing to a multiplicity of explanations, appears elsewhere, in a comprehensive UNICEF document on Palestine that was published in December 2015, shortly after the release of the TF report. We read there:

"Eight percent of children in urban and rural areas are stunted, while the lowest prevalence was noted in [UNRWA] camps (6 percent). Children in the West Bank showed higher prevalence rates (8 percent) compared to Gaza Strip (7 percent) [different from the trend noted by the TF]. Children whose mothers have higher education are less likely to be stunted compared to children of mothers with basic education..." (p. 37)¹²

Stunting then, in addition to external constraints, clearly may reflect internal social or political processes. The putatively "anthropological" presentation offered by the TF Report knows nothing of this: it simply *returns to the refrain of Israeli culpability*.

The third figure (22), relates to infant mortality rates—deaths of children under 5. The graph compares Palestine and Israel for the years 1990-2013. The opening discussion emphasizes how mortality rates are much lower in Israel than in Palestine. It goes on to remind us that 2014 may eventually result in higher figures for the latter. There is something else, however, that clearly appears in the comparative graph that hardly receives attention: that the *slope of decline* in infant mortality rates (i.e. improvement), is much steeper in Palestine than in Israel.

¹² https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/Middle%20East%20and%20North%20Africa/State%20of%20Palestine/2014/Final/State%20of%20Palestine%202014%20MICS_English.pdf

The authors seem aware of this amelioration of health within Palestine but play it down in a bracketed phrase: "—although there had been marked improvement in Palestine as a whole between 1990 and 2013—..." They even indicate that the mortality rate in 1960 was 127, but offer no thoughts on how it declined to 43.4 by 1990—the first year noted in the graph.¹³ During twenty-three years of that 30-year interval, Israel was in charge of health. But that "the occupation" was a complex phenomenon has no place in this narrative.

What other options existed for giving an overall picture of health? Consider the following table, based on UNICEF data on child mortality, parallel to what is presented by the TF report on the subject. But this table also can serve as an introduction to other questions that anthropologists might want to ask. This, in contrast to setting a goal in advance, and bringing only the evidence that supports it.

Health Indicators Relating to Children

Changes from 1990 through 2013

Comparative Perspective from Selected Countries

Indicators/ Country	State of Palestine	Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Egypt	Middle East, North Africa	Lebanon	Israel	UK	USA
Child mortality 1990-2013	43 to 22	37 to 19	44 to 16	85 to 22	70 to 31	32 to 9	12 to 4	9 to 5	11 to 7
Infant mortality 1990-2013	35 to 19	30 to 16	35 to 13	63 to 19	52 to 24	27 to 8	10 to 3	8 to 4	9 to 6
Neonatal mortality 2013	12	11	9	12	15	5	2	3	4
Life Expectancy at birth 2013	73	74	75	71	71	80	82	81	79

Source: UNICEF. THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2015: Executive Summary. *Reimagine the future: Innovation for every child*. See Table 1 Basic Indicators, pages 36-41.

http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2015_Summary_and_Tables.pdf (accessed 12 Feb 2016). The selection and organization of data were suggested by Ted H. Tulchinsky.

¹³ From a broader historical perspective, infant mortality declined among Muslims in Palestine from 200 per thousand live births to 130 within the period of the British Mandate. These figures—from 1925 through 1944—are from **Table 2.1** in Sandy Sufian, "Arab Health Care during the British Mandate, 1920-1947," in Tamara Barnea and Rafiq Husseini, eds. *Separate and cooperate, cooperate and separate: the disengagement of the Palestine health care system from Israel and its emergence as an independent system*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002, 9-30.

This table also permits the reader to select what kinds of comparisons are relevant, and in what context. The TF, we have seen, at times compares the situation in Palestine to other Middle Eastern countries, and at times to the situation in Israel. What is stressed in each instance is constant, seeking to place Israel and the putative effect of occupation in a negative light. As stated, a broad view of infant mortality trends shows definite improvement in the situation in Palestine, while the table also shows that this was true *in the region more generally*! Moreover, while we do not present the material here, much Public Health data for the decades parallel to Israel's occupation of the West Bank shows trends of significant advances in regional health. This certainly is background that a judging anthropologist ought to know. It also calls into question *what exactly is it that we are learning* from the selected materials and slanted discussions in the TF report? There are many reasons to criticize and oppose Israel's occupation. But an argument from Public Health is among the weaker ones.

Consider some basic developments in Public Health that took place after Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza. The government health service gained control over vaccine-preventable diseases, and also gave high priority to maternal and child health (e.g., free care for children 0-3 and pregnant women). Frameworks were established for vitamin and iron supplementation for children, as well as for monitoring growth.

These were not only initiatives done with Palestinians as "objects," but entailed extensive manpower training and the upgrading of local hospital services including that of staffing. Parallel to the medical realm, there was extensive progress in the sanitation of drinking water, and major steps were taken in managing the disposal of sewage and solid waste. As the Oslo accords were taking shape, preparations were made to transfer the relevant structures and skills to Palestinian jurisdiction.¹⁴ Many of the developments mentioned are described in publications that were co-authored by Israeli and Palestinian medical practitioners and researchers.¹⁵

These activities and their results receive no attention in the TF report, which appears fixated on a paradigm in which essentialized Israelis and Palestinians exist in separate worlds except for the malign impingement of the former on the latter. Reinforcing this binary image leaves no room for basic facts, such as the large numbers of Palestinians who receive treatment in Israeli hospitals—the numbers have been well over 100,000 per year recently. As will be indicated in the next section, other forms of interaction continue alongside the tense politics and outright conflict which typically

¹⁴ Tamara Barnea and Rafiq Hussein, eds. *Separate and cooperate, cooperate and separate: the disengagement of the Palestine health care system from Israel and its emergence as an independent system*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.

¹⁵ See, for example: Theodore Tulchinsky, Yehia Abed, Said Shaheen, Nadim Toubassi, Yitzchak Sever, Michael Schoenbaum, and Rachel Handscher, "A Ten-Year Experience in Control of Poliomyelitis Through a Combination of Live and Killed Vaccines in Two Developing Areas." *American Journal of Public Health* December 1989, 79:12, 1648-1652; Theodore Tulchinsky, Abdul Majid Al Zeer, Jawad Abu Mounshar, Tagreed Subeih, Michael Schoenbaum, Marcia Roth, Beth Gamulka, Michael Abenueze, and Cilia Acker, "A Successful Preventive-Oriented Village Health Worker Program in Hebron, the West Bank, 1985-1996." *J Health Medicine Practice* 1997, 3:4, 57-67; Ziad Abdeen, Tamar Berman, Kifaya Azmi, Rania Abu Seir, Hazem Agha, Eliana Ein-Mor, Thomas Göen, Yael Stein, Elihu Richter & Ronit Calderon-Margalit, "Urinary organophosphate metabolite levels in Palestinian pregnant women: results of the Middle East Regional Cooperation Project." *International Journal of Environmental Health*. Published online: 17 Nov 2015. Research, DOI: 10.1080/09603123.2015.1109067

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09603123.2015.1109067>

grab media headlines and solidify images of the region. The former certainly deserve the attention of anthropologists, while the TF reports offers little information on these and other instances of positive exchange.

As explained at the outset of this section, the TF decided to incorporate a discussion of health under the general heading of Human Rights. Human Rights is a valuable guiding concept, but is not immune to manipulation. As noted in a statement of the *International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences*, "Human rights discourses should therefore be understood as embedded in socio-political practices through which power is exercised to make meaning – meaning that, if accepted, in turn affects that exercise of power and may marginalise or even oppress some by others."¹⁶ In the case of the TF report, Human Rights discourse is linked to a shallow, slanted, and inaccurate account of Palestinians' health in Israel/Palestine.

Section 2:

Palestinians in Israeli Higher Education

Pages 42-46 of the TFR are devoted to *Palestinian Academics in Israel*. The title is instructive because it foregrounds 'Palestinian,' while adding the information that their academic activity is in Israel. The term 'Palestinian Israelis' is avoided in the discussion, even though there are many grounds for using it and it is chosen by some Palestinian citizens of Israel themselves (p.8). Our immediate focus, however, is not on semantics or rhetoric (to which we return briefly at the end of this section), but rather, underlines the elaborate structures and social contexts affecting Palestinians within Israel's system of higher education. A discussion that sees only the rubric 'Palestinian' as central supplies half-truths, ignores background as well as basic information, and conveys only an superficial impression of solid documentation rather than a set of insights that meet anthropological expectations.

The major theme in this section of the TFR is that the participation of Palestinians in academic life in Israel is less than it should be, given that they are one fifth of Israel's population. No one would dispute this assessment; it hardly needs a special report to point it out. At the same time, the TFR is highly misleading in terms of (1) how it frames this "discovery," and (2) how it ignores both (a) improvement of the situation, as well as (b) current policies and programs aimed at further reducing the imbalance. Rather than illuminating an evolving situation with both difficulties and opportunities, the report consistently returns to shortcomings. We begin by citing a brief statement in the report and a reference attached to it.

The second paragraph in this section of the TFR begins: "Israeli Palestinians constitute roughly 20% of Israel's population. Yet Israeli Palestinians attend university at much lower rates than Israeli Jews." It footnotes an OECD report on the development of the Northern region in Israel (the Galilee) that came out in 2011.¹⁷ What this two-sentence excerpt ignores is that the information appearing in the very same OECD document points to trends of improvement taking place, even before this international document appeared. This fits into general pattern of *overlooking changes over time* on this topic.

Here are two examples from the OECD report: "In the Galilee the access to higher education has improved significantly: in 1990, there were no accredited institutions authorised to grant academic

¹⁶ <http://www.iaaes.org/statement/human.html>

¹⁷ See <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/8910111e.pdf?expires=1455309546&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7A70A548A19052B9FD5B9E1E2C1EC10F>

degrees in the region, whereas in 2008 the region had 8.5% of the total number of students in Israel." (p. 17); or: "While the opening of colleges in the periphery has increased the access of the Arab population, particularly for women, the overall participation and attainment levels still lag behind: only about 20% of Arab population aged 15 and over has attained tertiary education, compared to 45% in the Jewish population." (p. 15). In contrast to the cherry-picked information in the TFR, the OECD document supplies figures pertinent to higher education in Israel for all categories of its population, and includes relevant contexts.

Critical here, too, is the term '*colleges*' that appears in the second quote cited. In Israel's initial decades, higher education was concentrated in its small number of universities. From the mid-1990s a policy shift resulted in the proliferation of colleges, whose overall number of students has expanded rapidly (today, two-thirds of B.A. students are studying in colleges), while the total number of students attending universities remained relatively stable.¹⁸ A critical phase of this ongoing process is reflected in the OECD document. It focuses on an outlying area in Israel where there is a thinner population, less industry and jobs, and fewer educational opportunities. In considering the expansion of higher education, it thus relates to the region as whole, which any contextual approach should do. At the same time, it does not ignore the distinction between the Jewish and Palestinian populations, the latter constituting a significant proportion of the Galilee. Adding basic knowledge about colleges in Israel's higher education system sets TFR statements in a somewhat different light.

To anticipate misconceptions, it is not the case that Palestinians study only in the colleges.¹⁹ Many are enrolled at universities (in 2012/13, some 36% of all Arab undergraduate students attended the major university campuses),²⁰ where most advanced degrees are awarded. Additionally, it must be noted that members of the TF were aware of the distinction. Among their interviewees were those who taught at colleges, and several colleges were visited as part of the "rapid assessment" visit. But *overlooking this distinction*, which is made clear in material appearing in the TFR's references, enabled the TFR to provide a highly *decontextualized* example, intimating no Israeli sensitivity to the academic expectations or needs of its Palestinian citizens.

The report tells us: "There has been a campaign underway for decades to establish a Palestinian university within Israel at Nazareth. 'Why do we not have a Palestinian university in Israel? Why is there no Fordham or Brandeis?' asked one Palestinian academic." (p.43) The TFR cites explanations like Israel's concern over developing nationalism or neglect of the Arabic language. This discussion ends with a footnote citing an August 2015 article in *Inside Higher Ed* on the subject.²¹

That article however, which reports on the breakdown in plans involving both Texas A&M and Haifa University in developing higher education in an existing Nazareth institute, *does not mention ethnic or national factors*. Moreover, it points to support for the idea within Israel, including the moral backing of then-President Shimon Peres. The newspaper does detail the challenges and differences of opinion that entail *any move* that seeks to upgrade a teaching program to gain accreditation as a

¹⁸ Higher education in Israel is largely dependent on government support within the context of the Ministry of Education. Policies are shaped by the Council of Higher Education (CHE), with a major subcommittee placed in charge of Planning and Budget (the CPB). Some of the discussion below refers to these bodies.

¹⁹ It might also be noted that these colleges grant B.A. degrees, and thus are different from two-year "community colleges" that exist in the USA.

²⁰ <http://che.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/HIGHER-EDUCATION-BOOKLET.pdf> ,p.33.

²¹ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/08/27/what-happened-texas-ams-plan-open-branch-campus-nazareth>

college (a step prior to even envisioning a university). Other basic data are missing from the TFR too, such as the existence of two colleges less than 20 miles away from Nazareth, and Haifa University situated 30 minutes away (that has a high percentage of Arab students). What the TFR provides the reader are snippets of information highlighting Palestinian disappointment, and only a very thin string that could supply substantial context to an anthropologist-reader.

Another critical aspect of context that was *totally overlooked in the TFR* is a 92-page report requested by Israel's CHE that was submitted in January, 2013. Prepared by a sub-committee of the CPB, the report was devoted to: "Pluralism and Equal Opportunity in Higher Education: Expanding Accessibility to Arabs, Druze and Circassians in Israel."²² It was based upon extensive data and concluded with a charge and recommendations to universities and colleges in Israel. The report is in Hebrew, but various references to it have since appeared in English.²³ As stated, no hint of this document, or its aftermath, appears in the TFR which was constituted a year-and-a-half later.

Here are some elements of the CHE-CPB report which provide context. "The main growth in the number of people of the age group relevant to higher education will be in the Arab and in the Haredi [Ultra-Orthodox] sectors. Because those sectors are underrepresented in academic studies, special efforts are required for their inclusion in institutes of higher education. Thus, a special significant section of the multiyear reform plan for the years 2010/11–2015/16 [appearing later in the report] concerns the inclusion of these two particular groups in the higher education system." (p. 20).

Further on, actual changes are presented: "The percentage of Arab students among all undergraduate students has grown significantly since the 1990s, reaching 10% in 1999/2000... in 2012/13, their percentage was estimated at around 13% of all undergraduate students." (p.33). As was also noted with reference to the OECD report (above), changes regarding woman students were significant: "Whereas Arab women comprised only 40% of all Arab undergraduate students at universities at the beginning of the 1990s, they comprised 66% in 2012/13, as compared to slightly less than 53% among the Jewish population." (p. 34) Other developments are presented as well: "we are pleased with the launch of a scholarship foundation — the first of its kind — for hundreds of Arab undergraduate students in the fields of engineering and science, in collaboration with various governmental and philanthropic bodies." (p.7) The CHE is well aware that more progress is needed—"the road ahead is still long and work is plentiful." (p.7)—but provides a grounded view of the challenges. This in contrast to isolated one-line anecdotes ('Why is there no Fordham or Brandeis?'), and the one-dimensional data appearing in the TFR.

In fact, awareness of the importance of improving higher education for Palestinian Israelis did not begin with this 2013 report. A decade earlier, the Technion—Israel's leading technology institution—embarked on a plan to promote minority educational opportunities and excellence. The program included (among other elements) pre-academic preparatory studies, academic tutoring, individual counseling along with social tutoring, and acknowledging Arabic in the university's website and also video- recording fundamental courses in Arabic by Arabic-speaking lecturers.²⁴

²² פלורליזם ושוויון הזדמנויות בהשכלה גבוהה: הרחבת גישות האקדמיה לערבים, דרוזים וצ'רקסים בישראל. דו"ח הצוות המקצועי של ות"ת. 2011. מרב שביב, נועה בינשטיין, ארי סטון, אורן פודם.

²³ See: The Higher Education System in Israel: 2014, 68-69.

<http://che.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/HIGHER-EDUCATION-BOOKLET.pdf>

²⁴ Based on a PowerPoint presentation by Yosef Jabareen: *Promoting Minority Educational Opportunities and Excellence at the Technion*.

The results showed far-reaching positive changes a decade later. Some appear in a *Bloomberg Businessweek* article from December 2014.²⁵

It is difficult to see the TFR's overlooking of important materials as accidental. In fact, in December 2014, three documents were sent to the then-Chair of the Task Force (Brenneis), including the power-point presentation already mentioned (see note 22), who acknowledged receiving them. A second item was a brief report by several Israeli NGOs that examined factors which could promote a sense of belonging among Arab students on campuses, in relation to the targets established by Israel's CHE.²⁶ A third was an ethnographic study depicting dilemmas and strategies of Palestinian women students at the Hebrew University.²⁷ Together, this material reflects multi-dimensional and dynamic perspectives, and illustrates the complexity of the issues. It was hoped that it would contribute to the richness of the TF's report discussion of university education, but there is no evidence that it was taken into account. Apparently, despite its importance and relevance, it was simply ignored.

Cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian institutions is another topic that receives almost no mention (except briefly when problematic aspects arise—see the next Section). This topic is not simple to discuss because often those involved feel most comfortable working "under the radar," so as not to draw political attention. But cooperative projects have existed and continue to exist in a range of realms, of which we provide only a few examples. A) A program to provide graduate and post-graduate-level health and science education to pairs of graduate students comprised of one Israeli and one Palestinian. This received support of a US university and prominent academicians and businessmen in Israel, the Palestinian territories and the United States. B) Palestinian and Israeli researchers studying the problem of pharmaceutical molecular contaminants that conventional sewage treatment methods cannot extract. C) Collaboration among Israeli (including Palestinian Israeli) and Palestinian colleagues on breeding disease-resistant plants. The purpose of this partnership is improving, expanding and protecting produce supplies for the entire region. The "Catch -22" entailed in not feeling free to discuss these projects is worthy of anthropological understanding, rather than simply ignoring the existence of such examples of Palestinian-Israeli interchange.

There is one more instance of glaring omission, which—as in other instances—is smoothly overlooked in the prose. In the subsection entitled "The 'Settler Colonialism' Frame" (p. 11), a problematic formulation as we already indicated, another mention is made of Palestinians who are Israelis. We learn that within Israel itself, Palestinians "can also vote and have access to the Israeli court system if they want to try to assert their rights" (14). This phrasing suggests that Israeli Palestinians "assert[ing] their rights," occurs only now and then, an insinuation more apt to the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. *Nowhere is the reader informed that in Israel there are Palestinian members of Parliament as well as lawyers and judges who are part of the Israeli court system* (and many Palestinians study in Israeli law schools)! Similarly, the TFR ignores the fact that within Israeli higher education including medical schools there are Palestinian department heads and high-level administrators (and our view is that there should be more). Are typical AAA members, with no "deep histories of expertise in the region," expected to figure this out on their own?

²⁵ See Peter Coy, *At Israel's MIT, Arab Women (and Men) Are Suddenly Thriving*. Dec. 5, 2014. <http://www.businessweek.com/printer/articles/239028-at-israels-mit-arab-wo>

²⁶ *Arabic and Arab Culture on Israeli Campuses: An Updated Look*. Dirasat: the Arab center for Law and Policy, Sikkuy: the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality, with the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute in an advisory role. n.d.

²⁷ Lauren Erdreich and Tamar Rapoport, "Reading the Power of Spaces: Palestinian Israeli women at the Hebrew University." *City & Society* 2006, 18:1, 116-150.

This leads to a more general point. We are concerned not only with missing data, or with oversights that might be attributed to the shortness of the project. *Rather the very method of giving contemporary figures only, and playing down both the historical and institutional contexts, serves a rhetorical purpose as well.* It allows the *reification of the category 'Palestinians,'* making their situated-ness within Israel an incidental reality. 'Palestine' and the Israeli state are thus elided when discussing Palestinian Israelis, and the latter left as an a-historical category to be invoked only when focusing on disadvantages and suffering. Positive developments among Palestinian citizens, as an outcome of the state's policies (regretfully slow in coming in various spheres), are not permitted to disturb the seductive binary of a powerful Israel vs. victimized and agency-less, Palestinians.

At a more basic level, this mode of mobilizing data feeds into an image in which Israel's concrete institutionalized and recognized existence appears as only contingent, another iteration of the "colonial settler" canard. This pretense of providing information for those not familiar with the region constitutes a pseudo-anthropological exercise, with a not-so-submerged political goal.

Section 3:

Limits on Academic Movement: A Two-Way Street

The other large section of the TFR, on Academic Freedom, follows that of Human Rights. The former, as noted, ends with a discussion of casualties resulting from the "conflict / occupation" (pp. 33/34) and a section on health (already discussed). Academic freedom, and limitations thereof are introduced as "a primary focus of the Task Force's charge." The issue, we are told, will be discussed "from both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives..." (p.39). In effect, the report places greater emphasis on the latter and little on the former. This may be seen with reference to the discussion of limitations placed on academic movement.

Half of the fourteen sub-sections under the heading "*On the West Bank*" deal with *Restrictions*, meaning Israeli policies in relation to Palestinian academe, and other sub-sections carry forward the same theme in different words. On the one hand, this is to be expected: Israel is occupying Palestinian lands and not the other way around. But to rely only on this assumption is to abdicate the responsibility of looking at a subject thoroughly. To illustrate this, we begin with one sub-section that has a different title: *Palestinian Embargo on Cooperation with Israeli Academics.*

This subsection does convey some "experience-near" picture of the situation, and also points to some shifts over time. We read: "The Oslo Accords [mid 1990s] also gave researchers the sense that Palestine would be a state by 1999, which further encouraged continued cooperation [between Palestinian and Israeli academics] so that there would be strong relations between the two states. After 2000, as Israel began to build the wall and to proliferate checkpoints, some Palestinian faculty ceased collaborating with Israeli colleagues — lack of mobility was a major issue for them." Here is some sense of real (though tense and decreasing) interchange between colleagues. *Yet it is coupled with a vastly misleading presentation of the wider setting.*

"The wall" (the separation barrier restricting access between the West Bank and pre-1967 Israel) was not built because of an Israeli whim. Its construction began in 2003, and was part of the attempt to stop suicide bombers from entering Israel during the period of "the second intifada" that began in 2000. In fact prior to that time, staunch right-wingers opposed building a barrier, claiming that it signaled Israel's willingness to give up part of the West Bank. The extensive loss of life and injuries among Israeli citizens—approximately 1,000 and 8,000 respectively depending on how one marks the end of the intifada—prompted Prime Minister Sharon to initiate the construction of the wall. *The basic details of this critical (and historically formative) period are not found in the TFR.* The context of what led to stricter mobility control over non-Israeli Palestinians is completely ignored.

With this in mind, we turn to two of the more focused, and seemingly data-supported, claims concerning limitations and pressures on academic activities in the West Bank in Gaza. As elsewhere,

we are presented with only part of the picture, and the elements of that partial picture themselves have varying degrees of accuracy.

The issue of *Restrictions on Foreign Scholar Entry to Palestine* appears on pp. 52-53. This is one of the "major obstacles in bringing faculty members to teach and participate in other academic activities at Palestinian universities," a statement backed up by two references. One reference is to a website mounted by the "Right to Enter Campaign" that seeks to defend the right of access, movement and residency in Palestinian territory generally.²⁸ The second is to an online *Forward* article that discusses the question from several points of view.²⁹

The fact that Israel closely monitors movement into and out of the Palestinian territories is known. At times, high profile cases appear in the media, and the TFR cites a series of restrictive incidents. As pointed out in the *Forward* piece, existing anecdotal reports are of varying evidentiary strength, though it is probable that military surveillance and interference at times exceeds reasonable proportions. It is not always apparent that restrictive zeal is greater regarding academics than other people. Israel claims, for its part, that it follows accepted protocols based on accords signed by it and the Palestinian Authority.

Israeli websites stress that foreign academics are free to enter the West Bank after acquiring a visa or permit. They can receive a three-month visa to the West Bank that can be renewed. More than 90 percent of academic applications are approved.

Denials typically occur for security reasons and decisions are also subject to judicial review.³⁰

It is futile to try to reconcile information coming from such distinct angles. But it is worth pointing out that *the TFR brings nothing from the 'Forward' article (which it itself cites), that offers an Israeli point of view.* Also worth noting is a brief caveat offered by the TFR early in the *On the West Bank* section: "The following section ...is drawn mainly from our notes on those conversations. Although the general information that they shared with us that goes beyond their direct experiences tends to be widely known, *we have not had the resources to corroborate specific statements.*" (italics added, p. 46). One may wonder then, if uncorroborated statements are worth conveying, why not at least offer a few examples of alternative points of view?

If what the reader may take from this section consists of "information that is widely known," interview statements that cannot be corroborated, and material from online sources, where is the value-added from an anthropological standpoint? Or has the TF simply taken the opportunity to supply its own packaging and branding?

²⁸ <http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/2013/Education%20Report%20Academia%20Undermined%20May%202013.pdf>.

²⁹ Hody Nemes, "Israel Under Fire Over Restrictions on Palestinian Academics—But What is Truth?" *Forward* January 14. <http://forward.com/news/israel/191100/israel-under-fire-over-restrictions-on-palestinian/>

³⁰ See "Higher Education in the Palestinian Territories: Entry of Foreign Academics to the West Bank," The Embassy of Israel to the United States, 2014, <http://www.israelemb.org/washington/AboutIsrael/Education/Pages/Higher-Education-in-the-Territories.aspx> ; "Border Security: Entry into Israel," Embassy of Israel to the United States, Israel Diplomatic Network, Consular Services, 2014, <http://www.israelemb.org/washington/ConsularServices/Pages/Entry-to-Israel.aspx>

Questions like these carry over to another sub-section: *Restrictions on Palestinian Students Studying in or Leaving Palestine*. (p.53) This sub-section concerns problems of students from Gaza who are studying in the West Bank or elsewhere (outside of Palestine). It cites several incidents such as: "USAID had international scholarships, some for Gaza students, but Israel would not allow them to leave Gaza." It is true that since Hamas gained power in Gaza (through elections in 2006, and then by forcibly ousting the Palestinian Authority officials in 2007), Israel has restricted the mobility of students, faculty, staff, and foreign nationals to and from Gaza via the crossing points that are under its control. But *to ignore the range of other factors impeding regular academic movement for Palestinians* is to severely misrepresent the situation.

One obvious omission is that there is an exit from Gaza through the Rafah gate into Egypt. Since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, Gaza Strip students seeking higher education abroad would cross there and then fly elsewhere from Cairo. In 2014 however, after mounting tension with Hamas, Egypt—for the most part—closed the Rafah crossing.³¹ The TFR picture falsely implies that all entrance crossings are Israel's responsibility.

Another central fact ignored is that *Hamas also restricts the mobility of students, faculty, and foreign nationals*. It has barred Palestinian students under its control from accepting fellowships to travel to the U.S. or to engage in educational visits to Israel intended to "plant seeds of peace."³² Another example appears in a 2010 report by the Sixth Educational International (EI) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) which held that the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Fatah [which controls the West Bank] has negatively affected university governance, led to university closures, resulted in the harassment and arrest of academics and students, and produced violations of academic freedom and basic civil liberties in both Gaza and the West Bank.³³ No echo of this side of the Gaza reality appears in the TFR.

In place of that, the section ends with a solipsistic interpretation of the situation: "Meanwhile, from the perspective of several people we interviewed, the separation of Gaza from the West Bank is fracturing Palestinian national identity." Nowhere in the TFR, is it mentioned that the deep schism between Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank leadership was solidified by a forceful Hamas takeover.³⁴ In the absence of basic facts, the reader is left to assume that this "fracturing of identity" also must be laid at Israel's doorstep.

Restrictions on academic freedom are also a two-way affair in the West Bank. In September 2014 the fact that Birzeit University operates a ban on Israelis reached media attention when *Haaretz* reporter

³¹ "Abbas Backs Egypt on Creation of Buffer Zone with Gaza," *i24news*, December 1, 2014. <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/53017-141201-fatah-denies-unity-government-mandate-over>

³² Kari Huus, "Hamas Bans Gaza Students Studying Abroad," *NBCnews.com*, August 17, 2011, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/44179843/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/#.VJ27KZDAQ; See also Isabel Kershner and Majd al Waheidi, "Hamas Turns Back 37 Gaza War Orphans from a Bridge-Building Trip to Israel," *New York Times*, December 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/world/hamas-turns-back-37-gaza-war-orphans-from-a-bridge-building-trip-to-israel.html>

³³ David Robinson, *The Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2010, 34, 42, 44-45. <http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/The%20Status%20of%20Higher%20Education%20Teaching%20Personnel%20in%20Israel,%20the%20West%20Bank%20and%20Gaza.pdf>

³⁴ "Hamas Takes Control of Gaza." <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jun/15/israel4>

Amira Hass was asked to leave a conference sponsored by The German *Rosa Luxemburg Foundation* and *The Center for Development Studies* at Birzeit. Hass is a prominent figure who for years has reported on the injustices and inequities stemming from Israel's occupation. Not everyone attending the university was aware of the existence of a university law that prohibited the presence of Israelis, but the incident became public when students at the conference registration desk realized she was an Israeli, and notified the university authorities of her presence. Later, the university published a statement: "The administration has nothing against the presence of the journalist Hass," but they did not deny the existence of such a law. For our purposes we note the absence of attention to this affair in the Report, which was in the media soon after the appointment of the Task Force.³⁵

Our close reading of the materials offered in the TFR (and alertness to information ignored), and especially the way the information and conclusions are presented, leads to a basic question. In what way can we see this as an especially anthropological report? It is hard to miss the tilt of the TF authors toward voices coming from only one direction. But if anthropologists simply align themselves with the political claims of those for whom they have the most sympathy, is this likely to ameliorate conflict and inequality? Why is there no consideration of an alternative approach, more in tune with particularly anthropological skills, to seek openings or windows that might provide human glimpses of engagement with the "other side?"

³⁵ Amira Hass, "When a Haaretz Journalist Was Asked to Leave a Palestinian University." <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.618007> Sep 28, 2014, Accessed 11 March 2016. Matthew Kalman, "The Real Lesson of Amira Hass' Ejection From a Palestinian University." <http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/outside-edge/.premium-1.618420> Sept. 30, 2014, Accessed 11 March 2016.

Part IV: Implications

Parts II and III have shown how (a) the TFR set up discourse establishing a recurring theme—the harm inflicted by Israel on Palestinians, and (b) data were carefully chosen and calculatedly presented in a manner that ran roughshod over anthropological norms of adequate context. We now examine some Implications of this approach, including asking the question "what is it that the report and its creators are seeking to convey to its envisioned anthropological audience?" Several themes are worth close attention: Responsibility for the Report; Moral Tone; and Positioning vis-à-vis the AAA Membership.

Responsibility for the Report:

The AAA Executive and the TFR: Some Queries and Missing Information

In an AAA Blog on 14 January 2016, President Waterston urged members to read the TFR and encouraged them to vote. She did not state what position the AAA executive takes regarding the Report. This lack of an explicit statement appears to continue a lack of clarity inherent in the Report from the outset.

Page viii of the TFR states: "Any remaining errors, omissions, or misinterpretation are the Task Force's responsibility and not the responsibility of the AAA Executive Board." Look, however, at Anthropology News from late April 2014, which announces that the Executive Board is moving "Toward an Informed AAA Position on Israel-Palestine." The move included the consideration of "organizing a task force." At that time, the AN statement was signed by four (4) individuals.

Two (2) of those same individuals appear as authors on the title page of the Task Force Report [Hugh Gusterson and Ed Liebow]. A third AN signatory, then-President-elect Waterston, is thanked for "assembling the bibliography and background materials." And a fourth signatory, former-President Heller, is acknowledged for reflections and encouragement in the planning and development stages of the Task Force's work" (p. ii). These contributions are not peripheral to the Reports content, particularly for a committee of non-specialists to the region! How can the same individuals be both responsible and not responsible?

The question of responsibility for the final composition of the TFR arose in another fashion. On April 28, 2015, some members of ADIP's steering committee, and other AAA members, received an email from the AAA Executive office: that "Don Brenneis will be stepping down from his role as Task Force chair." The message then continued, "We are immensely fortunate, however, to have Richard Bauman available and willing to replace Don on such short notice." This news was problematic to the ADIP network.

Professor Richard Bauman, Emeritus at Indiana University's Department of Communication and Culture, had signed an online petition by anthropologists in the Fall of 2014 (referred to in the TFR), supporting an academic boycott of Israel. His pending appointment stood in contradiction to the AAA's assurance, in describing the mission of the new Task Force, that the TF members would have "no public commitment to any given political stance on that conflict." Still, an announcement of Bauman as chair of the TF became public on line shortly thereafter.

A letter from several ADIP members was sent to the AAA executive on 30 April, 2015, pointing out this breach of its own principles. Another AAA letter was then sent on 5 May, 2015 (at the time that three members of the TF were on the "rapid assessment" visit). It stated that Bauman "feels he is not in a position to chair the Task Force on AAA's Engagement with Israel-Palestine." Simultaneously that letter stated that the Executive Secretary would now "facilitate the Task Force's work through to

the completion of its report to the Board." This was soon announced on the AAA website, and *the Bauman appointment and its cessation was removed from online view*.

Given (a) the overlap in personnel who announced the AAA intentions and those who contributed to shaping the TFR, and (b) the hasty and irresponsible announcement of a chair replacement who publically was identified with a pro-boycott position, can it be said the process of producing the TFR has been "fair, transparent, and respectful of diverse perspectives." (quote from the 5 May 2016 letter)? Additional questions arising from this confusing situation will be discussed after some remarks on themes of morality arising within the Report.

Moral Tone:

Information and Insinuation: Strategies in the TFR's Composition

Our careful reading of the TFR has revealed important information that is missing, along with modes of presentation of data that keep this partiality from being obvious. This reflects writing strategies, of which we note two. One consists of smattering examples of "balance" here and there within the Report. Another is the scattering of messages of moral condemnation throughout its pages.

In our introduction to this document, we noted that: "With a close search one can find an example, or at least a hint, of whatever one wishes..." One example is that the report refers to testimonies about aggression and intimidations arising at the AAA meeting and in anthropology departments following the boycott debate, yet there is hardly a mention of such concerns in the final pages of the TFR where the authors outline what actions the AAA might take. Another instance is the beginning of the sub-section on *Palestinian Academics in Israel* (Part III, *Section 2*), which starts with the following sentences:

"The situation of Palestinian academics (faculty and students) in Israel is better than the situation Palestinian academics face in Jerusalem and the West Bank, which is discussed in the next section. They are free to travel, they do not have to cross military checkpoints to get to the university, their salaries are paid on time, they have more resources with which to conduct research, they have access to good libraries, and they do not have to worry about being tear gassed by Israeli soldiers or about students being detained without charges in the midst of the semester. Nevertheless..." (p. 42).

The Report introduces the situation of Palestinian Israeli academics as having features of normality, but does so by *recounting their opposites*: difficulties in the West Bank and Gaza. Immediately afterwards, with the aid of 'Nevertheless...', the focus quickly becomes what is wrong within Israel itself. As shown in our discussion of that Section, there are problems and challenges in Israel, but the TFR omits essential information as well as background enabling the reader to situate them in a specific, Israeli, historical context. This is one way of reinforcing the perception of a seamless web of deficiencies within Palestinian life under Israeli rule, with only local variations in the details.

These compositional tactics appear to stem from a moral stance,³⁶ at the same time that the authors of the TFR steer readers away from critiquing them in these terms. Thus:

"There was some discussion among us about the logic and appropriateness of such a visit, several voicing slight concern that the Task Force delegation's trip might be seen by some as a kind of "moral inspection tour." And indeed some Israeli anthropologists expressed discomfort with the delegation's visit. As one put it, "you see people in the U.S. who live in big homes in well appointed suburbs who make easy judgments and don't appreciate the complexities on the ground, how hard it

³⁶ See Dan Avnon, "BDS and the Dynamics of Self-Righteous Moralism." *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 2014, 28, 28-46.

is to be a good person in this situation. So people are really offended to have people come from a more privileged situation and judge them." (p. 39)

Note that the TF members never bothered to answer this pondering over their double standards and their moralistic, imperial, hubris. They merely cite the conversation and move on as if they merely had a nice story to tell. Furthermore, by citing this one opinion and referring to "big homes in well-appointed suburbs," the authors trivialize more weighty moral issues, after—as we now show—having slipped in their own moral assumptions earlier in the report.³⁷

A "white elephant" roaming in the hall of boycott-Israeli-academe discussions is the question of comparison; it is allowed to be felt only from time-to-time. Why single out Israel when much more harmful policies are being enacted elsewhere against other populations? Why not pay fuller attention to hostile activities initiated by Palestinians? Why not compare the situation of Palestinians who are Israeli citizens with those living in other Middle Eastern countries? Public discourse within the AAA and the TFR has kept such questions—suffused with moral implications—under a lid, if acknowledging them at all.

The TFR, however, subtly but definitely, introduces its own moral comparisons. Consider the following:

"Throughout, we see a tragic instance of victims of one of the most egregious instances of nationalism / colonialism creating a system of oppression with echoes of the very system they had managed to escape." (p. 3)

and somewhat later:

"But we also want to note the complexity of a situation in which Israelis have their own powerful claims to victimhood and the irony of a situation in which they have recreated some of the same forms of victimization to which they were subjected," (p. 15)

In both these passages, without using the term, the TFR establishes Nazi policies and deeds as moral reference points in the conversation.

As in the first topic mentioned above, authors of the Report are low key in the way they guide their readers. But the two quotes cited open the option of comparing Israel's actions to Nazi crimes. We ask the anthropological reader: What broad unspoken frameworks does the TFR evoke, and which questions would it prefer not be raised by its readers? The Task Force Report must be assessed as a document with its own moral calculus; we find its vectors pointing in one direction only.

Addressing the Membership:

Where does the AAA Stand?

With this moral tone and certitude, one might expect the AAA executive to be highly confident in addressing its anthropological audience. Instead, what it has loudly communicated is an obligation for the readership to *decide for themselves*. Consider the statements by-former President Heller cited in an online news item after publication of the TFR, a month before the 2015 Business Meeting:

³⁷ Recall the discussion above in Part II, Section 1, relating to page 76 of the Report.

"The Executive Board's view is that the debate over Israel/Palestine is historically important and anthropologically relevant,...If there ever was a time when this was a fringe issue within the Association, that time has passed."

This echoes a sentence in the TFR itself (p. ix). But what exactly is the outgoing president so confident about?

"Our primary responsibility is to make sure our membership has access to information and space for respectful debate and informed decision-making. The Executive Board will be listening carefully to what our members tell us."³⁸

Consistent fervor is portrayed in letting the AAA readers know about information available to them so that they are now to debate in dignified manner.

A parallel line is continued by President Waterston in a blog from January 14, 2016, cited above.³⁹ It *pleads* with members to read the report and *invites* them to ask questions and get information, while abbreviating the elements of the report that should form the basis of an AAA decision in two short paragraphs (total = 117 words). No views are offered on the content of the report by the presidential figures, even though, as noted in the TFR Acknowledgements, each supplied significant input to its creation.

Along with this position, of staunchly withholding opinion on the Report, another statement from the AAA executive was posted as a comment to a *Washington Post* Op-ed that appeared shortly after the 2015 Business Meeting voted for a boycott resolution. There it was asserted that:

"... the American Anthropological Association will continue to be guided by the principles of preserving academic freedom, protecting human rights, democratic decision-making process,... The boycott's proponents suggested a blueprint for implementing such an institutional boycott. However, they do not speak for the association, nor do they have the authority to dictate the terms of any such action, should the outcome of the membership-wide vote go in their favor."

The comment goes on to point out:

"The resolution itself acknowledges that the Association leadership has the sole authority for establishing guidelines in the event that there is something to implement, and that such guidelines must be in accord with our Association's mission to promote the global exchange of scholarship. There will be no compromise of our mission as a scholarly and professional society. As clearly stated in the Association's Task Force report, withholding institutional subscriptions to our journals is off the table."⁴⁰

A parallel Message from the Executive Secretary (including a call to vote), less imposing in its presentation, appeared after that in the online *Anthropology News*:

³⁸ <http://www.americananthro.org/StayInformed/NewsDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=12979>

³⁹ <http://blog.americananthro.org/2016/01/14/message-from-the-aaa-president-member-engagement-alert/>

⁴⁰ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2015/11/23/anthropologists-seek-to-enlist-intel-wiley-publishing-co-in-its-israel-boycott/?tid=a_inl

"Should the member-wide vote approve the boycott resolution, the Association's Executive Board will determine the terms of any such action."⁴¹

How does one make sense of this hybrid cluster of declarations: enthusiasm for the process and encouraging members to vote, saying very little about the proposal's content, while proclaiming its autonomy and authority? Is the AAA leadership fulfilling its bureaucratic-democratic duty? Is it playing coy about its commitment to a path with which it identifies, but refraining from stating this loudly? Is it secretly hoping that the "storm will pass," without a major jolt to the association's standing?

Several anthropologists, adding online comments to the above-referenced Message, stress dilemmas that are being presented to the membership. On December 4, Donald Scott Wesolowski wrote:

"I note that this says "[s]hould the member-wide vote approve the boycott resolution, the Association's Executive Board will determine the terms of any such action." In order to vote, I would first need to know what is meant by "boycott," and specifics as to what the "terms of any such action" would mean. Such terms and possible impacts they might have are of extreme importance, as the word "boycott" is in itself highly ambiguous."

Another comment from Sydel Silverman (Dec. 12) relates to the resolution itself:

"The boycott proponents [in the resolution] misrepresent key conclusions of the Task Force report....[It] considers several possible courses of action, most of which are dismissed out of hand by these proponents in favor of an academic boycott. But, as the report states, a boycott must specify the conditions under which it would end. In this instance the conditions... amount to a total resolution of the Israel-Palestinian situation, with Israel making all the concessions. Not only is such an outcome unlikely, and beyond the capacity of academic institutions to effect, but — according to the report — they are 'highly problematic' for the AAA, since it lacks the capacity to assess the extent to which such conditions are met, and therefore 'it is not possible to determine whether such a boycott could ever be ended.'"

Is it not reasonable to expect to hear the voice of the AAA leadership when such discrepancies between the TFR and the boycott proposal clearly surfaced?

Here as, elsewhere, readers-members may look in vain for coherence. At times a hint of a clear evaluative stance emerges as in the firm exclamation that "withholding institutional subscriptions to our journals is off the table." Earlier in the same paragraph, the Executive Director notes accord between AAA principles and the resolution which "itself acknowledges that the Association leadership has the sole authority for establishing guidelines..." But there are other instances when the glaring silence seems to beg for interpretation.

Another discrepancy between the resolution and the report, to which AAA leadership should have called attention, relates to the very rationale for boycotting academic institutions for what their government is doing. The resolution that now is up for a full-membership vote is predicated on an assumption that: "Israeli academic institutions have been directly and indirectly complicit in the Israeli state's systematic maintenance of the occupation..." A contrary assertion appears in the TFR:

"The Task Force repeatedly asked supporters of a boycott for specific examples of active anthropological complicity with the conflict / occupation. In the end, the Task Force *could find almost no examples of such active collaboration*, although anthropologists may need to explore whether they are responsible for more passive forms of complicity." (p. 66, italics added)

⁴¹ <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2015/12/04/aaa-statement-on-the-resolution/>

While briefly noting the report's introduction of the morality card at the end of this quote (an antidote to the lack of culpability of Israeli anthropologists?), the more central point here is that the executive ignores this stark incongruity between the resolution and the report.

Another subject on which an AAA response might be expected, but is obtrusively absent, is the dubious base on which the whole resolution stands: that one can distinguish between academic institutions and the scholars who work in them. It includes the explanation: "The resolution applies to academic institutions only. Israeli scholars will still be welcome to participate in AAA meetings..." Without taking a stand on Israel / Palestine, could not the Executive—with more than a century of experience behind it—offer some thoughts on the likelihood of an anthropologist feeling welcome by an association that boycotts the institution within which s/he works and develops? Silence on such a matter appears to fully buy into pro-boycott doctrine, instead of exercising the most elemental anthropological reflex of examining assumptions.

Various paths of questioning, then—of the unclear line separating the AAA executive from the Task Force, of the un-acknowledged morality currents appearing in the Report, and of the labile representations of the AAA Engagement with Israel/Palestine effort toward its membership—lead to a single challenge. **Is this a document which the association will choose to represent its modes of inquiry and its ethics?**

Anthropologists for Dialogue on Israel and Palestine is deeply concerned with the inhabitants of the region. They are constituted by a range of actors: Palestinians who currently have no state, Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, Jewish Israelis, and other residents of the area. Individuals in all these categories have been enmeshed in an evolving web of interaction for decades resulting in deprivation and harm to many. The Israeli government currently bears a major burden for the political impasse and the inequalities and pain which it entails. **But for the AAA to support an academic boycott would only help keep Israel and Palestine ensnared in the restricted and self-harming myths and actions of the past, rather than contribute to moving toward a more hopeful future.**

The discipline of anthropology has developed tools that could make the kaleidoscope of identities and experiences in the region available for intellectual and personal understanding. There have been injustices and suffering but some growth and opportunities also are in evidence. An academic discipline that aligns itself with a particular political stance, while viewing Israel and Palestine in a binary and biased mode, undercuts its modest but crucial ability to re-imagine the area in terms of forward-looking anthropological perspectives. The challenge still remains of developing engaged anthropological approaches, based on informed familiarity with particular groups that is joined to critical judgment, which adhere to academic principles while pressing to realize human values in concrete contentious settings. The AAA has only taken initial and faltering steps down this difficult path. **If there is to be any progress, it must entail academic openness and dialogue.**

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