

## **Nevet Basker**

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February 12, 2014

*Personally delivered  
by Gary Kremen*

Prof. John L. Hennessy, President  
Office of the President, Building 10, Main Quad  
Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305

Dear President Hennessy,

I am a proud Stanford alumna (GSB '89), as was my mother (née Eileen Lanfeld, '57). I am also a native of Israel and an Israel-education professional. I am writing to you regarding the academic boycott of Israel adopted by the American Studies Association in December 2013.

The ASA resolution is factually and morally wrong on at least three fronts. First, it is completely antithetical to everything academia represents. Second, it singles out Israel—of all the countries in the world!—for opprobrium and discrimination. And third, it is completely mistaken on the substance of its claims: Israel has an enviable record of academic freedom and other civil liberties; Israel is, in fact, a bastion of liberty and democracy in an otherwise quite illiberal region.

You signed on to a rejection of the ASA boycott, saying that “Efforts to address political issues, or to address restrictions on academic freedom, should not themselves infringe upon academic freedom.” Thank you for taking this clear stand against the travesty of academic values. However, the statement does not go nearly far enough; in particular, it appears to tacitly confirm Israel’s alleged misdeeds, when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. Worse, Stanford continues to maintain *two* memberships in the ASA. (Stanford is the only university with two such memberships, for the American Studies Program and Green Library.)

In the wake of the ASA’s boycott resolution, at least six universities have terminated their ASA memberships. I wrote to your office in December and to the university trustees asking that Stanford follow their lead. (I never received a reply or acknowledgement.) I also corresponded with the American Studies Program and the library system. In each case, even those who said they “abhor” the ASA’s boycott defended their continued affiliation with the organization.

I urge you to go beyond a generic “rejection” of the boycott and take affirmative steps to distance Stanford from this misguided and bigoted association. At a minimum, Stanford must end the library’s membership—as an administrative function subject to university oversight, academic freedom is not at stake in this case. (And if nothing else, the duplicate memberships are inefficient and wasteful of the university’s resources.)

I hope you will also issue a stronger statement denouncing not only the boycott itself but also its underlying mistaken and slanderous premise. Most importantly, Stanford should invest in proactive outreach to Israeli scholars and institutions, exchange programs for students and faculty, and high-profile public endorsements of Israeli academics—demonstrating clearly that the university deplores the ASA’s hatefulness, and supports the free exchange of ideas, not to be hijacked by a political agenda.

I would be happy to discuss this issue further with you or any member of your staff.

Sincerely,

[Signed]  
Nevet Basker