

Gary Stein (Host) ([00:05](#)):

You're listening to pull up a chair podcast created by the associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore. I'm your host Gary Stein. And for this episode, we'll be talking about the BDS movement on college campuses.

Jenn Miller ([00:18](#)):

My Jewish education was, and as much as I learned Jewish and Israeli history and about Israeli politics, as far as being equipped with the tools to combat BDS on campus, it's something that I think is only now becoming part of a Jewish state school curriculum

Gary Stein (Host) ([00:38](#)):

BDS, which is an acronym for boycott divestment and sanctions is a Palestinian led movement that first launched in 2005. And it's caused significant tensions at a number of colleges and universities over the years. The questions are how prevalent is it? What effect does it have on our Jewish student population and what tools can we use to combat it? So pull up a chair and join us.

Jenn Miller ([01:05](#)):

My name is Jenn Miller. I am a 2019 graduate of the university of Maryland college park. I'm the student government legislator and the past president of TURPs for Adrial during the 2019 fight against BDS entrepreneur.

Stephanie Hausner ([01:22](#)):

I'm Stephanie Hausner and I'm the deputy director of the Israel action network at the Jewish federations of North America and where a project of the Federation system. We fight BDS in the de-legitimized station of Israel. We were started in 2010 after there was a BDS issue at the Toronto film festival against an Israeli film and the large federations of which Baltimore and associated as one of them got together and said a lot of pro Israel organizations, but we need something within the Federation system that works with federations and Jewish community relations councils to fight these battles that we're facing in local communities as they arise. Our primary role is to work with federations as they see these issues going on in their community and also to build proactive relationships so that we can create a firewall against BDS activity.

Gary Stein (Host) ([02:16](#)):

When you experienced firsthand on the campus at the university of Maryland, tell us a little bit from your perspective, what went on and kind of what your experiences were.

Jenn Miller ([02:26](#)):

Sure. So for, for two years now the student government has received a yes related bill civil legislature to debate and ultimately passed in early 2017. I believe the first one was a series of students, part of students, students, and justice for Palestine, along with other Alliance groups worked with legislators, little bill, which later over overwhelmingly defeated by a student legislators each year will have to be resubmitted. It doesn't carry over. So for, for two separate now, a university of Maryland students have overwhelmingly rejected BDF activities. Although definitely in a semester to come and see it getting more traction,

Stephanie Hausner ([03:11](#)):

College campuses tend to be where social movements arise. We seen that throughout history, but we also see that college tunes tend to be very progressive, very liberal. A lot of the efforts of the BDS movement particularly tried to push and use terminology of progressive movements. So using human rights, using justice equality as an effort to try to bring young, progressive student Jewish and non-Jewish on to their BDS, cause now the BDS movement does not believe that there should be a Jewish democratic state of Israel, right? But that's not necessarily what we're hearing on college campuses. A lot of time it's couched in this language of, of human rights, not one university in the United States has ever divested a dime from Israel. And yet, like Jen's talking about, we see these resolutions pop up on college campuses year after year. So what's the reason, right? If they're not making any financial impact on the state of Israel, I think a lot of that is that it raises the awareness. It creates an uncomfortable situation for Jewish students, pro-Israel students and it brings it into the mainstream light.

Jenn Miller ([04:24](#)):

I think that being pro Israel and being pro-Palestinian are not mutually exclusive. And I think that's where dialogue begins to break down and just cease to exist when you split it up into one side versus another. So what, what TURPs or Israel tried to do and other promos or organizations on campus like J street tried to do was invite members of students in justice for Palestine, the Muslim Alliance for social change, which is another political organization on campus. You know, try to create these dialogue events and not, not create a solution and not, you know, compromise and not find an alternative, but just here where we were coming from. You know, I see these people on campus and I'd say hello, but when it came down to sitting and getting a cup of coffee, just to hear why, why they believe that they did it, it just wouldn't happen.

Jenn Miller ([05:09](#)):

So again, it's, it kind of comes from two places. It's, it's these organizations following a national, or in this case, international doctrines of escape where they are not to engage in dialogues and those, they consider a process. And then also I think, you know, whether it's social media and people that devote their lives to, you know, studying the middle East and the BDS movement in the conflict, splitting it up into this false dichotomy pro-Israel students against pro-Palestinian students, instead of people that really at the end of the day should just figure out how exactly we're going to rectify pay. It's okay to be a Zionist. And it's okay to be pro Israel and also fight for rights of Palestinians.

Gary Stein (Host) ([05:50](#)):

Where does your activism come from in general? Did it start at the college campus or were you active nature beforehand?

Jenn Miller ([05:59](#)):

So it definitely started in in high school. I went to [inaudible] before that I moved to Krieger Schechter traveled to Israel, I believe twice before even coming to BT. and then one of a bunch of Phil's rabbis actually brought me to APAC conference. so I will say that is definitely what spurred my political activism in general. And speaking in this fund through through a pro-Israel context, I had teachers that believed in me, sent me to different conferences, different training opportunities, brought me to political fundraisers around Baltimore to meet members of Congress and other stakeholders in, in, you know, areas of interest, not just regarding Israel, but really started back at BT. And I've carried that through, through college. And now in my work in Washington, DC, where I live now,

Gary Stein (Host) ([06:49](#)):

How can we prepare our high school students to be better equipped in confronting BDS and other anti-Israel initiatives on campus?

Stephanie Hausner ([06:57](#)):

It's important for people to know facts and to know the history, but that's not the most important thing. The most important thing is that our teenagers and even our younger children feel passionate about Israel, feeling a connection to Israel, right? And that's something that every parent can give their child. And it doesn't mean that every child has to go to Israel before they enter college campus. I didn't go on birthright until I think my junior year of college. But we have to be able to give them that love, right? Because you could know every fact about Israel. You can know every detail of every potential peace agreement, but if you don't have the confidence and you don't have the, the passion and the love to go on campus and be part of these conversations, it doesn't matter.

Stephanie Hausner ([07:44](#)):

And I think a lot of our students feel like they don't know every fact and they feel that some people are telling them, you have to be able to debate these students, these debates don't happen on college campuses. That's not what this is about. We need to prepare our students to have a conversation with their roommate, with their friend, as they're walking through the quad. You know, my, my college roommate had never met a Jewish person before. And my name is, you know, maybe German, right? So we got to college and it was a little bit of a culture shock.

Jenn Miller ([08:16](#)):

I definitely know, as a, as a Pikesville native being able to have a good schmooze is so important. Most of my conversations before successfully defeating BDS two semesters in a row at Maryland came from these one-on-one conversations with Jewish and non-students alike because I, you know, have you conversation skills. And I was able to lay the groundwork and build a relationship before I decided to delve into the language of a bill. You know, I get coffee with someone and I asked them about their day and you know, what pops they have and how hard their classes are. I'm not midterm kind of stinks sometimes. So laying the groundwork in building these genuine relationships before getting into something nitty gritty, complicated, and oftentimes I'm comfortable having these prior relationships beforehand. It's so important. Otherwise, you know, your fight is just disingenuous.

Gary Stein (Host) ([09:09](#)):

So that'll do it for this edition to pull up a chair. We talked about the rise of the BDS movement and ways students can better prepare to confront anti-Israel supporters on college campuses. Thanks for listening to pull up a chair to make sure you catch the next episode. When it comes out, please subscribe to pull up a chair on iTunes, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts.