



A Gift of Giving with PIFFT

From the President

Alisse Waterston

November 4, 2016

Dear Members,

I write with great excitement to announce the launch of the [Palestine-Israeli Fellowship Fund for Travel \(PIFFT\)](#), a project that emerged as one among eight actions AAA has taken in response to conditions on the ground in Israel Palestine. Recognizing those Israeli government policies and practices that inhibit Palestinian and dissenting Israeli academics from effectively collaborating with colleagues internationally, PIFFT is designed to ameliorate these obstructions and obstacles.

In the first instance, PIFFT is designed to support Palestinian scholars. It may also support those dissenting Israeli scholars whose academic freedom is limited. As documented by the [AAA Task Force on Israel Palestine report](#), there are Israeli scholars who feel silenced—unable to speak up against Israeli policies and practices. When they dissent they are punished or threatened with punishment; it is these Israeli scholars that the Fund seeks to support. Finally, the Fund may support visiting scholars to the region who face the obstructions and obstacles noted above.

Over the summer and into the fall, we have been working to develop the parameters of PIFFT as a travel fellowship award program, institutionalizing it within the organizational structure of the Association. It has gone through various official approval processes (Resource Development Committee, Finance Committee, Executive Board) to land at this moment: ***the launch of the fundraising stage (November 4, 2016).***

We need your help to make this vision a reality. An anonymous member-donor stepped forward when PIFFT was a glimmer of an idea to pledge \$5,000 to the Palestinian-Israeli Fellowship Fund for

Travel. We need at least \$10,000 to make PIFFT a viable member-supported AAA project. Please support this important project. You may do so right now on the [AAA Donate page](#).

What does PIFFT support?

The parameters of PIFFT are very specific. Firstly, PIFFT will support travel expenses to the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association including airfare, ground transportation, and visa application fees; living expenses and housing; and other reasonable and justified expenses. Secondly, financial support may be provided visiting scholars for travel to the region including airfare, ground transportation, and visa application fees; living expenses and housing; and other reasonable and justified expenses.

Who does PIFFT support?

In the first instance, PIFFT supports Palestinian scholars living or working in the West Bank, Gaza or Israel. Secondly, PIFFT may support “dissenting” Israeli scholars (applicants must make the case for why they fit the category of “dissenting Israeli scholar”). Thirdly, PIFFT may support visiting scholars outside Palestine-Israel to the region (applicants must include evidence of the specific conditions that have constituted obstruction and obstacle to their serving as teacher, mentor or research collaborator in the region).

Who selects awardees?

A three-person committee comprised of the AAA VP/President-Elect, the Awards Committee Chair and a member of M-PAAC who represents Human Rights will review all applications, assessing them according to the [PIFFT rubric](#), which is designed to ensure awards are made to intended recipients. This three-person committee will recommend applications to be funded and the amounts to be awarded for Executive Board approval.

Where can I find information on PIFFT?

We have carefully prepared documents that provide information for donors and applicants, all of which can be found on the AAA website. [PIFFT Fellowship Details and Application Instructions](#) detail the fund, its purpose, eligibility, specific selection criteria, and provide details on the application components. The application form will be activated when the application process is launched. The [PIFFT rubric](#), which will be used by the PIFFT Awards Committee, is also posted.

How can I donate to PIFFT?

It's easy: [Donate to PIFFT](#)

How else can I help?

In addition to financing PIFFT, the project's success rests on getting applications from those it is designed to support. Before all else, we need your help in facilitating applications from Palestinian scholars. We also need your help in facilitating applications from those you know are dissenting Israeli scholars. If you or someone you know fits the criteria for a visiting scholar to the region, we urge you to apply or encourage them to apply.

In my view, we have a great opportunity here to make a dent and a difference. We can make a dent in overcoming obstructions and obstacles to academic freedom and a difference in the lives and work of those who otherwise would be unable to engage in scholarly exchange. By means of PIFFT, we have the chance to do our bit to include the excluded in scholarly exchange.

Thank you for your consideration and for your generous support.

Yours sincerely,



Alisse Waterston, President

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Cynthia Saltzman says:

November 7, 2016 at 11:49 pm Edit

Kudos to Rakhmiel Peltz's post. Amnesty International has posted information about a conference at the New School this November 2016 sponsored by the Center for Public Scholarship and Endangered Scholars Worldwide. It will discuss threats to free expression at universities in China, Syria, Iran, and Turkey. I hope that the AAA will establish funds to help free inquiry in these countries and in particular will support funding for scholars who have been affected by an unprecedented and alarming purge of academics in Turkey.

[Reply](#)**Rakhmiel Peltz** says:

November 7, 2016 at 4:54 pm Edit

Could President Waterston send us a complete list of all the areas throughout the world that the AAA has started such an initiative to overcome obstructions and obstacles to academic freedom. All the more power to such a worldwide undertaking.

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