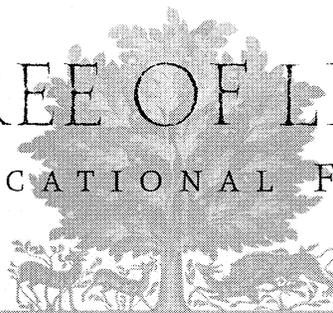


# TREE OF LIFE

## EDUCATIONAL FUND



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January 25, 2016

Dennis Williams, President, UAW International

RE: Local 2865's Resolution Supporting BDS

Dear Brother Williams,

I write to you as a life long trade unionist, labor lawyer and former member of UAW Local 1251, in Waterbury, Connecticut, to express my deep disappointment in the UAW International Executive Board's action to nullify the human rights resolution passed by UAW 2865 in support of the call by Palestinian civil society, including trade unions, for boycotts, divestment and sanctions in the struggle against the Israeli occupation.

By all accounts, Local 2865's vote was robust, democratic, and free of misconduct. The International Executive Board's action, in nullifying the Local 2865 vote, is contrary to the proud democratic rank and file traditions that founders such as Walter Reuther cherished. In addition, the International Executive Board's action in this matter is on the wrong side of history. Likewise, the Executive Board's rationale that support for BDS is "suggestive of discriminatory labeling and a disparagement" of Jewish members, is simply wrong and a poor reflection on the Executive Board's understanding of BDS. BDS targets policies of occupation and oppression, not people.

In addition to my life-long career in the labor movement, first as a member of UAW, then as an organizer and officer of 1199, Healthcare Employees Union, and now, for the past 21 years as a labor lawyer, I also serve on the Board of Tree of Life Educational Fund ([www.tolef.org](http://www.tolef.org)). In that capacity I work with voices of conscience from Israel and Palestine who desperately seek an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the reoccurring cycles of violence that emanates from this ongoing tragedy. I have traveled to Israel and Palestine numerous times to meet human rights activists, labor leaders, workers, government officials in both Israel and Palestine. I have hosted many such activists from Israel and Palestine in my home as they tour America for conferences. They welcome the International solidarity expressed through BDS and view it as necessary to help end the occupation and negotiate a just and secure peace. This is moreover the case given the present right-wing Israeli government.

In 1978, I was one of the founders of the Connecticut Anti-Apartheid Committee formed of labor, community, civil rights and faith-based activists. In response to calls for international solidarity in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, we succeeded in passing legislation requiring Connecticut to divest from its significant pension fund

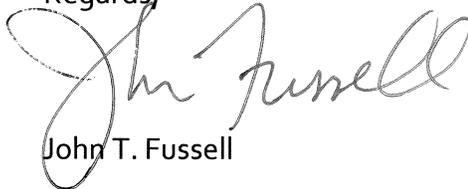
investments in U.S. corporations active in South Africa. Governor O'Neil, bending to many of the same type of criticisms leveled today against the BDS movement, vetoed the legislation. We rallied and lobbied, and the Governor formed a Task Force on South Africa to recommend a course of action. I was at the UAW Leadership Training Program at Black Lake when I received the call from Region 9-A, and then the Governor's office, to serve on this Task Force as the UAW's representative. Through our work the Task force recommendations targeting nearly 200 million dollars of investments in U.S. companies active in South Africa were adopted and signed into policy by the Governor. Connecticut was one of the first States to embrace divestment in the struggle against apartheid. The international pressure applied to South Africa through boycotts, divestments and sanctions helped free Mandela and forced negotiations that ended the racist apartheid system. The same type of International solidarity is now required to force Israel to end the occupation and negotiate a fair and just peace.

Responding to questions about Israel/Palestine, Mandela stated: "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians." I am certain that if you took the time to walk with me through Nablus, Qalqilya, Bethlehem and Hebron, and you saw the children, and talked with the workers and their families about their suffering under the Israeli occupation, you would agree with Mandela. You would then support the brothers and sisters of Local 2865 in their principled human rights vote supporting BDS.

Such action as taken by the UAW Executive Board will not defeat the growing International human rights movements. It simply reflects poorly on the UAW. The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.

The Tree of Life Educational Fund organizes witness trips to Palestine and Israel each year. I would be very pleased if you would join me on such delegation.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John T. Fussell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

John T. Fussell

cc: Gary Casteel, Secretary Treasurer, UAW  
[UAW2865@uaw2865.org](mailto:UAW2865@uaw2865.org)  
[UAW2865bds@gmail.com](mailto:UAW2865bds@gmail.com)  
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