

## Report of the B'nai B'rith International Leadership Forum October 2018, New York



B'nai B'rith International held an International Leadership Forum and gala dinner from Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018 in New York, the place where B'nai B'rith was founded exactly 175 years ago. Jeremy Havardi (JH), together with Alan and Edna Miller, attended from the UK and there were over 100 other representatives from many countries around the world.

On Sunday evening, following the Menorah lighting, the Label A. Katz awards were made to some outstanding volunteers from the world of B'nai B'rith. International President Gary Saltzman then delivered a 'State of the Organisation' speech and this was followed by the President's reception.

At the main conference on Monday, Dan Mariaschin, Executive Vice Chairman/CEO of BBI, gave a powerful speech explaining the challenges and threats facing the global Jewish community and Israel. He said that BBI had welcomed a number of decisions in the last year, including the US embassy move to Jerusalem, the decision to remove funds from UNHRC and the decision to withdraw from the flawed Iran deal, given the regime's ongoing threat to regional stability. He also lauded the work done by Nikki Haley at the UN and discussed the Trump administration's plans for reactivating Middle East peace. He talked about endemic UN bias at all its major organisations but praised its Chief, Antonio Guterres, for recognising how the organisation had become politicised. Dan also discussed the global menace of antisemitism in the last year, especially in Europe where he cited attacks in Warsaw and Paris and mentioned Poland's Holocaust law. He also examined left wing anti-Israel hatred in the form of BDS and why it was necessary for governments to adopt the IHRA model. It was an important and enlightening overview.



*Dan Mariaschin*



*Gary Saltzman*

The leadership forum continued with a panel event led by Dan. It featured the voice of progressive Zionist Jews who spoke about their daily encounters with prejudice. Amanda Berman, founder of organisation Zioness, talked about how Jews were so often marginalised by progressive groups because they refused to disavow their support for Israel. Such demands were not being made of other groups because they would rightly be decried as racist. She also lamented the absence of Zionist voices within the progressive space to challenge this hatred. Attendees also heard from freelance journalist Emily Shire, who talked about anti-Zionism in media circles and from Ann Lewis, a former Democratic Party strategist, who spoke about how some recent Congressional candidates hid their anti-Israel views prior to being nominated and then revealed them afterwards. There was also a discussion on intersectionality.

After lunch, Israel's Consul General in New York, Dani Dayan, gave an overview of Israel's three major problems (all Iran) as well as other pressing geopolitical issues. In the afternoon, Alan

Schneider, Director of B'nai B'rith World Centre in Jerusalem, David Michaels from BBI, Eric Fusfeld (also of BBI) and Eduardo Kohn, a BB representative from South America took part in a second panel event. Kohn discussed the reasons why there was a leftist turn against Israel in South America and Eric looked at the relationship between European member states and Israel. David Michaels examined the relations that BB had with various faith groups (Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Muslims) and their respective attitudes towards Israel.

The third panel event featured a discussion about some of BBI's humanitarian work. It was led by Eric Fusfield, BBI's Director of Legislative Affairs, Evan Carmen, Assistant Director for ageing policy at the BBI Centre for Senior Services and Breana Clark, a senior program associate for the Centre. All three spoke of the valuable work of the Social Services Centre which provides 5,000 elderly people with affordable housing in 28 communities and which advocates on a range of welfare issues. Eric also spoke about BBI's concerns over immigration and refugee policy and the organisation's bipartisan campaign to ensure just policies in these areas.

On Monday evening, a gala dinner was held at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Battery Park, in close proximity to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. The evening commenced with a brief tour of the museum which contains many hundreds of artefacts related to modern Jewish history, including the Holocaust. Several individuals received Jewish Heritage awards, including Malcolm Hoenlein, CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations. A video showcased the history and work of B'nai B'rith and this was followed by a three course meal.



9/11 Memorial



Charles (Chuck) Kaufmann,  
Jeremy Havardi, Alan Miller

Further discussions were held on Tuesday morning. After breakfast, new officers were elected, including the President, the Chief Executive of the Board and several new Vice Presidents. A series of resolutions were discussed, including one from the new President outlining B'nai B'rith International's stand against antisemitism. Some awards were made, including the Moe and Berdie Kudler Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service, the Julius Busno Award for Professional Excellence and the Sidney H. Closter Award for an outstanding Young Professional. During the installation luncheon, the outgoing President of BBI, Gary Saltzmann, was congratulated for his work and the incoming President, Charles (Chuck) Kaufmann was introduced. After the new President's remarks, attendees were invited to make comment and ask questions. JH said that he hoped that there would be collaboration between BB's different advocacy groups around the world so as to provide a more uniform and well informed approach to this type of work. Afterwards, he was thanked for his comments by the new President, the outgoing President and the new Chief Executive of the Board.

Overall, the Forum was an outstanding opportunity to meet fellow BB delegates and to share in the excellent work that they had been doing.