

University

Pro-Israel position fails to show again

by Tamara Conrad

Once again, Students for Justice in Palestine organized a debate intended to serve as a platform for the pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel sides of the Gaza conflict, and once again, the pro-Israel side didn't show up to represent itself.

Organizer Shadi Ghrayeb started searching for debaters for the Nov. 2 event in August. He was able to get Norman Finkelstein, an independent scholar and author of six books on the subject, to represent the pro-Palestine viewpoint, but could not find a stand-in for the pro-Israel viewpoint.

Ghrayeb said he contacted people through Penn State Hillel, Chabad, Penn State Israel Alliance, and the Penn State Jewish Studies Program. He also tried to find defenders of the Israel perspective through the Consulate General of Israel in Philadelphia and the pro-Israel lobby American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The student group hopes to raise the profile of what some call an invasion and others a war in Gaza last year, when in response to rocket propelled grenades and

The student group called Students for Justice in Palestine has organized two debates in the last year in an attempt to raise the profile of the dispute over the Gaza Strip. Both times, despite early and frequent invitations to join them, people who could represent the pro-Israel side have refused to participate, in one case calling the invitation to debate a "trap."

mortars fired from Gaza, Israel launched military action that killed at least 1,400 Palestinians.

Everyone he contacted turned down the offer.

"I knew this was going to happen," said Ghrayeb, who organized a similar event last year with the same results.

Ghrayeb said finding a qualified speaker is not the problem; finding someone who will publicly debate the issue is.

"They don't want to challenge us," Ghrayeb said.

Ghrayeb said the central conflict in the Middle East "is an issue of justice and human rights," and that if pro-Israel people

debate their opinions on the conflict, "people will see how ridiculous their points are."

Aaron Kaufmann, Director of Penn State Hillel, was invited to debate the issue. E-mail correspondence records show that the Consulate General of Israel in Philadelphia informed Kaufmann about the event on Oct. 13, 2009, about three weeks prior to the intended debate. Although Kaufmann turned down the offer to debate, he attended the event. He told Voices he was not contacted until the event was "soon approaching."

"My job is not to be on stage as a talking head," Kaufmann said.

He also said Penn State Hillel is a reli-

gious organization, not a political organization. The organization focuses on Judaism, not Israeli conflict.

Yet in 2008, Penn State Hillel brought Mitchell Bard, executive director of American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, to discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Bard was one of the first people Students for Justice in Palestine contacted for the November debate, Ghrayeb said. Bard, who corresponded with Kaufmann by e-mail prior to November's event, called it a "trap." Kaufmann said he had no influence on Bard's decision to turn the students down.

"He certainly made his own decision on the matter," Kaufmann said.

When Ghrayeb contacted the Consulate General of Israel in Philadelphia, they in turn informed Penn State Professor Amit Schejter of the debate, unknowingly to Ghrayeb, the student said. At the same time, Schejter had been recommended to Ghrayeb as a possible debate candidate by another professor. Ghrayeb said Schejter

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Law school invites left, right to healthcare debate

by Nadin Naumann

In an effort to raise awareness about the pros and cons of a universal healthcare plan, two law school organizations sponsored a debate in November in which both sides agreed the current system is broken and needs to be fixed.

The Penn State Dickinson School of Law Federalist Society and Student Health Law Association sponsored the debate, titled, "Health Care: Right or Privilege? Who controls it? How to fix it?" Doug Bandow, senior fellow at the conservative Cato Institute, who specializes in foreign policy and civil liberties, and Chuck Pennacchio, executive director of the progressive Healthcare4AllPA, were the speakers.

"The purpose was to inform the Penn State community and the law school community on the important issue of health care

reform and some of the issues people should be thinking about when deciding whether health reform and what aspects of health reform are essential," Student Health Law Association President Stephanie Hill said.

The Cato Institute is a public policy research foundation that promotes private enterprise and limited government involvement. Healthcare4AllPA is an advocacy group created in 2006 to secure a single-payer health care system for Pennsylvania citizens.

"It is important to ensure that our law students are aware of the issues about health reform and how the outcome of the reform will affect us as individuals and future lawyers," Hill said.

The debate drew out about 40 people at University Park and was also simulcast in Carlisle, Pa.

Pennacchio led the debate by advocating for single-payer healthcare, which would provide health care coverage to everyone in the United States. Congress has already ruled out the option for such a bill at the national level.

"The problem with our current system is that it costs too much," Bandow said.

Pennacchio also said that there are 78 advanced countries in the world today, and of those, 77 guarantee healthcare for all of their citizens, and only does not.

"You can guess which one that is," said Pennacchio.

Medicare is an example of a single-payer system where healthcare is being paid for by a single entity: the government.

Bandow said Medicare isn't as efficient as people may think. He said people with Medicare are often left unsatisfied, and a lot of doctors don't even take it.

"We make a lot of promises and don't take care of them," Bandow said.

Pennacchio disagreed. He said healthcare systems like Medicare work.

"Under single-payer you don't pay any bills when you go to the hospitals or premiums," said Pennacchio. "You get an extra tax, and instead of it going to the private insurer, it goes to the government."

The single-payer healthcare bill was introduced by Healthcare4AllPA in July. Pennacchio hopes that the Pennsylvania single-payer model can serve as an example to be adopted at the national level.

"It's shameful for Democrats and Republicans to not look at this," Pennacchio said. "It makes the only economic sense."

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seemed interested in speaking at the event until he was informed that he would be debating Finkelstein.

Ghrayeb said Schejter called Finkelstein, the son of a Holocaust survivor, a Holocaust denier. Ghrayeb told Schejter that if he could support his accusations with proof, the event would be cancelled but he never received any proof, said Ghrayeb who added that Schjeter later said he did not know anything about Finkelstein.

Schejter refused to be interviewed for this article.

When Ghrayeb contacted AIPAC, he was directed to its Penn State liaison, Michl Berns, who is also the President of Penn State Hillel, who also would not debate.

When asked why qualified people would not be interested in debating the pro-Israel viewpoint, Kaufmann said, "It wouldn't be worthwhile to hypothesize about that."

Responding to charges that the debates are one-sided, or a "trap," Ghrayeb said,

1	6	2	4	5	9	7	3	8
8	4	3	6	7	1	9	5	2
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5	3	8	7	1	2	6	4	9
9	1	4	8	6	5	3	2	7
6	2	7	9	4	3	1	8	5
4	8	9	2	3	6	5	7	1
3	5	6	1	8	7	2	9	4
2	7	1	5	9	4	8	6	3

"[Students for Justice in Palestine is] not here to spread propaganda." He called Finkelstein a "walking encyclopedia" and considers him a difficult opponent to debate.

"I think Finkelstein's the best qualified to speak about the conflict," Ghrayeb said. He wanted to get the best person to defend the Israeli perspective, he said. He even searched for a qualified debater at Penn State through the Israeli Consulate in Philadelphia.

"Finkelstein is their worst nightmare," he said. "They don't want to give [Finkelstein] legitimacy."

"There's more than just two sides to the story," about the conflict, Hillel's Kauffman responded.

Ghrayeb said he has tried in the past to organize the debate about Gaza through a third party, the Political Science Association on campus, but the pro-Israel people were uncooperative then as well.

Kaufmann said Penn State Hillel does its best to work with other student organizations, but that his organization has a different approach to dialogue. He said his organization approaches the conflict in a "positive" way.

In October, Penn State Hillel organized a comedy show with the Arab Student Union with comedians representing both cultures poking fun at themselves.

"They're trying to control the debate," Ghrayeb said.

Finkelstein, who ended up giving a talk instead of debating the issue, had the first and last word on the subject Nov. 2.

"The truth is out, and it's a very ugly picture," he told the audience.

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Bandow had a different idea of what he thought healthcare should look like in America. He advocated for a national insurance market, one that builds on competition and choice.

"We need a national competitive marketplace to choose whatever we want," Bandow said. "We need to take care of people who can't take care of themselves, and that will be expensive."

During the debate, Bandow expressed his concern for the government takeover of healthcare by explaining that modern society's vision of healthcare coverage is not a traditional view.

"Today people expect insurance to cover procedures such as hair transplants and medications like Viagra," Bandow said.

Bandow believes a government takeover

of the healthcare system, as proposed by Congress, would be a step in the wrong direction.

Under Pennsylvania single-payer legislation, everybody would pay his or her "fair share," which takes 3 percent of income, compared with the 8 percent paid by the average Pennsylvanian last year. Businesses and municipal, county and state governments would pay 10 percent of pay, instead of the current 20 to 40 percent.

Bandow's answer to the high costs is to move away from employer-provided health insurance and instead increase competition among both insurers and health providers. He stated that employer-provided insurance hides much of the real cost of health care that consumers get, therefore we should try something else.

"Is healthcare a right or a privilege? In a society such as ours, it is a right," Pennacchio said.

Let them know what you think!

Voices encourages our readers to pick up the phone to policy makers and let them know what you think about pending legislation or issues important to you.

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Healthcare reform lets us be kind to others

by Jamie Campbell

Thanksgiving is annual kick off for the shopping, good cheer and giving to the less fortunate season. At no other time, it seems that we care so much about our fellow man. That is a good thing, really a great thing, but (you knew it was coming) we often forget caring for folks is a year round thing.

Let us start with the simple stuff. As the cold and flu season kicks in show some concern for your fellow workers; stay home. Trust me, your co-workers with small children will appreciate you so much more.

I know it might be hard, but when your child is sick let them stay home. The other kids in the class may not appreciate it, but the teachers will. Teachers deal with so many aspects to classroom management, when one of their kids is sick, they are splitting their focus even further than it already is. So care about your child's teacher and the learning that must go on for the other students.

If you decide to receive a flu shot, work with the caregivers who are providing it by showing some patience. They would love to have more flu shots to give out, but they don't, so keep the complaining to a minimum and say thank you to them. One, it will confuse them, I mean who says thank you for a shot? And two, they are doing one of the most important jobs this time of year and your kind word could get them through the next 20 hours of administering shots to people who might not be eager to get a much needed needle.



Ok, that was the simple part. Now let's take this caring thing up one notch.

On Nov. 20, our elected officials undertook one of the most important votes on health care since 1965 when Medicare passed. This vote will not enact blanket coverage for everyone, but it will cover a great deal of people who are left without any support for medical emergencies. I know a great deal of people have their "I hate the insurance company" stories, but I am grateful for mine and I am constantly forced to think of those without any type of coverage.

When I get sick, I go to the hospital, pay my co-pay and do not think twice about going. If I did not have coverage and the rent was due, the light bill was due and I needed groceries feed the family, I would more than likely be sick and take of my family first.

This kind of decision is the same one that is facing many people every day. Having a healthcare system that would take care of the least fortunate among can only be a benefit for everyone. I am not going to even begin to think that a program like this is going to have a direct impact on helping me; I understand what I am advocating I probably will not qualify for. I know this, and I am fine with it. If helps someone who otherwise would have had to suffer, so be it. I have constantly heard that we should not

be taxed to care for someone else's problems. Taxes are always going to be a problem, too much, too high, so on and so on. At least, in this case I can think that they are helping an individual or a family that truly needs it.

When I saw the bill from a hospital visit of mine last year, it made my knees buckle and eyes water! Then I realized I had insurance, and I was fine. The moment passed when the random thought of what if I did not have this plan or even worse the company decided not to pay (a totally different story I know), but I had a plan and so my family was saved from one more major bill. But the nagging thought remains, what if I did not have plan?

This national health bill will not be perfect, not by a long shot.

With more and more people out of work, not able to find work, taking care of their families the best way they can, more people are just a medical issue away from losing everything. Those of us who can, need to try to support something, anything that will help them.

This year also kicks off a great deal of people quoting lines from books, movies and plays. Here is one that can help define this whole situation in my opinion:

"On the last day, Jesus will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, and enter the

Kingdom. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was sick and you visited me.' Then Jesus will turn to those on His left hand and say, 'Depart from me because I was hungry and you did not feed me, I was thirsty and you did not give me to drink, I was sick and you did not visit me.' These will ask Him, 'When did we see You hungry, or thirsty or sick and did not come to Your help?' And Jesus will answer them, 'Whatever you neglected to do unto one of these least of these, you neglected to do unto Me!'"

I wish you and your family health, prosperity and your dreams this holiday season.

Jamie Campbell is the president of the Forum on Black Affairs.



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Globalization forum draws nearly 200

A November forum called Tragedy of Errors, organized by the self-described "Anthropology 455 Collective," drew nearly 200 students, faculty and community members to a dramatic presentation of globalization issues.

The event included its own armed guards who appeared to be at the beck and call of a "businessman" (played by Kevin Hagopian) who periodically demanded that various "protesters" settle down. When they didn't, he would call on the guards to throw them out, which they managed to do with great effort.

In addition to the dramatic flair of faux audience participation, students presented

videos produced during the semester, interspersed with five-minute presentations by professors and one by alum Ben Brewer who spoke to them about activism. Elaine Meder-Wilgus officiated a Victoria's Secret "fashion show."

The event was emceed by Charles Dumas with assistance from Jo Dumas.

The class is taught by Voices OpEd Editor and anthropology professor Paul Durrenberger.



Photo by Micah Wallace

Above, Prof. Lakshman Yapa speaks to the audience about the negative impact of globalization on the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Left, student Andy Mazur ends the evening by delivering the "Mad as hell" excerpt from the movie "Network" and getting the audience on its feet.



photo by Rachel Hanson

Instructions:

Fill in the grid so every row, every column and every three-by-three box contains the digits 1 through 9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reason and logic.

Thanks to Peter Morris for contributing this puzzle.

The solution to this month's puzzle can be found on page 19 of this issue.

Sudoku

		2	4	5		7	3	
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Come as you are.

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agnostic, atheist, believer, doubter, humanist, egotist, naturalist, activist, pacifist, optimist, pessimist, 7th day horizontalist, gay, straight, bicyclist, curious, creative, able, depleted, dilapidated, caffeinated, thirsty, open minded.

You are welcome here.

Dec 6 - 10 a.m. Sunday Service "Spirit of Life"

Rev. Mark Hayes examines our common theology and spirituality expressed in a hymn.
7:30 p.m. Soulful Sundown: "A Celebration of Winter"
Music, songs, and personal reflections for the season, led by Gail and Reid Hendershot.

Dec. 9 - Wonderful Soulful Wednesday

5:45 p.m. Potluck Supper, 6:45 p.m. Vespers
7 p.m. - Womanspirit: Celebration of the Winter Solstice (women 16 and older).
Origami Ornaments - all ages welcome to learn the art of folding paper.
Games Galore - drop in for an hour or all night to play board, world, tile and card games. Modern Euro board games are non-attacking and have a deep strategy. All ages welcome.

Dec 13 - 10 a.m. Sunday Service "Embracing the Spirit of the Season"

The choir, under the direction of Matt Travis, offers music from Handel's Messiah and Bach's Christmas Oratorio. Stay for lunch, ornament making, and help trim the Christmas tree while the band plays holiday carols.

Dec 20 - 10 a.m. Sunday Service, "Dark Nights of the Soul"

Rev. Mark Hayes speaks on the darkest time of the year... the dark times in our lives. What does it take to get through them and greet the return of light?

Dec 24 - 7:00 pm A Family Christmas Eve: "Would You Like to Hold the Baby?"

8:00 pm Fellowship and refreshments in the Social Room
9:00 pm A Contemplative Christmas Eve in Words and Music

Dec 31- NEW YEAR'S EVE GAME PARTY, starts at 6 p.m.

A friendly, festive, laid-back and wholesome start to the year. All are welcome. Learn modern non-attacking strategy games you've never played, watch the fireworks at midnight (good view!), bang the pots & pans, and then play some more.



Visitors are always welcome.

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