

ACL CONFERENCE

Experts tackle Middle East invasion on campus

TORONTO – Several high-profile experts on the Middle East spoke recently at a conference, *When Middle East Politics Invade Campus*, presented by Advocates for Civil Liberties (ACL).

At the Hyatt Regency Hotel an impressive array of students, professors, analysts and activists made presentations.

On the roster were: Dr. Phyllis Chesler, emerita professor of psychology and women's studies, City University of New York; Dr. Richard Cravatts, founding

director of Boston University's Program in Publishing and a contributor to the *Jewish Tribune*; Salim Mansur, professor of political science, University of Western Ontario; Andrew Roberts, founding member, Friends of Israel Initiative; Dr. Catherine Chatterley, research fellow, University of Manitoba, and Gil Troy, professor of history, McGill University.

Journalist Jonathan Kay, managing editor of the *National Post*, served as moderator. The panel of five university students consisted of Sara Akrami, Josee Chiasson, Noah Kochman, Afroza Mohammed and Michael Payton. ACL President Lorne Saltman spoke first and introduced retired Israeli Judge Hadassa Ben Itto, author of *The Lie That Would-*

n't Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, who gave the opening remarks by video. ACL Vice-President Stephen Posen gave the closing remarks.

Each speaker identified an aspect of the "war on campus" and suggested courses of action. The overall message was that universities are a microcosm of Western civilization and the battle on campus reflects the larger campaign being waged not only against Israel, but also against the entire Western world.

Stories and photos by Joanne Hill

Students must oppose hatred, violence on campus, panel says

Sara Akrami is studying Political Science at York University and is the head of the Human Rights Activists Association, which works to raise awareness of human rights violations in Iran and lobbies for regime change. Group members have been threatened on campus by supporters of the Iranian government.

University students have a duty to oppose the promotion of hatred and violence on campus and promote peace, she said.

"Unfortunately, one of the universities that has an atmosphere full of tension and hatred is York University."

Josee Chiasson is studying psychology at York University and is president of Christians United for Israel on Campus. Her first exposure to the Middle East conflict was seeing "two mobs yelling at each other with signs" on campus. She subsequently visited Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

"My conclusions have been that what is being propagated during Israeli Apartheid Week is a complete distortion of the historical fact and it's also rhetoric that doesn't reflect the situation on the ground in Israel."

University administrators must ensure that the information given to students

does not "cause destruction in the future.... We need to take this responsibility very seriously. We need to be able to challenge the beliefs that are radical beliefs, that are dangerous beliefs.

Afroza Mohammed is studying education and sociology at York University. She is the student information director of the Faculty of Education Students' Association. She said she was "neutral" on this issue and was there "to be the voice for thousands of students whose concerns for safety have been neglected during Israeli Apartheid Week."

The "intimidation, abuse (and) threats" experienced first- or second-hand by students has made her feel that "York and York community are not able to have a conversation in a mature way about this conflict, (which) does not leave students feeling abused, hurt or ignored.... Campus is a part of the academic institution and is a place of higher learning above all uses and purposes. So why is it that in my years at York I've witnessed so much bigotry, intolerance and ignorance, particularly around this issue?"

Although York now offers training in "the art of respectful and meaningful dialogue" and has placed restrictions on

some activities, Mohammed said, "it still has a long way to go in terms of repairing the damage done to our student space, to the student body, as well as to the image of York."

Michael Payton is studying cognitive science at York and is an associate member of the Centre for Inquiry Canada. A self-described atheist, he spoke of the human tendency to generate bias and the difficulty of achieving an open dialogue.

A "prevalent bias" today is "the ability to claim victimhood in order to have power over another person. If I say I am being oppressed in some way, then automatically the audience owes me duties and favours and everything is owed to me."

Noah Kochman is studying law at the University of Ottawa and he spoke on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Jewish Students. He stressed the importance of having a big enough "tent," under which all Jewish students will feel comfortable. Providing an atmosphere in which Jewish and non-Jewish students are permitted to be critical of Israeli government policies might prevent them from being "recruited by groups like Independent Jewish Voices and others."

Jihad on campus: inside and outside of classrooms, Gil Troy says

There are "two different jihads" taking place on campus today, said Prof. Gil Troy: "the campus jihad," which takes place outside of classroom hours, and "the academic jihad," which takes place inside the classroom. To counter both, it is necessary to "get out of defensive mode" and insist on a return to traditional academic values.

"How do Zionists get a passing grade on campus? By bringing academia back to academic values. And if we do it right, we won't just improve the situation for Jews and Zionists on campus, we'll remind professors, administrators, students and parents about who we are and what our mission is.... Because there's a broader issue on campus today: a lack of concern with quality of teaching (and) a lack of concern with the quality of the students' interactions and feelings.

"There's a paradox today: this is a Golden Age for Jews on campus...but we have to notice that it's also a Golden Age for Israel-

bashers on campus." Troy gave several suggestions for ways to create positive change.

"First, we have to rescue academia from all these corrupt academics.... When we talk about the content of the pro-Palestinian professor, we lose.... We'll always lose the battle over academic freedom. But if we talk about educational malpractice, if we talk about hijacking the podium to advance your own personal political position, whether it be for the right or the left, whether it be pro-Palestinian or pro-Israeli, if we link it to a broader conversation about how to improve teaching quality...then we have a chance at succeeding and a chance at improving the university."

Salim Mansur said the West cannot solve the problems of the Arab/Muslim world but must instead focus on fixing its own "desperate" situation. He warned that the separation of religion and politics in the West might be lost because too many intellectuals are "ready to surrender it

to sharia (Islamic law)."

People of the West must remember their own "bloody" history as they view the "convulsion process" currently taking place in many Muslim countries and not indulge in polemics. The focus should, instead, be on principles that are exemplified by the affirmation of individual rights such as freedom of speech and the rejection of multiculturalism.

"We are a culture that affirms individual rights and the ultimate minority in the world is the individual. The minority of the world is not a Jew, it's not a Hindu, it's not a Confucian, it's an individual. (When) we protect the rights of the individual, we protect the Jew, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, everyone, because we protect that person as an individual."

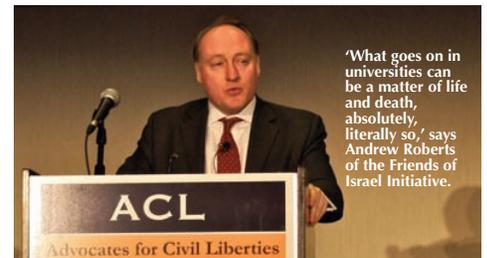
"What are we teaching our students: to respect sharia? I am a Muslim and I have no respect for sharia.... Shariah is a legal construction of the 8th, 9th, 10th century. What has it got to do with Islam?"

It's got to do with the thinking of 8th, 9th, 10th century men that puts the privilege of men over women, Muslim over non-Muslim, free person over slave. That's 8th century thinking and it's being upheld in the 21st century not simply by Iran.... Where are all the Jewish students and where is everybody else standing up? That's the principle we need to fight for."

Dr. Catherine Chatterley's contribution to the panel was an academic look at the evolution of antisemitism and anti-Zionism.

"Today Israel is confronting a coordinated global strategy to weaken its connection to the West, including the Jewish diaspora. If speaking out in defence of Israel is made the equivalent of defending apartheid, then the hope is that Israel will eventually collapse in isolation or be coerced into negotiations that make it vulnerable to dismantlement or destruction. This is the larger context in which IAW must be understood if we are to see it clearly for the political

Campus hate speech linked to terrorism: group spokesperson



"What goes on in universities can be a matter of life and death, absolutely, literally so," says Andrew Roberts of the Friends of Israel Initiative.

The dissemination of hate speech at universities has been linked with terrorism, said Andrew Roberts, Friends of Israel Initiative.

"What goes on in universities can be a matter of life and death, absolutely, literally so. And what is presently going on, right across the Western world, is a marked increase in harassment, disruption, hysteria, physical threats and hate speech."

Roberts listed a few examples of men who participated in Islamist groups at British universities and later became terrorists. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, "the underwear bomber," attempted to blow up an airplane in 2009; Omar Khan Sharif was one of the suicide murderers who bombed Mike's Place in Tel Aviv in 2003; and Taimur Abdulwahab al-Abdaly failed to detonate his car bomb but blew himself up in Sweden at Christmas-time last year.

"There should be no surprise that the messages at these universities' radical Islamic societies has led directly to murder and maiming. Hate in, hate out.

"Universities were meant to be the place where mankind advanced through open discourse, progressing towards a genuine enlightenment of thought through debate and the interaction of ideas freely expressed. This is the crux of what we mean by civilization and anything that seeks to oppose such a vivifying and noble idea is perforce to be placed alongside the forces of ignorance and intolerance."

Totalitarian repression has been evidenced at times throughout history such as during the Crusades, the burning of the Great Library of Alexandria, the Salem witch trials and the Holocaust, and is on the rise again in the "morally despicable" campaign to delegitimize Israel and the Jewish people.

"Israel, therefore, should not merely see herself as being in the frontline of the war against terror, although of course she is, but in this present struggle of the academic boycott and right to free speech in universities, Israel and her supporters, Jew and Gentile alike, are in the forefront of something even more important than that. For today, they stand in the very vanguard of the centuries-old struggle for truth over falsehood, knowledge over ignorance, and therefore, ultimately, of civilization over barbarism."

The Friends of Israel Initiative was launched last August. Its founding members include José María Aznar, former prime minister of Spain; Václav Havel, former president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic; John Bolton, former United States ambassador to the United Nations; Alejandro Toledo, former president of Peru; and the Italian philosopher Marcello Pera. It is led by people who are not Jewish and who "are convinced that Israel is of fundamental importance to the future of the West," Roberts said. "Although the peace process is important, the members of the Friends of Israel Initiative are even more concerned about the onslaught of radical Islamism, as well as the spectre of a nuclear Iran, both of which threaten the entire world."

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Western civilization is in a fight for survival: Chesler

Western civilization is in a fight for survival against totalitarian barbarism and women's rights will be the pivotal issue in that battle, warned Dr. Phyllis Chesler. Furthermore, if people in the West choose not to act, they may unwittingly be guilty of complicity with evil.

"Here, then, is exactly where the greatest battle of the 21st century is drawing: totalitarian barbarism versus vulnerable... civil libertarians, in a democracy where there is dissent, where there is freedom of thought, where there is freedom of religion...."

"Big lies and monstrous hatred have gone global. Stand against this. Stand for the values of the enlightenment. Stand for truth over lies. Otherwise, if not, we will all be bombed back to the Arabian 7th century.... More than the lights will go out. This time it won't be just the lights going out over Europe, it will be the lights going out over the entire precious world."

Phyllis Chesler's credentials as a leading feminist and human rights activist are impeccable. For decades she was loved and lauded by people in those circles, until she began to speak out against Islamic apartheid and honour killings; now she is shunned by her former comrades and denounced as a right-wing racist.

"The real apartheid," Chesler told the *Jewish Tribune* in an interview, "is Islamic religious, as well as gender, apartheid. Demonizing Israel is used precisely to divert the world's attention away from the true nature of Islamic apartheid."

In Islamic religious apartheid, Chesler said, non-Muslims are denied equal rights with Muslims. Islamic gender apartheid features normalized abuse of females, forced veiling, female genital mutilation, arranged marriages (often between first cousins in some countries) and honour murders.

Chesler speaks from firsthand experience: as a young woman, she married her college sweetheart and together they left America to visit his family in Kabul, Afghanistan. When they arrived, her passport was confiscated by airport officials; at her husband's family home, she was surprised to learn that her father-in-law had three wives and 21 children. Her husband shrugged off the effects of 14 years of life in America and resumed the traditional attitudes and role of an Afghani Muslim man, while



Phyllis Chesler: If people in the West choose not to act, they may unwittingly be guilty of complicity with evil.

Chesler was relegated to life under *purdah*, in which women and men are kept apart as much as possible.

"I then observed," she said in her speech, "the level of suffering and cruelty that would be unimaginable to most Westerners and then I understood that such barbaric practices are indigenous to the region and to the culture and they are not caused by Western imperialism or colonialism or capitalism or certainly Zionism."

Chesler told the *Tribune* that the threat against the West and its values comes not only from Islamists, but also from those who espouse moral relativism, especially in academia and the media.

"The barbarians are not only at the gates, but they are in our heads: we've got a fifth column, which is my people, the Western intelligentsia, and the Israeli counterpart of that Western intelligentsia. We have a real problem."

Feminism has also failed, due in no small part to moral relativism.

"Feminists, who have become 'Stalinized' and 'Palestinianized,' along with the rest of the intelligentsia and the academics, are not standing up for one universal concept of human rights for all; they're saying, well, everything is relative.... They're not even taking a morally courageous stand using just words. And the few who are or who have - Muslims, ex-Muslim dissidents, myself - are demonized as racists."

For Israel and the Jewish people, "the priority right now is Jewish survival. We are in an existentially perilous state. It is 10 minutes after midnight and we need to now do things that are pre-emptive, not defensive."

When asked by the *Trib-*

une whether she believes the world faces the risk of another Dark Age, she said, "Yes, but we don't really know the future. We see barbarism rising, we see a Dark Age rising all over the Muslim world, that's clear, and we see it in Muslim communities in the West, at least in Europe. We see how permeable all the Western values are, that we should be standing for, with great strength and pride and clarity, and that's not the case. The West is filled with apologetics, with guilt, with shame...."

"Let's also say that the call for the moderate Muslim is like calling for the good German during the Nazi era. Because if you do not resist, if heroism is not your only alternative, if you are not willing to risk death - and how many people are - then you're part of the problem. Then you end up being complicit with evil. So even if you're a good person and for all kinds of human and understandable reasons you want to just stay out of the line of fire, you want to stay alive, you can end up in historical terms having been complicit with very radical evil."

In her speech, Chesler shared her concerns about recent events in Egypt and listed statistics from a 2010 Pew Research Study of the attitudes of Egyptians towards Islamic terrorist groups and Islamic (sharia) law. She also discussed some of the findings of her extensive research into honour murders.

'Start making trouble' by stopping antisemitism on campus: Cravatts

Antisemitism is being dressed up in "scholarly clothing" at universities and Zionists must go against tradition and "start making trouble" by insisting that it stop, said Richard Cravatts.

"We have to demand that the universities take a moral stand and if they want to let all speakers come to campus and say these things, they have to let both sides come.... It's a moral commitment to do that because the stakes are important. These are the new minds that are going to become our leaders, politicians, ambassadors, policy makers, citizens and we don't want them coming out of college thinking that Israel is the main impediment to world peace."

Cravatts gave his perspective as a teacher of marketing, advertising and consumer behaviour. He explained that branding can apply to countries as well as to products and that brand hijacking happens when consumers take over the promotion of a particular product or country.

"Israel's brand has been hijacked but it has not been hijacked by its consumers and the people that love Israel. Israel's brand image has been hijacked by the enemies of Israel, those who are pro-Palestinian, who are trying to reshape the narrative of what Israel is and represents, who are rewriting the history of the Bible and the Western Wall and the creation of Israel and the State of Israel today.... On campuses, this brand hijacking is aided and abetted by left-leaning professors, Muslim student groups and others who have bought into this repositioned image of Israel."

He illustrated this with clips from the video, *Crossing the Line: The Intifada Comes to Campus* (reviewed by the *Jewish Tribune* on May 11, 2010), and images of anti-Israel posters and books.

The brand hijacking has been successful. In 2006, Simon Anholt conducted a survey of 26,000 people and asked them to judge 56 different countries based on a list of characteristics and impressions. Israel came in last, scoring behind countries such as Libya, Iran, Syria and Sudan. Respondents said Israel was militaristic and too religious.

Idealistic students who want to help people are being drawn in by a one-sided concept of social justice.

"The idea of social justice is coddled and

shaped by the left on campuses and what it does is make them feel that they have a commitment to helping people, that the victims of the world have to be helped and the favoured victim on campus these days, since apartheid ended in South Africa, is the Palestinians. Anything that is done for their benefit is fine, even if it means dismantling Israel, even if it means insisting on the right of return of the Palestinian refugees into what is now Israel, so they would destroy, by demographics, the Jewish state."

IAW on campus an outrage, ex-judge says

It is outrageous that Israeli Apartheid Week will be held on university campuses in March, said Hadassa Ben Itto.

In her 31 years as a judge and during the six years she spent researching and writing her book, "I dealt with facts, for the only way to disprove a lie is by establishing the true facts."

"Unfortunately, most people get their information from a biased mass media and thus lack an understanding of events in the Middle East and elsewhere. Furthermore, a misinformed public is directly influencing government policies."

She had hoped that academia would counter the "contaminated" public discourse but it has failed.

Universities were once "centres of learning, of honest intellectual debate" and "a beacon of light in the darkest eras; seekers of truth. So you can imagine my great disappointment when I learned that some universities are in the forefront of spreading distorted information; questioning the legitimacy of Israel; while lending a forum to a dictator guilty of incitement to genocide; promoting boycotts; presenting a one-sided, biased picture; (and) expelling by force speakers who try to set the record straight or even to present a different set of facts. I asked myself, have these universities abolished their true marketplace of ideas? Have they turned themselves into a replica of the public square? Have they replaced the microphone with the megaphone, shouting unfounded slogans to incite the masses?"



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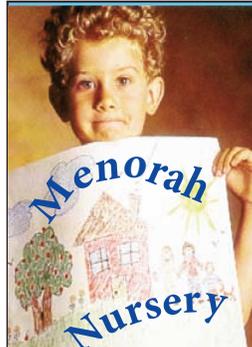
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