

# A Wakeup Call

by Ari Bussel

Last week, Israel Jewish Life published an article by Betsy Schwarcz titled "An Inappropriate Workshop." The article was a report from Saturday's eight hour session of a Salary Point Workshop given for teachers by UTLA (Union Teachers Los Angeles, utla.net). This was part of a 16-hour professional development workshop titled TEACHING ABOUT THE ARAB WORLD: MEETING THE STANDARDS ACROSS DISCIPLINES, K-12, presented by the American Friends Service Committee February 2-5, 2007.

Betsy concludes her article:

*"Most importantly the workshop did not accomplish what it was supposed to. First of all, the name workshop in itself means an interactive medium. All the professional development workshops I have participated in, engage the students in some practical manner. Often, the presenter speaks about their topic and while talking discusses how their ideas can be used in the classroom. Then the students are usually asked to get a partner and do an exercise relating to what they have just learned. The speaker then asks some students to share their thoughts about the exercise. The standards are always addressed. This "workshop" failed to do any of that. A more suitable title for the program would have been "Teaching Adults About the Arab World In A Very Pro-Palestinian, Anti-Israeli Way – No Practical Use For Grades K-12."*

A former Superintendent of the Beverly Hills Unified School District commented on Betsy Schwarcz's article (IJL, 2/7/2007): *"This is outrageous... an appalling and inappropriate use of public money for a presentation, [which] as Betsy notes, has no relevance for the California standards. Who made the decision to give his guy a pulpit??"*

Nancy Krasne, a current candidate to the Beverly Hills City Council, remarked:

*This is frightening. If this was part of a sponsored district program for credit towards a pay raise the credit can be knocked off by the raciest tone of this class.*

This WILL BE STOPPED!

Regretfully, the following public officials did not see fit to address in this form

the issues raised in Betsy's article, but may be taking action in other venues:

- 1.) *Superintendent David Brewer, LAUSD*
- 2.) *Marlene Canter, President, Los Angeles Unified School District*
- 3.) *Tamar Galatzan, the Mayor's endorsed candidate in the Valley*
- 4.) *Councilmembers Wendy Greuel and Jack Weiss*
- 5.) *Mayor Villaraigosa.*

I was present during both the Saturday and the Monday sessions of the workshop as an official observer for the Anti-Defamation League. DISCLAIMER: The opinions expressed in this article are my own and do not represent the opinions of the Anti-Defamation League.

The Workshop was nothing but a platform for anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian propaganda. The "teaching tools and resources" presented were clearly ANTI, self-serving, truth-distorting, factually-incorrect and quite insensitive to history and to humanity. The Holocaust, for instance, is not a proprietary Jewish phenomenon. Many more Christians died during WWII than Jews. Making a joke about not being allowed to leave early since "the doors are locked, there are guard dogs outside, and we built a 25 foot wall," following a previous description of the Palestinian cities being surrounded with 25 feet walls and watchtowers every 200 meters, its population held in "an open air prison," its livelihood being taken away from it, its water being poisoned, etc., would leave a very vivid impression in anyone's mind. Such a joke would be universally considered insensitive and inappropriate, except at this Workshop. Anyone wandering the connection between the described "plight" of the Palestinians and the Holocaust, should refer to the usage of a new word: "ghettoization" (word taken from a handout).

Ghetto, Wall, Oppression--all were used against Israel in most sophisticated ways: Teaching teachers in Los Angeles about Palestinian farmers' plight, Palestinian embroidery as an expression of national identity, and the escape of Christians from Bethlehem because of Israel, emphasizing that Christian Palestinians and Muslim Palestinians live in harmony in the birthplace of Christ (nothing could be further from the truth).

Let us read, for instance, about (Arab) Women and Education. The material given reads, in part:

Over the past five decades, women have been active in the Palestinian resistance movement. Several hundred have been imprisoned, tortured, and killed by Israeli occupation forces since the uprising, "Intifada," in the Israeli occupied territories began in 1987.

One of the magazines distributed shows on its back cover an Israeli soldier aiming his rifle at a woman who is bowing and a

child who looks straight into the soldier's eyes. The caption: An Israeli soldier on patrol in the West bank city of Hebron aims weapon toward a crowd of Palestinian shoppers on Jerusalem Day, Oct.20, 2006. Cover to cover, the magazine talks about Israel, Palestine, Oppressed Palestinians and Misery caused by or attributed to Israel in one form or another.

Hebron, if you wondered, is part of the Occupied Territories. A presenter who

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claims to have been born and raised here in the USA, stated she is an Arab, a Muslim, a Palestinian, a Woman – from the Occupied Hebron. As an American who was born and raised here, I would first describe myself AN AMERICAN. The presenter, it seems, was not alone: Another presenter emigrated to the United States seven years ago from Nazareth, Israel, also told us she is from the Occupied Territories. All of Israel, it seems, is occupied. There is a sense of identity, magnetism to a fictitious land called "Palestine," from which all hatred emanates.

Thus, after the eight hours I attended, during which whatever happens in the Arab World is related to the evil occupation of Palestine by Israel (and if not than at the very least to America, who is connected by associated to Israel), after receiving material written by the likes of Noam Chomsky, after hearing, time and time again of the plight of Palestinian people (whether in Israel, Lebanon, or elsewhere), is there any doubt in anyone's mind that teachers attending the Workshop need to spring to action? They must educate (since what one hears in the news is misleading), they must show the right ways to the kids in their classroom, and they should support the Palestinian efforts to rid themselves of the ghettoization by the Israeli occupation.

Imagine a staff professional development workshop about Israel, or even a workshop about the Arab World which is given by an Israeli or a Jewish presenter, or yet another workshop about the plight of immigrants in California or about Gays and Lesbians (all aimed at teachers of students in K-12). Protestors will be in the building and outside. The media will be all over the place. In this case, it is Israel-bashing, a most honorable of pastime methods, definitely not "sexy enough" to be "newsworthy."

Without immediate, corrective action, we fail. Being accommodating, fair and respectful apparently does not work in the setting of this Workshop. As much as the presenters see themselves as Palestin-

ians, a workshop about the Arab World disguising PROPAGANDA should NOT be allowed. Not in 2007. Not in 2008. Not at any time where the presentations are skewed and amount to a 16 hour brainwashing about OCCUPATION by ISRAEL and the PLIGHT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE WORLD WIDE (as related to the occupation). I only wonder if there is any change between the previous presentations in 2005 and 2006 and the current one now that Israel is out of the Gaza Strip!?!?

Probably none. Rachele Marshall, a member of the Jewish International Peace Union, writes in a Special Report available in one of the magazines given out: Bush's Lies Can't Hide Middle East Realities:

The World Trade Center attacks gave Bush the chance to sell this agenda to Americans as essential to the "war on terrorism." [NOTE: in Saturday's presentation we learned that due to all the billions spent on the War on Terrorism and the War in Iraq, are schools and education are suffering. Imagine what could be done with all these billions of dollars right here at the classroom!] ... It was a claim no more real than the imminent "mushroom cloud" Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice once warned about. ... Israel's confiscation of more than \$50 million a month in Palestinian revenue collections, and the cutoff of international aid funds, have forced schools to close and caused serious shortages of fuel, hospital equipment, and medical supplies. [NOTE: same figure mentioned on Saturday by the speaker: \$600M last year alone = \$50M / month.] ... Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, with full support from America, was a major cause of the anger among Arabs and Muslims... more than 120,000 people of Palestinian descent have been affected by laws that serve no other purpose than to reduce the Palestinian population and impoverish those who remain.

It goes on and on, within this article, and then article after article. The availability of these magazines and handouts is no coincidence. The same statements were repeated and incorporated in the presentations.

The Palestinian "crowd" is extremely sophisticated. A Thousand and One Arabian Nights. They create a reality of their own, which has no connection with the actual reality, and seem to believe that telling a lie enough times makes it into truth. The Christian Palestinians from Bethlehem, for instance, would be those to attest that the reason their population dwindled to 1.9% of the city inhabitants has nothing to do with Israel but with the Muslim Palestinians. They will attest to the fact they do not "live in harmony," unless one defines no more Christians living in the birthplace of Christ as a prerequisite for "harmony."

Meeting the Standards Across Disciplines, K-12: What standards? Which disciplines? If the purpose is to provide a seminar on Palestinian statehood, do that. Educators' training regarding TEACHING ABOUT THE ARAB WORLD should have two elements:

- a.) *Teaching*
- b.) *Arab World.*

The parts I attended should have been called Israel's Role in the Plight of the Palestinian People. One should do the honorable thing and call things by their true name. A cow is a cow and not a pig. If one wants to teach about pigs and apes, let no stone hide the pigs and the apes – call them by their name!

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