



The Citizen

Kennedy School of Government

Volume 10, Number 12

www.KSGCitizen.org

May 5, 2005

Race propaganda at Harvard?

By Robert Berman, MPA/MC
Guest Columnist

With a chance for renewed peace in the Middle East, do you want the KSG Middle East Initiative (MEI) to teach today's leaders and diplomats? For the past few years, the MEI, led by Harvard Professor John White, has been sponsoring and promoting numerous events that are highly biased, factually inaccurate, and inflammatory.

One such event was the February screening of "Peace, Propaganda, and the Promised Land." This so called documentary bashes and blames Israel for every problem under the Levantine sun and interviews the usual anti-Zionist characters, such as Noam Chomsky and Hanan Ashrawi.

Even the NY Times has called the movie a "one-sided film" that is "Pro Palestinian" and "largely ignores Palestinian leadership, which has surely

played a part in the conflict's broken vows and broken hearts."

In March, the Director of the MEI, Palestinian Hilary Rantisi, and its program coordinator, Lebanese Mirna Kassir, invited to KSG the infamous Jeff Halper, an anthropologist and self-appointed Coordinator of the Israel Committee against House Demolitions.

Without going into Halpers convoluted, and sometimes hallucinatory, perceptions of Middle East reality, at the end of his talk he proudly stated that he is "totally biased" and "has an agenda." He continued to boast that after delivering the same presentation at Brown University he was refused his promised honorarium because "Brown stated it does not pay for biased advocacy" when the speaker bills himself as an academic. The Middle East Initiative apparently doesn't have the same standards.

Rantisi tipped her true colors this week in an email sent on April 22nd

by the Society of Arab Students and the Palestinian Solidarity Committee. She was listed as a participant of an upcoming panel that would "discuss" the decision to divest from Israel on April 26th.

A reminder email was sent on April 25th absent Rantisi's name. Evidently someone correctly reminded Rantisi that she is head of the Middle East Initiative, not the Palestinian Initiative, and she needs to be a little less obvious in where her loyalties lie.

Our experience at KSG should deepen our understanding of the Middle East conflict from all perspectives sans hyperbole and lies. We need analysts not advocates. The Kennedy School of Government, of all places, shouldn't be sponsoring Palestinian propaganda or polemics. Someone should tell the Middle East Initiative.

Robby Berman (MC/MPA) is a former freelance journalist and the founder/director of the Halachic Organ Donor Society.

importance, includes a responsibility to give students thoughtful, relevant feedback on their work. Students should not be thankful when a professor takes the time to write more than a sentence of feedback on a memo or paper. Thoughtful feedback should be an expectation.

To create this outcome, the Administration must use student course evaluations in a meaningful way to compel teachers who perform below excellence to improve. Without accountability, standards accomplish little. The Administration must establish, reward and meaningfully enforce teaching standards of excellence that will push faculty to be their best for students.

Dean Ellwood: invigorating and sustaining a culture of excellence is immensely challenging. There are no short term fixes, new classes, or small modifications that will do it. The suggestions above are a small though important start. Real change requires instilling a different mindset throughout the school and creating a frame of reference that makes excellence the expectation.

Lead the change, Dean Ellwood. Let's create a culture of excellence so all students, faculty and staff will be