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West Bank tales from two Tar Heel alums

Today marks the first day of Palestine Week at UNC. As May 2007 graduates of the University and teachers in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Palestine, we write to invite you to the week's events.

While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is immensely complicated, the organizers of Palestine Week have tried to make it as accessible as possible. The Tuesday program "Israel and Palestine for Beginners" is specifically tailored for that purpose. Students have the opportunity Wednesday to hear firsthand accounts of what it's like in Palestine from Tar Heels who have visited.

GUEST COLUMNISTS Living and working here for five months has been an exercise in trying to make sense of what's going on around us. We are regularly perplexed by the stories we hear and the experiences we have. Given this opportunity, we feel obligated to share them.

When we asked our ninth-grade students to write an essay about important events in their lives, we didn't expect to receive the stories we did. We knew that Israel has held the West Bank under military occupation for 40 years, but what exactly does that mean?

It means some of our students have never swam in the Mediterranean, despite being able to see it from West Bank hilltops.

It means many of our students are prohibited from using Israel's airport, only 30 miles away, and instead must travel four hours to the airport in Amman, Jordan.

It means some of our students have not left the West Bank in years because, despite living on their own land, the Israeli government would bar their re-entry.

It means one of our students could visit her sister undergoing chemotherapy in Jerusalem only twice over many months because she needed a permit from the Israeli government to do so.

It means our students, only 13 and 14 years old, have written about running away from Israeli soldiers and tanks.

It means Christina, the best friend of one of our students, was beaten by Israeli soldiers because she tried to go around a military checkpoint while running late to school. The ambulance taking her to a Jerusalem hospital was delayed at the same checkpoint.

Christina was dead on arrival.

We fully acknowledge that Palestinians have no monopoly on suffering and that the suffering of the Jewish people throughout history is virtually unparalleled. But like the Jewish academic Norman Finkelstein, we're wary of using past atrocities to justify current ones. To present a few statistics, the ratio of Palestinians to Israelis killed in 2007 is 373 to 13. The ratio of prisoners held by each side is 10,000 to 1. The ratio of homes demolished as a part of official government policy is 18,000 to 0.

With the exception of these extraordinary living conditions, our students are hardly different from American high school students. They are talkative, ram-bunctious and eager to get away with anything they possibly can.

Coincidentally, four of them were born in North Carolina. Two were recently admitted to MIT and Duke University. All of them have taken English since first grade. Our ninth-graders are reading "The Diary of Anne Frank," and students in the International Baccalaureate program read Shakespeare and "Wuthering Heights." A group of seniors recently produced its own cinematic version of "Romeo and Juliet," set in Palestine. You can view its trailer by searching "In Fair Palestine" on YouTube.

These stories might not fit with the image of Palestine you had in mind, as they certainly did not when we first heard them. To learn more, take advantage of Palestine Week and take advantage of us. Send us an e-mail, and check out our blog and pictures. If you're ever in the neighborhood, let us know. As fellow Tar Heels, it would be our pleasure to host you.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Mason Phillips, mphil@email.unc.edu



Coming up short

Code should be clarified regarding petition timeline

A shortfall in the Student Code has surfaced again this election season.

Candidates who did not collect the minimum number of signatures to campaign for their post were given an additional 48 hours to collect the rest.

There should be no wiggle room in the Code when it comes to doing the necessary work to get on the ballot, especially not when other potential candidates have met all requirements on time.

Title VI, article III, section 303 of the Code states, "Candidates whose petitions are not in order shall have 24 hours to correct their petition and resubmit it to the Board of Elections."

The extra time is meant to address petition problems that occur because some students signed multiple petitions, so their signatures don't count.

BOE chairman Mitchell Caprigione gave candidates 48

hours, from 5 p.m. Wednesday to 5 p.m. Friday to turn in the rest of the required signatures.

Caprigione said that candidates are required to submit the extra signatures by 5 p.m. Friday and that the BOE is obligated to post the number of missing signatures at least 24 hours before that Friday deadline.

Instead, the BOE had signatures counted before the specified deadline and posted them by 5 p.m. Wednesday, 24 hours before the Code required.

While we commend the Board of Elections for being on top of its game, the additional 24 hours for collecting signatures should be the maximum extension allowed, no matter how early the board posts the data.

While the BOE did not act contrary to the Code, we figure that an extra 24 hours, especially when others not only met requirements, but went beyond, is more than generous.

According to the Code, if a candidate fails to submit enough signatures for any reason, they are permitted the extra day.

Senior class officer candidates Stephen Barber and Rachel Moss did not have the necessary 350 signatures even before double signatures were canceled out. A handful of Student Congress hopefuls also did not meet the signature requirement.

If most candidates can meet the requirements even under the threat of duplicates, then there is no excuse for the few who cannot meet guidelines because they didn't submit enough to begin with.

The Code should specify that candidates should be given only another day to collect signatures if they were short as a result of duplicates, not if they simply didn't do enough leg work.

If there's going to be a deadline for signatures, it should be upheld for all candidates.

Sporting their benefits

Priority registration is the only unfair athletic perk

Athletic apparel. A separate dining hall. A separate basketball ticket distribution. Priority registration. Those are just some of the perks that one receives simply by virtue of being a UNC varsity athlete.

Although some question the fairness of these privileges, the sacrifices athletes make to bring prestige to the UNC name make these extra resources mostly well deserved, with the exception of priority registration.

"Free" athletic apparel and a separate dining hall really aren't that big of a deal.

Generally, student athletes receive only practice apparel that must be returned unless it is too worn to be reused.

And not to knock the food at Lenoir and Rams Head, but it just doesn't contain the nutrients that athletes need to be at the top of their games.

Just as UNC provides facilities such as the Writing Center to help students fulfill their academic potential, student athletes should likewise have services to help them fulfill their athletic potential, like the nutritionist-

dietician whose job it is to make sure they eat balanced meals.

The separate men's basketball ticket distribution for student athletes also doesn't put them at an advantage. In fact, it puts them at a definite disadvantage.

While the 6,000 slots that are allotted for about 28,000 students gives the average student about a 21 percent chance of winning a ticket, 800 athletes competing for 100 upper-level tickets have only a 12.5 percent chance of getting a ticket.

A separate distribution made sense when athletes' practice and tournament schedules did not allow them to spend Saturday mornings standing outside the Smith Center to get a ticket.

Now that the men's basketball ticket lottery is online, student athletes can register for tickets at their own convenience.

Thus, the impetus behind having a separate athlete distribution is no longer there, and given that it actually decreases the chances of an athlete getting tickets, they should be reabsorbed into the general student lottery.

The only benefit conferred to athletes that should be rescinded is priority registration.

Student athletes might be limited in the classes that they can choose from during registration due to their practice schedules.

However, many other groups of students who do not receive priority registration, from those heavily involved in student government to those who have to work 20 or more hours a week just to pay for college, are also limited in the classes that they can take due to the great deal of time that they contribute to their respective activities.

Priority registration puts athletes above other students in giving them the first crack at classes and unfairly closes out other students from the only classes that fit in their schedule due to work or other time-consuming extracurriculars.

The sacrifices that student athletes make for "the glory of NCU" make many of the perks that they receive both well-deserved and necessary, but those benefits cannot come at the expense of other students.

A matter of inches

Only throwing money at the problem won't end obesity

According to reports by the Census Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, North Carolina is paying \$26 billion a year for three major causes of preventable disease: obesity, lack of exercise and tobacco use.

It's not breaking news that Americans are overweight and addicted to tobacco. But while North Carolina's reported failures by the American Lung Association to enact anti-smoking initiatives don't tell the whole story on the issue, it's hard to say the same for obesity statistics.

The numbers used to calculate body mass index aren't completely holistic and shouldn't be the only measure of obesity. But even without these numbers, there is no denying that too

many people are overweight.

According to the nonprofit N.C. Prevention Partners, 63 percent of state residents are at least overweight, and less than half of adults exercise at least 30 minutes per day most days of the week.

It's a strain on their waistlines and a strain on the health care system, so why can't North Carolinians get their weight under control?

There are some interventions to help specific states battle obesity. Since 2000, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has given the state money to create policy and environmental changes that will help North Carolinians live healthier lifestyles.

Guidelines have been imple-

mented in workplaces, schools and food companies that are proven to lower the number of overweight people and, in turn, lower health costs for our state.

But seeing as obesity rates in North Carolina haven't dropped in the past three years, these programs aren't having the effect needed to lower health care costs or the numbers on the scale.

It's going to take radical change in the lifestyles of citizens to stop the obesity epidemic. Funding and special programs only go so far.

At some point in time, it's up to individuals to make their own decisions regarding their health. North Carolina can put information and tools for better health on the market, but it can't spoon-feed anyone.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"Where am I going to get cow tongue tacos at 11 o'clock on a Thursday night (without) taco trucks?"

MARK CHILTON, CARRBORO MAYOR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To read the full-length versions
VISIT <http://dailytarheelpublic.wordpress.com>
Post your own response to a letter, editorial or story online.
VISIT www.dailytarheel.com/feedback

UNC policy allows worker mistreatment to continue

TO THE EDITOR:

I am glad that the DTH is continuing to shine a spotlight onto our University's labor licensing policies, especially with regards to New Era Cap's Mobile, Ala., workers, who have complained of racism, disrespect and arbitrary disciplinary and firing practices ("UNC mulls workers' rights," Jan. 23).

The article should have included a note that in 2001 UNC suspended our contract with New Era Cap for labor abuses in New Era's Derby, N.Y., factory.

Our University needs to take a harder stance on these corporations by adopting the Designated Suppliers Program.

One of the main structural reasons that sweatshop conditions exist is brands consistently cut the prices that they pay to factories, making it economically infeasible to enforce codes of conduct and pay workers living wages.

The DSP would require these licensees to pay fair prices to the factories they source from, so our codes of conduct can be upheld.

Chancellor (James) Moeser's refusal to adopt the DSP as policy shows that he cares more about the corporate profit of licensees like Nike and New Era than he does about apparel workers who are struggling for their rights and human dignity.

Salma Mirza
Organizer
Student Action with Workers

Rooting for the underdog is the true 'American way'

TO THE EDITOR:

I was not only distressed by the article, "Root for the Patriots; It's the American way," (Jan. 25) I was offended.

I have watched the Giants struggle their way through the regular season, earn a Wild Card ticket to the playoffs and finally defeat Green Bay to make it to Super Bowl XLII. Their season has been one of the greatest Cinderella stories since the 1980 U.S. hockey team beat the Soviets.

The article says that "America prides itself on great achievements," but it does not give credit where it's due.

That season-long improvement is something the Patriots cannot match. I'm not saying that the Giants are necessarily a better football team than the Patriots; I am merely saying that rooting for a team that endorses cheating just because its name is the Patriots does not make you any more of an American.

The article discusses the fact that if the Patriots win the Super Bowl, we can tell our grandkids that we remember when one of the greatest teams of all time went 19-0. So what? I would rather tell them that I remember the biggest upset in the history of football!

If you're still going to root for the Pats, go ahead; it will be a thankless win anyway. If you do choose to be "un-American" and root for the Giants, and they clinch the ultimate victory, it will be all the more satisfying.

Plus, if you haven't noticed, the Giants colors are also red, white and blue.

Michaela Dudley
Freshman
Peace, War & Defense

SPEAK OUT

WRITING GUIDELINES:

- Please type: Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- Sign and date: No more than two people should sign letters.
- Students: Include your year, major and phone number.
- Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
- Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

SUBMISSION:

- Drop-off: at our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union.
- E-mail: to editdesk@unc.edu
- Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Columns, cartoons and letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Daily Tar Heel or its staff. Editorials are the opinions solely of The Daily Tar Heel editorial board. The board consists of eight board members, the associate opinion editor, the opinion editor and the editor. The 2007-08 editor decided not to vote on the board.

Female brothers are proud members of Mu Beta Psi

TO THE EDITOR:

I am the president of the chapter of Mu Beta Psi at this school. I am a brother. I also happen to be a woman.

When Mu Beta Psi was founded in 1925, it was male-only. But in 1961, we began admitting women. They were given a decision and voted to be called brothers.

Instead of feeling invisible ("Co-ed 'fraternity' needs to use inclusive language," Jan. 24), the women of Mu Beta Psi embraced the title of brother and still do.

We have many women holding offices in their chapters and on the national level. There are women shining their light everywhere in this fraternity.

Mu Beta Psi, when it chooses its brothers, makes its choice based on the talent, drive, passion and love of music its hopefuls possess. What is between one's legs matters as much as whether they cut their toenails on Tuesdays. Isn't that the true definition of equality?

Our women are proud to be called brothers. The brother that posted those fliers in the women's bathroom had pride in her fraternity, had pride in her devotion to music and, most of all, had pride in herself.

If anyone wants to learn more about our coed musical fraternity, we encourage you to come to our rush events (schedules posted in both bathrooms across campus), visit mubetapsi.org or e-mail lbrackett07@yahoo.com

Kate Capehart
Senior
English

Freedom has always been a changing concept in U.S.

TO THE EDITOR:

When I was a boy, dogs roamed freely throughout the neighborhood, as did other pets. The idea of having restrictions on outdoor barbecue grills was unknown. No one ever said anything about restricting water use.

The ultimate in freedom, perhaps, in the summer, we kept the front and back doors open, locking only the screen doors, allowing the cool night breeze to pass through the house. Having no concern for your security is perhaps the greatest freedom.

We're faced today and for the next century with any enemy who wants to blow up the George Washington Bridge, the Super Bowl and Congress while it's in session.

Some people don't think the enemy is potent. They claim that we've traded "liberty for security." Hardly.

Lower your security an iota and, soon enough, liberty will drop in a free fall. When people don't feel safe to go to a football game or a shopping mall, western civilization is cooked.

Jeff Davidson
Chapel Hill

The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893,
114 years
of editorial freedom

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