

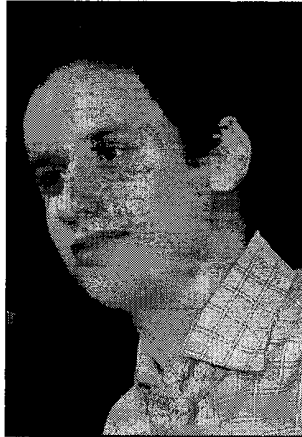
Israel Truth Week; Inspiring the Power of One

"It's time the truth be told. It's time to stand together. It's time to stop being afraid."

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Dr. Lawrence Hart; Israel Truth Week



Zach Paikin; Israel Truth Week



ATARA MESSINGER, Israel Truth Week



Jonathan D. Halevi, Israel Truth Week

By Doris Strub Epstein

The deluge of abuse and malice against Zionism and Israel, and a surge of anti-Semitism is seeping into our culture. The mainstreaming of the once unthinkable is in our midst.

Israel Apartheid Week was held on over 230 campuses this year. Israel Truth Week (ITW) arose to confront all this. Founded and organized by the valiant Mark Vandermaas, it brought Christians, Muslims and Jews together - speakers and audience - people with vastly different backgrounds but with a common goal of standing with Israel and the Jewish people - "pushing back with truth and action" the themes of the two day conference.

It was held at the Victory International Church and McMaster University in Hamilton. Everyone involved volunteered - even those traveling long distances came at their own expense.

Vandermaas, an activist in the Caledonia Indians versus residents "rule of lawlessness", got a standing ovation before he even got to his feet. "We are all facing the same enemy," he told them. "Put aside differences and unite to defend our values whether the victims are in Caledonia or Israel."

Dr. Lawrence Hart, who founded the Jewish Faculty Association at McMaster, was born in South Africa. He demolished the "slander" of apartheid levelled at Israel.

"From birth to grave, skin colour dictated jobs, schools, health care transportation. Marriages were forbidden. (white and black) Even park benches were segregated. Enforced racial separation was the law of the land. Any transgression no matter how petty was severely punished."

He contrasted that with Israel where "the law guarantees social and political equality to all citizens. It is a falsehood of the

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highest order and trivializes the suffering of those under South African apartheid."

"The real core is anti-Semitism," he told the audience, "hiding behind criticism of Israel's human rights." IAW has intensified in hostility and size both at McMaster and Western University, he said.

Atara Messinger was born in Israel and came to Canada at the age of ten. She is a fourth year student at McMaster. "I grew up in a small town outside of Tel Aviv, playing with Arab kids. Nothing prepared me for the shock of IAW in my first year." By her third year she was becoming increasingly frustrated.

"No group addressed IAW head-on. I felt alone, an unwelcome stranger at my own school. As an Israeli -violated." Atara took chalk and covered the A's wherever she saw IAW posted, making it IW, Israel Week. The Jewish Student Association told her she was "out of line." She ended by exhorting Jewish students in Canada to "stop talking and start concentrating on how to stop it. (IAW) " We can't afford to be idle anymore."

Attesting to the power of one, was London resident, Israeli- born Jacob Peretz. He succeeded singlehandedly in preventing an art exhibit supposedly made by children in a hospital in Gaza, called "A child's

view from Gaza," from public viewing. This exhibit made the rounds in different communities in Canada and the US.

Organized by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, it was described as a "learning opportunity for Londoners to consider the impact the Israeli military has on Palestinian children, denying them the possibility of childhood play and laughter". "I felt that this exhibit is a pure political statement and should not be participating in a cultural event," he told the group.

Zachary Paikin, 21, is a graduate of The Canadian Institute for Jewish Research's student Israel advocacy program when he attended McGill and testified to its efficacy. He was a recent candidate for policy chair of the Liberal Party and is presently attending the Munk School of Global Affairs. He is also the son of TVO Agenda host, Steve Paikin. "The Gaza war was raging, and McGill was a hot bed of anti -Israel invective." We won over them in a student debate. It gives you the skills to advocate for Israel and the skills for the

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world of politics. You also learn important leadership skills to lead in Canada today and tomorrow."

Author Salomon Ben-Zimra, co-founder of Canadians for Israel's Legal Rights, dispelled the false notion of the "occupation" on which the Palestinian narrative is centre, by informing the audience of Israel's legality under international law since 1920. "Jews have historical, demographic and

legal claims," affirmed Boston lawyer and journalist, Mathew Hausman.

Renanah Goldhar-Gemeiner reported on a petition she helped draw up to the House of Commons for the "Reaffirmation of Jewish Legal Rights to the Land of Israel."

Talking about the Arab "Islamic" Spring and issues such as the aspirations and global reach of the Muslim Brotherhood, the grim realities of the Middle East were revealed in the packed-with-information presentation, given by Jonathan D. Halevi former Lieutenant Colonel in the IDF and editor of Shalom Toronto. "The recognition of Palestine by the UN changed the political equation," he said. "From land for peace, it's now land for nothing."

One after another, they spoke out: Pastor Kingsley Osei: the Christian case for Israel; Tahir Aslam Gora: a Muslim's case against anti-Semitism; Stuart Laughton for the Christian-Jewish Never Again Group in Hamilton. Aside from JDL's Meir Weinstein, conspicuously missing were representatives of Jewish organizations.

ITW and its message is spreading. Ryerson University Israeli Student Association organized a one day ITW at Ryerson. The Hamilton Christian Fellowship screened the Sheba based film, Precious Life, in support of ALYN Hospital in Jerusalem on Thursday. Royal View Church in London will show it on Wednesday with proceeds going to Mogen David Adom.

From March 11-15, a daily Israel Truth Week Vigil at York University was organized by the Canadian Patriotic Society. "We braved the bitter weather to send a message to Jewish students and their families that they are not alone," said Vandermaas who participated. depstein@rogers.com