

Question 6: What specific plans do you have for promoting greater cross-cultural/interfaith, understanding/ conflict transformation & social entrepreneurialism your community or school?

Objective: Create a series of listening events to generate dialogue between groups affected by the Palestinian/Israeli conflict where participants engage in critical, yet respectful analysis based on norms of reciprocity and mutual respect.

Issue: Berkeley has historically been known for its innovative policies and ideas generated by dialogue between its incredibly diverse student body. In the case of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, however, the campus is locked in a large debate between two heavily entrenched sides, neither willing to concede a rhetorical inch, or even listen to what the other side has to say.

Examples:

- Berkeley ASUC divestment bill SB 160. This bill sought to remove 14 million dollars of UC investments from three companies that, according to the bill's own language, were complicit in Israel's "illegal occupation and ensuing human rights abuses." The debate during this session lasted a continuous 10 hours where students were limited to just two minutes each. The vote finally took place just before 5:30 am the following morning, and resulted in an 11-9 passage. This narrow victory in the senate, which represents Berkeley's diverse student population, demonstrates the intense divisions on campus. I was present for most of the debate that night, and several times students testifying broke down into tears, and in a few tense moments, racial slurs were hurled at Jewish and Muslim students alike.
 - There were also several instances of violence associated with the bill. One such incident was documented in a Daily Californian article, "UCPD is currently investigating an incident on Sproul Plaza in which a student who was handing out pro-divestment fliers was struck in the face. UCPD Lt. Eric Tejada confirmed in an interview with The Daily Californian that the incident to which Birgeneau referred is the battery that occurred on April 1, when a student tabling on Sproul was punched and knocked to the ground."
- I don't currently have access to my notes, but when we visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the former Israeli delegate to the Western United States said that he was speaking in Berkeley when most of his audience staged a preplanned walkout protest. He was infuriated by the demonstration and said he would never return.
- I was speaking with a very close Jewish friend about the Fellowship, and briefly mentioned that I intended to hang a Palestinian flag in my room that I

acquired in Ramallah. She was extremely offended and said she would never go into my room as long as the flag was hanging.

Solution: Before meaningful cross-cultural dialogue on UC Berkeley's campus can take place on the Palestinian/Israeli subject, we have to establish norms that govern listening based on reciprocity and mutual respect. Over the course of the next year, I will aim to plant those norms on Berkeley's campus with a series of events and workshops.

Ideal Scenario/End Goal: Host a series of events where a panel of student leaders representing different interests in either the Palestinian or Israeli community participate in a respectful, yet critical Q&A session with an official representative of the other side's position. So, one event will host a notable Israeli speaker (perhaps a government representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) as well as a panel of students representing a range of Palestinian positions. In this way, both groups maintain ownership of the event; neither has an incentive to cause a nuisance or disruption. Furthermore, groups have an incentive to participate because they get a rare opportunity to engage with an official position of the opposing viewpoint in a public setting, thus establishing greater credibility for their organization. Prior to these events, I will hold a workshop with the different panels to establish ground rules for discussion—yelling, interrupting, and insults will not be tolerated. Nevertheless, participants will be encouraged to pursue critical questions. We will hold at least two of these events, one for each position, accompanied by listening workshops.

Steps for initiating goal:

1. Contact leaders from various interest groups on campus. Explain the idea behind the movement and establish commitments.
2. Contact the university and other organizations to sponsor the events, provide a venue, and market them in their respective communities.
3. Contact potential keynote speakers with list of participants and sponsors and obtain commitments.
4. Finalize dates for events and begin logistical planning.
5. Coordinate with the Peace and Conflict studies department and set up workshops for each side to establish ground rules for discussion. Perhaps Peter Bartu would be willing to lead the workshops.
6. Gauge efficacy of the project, plan follow up dialogue groups, events, etc.

Conclusion: This is a struggle that deserves dialogue and not deadlock. It is most difficult

to discuss the issues we are most passionate about. Both sides of the Palestinian/Israeli narrative involve accounts of lost of loved ones, destruction of property, and a struggle for recognition—all of which invoke intense emotions. Ironically, however, the issues that involve the greatest passions are those that require the most discussion. This discussion must be governed by norms of mutual respect; otherwise it will only serve to deepen the divide between the two. Discussion done correctly, however, can break down barriers and lead to social innovation.