SPEAK! Series: “Rethinking Israel-Palestine”

On Tuesday, November 4th, over one hundred students and community members joined Noura Erakat in the John B. Davis Lecture Hall for her discussion titled “Rethinking Israel-Palestine.” Noura Erakat is a Palestinian-American human rights attorney and activist. She is also an Assistant Professor at George Mason University and co-editor of Jadaliyya, an independent ezine produced by the Arab Studies Institute. Professor Juliana Hu Pegues of American Studies acted as the interviewer for the “Inside the Activist’s Studio” format for the SPEAK! Series. Noura began the discussion by sharing her personal experience growing up as a Palestinian-American woman with parents who did not want their children being involved with the conflict in Palestine. With wit and humor, she also discussed how disillusioned she was with law school where she fully realized that laws often failed to provide justice, as in the case with Palestine. Through her responses, Noura demonstrated her personal investment in the liberation of Palestine in a manner that was able to engage with opposing perspectives. She drew parallels between the settler-colonialism taking place in Israel and the United States in an attempt to educate Macalester students about how we benefit everyday from the ongoing colonization of Indigenous Peoples. Students took away from the conversation the ability to articulate the conflict in Palestine and Israel to others. Various departments and student organizations at Macalester co-sponsored this event to help make it a successful and memorable one.

Trans Day of Remembrance

On Thursday, November 20th, over 35 participants took part in a Trans Day of Remembrance event in the Cultural House. This event was an opportunity for the Macalester community to learn about trans issues in the United States and to remember those who have been victims of transphobic violence. This workshop was facilitated by J.P. Arcani, educator with the Trans Youth Support Network in Minneapolis. J.P. encouraged the students, faculty, and staff members that attended to reflect on the similarities we share as humans whether trans or not.

The program began with a vigil that took place in the multipurpose room to honor trans people who have died due to transphobic violence within the last year. As part of the remembrance, there was an altar that attendees could add condolences and mementos to in honor of those lives lost. The names of those who were victims of transphobic violence were read out loud as candles were lit. After the ceremony concluded, the attendees watched Laverne Cox Presents: The T Word and had a debrief discussion. The event was co-sponsored by the Department of Multicultural Life, Fund for Lavender Life, and FIA*STARSA.
Cultural House Poetry Slam!

By Demetrius Colvin
Assistant Director, Lealtad-Suzuki Center

Congratulations to Anna Caroline Stuligross '18 (first place), Vivian Liu '17 (second place), and Amani Mekraz '16 (third place) for placing in the 20th Annual Cultural House Poetry Slam last Saturday. Congratulations also to all of the contestants, including Hannah Lair '16, Alejandra Marin '15, and Benjamin Bartenstein '16, whose stories and courage made this year's slam a special one.

In addition to student performers, this year Bao Phi '97, a past poetry slam winner and spoken-word artist and activist in the Twin Cities opened up the event and gave his reflections on his time here at Macalester and the importance of spoken word. Past Poetry Slam finalist Anandi Somasundaram '15 also performed as a guest poet during the event.

Special thanks to the C-House staff (Abaki Beck '15, Elise Ong '16, Samia Habli '16, Dagmara Franczak '17, Charles Birge '15, Emily Walls '16, Kelsey Larson '16, and Sarah Richman '16) for collaborating to organize this annual Macalester tradition.

2014 C-House Poetry Slam Contestants
Hannah Lair '16, Anna Caroline Stuligross '18, Amani Mekraz '16, Vivian Liu '17, and Benjamin Bartenstein '16
Latin@ attitudes about abortion are less critical than the general public is lead to believe. Surveys conducted in Latin@ communities revealed that respondents were in favor of access to abortion and contraception. This polling suggests that Latin@ voters may be turned off by the heavy-handed conservative approach to limiting reproductive rights.

“The two finger virginity tests” used by healthcare providers around the world is degrading, has “no scientific validity” and should be treated as a violation of a woman's human rights,” says a newly issued World Health Organization handbook for women subjected to sexual violence. “Prejudice and negative stereotypes against women and girls are passed off as medical science,” said Liesl Gerntholtz, Human Rights Watch's director of women's rights.

Transgender social worker student and activist Monica Jones was deported from Australia breaching her visa. Her past criminal record of being accused of being involved in sex work under Phoenix, Arizona’s Project Rose also surfaced. Jones claims that there is a “political dimension” to her arrest and that her status as a transgender woman of color ultimately made her an easy target. Although her deportation is a sign of how trans people can become victims of arbitrary laws, Jones’ high profile also reiterates a “stereotypical portrayal of trans women of color.”

On Tuesday, November 11th, Macalester’s Urban Studies Colloquium hosted a panel discussion on ending homelessness in the Twin Cities. Panelists included representatives from local organizations: Hearth Connection, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Project Footsteps and the Council on Crime and Justice.

A first grader in Snohomish County School District in Washington state was denied lunch because he had a negative lunch balance. Unfortunately, this case is not unique. Some schools in Utah, Texas, and Colorado have reportedly thrown away lunches and humiliated students whose families were unable to pay for their lunches. Some school districts “in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Indianapolis, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina have signed up” for a federal program that allows all students, regardless of income, to receive free breakfast and lunch.

Much of the push for the Keystone XL Pipeline has been arguing for the creation of jobs; Trans Canada CEO Girling recently stated that the project would yield only around 50 operating jobs.

The Fight for 15 pickets began with fast-food workers, and most have heard that Wal-Mart workers have also joined in them. Other workers, including convenience and dollar store workers, baggage handlers, wheelchair attendants, and others have recently joined them.
DML Corners!

Religion & Spirituality  
(By Grace Zhu '15 and Emma Stout '15)

A bill providing protections for people with sincerely held religious beliefs was passed out of the House Judiciary committee and the full House of Representatives on straight party line votes Thursday, December 4th, in Lansing, Michigan. Officials claimed the bill will merely protect people and their beliefs and practice of religion.

Four prominent New York rabbis were arrested during protests against police brutality and racial injustice on Thursday night, December 4th. "Rabbis and all Jews need to stand up and say that every single person is a creation in the divine image – that black lives matter," Jacobs, one of the Rabbis, said. "We put our bodies on the line to show how crucial it is that the systems meant to protect us do protect all of us.”

His Holiness the Khalifa of Islam, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad spoke out against ISIS and Muslim extremism at 2014 Ahmadiyya Muslim Peace Symposium in November, condemning Muslims who promote violence. Instead, he promoted religious tolerance and peace. And in an article about this speech, lawyer and best-selling author Qasim Rashid points out that very few media outlets have reported on Ahmad’s work or the voices of other Muslims speaking out against violence, instead focusing on Muslim extremism.

Racial/Ethnic/National Identities  
(By Kyla Martin '15 and Amy McMeeking '16)

In England a Palestinian-Briton was convicted of rape and abetting rape of 47 girls. The case brought up questions about whether the police avoided addressing the issue due to fear of being called racists and whether the issue is one of race and ethnicity. The chief prosecutor who is also a Pakistani-Briton says it is not an issue of race but on these men’s “attitude toward women.” The prosecutor argues his point by providing statistics on rapists: 9 out of 10 are white males and the most common pattern observed is rape occurring in the same community, and sometimes the same home.

The US Justice Department will soon release new standards aimed at ending racial profiling, according to Attorney General Eric Holder. This will be an update of 2003 guidelines on racial profiling, which left many loopholes, such as exempting local law enforcement, national security, and border issues. Because of these loopholes, the DOJ document had little impact on many of the most prevalent instances of racial profiling in the US. While he hasn’t released any details on the content of the new guidelines, Holder promises they will be more rigorous and “help end racial profiling once and for all.”

The Lealtad-Suzuki Center’s Team
Black Lives Matter: A Call for Community Solidarity

Last Tuesday, December 9th, members of the Macalester community gathered on Bateman Plaza to stand in solidarity against police brutality. Black Lives Matter was the clarion call!

As I listened to the speakers, I felt a genuine concern for the families of Michael Brown and Eric Garner and all that they have come to represent. Indeed, public trust in our democratic institutions has been shaken to its core by the ancient scourge of race and racism. For many people, faith and the presumption of fairness in our criminal justice system has turned a blind eye to justice for Black people especially among the working poor. Former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover once observed, “justice is just incidental to law enforcement.” The decision not to press charges against police officers that killed an unarmed grandfather and college bound student causes all to confront Hoover’s law enforcement proclamation. The cell phone footage showing police choking the life out of Eric Garner seem like a rerun of an American epic saga seeking to control Black bodies regardless of the real or perceived threat. The peaceful protestors who organized for 100 days following the shooting of Michael Brown, in sweltering heat and in frigid cold, never received due attention from major media outlets. They were disciplined and helped business owners pick up the debris that spilled over from the cup of endurance in Ferguson, Missouri. In a moment of political and spiritual maturity, organizers and protestors in Ferguson channeled the voice of Emmitt Till’s mother when she stood over the casket of her 14 year old son uttering the following: “I don’t have a minute to hate, I must spend the rest of my life struggling for justice!”

Tapas Series: Complicating Faith - A Panel Discussion

The second TAPAS series was a collaboration between the Tapas Series and Soup & Substance. On November 18th, students and staff gathered in the lower level of Kagin Commons to hear a group of student panelists talk about their experiences with sexuality in their respective faith communities. Panelists Maddie Jaffe ’17, Tyler O’Brien ’16, and Samia Habli ’16 spoke about their respective experiences in their faith communities with regards to sexuality. Kyla Martin ’15, the moderator, asked the panelists questions, and at the end of the event, the floor was opened up for students to ask the panelists questions.

Later that week, on November 21st, we held a follow up event, which was a collaboration between the Tapas Series and the GSRC (Gender & Sexuality Resource Center). Several students and Chaplain Kelly Stone attended the discussion group. We talked about the intersectionality of sexuality and faith. Positive and negative models of sexuality were discussed, and there was also consensus that there should be more discussions surrounding intersectionalities of faith and sexuality. The main event was well attended and the panelists were great.
What to Look For...

HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!

The Department of Multicultural Life wishes all the Macalester Community a wonderful Holiday Season & a Happy Break for our amazing students!

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