

COPMA

Citizens Opposed To
Propaganda Masquerading As Art

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March 6, 2011

Susie Gelman
President
The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington
6101 Montrose Road
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Ms. Gelman and Federation Board Members:

As you may be aware, quite some time ago, in response to concerns in the community that certain recipients of Federation funds were inappropriately engaged in political activities harmful to the State of Israel, the group COPMA (Citizens Opposed to Propaganda Masquerading as Art) was formed. It is our belief that the problem has not been solved and in fact has grown.

It is critical that the Federation establish guidelines for withholding funding from partner agencies that engage in political propaganda and activism denigrating Israel and undermining its legitimacy as a strong, secure and independent Jewish State. That independence is jeopardized by unwarranted political pressure from interest groups seeking to impose their vision upon the Jewish State.

Without these guidelines, Theater J, a partner agency of The Federation and a recipient of its funding and support, has turned an arts program at the DCJCC (District of Columbia Jewish Community Center) into a platform for political activism that expresses hostility and antipathy towards the State of Israel and little regard for its security. In the attachments to this letter, we provide documentation.

Despite intense criticism, plays continue to be performed at Theater J that demonize Israel and the Jewish people. In 2009 Theater J staged *"Seven Jewish Children, A Play for Gaza,"* which depicts the deaths of Palestinian children in Israel's defensive operations against terrorists as deliberate and as comparable to the Nazi murders of Jewish children during the Holocaust. This year, as part of its *"Changing Voices of the Middle East"* festival, and with a grant from the Federation, Theater J presented *"Return to Haifa,"* a play that distorts the history and origins of Israel and makes the historically accurate death of a Jewish child in the Holocaust (a reality for over one and a half million children) comparable to the fabricated and utterly fantastical story of an Arab child allegedly abandoned by his fleeing parents in Haifa in 1948, ostensibly as a result of their terror over advancing Israelis.

After performances of *"Return to Haifa,"* Theater J hosted and co-sponsored workshops, panels and Peace Café sessions with groups and speakers dedicated to promoting the Palestinian narrative, unrelenting in criticism of Israeli policies and intensely hostile to the existence of the State of Israel. Groups that preach boycott, divestment and sanctions (so widespread has the anti-Israel chorus grown that these movements have been given the acronym BDS movements) against Israel were represented. (Attachment 1).

We call your attention in particular to the prominent role that J Street played in these post-production panels. In a previous letter to Board members (in 2009), we noted the inappropriateness of Theater J, an arts group, signing on as a Participating Organization at the first Conference of J Street, a political organization at odds with the policies of mainstream Jewish organizations. (Attachment 2). This year, though not a formal co-sponsor of the J Street Conference, Theater J has continued to promote the J Street agenda in workshops and sessions of The Peace Café. On J Street's website, the schedule for the evening of February 27, 2011 lists the play *"The Admission"* at Theater J as an "optional session."

The Peace Café held on January 23 following the performance of *"Return to Haifa,"* which was billed as a celebration of the tenth anniversary of The Peace Café (Attachment 3) featured two speakers who support BDS, as well as the President of J Street. Additionally, The Peace Café, linked to Theater J by personnel and publicized on their website as Theater J's *"Beyond the Stage"* program, regularly features speakers and organizations that are extremely hostile to Israel, endorse the Palestinian narrative, and call for Israel to be pressured by the US and The United Nations. (Attachment 3).

Ari Roth, Theater J's director, participated in the Sabeel Conference in 2009; Sabeel has been the early driving force behind the Palestinian Christian church's anti-Israel divestment tactics and a model for subsequent BDS movement tactics. (Attachment 4)

Theater J's response to criticism has been to invoke arguments of free speech and artistic freedom. We are not disputing the right to free speech. We are disputing the appropriateness of Federation funds' being used to support activities by its partner agencies that undermine Israel's

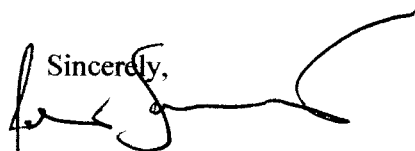
legitimacy and security. The support that the Federation has to offer is not merely financial: linkage to The Federation, prominently displayed on the Theater J website, serves to legitimize its activities and garner support from other community groups and foundations. Whether intended or not, it is a *de facto* endorsement.

The current Federation policy of autonomy for its partner agencies may work well for many of the social service, information and community agencies under its aegis, but not for Theater J, which subverts its self-proclaimed cultural mission in order to promote its political agenda.

Following the outcry over the performance of "*My Name is Rachel Corrie*" by a Federation-supported group, The Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco implemented guidelines for its recipient organizations to prevent anti-Israel/anti-Semitic programming. (Attachment 5). The Board of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington should also establish guidelines that, at the very least, prohibit the funding of groups or activities that are (a) hostile to the State of Israel or (b) support directly or indirectly, boycotts, divestment, or sanctions being used against Israel or (c) promote the use of outside pressure against Israel, including pressure by governments, international bodies, or NGOs. While that type of activism is unquestionably within the rights of individuals and organizations, it should not be funded by the Federation.

The Federation, by adopting such guidelines, will go a long way toward ensuring that its many good works on behalf of the Jewish community and Israel are not in any way offset by support for activities that undermine Israel. We would greatly appreciate a response from you indicating whether you agree with us that the adoption of guidelines should be considered. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Samet
Chairman
COPMA
Citizens Opposed to Propaganda
Masquerading as Art

Attachment 1

Speakers on Panels at Theater J

Many of the speakers on the panels and at The Peace Café sessions following performances at Theater J represent political organizations that speak of peace, but are focused almost exclusively on

- promoting the Palestinian narrative at the expense of factual Israeli history,
- faulting Israel for the lack of peace, and
- demanding - often through pressure from outside - one-sided Israeli concessions.

Some of the panelists after the play "**Return to Haifa**" represented organizations promoting a policy of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel. A partial list of speakers on panels and peace cafes after the play, "Return to Haifa" included:

a. On 1/22/11 **Philip Farah** of Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace (WIAMEP) was one of the panelists. On its website WIAMEP promotes divestment from Israeli companies that "**sustain the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land**" and "**urges support of the UN Goldstone Inquiry into human rights violations in Gaza.**" <http://www.wiamep.org>. WIAMEP is a signatory of the Kairos Palestine document, which explicitly endorses Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.

b. On 1/22/11 **Mai Abdul Rahman**, of American Palestine Women's Association and a member of Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace (WIAMEP) was also a panelist. She can be seen on a YouTube video clip entitled "**Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Urged Against Israel**" in front of a "**Free Gaza**" banner and heard to accuse Israel of "**attacking and maiming young children.**" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xwn895-Dk2M> Rahman writes in Feb. 2011 that "**BDS promises a just peace, unlike current U.S. strategy.**" <http://bdsmetrodc.peacepress.info/2011/02/09/bds-promises-a-just-peace-unlike-current-u-s-strategy/> Rahman participated in a Code Pink demonstration last year outside the AIPAC conference at which she was quoted asking Americans to "**sanction companies linked to the Israeli occupation by divesting from American companies that benefit from Israeli war crimes and the Israeli occupation.**" <http://wrmea.org/component/content/article/351-2010-may-june/9061-waging-peace-codepink-activists-protest-aipac-at-dc-confab-html>

c. **J Street** (see attachment 2 on J Street) participated in two panels at Theater J. The January 18, 2011 performance of "**Return to Haifa**" at Theater J was billed on the J Street website as **co-sponsored** by J Street DC Metro with a reception before the show and a panel afterwards. The panel was composed of **Daniel Levy** of the New America Foundation, **Hadar Susskind** of J Street and **Jamal Najjib**.

Jamal Najjib is director of operations for the United Palestine Appeal and administrative director of the rabidly anti-Semitic publication, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs.

http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=2&x_outlet=64 .

Daniel Levy is co-director of **The Middle East Task Force at the New America Foundation**. The New America Foundation took credit for arranging face to face meetings with US congressmen for Richard Goldstone to justify his leadership over the grossly one-sided UN Report condemning Israel for its conduct in the Gaza campaign in the winter of 2008-2009.

Amjad Atalah, co-director of the Middle East Task Force of the New American Foundation, was a speaker on a Theater J panel on 2/5/09 following a performance of *"The Accident"* at Theater J. **Amjad Atallah** signed a letter urging Obama not to veto the UN Security Council resolution in February 2011, (Pierre Tristam, "Letter to Obama Urging Support for a UN Condemnation of Israeli Settlements.") <http://middleeast.about.com/od/documents/a/Letter-To-Obama.htm> and urged (6/1/10) U.S. condemnation of Israel for its attack on the Gaza flotilla: **"U.S. Must Condemn Israel for Ship Killings"** http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2010/us_must_condemn_israel_for_ship_killings_32466 Both Levy and Atalah are speakers at the J Street Conference this year.

d. On January 22, 2011 Peace Cafe at Theatre J celebrated the Ten Year Anniversary of the Peace Cafe Discussion Series with **Jeremy Ben-Ami** (President of J Street) as the speaker.

e. On 1/27/11 **Mustafa Abu Sway** from Al Quds University was another panelist. He was **"a board member and raised funds for two Jerusalem-based Hamas-related organizations, the Heritage committee and the foundation for the Development of Society. The Israeli government shut down both organizations in February 2003."** <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/1487> ... See also <http://www.danielpipes.org/blog/2003/11/mustafa-abu-sway-islamist>

f. The 1/25/11 panel **"Creating a Cross Cultural Dialogue"** was almost completely composed of staff members of the groups **YES MEP (Yes We Can: Middle East Peace)** and **Sharing Jerusalem**. The panelists included **Aziz Fahmy Faraq**, a Saudi journalist and staff member of YESMEP; **Kay Halpern**, the Director of Government Affairs for YESMEP and member of Sharing Jerusalem, and **Jim Vitarello** of YESMEP and Sharing Jerusalem; **Dan Spiro** of the Jewish Islamic Dialogue and **Elliot Colla**, chairman of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University rounded out the panel.

Elliott Colla wrote a chapter entitled, **"Solidarity in the Time of Anti-Normalization"** in the book, **"The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel, 1993-2005."** He wrote **"anti-normalization insists that until Israel begins to deal fairly with the Palestinians, Egyptians will withhold from Israel the sort of recognition that legitimate states deserve."** (p.249)

The group **Sharing Jerusalem** has a vision of **"a two-state solution that would include a Jerusalem that is "shared" both politically between Israel and Palestine and religiously among Jews, Muslims, and Christians."** Sharing Jerusalem has sponsored **"A Gaza Workshop"** with **Philip Farah** (see above) and a religious service at a Unitarian Universalist church where **Kay Halpern** expressed a disconnect between many of Israel's policies and the values of justice and compassion. <http://www.sharingjerusalem.org/> In January 2009, Halpern wrote: **"As human beings we are shocked and appalled at the mass destruction unleashed by the State of Israel against the people of Gaza in its military operation following years of Israeli occupation, siege and deprivations."** http://keywiki.org/index.php/Kay_Halpern

The choice of "Return to Haifa," a play delegitimizing the state of Israel, is typical of many of the plays about Israel selected by Theatre J. The panels and discussions following these performances in previous years were also largely composed of virulent critics of Israel. Examining the schedule of productions at Theater J shows this Israel bashing event to be part of a pattern. In 2009, the panels after the production of "***The Accident***" bear a striking resemblance to this year's panels. For example, the panel on March 8, 2009, after the play, "***The Accident***," included:

a. **Mitchell Plitnick**, director of US office of B'Tselem. The Human Rights Links on B'Tselem's website include three organizations that promote BDS: 1) **Abdalah**, which has charged Israel with breaches of international humanitarian law, war crimes, willful killing, racism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing. 2) **Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)**, which in its 2008 annual report described Israel's practices as "*in many way reminiscent of the Apartheid regime in south Africa.*" 3) **Arab Association for Human Rights** (uses the acronym HRA), which endorsed the July 9, 2005 Palestinian United Call for BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) against Israel.

b. Two panelists representing **J Street, Dorit Price-Levine and Steven Kraviner**, were also on the March 8, 2009 unbalanced panel.

With regard to the panel titled "***The Israel Moral Compass***" held on February 5, 2009 after the showing of "The Accident," speakers included:

a. **Daniel Seidemann**, founder and legal advisor for Ir Amim and now Terrestrial Jerusalem. NGO Monitor reports that "*political NGOs such as Ir Amim, B'Tselem, and the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARI) use this foreign support to advance agendas on Jerusalem that are in direct opposition to Israeli policies.*" http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/eu_funded_ngos_promote_the_palestinian_narrative_in_jerusalem.

b. **Amjad Attallah**, co-director of the Middle East task force of the **New America Foundation** (see 1c. above) also was a panelist.

Attachment 2

J Street – Friend To Theater J - No Friend To Israel

1. In February 2010, J Street, in conjunction with a group called churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), co-sponsored a congressional mission to Israel. CMEP's website features the "**KAIROS Palestine Document**," which explicitly advocates the use of BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) against Israel. J Street Factsheet, NGO Monitor, November 23, 2010 http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/j_street_factsheet
2. J Street, when asked, lied about its substantial financial support (\$750,000.00) from George Soros. Soros is known for funding rabidly anti-Israel groups like **Ir Amim, Mossawa, Al-haq, Breaking the Silence, Gisha, al Mezan**, among others. J street" NGO Monitor http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/j_street and "Open Society Institute (OSI)," NGO Monitor http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/open_society_institute_osi and "The NGO Front in the Gaza War: Lawfare Against Israel," NGO Monitor http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/the_ngo_front_in_the_gaza_war_lawfare_against_israel
3. J Street participated in organizing the Capitol Hill visit of Richard Goldstone, author of the extremely flawed, anti-Israel UN report on the Gaza campaign. <http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/j-street-facilitates-goldstones-visit-capitol-hill>
4. J Street was "**unable to support**" the unanimously approved Congressional resolution HR 867 condemning the Goldstone report. <http://washingtonindependent.com/65833/j-street-opposes-the-congressional-goldstone-resolution>
5. J Street opposed sanctions against Iran until it was obvious they were out of step with US policy: "**J Street joined with the pro-Iranian lobby, the National Iranian American Council (NIAC), to oppose congressional efforts to impose sanctions on Iran. Ben-Ami and NIAC director Trita Parsi co-authored an anti-sanctions article titled "How Diplomacy Can Work with Iran" in Huffington Post in June 2009.**" <http://pajamasmedia.com/?p=107312>
6. J Street encouraged the Obama administration to refrain from vetoing the UN Security Council Resolution condemning Israel in February 2011. <http://blogs.jta.org/politics/article/2011/0/25/2742707/ackerman-and-j-street-the-full-exchange>
7. J Street conferences have been used to host and promote groups affiliated with the Boycott Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, including B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence, These also include groups that actually fund the BDS movement.
8. J Street has recently launched a campaign to pressure the US to vote for a Palestinian state in the UN Security Council in September 2011 and opposed the unanimously passed December 15, 2010 Congressional resolution (HR1765) that called on the Obama administration to deny recognition to any

unilaterally declared Palestinian state. <http://ita.org/news/article/w010/12/16/2742207/house-urges-Obama-to-block-unilateral-Palestinian-statehood>

9. Daniel Levy of the New American Foundation was Jeremy Ben-Ami's partner in the formation of J Street, and he now sits on J Street's Advisory Board. At a recent conference in Abu Dhabi, Daniel Levy stated ***"the creation of Israel' was "an act that was wrong."*** J Street quickly came to Levy's defense, claiming the statement was taken out of context, but a video of the meeting shows that the transcript was correct. Levy was also a defender of the Goldstone Report on Israel's operation in Gaza in the winter of 2009-2010. ***"Twenty-Six Reasons J Street's Demise Shouldn't Be Mourned"***
<http://pajamasmedia.com/?p=107312>

Attachment 3

“Peace Café” - Theater J’s Political Alter Ego – The Incestuous Marriage of Political Activism & Art

The **Peace Cafe** was founded ten years ago by Ari Roth (Artistic Director of Theater J), Andy Shallal (an activist who in 2007 spoke at an anti-Israel demonstration called *“Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation”*) and Mimi Conway. Peace Café is a convenient way for Theater J to far exceed its artistic mandate, without explicitly doing so in the name of the DCJCC or Theater J. It is a front for the political activism of its founders.

“Anas ‘Andy’ Shallal (born March 21, 1955 in Baghdad, Iraq) is an Iraqi-American artist, activist and restaurateur. He is best known for his opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq and as proprietor of the Busboys and Poets restaurant chain in the Washington, DC area.... Shallal moved to the United States with his family in 1966. His father was Ambassador of the Arab League....” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andy_Shallal

Both **Andy Shallal** and **Mimi Conway** are now on the Theater J Council, and Conway is a past Theater J co-chair. The incestuous coupling of Theater J with these political activists on its governing board, and with the artistic director, Ari Roth, at its helm, threatens to create a crisis of trust in DCJCC and Federation donors.

At the Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation noted above, **Andy Shallal**, in an on line videotape, can be heard to say:

“Palestinians continue to be ethnically cleansed, humiliated, harassed, imprisoned, serially murdered and assassinated. Human rights are taken away, no jobs, no security, their living conditions are a bit... well I can say that first hand, I've visited refugee camps...millions have been made into refugees, scattered all over the world. In the last 40 years ladies and gentlemen there has been over 300,000 Palestinians that have been killed.” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWj_OTSnJnc

Peace Café events are political talks and discussions about the Middle East. They are held at both Theater J and at the restaurant, Busboys and Poets, owned by Shallal. Peace Cafe events, when held at Theater J, are often made a part of the theater’s schedule (as were two Peace Cafes held after Theater J staged the play *“Return to Haifa”*). They are also brazenly linked, described and promoted on the Theater J website and in emails as events *“Beyond the Stage.”* The admittedly extracurricular nature of these non-theatrical, non-arts related, purely political events not only constitute an extreme imposition on Jewish members of the DCJCC who seek to enjoy the DC Jewish Community Center without having the political views of a few members foisted upon them, but they also are in improper use of charitable contributions to the Federation and to the DCJCC by donors who do not wish to have their funds used for political purposes. Political activism by the recipients of community charitable contributions is a violation of trust. It is being done with the tacit, if not explicit approval of the DCJCC itself, and it should be stopped.

The tenor of programs at Peace Cafe can be gauged by the fact that the scheduled reading of "Poets" at the first J Street Conference, which was canceled once it became known that a poem included a comparison of Israelis to Nazis, was immediately transferred to Bus Boys and Poets on the same day. (10/27/10). An example of language in the poem that sparked the furor was **"... now reading that we're [Jews] the ones writing numbers on the wrists of babies born in the ghetto called Gaza?"** Ari Roth was indignant that the reading was cancelled at the conference but exultant that the reading took place at the restaurant before an enthusiastic audience. (See Roth's blog for 10/27/10).

Peace Cafe has also teamed up with the political organization J Street DC Metro, the local branch of J Street, to host the following recent events:

November 16, 2010 the **Peace Cafe and J Street DC Metro** hosted John Ging, UNWRA director in Gaza, to speak about refugee camp conditions in Gaza. Ging **"has promoted political warfare against Israel..."** (NGO Monitor, 11/17/2010) and has voiced his support for the **"Free Gaza Flotillas."** He has been widely quoted as calling on the international community **"to shoulder its responsibility on this issue"** by **"sending ships to break the siege."** Ging's condemnation of Israel for allegedly causing 43 civilian deaths in an UNWRA school in Jabalya, Gaza on January 6, 2009 had fueled false accusations of an Israeli **"massacre"** and demonization of Israel. (See CAMERA Feb. 4, 2009) The Peace Café event was just one stop on Ging's J Street sponsored speaking tour.

December 15, 2010 The **Peace Cafe along with J Street DC Metro** presented **"Jerusalem-What are the Stakes? Going Beyond the Headlines."** This was described as **"another Two State/One District Dialogue on Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peacemaking, a presentation and discussion with Sarah Kreimer, Associate Director of Ir Amin (City of Nations) - an Israeli NGO that criticizes Israeli government policies aimed at keeping Jerusalem both Jewish and under Israeli control. "** An NGO Monitor article, **"EU-funded NGOs Promote the Palestinian Narrative in Jerusalem"** (May 21, 2009) cites Ir Amin as one of the **"powerful political NGOs ...[which] use EU and European government funding to advance agendas on Jerusalem that are in direct opposition to Israeli policies..."** Sarah Kreimer has called on **"the help of the international community to curb these dangerous actions"** of the current Israeli government.
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ir-amin/jerusalem-is-not-a-final-b.505896.html>

The three founders of the Peace Cafe, Ari Roth, Mimi Conway and Andy Shallal, all of whom serve in a governing role at Theater J, showed their true colors when they arranged for a bus to take 32 participants of the Peace Cafe to a showing of **"My Name is Rachel Corrie"** in Shepherdstown, West Virginia in July 2007. After the play they led a pre-arranged talk on site in a tent attended by about one hundred people. In response to a comment that the play was not balanced, **"Bob Griss, a long time Peace Cafe participant recalled that years ago he had attended a performance of the 'Diary of Anne Frank' in New York City and didn't remember anyone complaining about the play not being balanced. 'The Diary of Anne Frank' did not represent the Nazi side of the conflict," Griss pointed out.** <http://www.washington-report.org/component/content/article/313/9407-peace-cafe-busload-takes-in-west-virginia-production-of-my-name-is-rachel-corrie.html>

"This is not a balanced play," the Iraqi-born Shallal [Andy Shallal, Theater J Council member] agreed. 'Most great plays are not balanced—that's theater! For us coming from the Middle East, we find the media here not balanced on the other side.'"

This showing of Rachel Corrie in Shepherdstown, WVA was sponsored by the Contemporary American Theater Festival (CATF). Two CATF board members in attendance protested the showing. They indicated they were familiar with the play and had read the script but refused to see it, because it was not balanced and didn't fairly present the events surrounding Rachel Corrie's death. They pointed out that the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), for whom Corrie was acting at the time of her death, was a **"a front for Hamas and its terrorist operations."** Theater J's Ari Roth cut one of the men off and chastised the two men:

"Roth cut him off and chastised them both for refusing to see the play. 'I wish you could have left your male egos behind and shown up at the play and taken it all in,' he told them, 'to see the transformation of this girl into a woman. Seeing all of that, we have to respond and take notice.'" <http://www.washington-report.org/component/content/article/313/9407-peace-cafe-busload-takes-in-west-virginia-production-of-my-name-is-rachel-corrie.html>

Peace Café acts as an alter ego for the political activism of Ari Roth, Andy Shallal and Mimi Conway, who serve in governing roles for both. Theater is secondary to their political agenda, and they should not be permitted to continue to use donor contributions to advance their political causes.

Attachment 4

Theater J and the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center (hereinafter referred to simply as Sabeel) is a Palestinian Christian organization that while professing to seek peace, works tirelessly to delegitimize the State of Israel through its connections to the leadership of American Christian churches. Sabeel works with the national hierarchies of these churches to persuade them to pass Sanction, Boycott and Divestment resolutions against Israel. In addition, it issues theological tracts and proclamations that denigrate the Jewish right to a homeland. Over the past few years they have met with some success in condemnations and boycott resolutions of the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Christ. Sabeel is an enemy of the State of Israel, waging a propaganda war against Israel by seeking to turn public opinion in the US against Israel.

On October 9, 2009 Ari Roth was invited by Sabeel to the Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington DC to deliver an introductory speech for the showing of a play called **"Palestine,"** written by Najla Saïd , the daughter of the notorious Edward Said, a Palestinian American professor ***"and advocate for Palestinian rights. ... Robert Fisk described him as the Palestinians' 'most powerful political voice.'*** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Said Jews and Palestinians alike may best remember Edward Said traveling to Lebanon, venturing south to Lebanon's border with Israel and then engaging in the peaceful gesture of throwing a rock over the Israeli border.:

"Although he denied aiming the rock at anyone, an eyewitness account in the Lebanese newspaper As-Safir asserted that Said had been less than 30 feet (9.1 m) from Israeli soldiers manning a two-story watchtower when he aimed the rock over the border fence, though it instead hit barbed-wire. While the photo provoked criticism from some Columbia University faculty members, some students, and from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Columbia provost issued a five-page letter defending Said's act on the grounds of freedom of expression." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Said

The issue is not whether Said, or Ari Roth, for that matter, have a right to political expression, which they indisputably do. The issue is the substance of what Ari Roth, in a high visibility position in the DCJCC and as director of Jewish theater in that organization, says and does. The issue is that he is using his position in what is supposed to be an apolitical organization to bolster and give credence to his political views. No amount of disclaimers at the bottom of web pages or statements by the leadership of the DCJCC to journalists about free expression can erase the implied endorsement of the DCJCC by its continuing to permit Mr. Roth's political activism to continue. The very impropriety of so doing begs the additional question of who ultimately is bearing the cost of such activities. The answer is that donors to the DCJCC and the Federation are paying Mr. Roth to engage in political activism.

If there is any doubt that Mr. Roth uses his DCJCC position as director of Theater J to advance his own political agenda, it can be dispelled by his introduction to the Sabeel showing of the play **"Palestine."** In his introduction he stated:

"Thank you for inviting me to this important conference and for the privilege of introducing a dynamic new voice, an exciting theatrical talent, a lively internet personality; the formidable Najla Said and her play PALESTINE.

I've been asked to give this brief preamble, perhaps because of my position at Theater J, the professional resident company of the Washington DC Jewish Community Center; a theater that invites a multiplicity of voices onto its stages to lend authentic perspective to the huge variety of portraits of life in the Middle East, be they set in religious Israel, secular Israel, Christian Palestine, Islamic Gaza, Lebanon, Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq or Iran, all areas which have been depicted on our stages (in mainstage productions or in developmental readings) and discussed in post show panels." <http://theaterjblogs.wordpress.com/2009/10/03/2-b-2g-intro-to-najla-said/#more-1608>

Sabeel is a supporter of the one-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has been at the forefront of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions) campaign against Israel, organizing pro-divestment conferences in both the US and Canada. Its **"Morally Responsible Divestment"** document, <http://www.sabeel.org/pdfs/mri.htm>, calls for churches to divest from Israel and its Sabeel 2005 **"conference report"** <http://www.fosna.org/content/sabeel-toronto-conference-report> stated that Sabeel will work with church-related organizations to promote **"economic strategies to achieve this end (including shareholder initiatives, partial divestment and boycotts)."** http://blog.camera.org/archives/2010/01/kairos_gets_its_closeup_1.html

Ari Roth and Theater J -- viewed by contributors as holding an apolitical, arts-related mandate -- have no business providing this purely political organization with the imprimatur of support from the Jewish Community.

Disparagement of Israel

One of the most egregious examples of Sabeel's disparagement of the Jewish state appeared in Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek's (founder and head of Sabeel) Easter Message of 2001. At the height of the Second Intifada, Ateek stated **"The Israeli government crucifixion system is operating daily. Palestine has become the place of the skull."**

As stated on CAMERA's main website, **"language like this is not the stuff of peacemaking, but demonization that fits the working definition of anti-Semitism issued by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2004 which mentions the use of 'symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis'."** http://blog.camera.org/archives/2010/01/kairos_gets_its_closeup_1.html

In 2005, Sabeel issued a liturgy titled “**Contemporary Way of the Cross – A Liturgical Journey along the Palestinian Via Dolorosa**” which portrays Palestinians as innocent, Christ-like victims of a crucifixion perpetrated by Israel, the Jewish State. According to CAMERA, it is *“an attempt to portray the Palestinians as innocent, Christ-like victims of a crucifixion perpetrated by Israel, the Jewish State...The discriminatory application of the Passion Play in to the Arab-Israeli conflict is a central aspect of Sabeel’s agenda and the liturgy proves it.”*

http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=2&x_outlet=118&x_article=1409

Denial of Fundamental Character of Israel as a Jewish State

In 2004 Sabeel issued its **Jerusalem Document** that called for the creation of *“one state for two nations and three religions.”* Sabeel's one-state formula is recapitulated in Mark Braverman’s recent book, *Fatal Embrace* (Synergy Books, 2010). Braverman is a member of Sabeel’s steering committee.

http://blog.camera.org/archives/2010/01/kairos_gets_its_closeup_1.html

JCF Policy on Israel-Related Programming by its Grantees

February 18, 2010

The Jewish Community Federation's (JCF's) core values include an abiding commitment to a secure Jewish community here and abroad, to the strong democratic Jewish State of Israel, and to mutual respect and diversity within Jewish life. Consistent with its core values, the JCF funds a full spectrum of organizations that sustain and grow our community through pluralistic expressions and wide-ranging perspectives that affirm a broad and inclusive tent vital to a strong and dynamic Jewish community. This policy applies only to the grantor-grantee relationship between the JCF and other entities.

The JCF does not fund organizations that through their mission, activities or partnerships:

1. endorse or promote anti-Semitism, other forms of bigotry, violence or other extremist views;
2. actively seek to proselytize Jews away from Judaism; or
3. advocate for, or endorse, undermining the legitimacy of Israel as a secure independent, democratic Jewish state, including through participation in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, in whole or in part.

These principles also apply to grants from the JCF's Endowment Fund.

In order to be eligible for funding, organizations that engage in Israel-related programming are required to produce documentation such as their policies, procedures, guidelines, and mission statement that demonstrate consistency with the JCF's core values or - in the absence of such documentation - to abide by this policy and to initiate a process to develop organizational guidelines, policies and procedures consistent with it. There can be no uniform set of policies or procedures that is applicable to every organization. Organizations are expected to adapt this policy to their unique circumstances.

This policy is not intended to discourage the presentation of a wide range of perspectives aimed at appealing to a broad cross-section of the community. The JCF and our community are well-served by fostering diverse expressions through our cultural, educational, religious, social service and community relations institutions, and by promoting a strong commitment to civil discourse.

The JCF will review its policy and supporting guidelines with each grantee, address questions unique to that grantee, and explain how implementation of the policy and guidelines can be a benefit to the grantee and the community. The JCF will also be bound by this policy in its own programming, partnerships and co-sponsorships.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICY

In the event of a perceived violation by a grantee of the JCF policy, the CEO of the JCF and its President and Officers will promptly review the situation, speak to the grantee, obtain the facts, understand the context, make a determination as to whether a grantee has violated the policy and - if it is determined that a grantee has violated the policy - take appropriate steps consistent with this policy. Where a grantee's overall body of work has been consistent with the JCF's core values, the grantee will be urged to swiftly address concerns that have been raised as a result of a specific program.

The JCF reserves the right to suspend funding and sponsorship, particularly in any case where it determines, in its sole discretion, that an egregious policy violation has occurred, there has been a sustained pattern of violating the policy, or insufficient remedial measures were implemented.

INTRODUCTION TO GUIDELINES

The Jewish Community Federation (JCF) has a long and proud history as a funder of arts and other diverse community organizations which seek to inspire and celebrate Judaism and Jewish life. The JCF recognizes that art, by its very nature, may express a political statement, provoke a range of emotions, or promote ideas that are potentially controversial. The JCF believes the community and our institutions will be well-served by establishing guideposts that help ensure consistency with the JCF's core values and which are not aimed at squelching creativity, diverse expressions or critique around controversial topics.

Grantees are strongly encouraged to consult with the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) in advance of potentially controversial programs that could contain any of the elements described in the scenarios below. Organizations ultimately make their own decisions, but broad consultation can help avoid conflicts with the policy, minimize surprise or polarization, and allow for the sharing of experiences before programs are set in stone. To ensure broad consultation, when there is a question whether a particular program may violate the policy or on the interpretation of the policy, JCRC will consult with the JCF's CEO, President and officers.

The following guidelines are intended to assist grantees with respect to programming as it relates to the policy statement.

GUIDELINES ON POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL ISRAEL-RELATED PROGRAMMING

Programs Generally in Accord with JCF Policy

The following kinds of programs are generally in accord with the policy statement, but early JCRC consultation is strongly encouraged and the programming should be presented within an overall program strategy that is consistent with JCF's core values:

1. Dialogue groups (i.e. non-public exchanges)
2. Private meetings
3. Presentations on topics other than the Middle East and Israel, that are not used to promote a BDS agenda or provide a forum for leaders of groups that espouse views inconsistent with JCF's core values
4. Presentations by organizations or individuals that are critical of particular Israeli government policies but are supportive of Israel's right to exist as a secure independent Jewish democratic state and that do not espouse views inconsistent with this policy.
5. Panel discussions, speaker series intended for the same audience, cultural presentations, or educational programs portraying a range of diverse perspectives that, on balance, are consistent with JCF's core values
6. Programs that are open to the community and welcome attendees regardless of their individual views
7. Participation in broad-based community coalitions on non-Israel-related issues provided that the coalitions do not become vehicles for undermining the legitimacy of Israel
8. Artistic presentations (displays, exhibits, films, performances) that may include critical perspectives of Jewish life or Israel and that, on balance, are consistent with JCF's core values

Programs Not Consistent with JCF's Policy

In addition to the specific areas covered by the policy statement, the following kinds of programs are not consistent with the policy statement:

1. Panel discussions, speakers series, cultural, artistic or educational programs that as an overall experience - i.e. based on the entire body of work - endorse or prominently promote the BDS movement or positions that undermine the legitimacy of the State of Israel
2. Individual programs that endorse the BDS movement or positions that undermine the legitimacy of the State of Israel
3. Co-sponsorship or co-presentations of public programs on Middle East issues with supporters of the BDS movement or others who undermine the legitimacy of the State of Israel