

EDITORIALS



Rivals must comply with Goldstone report

Suhail Ansari
Editorials Editor

The Palestinian/Israeli conflict has raged ever since Israel's formation in 1948. Including countless failures of diplomatic talks to reach peace in the region, the coexistence of the two peoples has not gone smoothly.

According to the BBC, a recently published report accuses both Palestinian and Israeli forces of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. Authored by Richard Goldstone, the report asks both sides to mount credible investigations with six months. A former South African judge and prominent former chief prosecutor of the United Nations (U.N.) International Criminal Tribunals for both Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, Goldstone recommends referral of both sides to the International Criminal Court should they refuse to comply.

Thus far, the U.N. Human Rights Council and General Assembly have endorsed the report; however, those two bodies do not have the authority to force any country to carry out any actions, something only reserved for the U.N. Security Council, a council over which Israel-ally United States has permanent veto power. History suggests that the U.S. would exercise its authority should the Security Council recommend such sanctions for Israel.

However, international pressure has been placed on Israel, with even the U.S. asking both sides to mount investigations, according to the BBC.

Furthermore, this report's demands are not an obstacle to the peace process as such, and the allegation highlights the ignorance of the Israeli defense policy

The BBC article "Legal row over Gaza report intensifies" cites that the Goldstone report found that a late 2008-early 2009 anti-Hamas offensive launched by Israel was a "deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population." Israel maintains that such a report is a hindrance to peace talks within the region, that the report is biased and contains fallacies and that it is a continued effort by the international community to criticize Israel.

However, according to the BBC, human rights groups say half of 1,400 people killed were civilians; Israel claims that only 300 of 1,166 people killed were civilians. On the other front, three Israeli citizens and 10 Israeli soldiers were killed. The offensive by Israel tore down thousands of homes as well.

Although the Palestinian Hamas forces were implicated by the Goldstone report as having committed war crimes, they are not recognized as a sovereign nation. Although their actions cannot be justified, they are trying to fight free of the oppression caused by Israel, in some respects highlighted by the recent refusal and discriminatory practices of distributing water rations (according to the "Israel rations Palestinians to trickle of water" report by Amnesty International).

Furthermore, this report's demands are not an obstacle to the peace process as such, and the allegation highlights the ignorance of the Israeli defense policy. According to the BBC article "Goldstone rejects Israel protests," Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said the conflict will not come to peace any time soon and that the international community should settle for continued violence and "learn to live with it."

The report has been endorsed by two of the most influential U.N. bodies and now only international pressure will force both sides to carry out credible investigations. The international community does not wish to unfairly criticize the sovereignty of one nation, but rather wishes to seek justice, something that can be achieved when both sides act on the report's recommendations.

As if a desire to see justice served were not enough, Haaretz reported that funding for Israel's offensive came directly from Americans' tax revenues (\$30 billion of defense aid over 10 years). As American citizens, we should remain cognizant of the future developments of the possible investigation. As a citizen of this nation, I do not endorse the commission of war crimes on my behalf, and neither should any right-thinking American.

Students crave new swipe-in area for mental rest



Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

The abundant options available at Niles West provide students with a variety of resource centers to attend during study hall. Although students are assigned to specific rooms, there are many locations in which students can keep busy, such as the Literacy Center, the Information Resource Center or the College and Career Center. However, there is always room for new ideas.

High school is stressful. Each student who works diligently in academic classes, extracurricular activities and athletics understands how stressful high school can be. Often, students are sleep deprived because they stay up all night doing homework. West has done a tremendous job providing resources to help students succeed in academic classes, but how about providing students a spot in which they could just relax?

I came to realize the importance of meditation and relaxation during the last semester of my junior year. Every Friday, my aerobics class would practice yoga, followed by meditation. In this class, students are able to learn the basics of yoga and practice a few times throughout the semester. The feeling I had as I walked out of the dance studio was indescribable. I felt light, relieved and stress free. I wouldn't have made it through my last semester filled with Advanced Placement exams, ACT testing or homework without the relaxation built right into my schedule.

Unfortunately, the only physical welfare class that offers yoga instruction and meditation is aerobics. However, many students don't have the option of taking aerobics during gym classes. Freshmen and sophomores are required to take regular physical education classes in which they engage in physical activity, none of which include relaxation in the dance studio. While juniors and seniors do have the option to take aerobics, typically, only one day of the week is devoted to yoga. Furthermore, juniors and seniors

who are physical education leaders might not have the option to lead an aerobics class.

Overloaded students—those with seven plus classes, extracurricular participation, athletics and (often) after school ACT and Advanced Placement preparation courses—need a break during the day to deprogram, a place and time to recharge their batteries.

An alternative to study hall, a location in which students can swipe in to just kick back and relax, a room filled with yoga mats, tranquil music and dim lighting

Some would suggest that study hall is the place to unwind. However, most of these venues are loud, crowded and brightly lit, environments not conducive to relaxation.

The solution? An alternative to study hall, a location in which students can swipe in to just kick back and relax, a room filled with yoga mats, tranquil music and dim lighting. In this space, students could watch a yoga instruction video, meditate to the soothing music or take a nap. I am confident many students would take advantage of this option.

Creating this ambience would be simple. There is a plethora of yoga mats in the dance studio, and one of the current study hall rooms could be designated for this purpose, with the assigned proctor taking attendance and maintaining order, although the latter should not be an issue.

Providing a calm and relaxing alternative to study that will promote rejuvenation will only make students more alert and motivated to do better in their classes, sports and clubs.

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WestWord

west opinions

Bow not sign of President's weakness—criticism unfair



Rexly Penafiora II
Editor in Chief

A few days ago, President Barack Obama visited Japan as a part of his tour of Asia. While there, he visited the Imperial Palace where the Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko live. As Obama greeted the emperor, he shook his hand and gave a bow to the emperor. Some in the media, particularly the notoriously conservative the *Los Angeles Times* and the unofficial public relations firm of the Republican party, Fox News, have roundly criticized the President because of the greeting, suggesting that such a gesture is show of submission and weakness unbecoming of the President of the United States.

It must be a slow news cycle if this is all the conservative media can muster to criticize Obama. After all, the bow was just a formal way of greeting Akihito.

For those who have lived in a cave and/or consider American the only nation on the planet worthy of consideration, the Japanese, as well as a variety of other ethnicities, view the bow as a sign of respect.

Martial artists bow to each other before and after fighting. Anyone want to inform Chuck Norris that he is submissive and weak? Me neither. (Insert Norris joke here.)

In Asian cultures, bowing is way to show respect and to acknowledge the other person's skills. Obama's bow was merely a greeting and a form of respect. According to www.politico.com, a senior administration official said that Obama "observed protocol." From what I have inferred, "protocol" would probably mean to show respect to a degree that a handshake would not be sufficient when greeting the actual or titular head of a nation. Furthermore, it is a gesture the emperor would understand without a translator.

Obama's actions do not carry a message that he believes the emperor—or Japan—is superior, but rather, it shows that unlike his predecessor who rarely strayed outside Texas or New England during his youth, Obama is a man that has experienced other cultures. He was born in Hawaii, an island that still practices a lot of Asian traditions despite being a part of the United States for 50 years. Using the *Times'* and Fox's logic, the Hawaiians must be wimps. Moreover, Obama's father is Kenyan, and Obama himself went to school in Jakarta when he was child. Obama's exposure to other cultures would heighten his knowledge of and sensitivity to customs other than what is the best sauce to put on spare ribs and what etiquette one uses when sailing off the coast of Kennebunkport.

I believe that the bow is a testament to that knowledge. Rather than caving in to the conservative media, who also criticized Obama earlier this year for bowing to King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, Obama decided to show respect.

The Dalai Lama, who is the head of state and spiritual leader of Tibet, greets other world leaders by bowing. This does not mean that he believes that the other leaders are better than he. It is merely his way of greeting other people with deference and courtesy. If the Dalai Lama can bow before others and receive no criticism, shouldn't the President of the United States be afforded the same leeway?

Nor is Obama the first President to display such manners. President Bill Clinton also bowed to the Japanese emperor during a visit, and <http://lefarkins.blogspot.com/2009/11/dwight-d-eisenhower-bowing-hour.html> features a series of photos of President Dwight Eisenhower (readers might have heard of him from, you know, winning World War II) bowing to a host of foreign dignitaries.

News organizations need to take a break from criticizing the President about slight details and instead focus on foreign relations that he creates or repairs by visiting other countries and respecting their leaders. If his predecessor had done so, maybe this country would not have squandered all of the post-9/11 goodwill expressed by the rest of the world.

Teachers' institute day scheduling proves counterintuitive

Editorial

Ancient are the tales of a lax senior year. The romantic mythology of an easy academic workload, the frequent taking of days off filled with the fun and mystique of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and meeting the right girl/guy for prom—while still getting into the best college—is otherwise known as "senioritis."

However, for those seniors who actually want to be prepared for their freshman year of college, the workload is anything but easy and can, in fact, be overwhelming, especially when college application essays need to be completed and confusing questions needed to be answered about line 16b of one's parents' 1040 IRS forms.

Not only does the application essay bog down seniors, but the College Board's CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE and other financial aid forms are required by many institutions and are often due around the early action deadline of Nov. 1. This involves deciphering one's parents' previous year's tax return to complete the financial aid application, not to mention a few last minute questions to one's tax preparer or accountant and a trip to one's bank to find out exactly how much that certificate of deposit that one's aunt opened for his birthday is worth.

This said, any senior would surely want every day possible to work on his/her applications, especially since many

applications' early action deadline is Nov. 1. Fewer senior tears might be shed by effecting one simple change to the school calendar: moving the current teacher's institute day to the last Friday in October.

According to executive secretary Patricia Moir, a veteran of more than two decades in District 219, institute days historically have been held in the first or second week of November.

The change would have multiple benefits for senior and teachers alike.

First and foremost, there would be an extra day off for seniors that are completing their college applications prior to those applications being due. Skeptics argue that providing a day off just prior to the Nov. 1 early action deadline would induce seniors to wait until the last minute to write their essays and not to revise them.

However, the reality is that early action applicants tend to be highly motivated and concerned about their future and inclined to produce multiple revisions of application essays, reviewed by teachers and Literacy Center tutors. This day off, which is just moved earlier, will help seniors complete their many applications due on Nov. 1 and to put the finishing touches on those essays.

Second, placing the institute day in midweek encourages students to extend their weekend. There was a sort of senior "ditch day" on Tue. Nov. 3, which involved many seniors, perhaps some who were exhausted after completing the grueling application process by Nov. 1. Certainly, administrators and teachers would agree that such a situation is not desirable.

Therefore, rescheduling teachers' institute day would not only be intuitive given the seniors' college application workload, it would help keep students in school.

November						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Application Deadline	2 Senior Ditch Day	3 Teacher Institute Day				
8	9	10				
15	16	17				
22	23	24				

With all due respect to my colleague Uzma Ahmad, the problem is not with teachers' assignments as she suggests in her column in this issue's wire section, the problem is that the application process to colleges is broken. This has been established previously in these pages in the staff editorial titled "Common Application not common enough for seniors," in *West Word* volume 49, issue one.

With a different college essay due for many individual institutions, a student can have up to 10 essays to complete. As college admissions pools get larger, the chances of getting an "admit" reply gets slimmer; one way to cope with such an affect is to write an engaging college essay.

Of course, the quality of a piece of writing can be roughly gauged by how much time is spent on it. If one were to graph the time spent on an essay on the x-axis and the holistic score grade on the y-axis, there would be a direct relationship. It is the same reason why college entrance exams only give students so little time to complete their essays: they know that unlimited time increases the number of amazing essays.

Should the November teacher institute day be moved to the last Friday of October?

Staff



Mindy Slutzky

No, because seniors have enough days off.

Senior



Krina Ghandi

Yes, because we need the time to work on our college applications.

Junior



Azfar Shareef

Yes, because a three day weekend would give [the student body] more time [to get work done].

Sophomore



Nicole Bonner

Yes, because the weekend is a good time to catch up.

Freshman



Narcis Ardelean

Yes, so the seniors have more time [for college applications].