

The Daily Targum - University
Issue: 4/29/05

Groups pitch coexistence
By Diana Pichardo / Staff Writer

Middle Eastern groups can come together and work constructively, according to the message spread in the Art History Building Wednesday on Douglass campus.

The Middle East Coexistence Project held its kickoff event, featuring two speakers that addressed the importance and possibility of cooperation between the various cultures located in the region.

The project is an initiative that has come together through a coalition of groups, said Douglass College sophomore Danielle Josephs, co-director.

"Essentially we noticed that there is a lot of animosity between Arab and Jewish people on campus," Josephs said. "We wanted to prove these groups can work together."

Participating sponsors include Rutgers Hillel, the Islamic Society of Rutgers University and the Middle Eastern studies department.

There are three goals the project hopes to accomplish.

The first is to enhance dialogues between Arabs, Muslims and Christians and Jews and Israelis at Rutgers, she said. Josephs said the second is to encourage women to get involved in the field of conflict and negotiation.

The third is to establish a global village wing for co-existence in the New Gibbons residence halls during the 2006-07 school year, she said.

Designed for Douglass College students, the global village is a place with live-and-learn communities that are catered to specific interests, which include language and human rights issues, said Dean Carmen Twillie Ambar, who served as the event's moderator.

"One of the things I thought was important is that we continue to have language houses but also [human rights] issue houses," she said. "The goal next year is to have a co-existence house."

Alma Abdul-Hadi Jadallah, a conflict resolution practitioner, spoke about what the study of conflict resolution can bring to an individual and how it can aid them in seeing the various elements involved in finding resolution.

It really has you unpack your identity and can help to remove an individual from anger to reflection, she said.

In order to deal with conflict effectively, one must look at the social context involved, she said.

"We are very biased toward having a resolution," Jadallah said. "Really what parties are looking for is more of an acknowledgment of what is going on."

Finding peace isn't always external from human beings, and inward peace is the first step, she said.

Professor Yael Zerubavel spoke about her experiences in Israel and the growing desire for a peaceful existence. Zerubavel is also the director of The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life.

When she was 18 years old, she was recruited into the Israeli Army, and at 19, she became an officer. One of her duties included going to visit wounded soldiers, an experience that shaped many of her beliefs now, Zerubavel said. Death, war and conflict are universal themes that no one is fond of, she said.

Now in Israel, there is a growing approach to the conflict that is taking on the sides of both parties, she said.

"There are a lot of voices in Israel beyond the voices acting out of fear," Zerubavel said. "There are other voices trying to promote reaching out."

Israeli poetry and films have become more diverse demonstrating a desire to embrace other views, she said.