

What does it mean to be an educator in the new global village? How do we, as Quakers, incorporate the needs and concerns of international humanity into our work? These questions were present for the attendees of the FAHE 2017 gathering in June at Guilford College. For this issue of QHE, we have gathered four articles and one piece of visual art that tackle this theme from different perspectives.

Keynote speaker [Prof. Diya Abdo](#), associate professor of English at Guilford College, shares with us the story of “Every Campus a Refuge” (ECAR) and offers suggestions on how we can make our campuses into safe havens. Diya's teaching, research and scholarship focus on Arab women writers and Arab and Islamic feminisms.

Earlham College professors [Alonzo Valentine](#) and [Stephen Angell](#) share with us on discussions that happened in their FAHE session on how Quakerism in the US might benefit from Quaker Institutions of Higher Education strengthening their international and study abroad programs. They cite actions taken at Earlham in recent years as examples of what others might do.

[Keelan LoFaro](#), assistant professor of education at George Fox University (GFU), reports on developing a professional collaboration with the Ramallah Friends School. She describes the beginning of this

relationship, and assesses its strengths and weaknesses.

[Dr. Stephen Zunes](#) is a Professor of Politics and International Studies at the University of San Francisco, where he serves as coordinator of the program in Middle Eastern Studies. He tells us the story of how Swarthmore assistant professor Sa'ed Atshan was disinvited to speak at Friends Central School, and he puts that event in the larger context of how American institutions often devalue Middle Eastern peacemakers.

Guilford College alumna [Laura Todd](#) gives us some context for a watercolor painting that has become the face of ECAR. Laura graduated in 2016 with degrees in English and Religious Studies. She has recently returned from a year of service and is applying to seminaries for further study.

Submissions: *QHE* is published twice a year, in the spring and the fall. Articles submitted for possible publication should be sent as Word documents to: either dsmith4@guilford.edu or to adams@ccsu.edu. Since *QHE* is not wed to any particular referencing format, you may use the professional style of your choice. If you would like to discuss an idea that you have for an article, our telephone numbers are: 336-316-2162 (DS) and 860-832-2616 (AEA).

FAHE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
June 14-17, 2018



Hoping to see all of you June 14-17, 2018! FAHE will meet at [Wilmington College](#) in Wilmington, OH, to consider the theme of “*Keeping Faithful in a Time of Rapid Change.*” The call for papers with queries and conference registration is available [at the FAHE web site](#) and at [this site](#).



Every Campus A Refuge: A Small College's Response to the Refugee Crisis

*Diya Abdo
Guilford College*

This article is adapted from [a blog post](#), and reflects much of Prof. Abdo's plenary speech at the 2017 FAHE meeting at Guilford College.

The refugee crisis is a perpetual crisis. As long as there has been conflict, there have been refugees.

I myself am the child of refugees, their first, born in a country right across the river from the one they fled. We were lucky; my family escaped the drudgeries of the refugee camps to live a life of tenuous citizenry in the "alternate homeland." Others around the world are not so lucky. Many are settled where they initially arrive, their tents simply morphing into the sturdier, stiflingly close, zinc-roofed rooms of the shantytowns. Still many others never complete the perilous journey. Countless refugees have drowned at sea in capsized boats and rafts, asphyxiated in the cargo holds of otherwise seaworthy and roadworthy vessels, succumbed to the limitations of their bodies, the elements, and the relentless indifference, if not cruelty, of the watching and waiting human race. Indeed, in the past seven years, the human race has been doing much watching and waiting as hundreds of thousands of displaced and dispossessed human beings, the highest numbers since World War II, make their way out of the conflict zones of the Middle East and Africa up and across the Arab world and Europe.

And then there was Aylan Kurdi. His little body, very seriously dressed for a dark and serious passage, moored by death on the shores of a resort town in Turkey, broke our hearts. It was visual proof of a horror we

knew existed (for the news told us every day) but rarely saw in the media (for when is a violent death so delicate, so gentle, so unassuming, so non-threatening as to be so easily shareable). Europe's conscience quickened for a brief moment. Hungary, gatekeeping for itself and Western Europe, temporarily eased its chokehold on thousands of refugees trying to make their way north. Germany temporarily accepted with open arms the streaming multitudes. England anemically grumbled about quotas. And Pope Francis called on every parish in Europe to host one refugee family.

But what do academic institutions do with broken hearts? With the dead and dying bodies? With the endless convoy of humanity trying to make its way from misery to the unknown? What is our responsibility as teachers, students, staff and administrators of higher learning? What is our complicity at institutions built on the lands of the dispossessed and displaced?

Every Campus A Refuge

[Every Campus A Refuge](#) (ECAR) was born out of a double impulse – a deep despair for the plight of the millions of refugees daily risking their lives and their children's lives to escape violence and a deep dedication to the possibilities of higher education in the world.

When, in September 2015, Pope Francis called on every parish in Europe to host a refugee family, I was immediately struck by the similarity between parishes (small cities or towns) and university and college

campuses which, given the nature of their material and human resources, are very much like small cities and have everything necessary – housing, food, care, skills – to host refugees and support them as they begin their lives in their new homes.

Inspired by the Pope’s call and my native Arabic’s word for university campus (“haram” which means “sanctuary”), and animated by Guilford’s history as part of the Underground Railroad and its Quaker testimonies of just and community-driven stewardship, ECAR was founded as a Guilford College Center for Principled Problem Solving (CPPS) program. Its aim is to mobilize resources (within and beyond the institution’s physical borders) to provide housing and other forms of assistance to refugees seeking resettlement in our local area and to call on other campuses to do the same so that, globally, we can increase numbers of resettled refugees; support underfunded refugee resettlement agencies; create a softer landing for refugees by providing additional financial, cultural, logistical and social support; and positively shape public discourse around “others” by committing institutional resources to welcoming and supporting refugees.

This last point is especially important, now more than ever, given the Supreme Court’s recent approval of parts of the travel ban, including those which affect refugees. Refugees admitted to the US have, of course, legal status in this country. By welcoming them onto campus grounds, institutions, which generally possess powerful and respected voices in their communities, are announcing in public and powerful ways that there is indeed nothing to fear from refugees. By taking on this initiative, and encouraging other campuses to do so, institutions can address the

problems of xenophobia that have accompanied the refugee crisis.

Collaborating with Community Partners

Through ECAR, Guilford partnered with the Greensboro office of the refugee resettlement agency Church World Service (CWS)¹ to develop a refugee hosting initiative that best served CWS’s stated needs and expectations and supported their goals in serving their clients. Affordable housing is sparse in Greensboro, especially for single individuals (whose one-time stipend is insufficient) and large families or families with particular needs. Finding appropriate housing is also difficult as the refugee communities here are becoming increasingly ghettoized or filled to capacity; rental companies in other neighborhoods are often refusing to rent to refugees who are initially unemployed and without SSN or credit history.

Since the beginning of our partnership (2015), Guilford has hosted twenty-seven refugees (clients of CWS) in campus houses and apartments. Sixteen of the hosted refugees have been children aged ten months to seventeen years. The already-hosted refugees include two Syrian families that have successfully settled in Greensboro. The campus just completed hosting an eleven-member family from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and is currently hosting a five-member family from the Middle East.

Under ECAR, each family is housed for three-five months at which point (with income and SSN) they are able to resettle more successfully in their chosen communities. At Guilford, they receive free housing (furnished according to CWS standards), utilities, Wi-Fi, use of college

¹ <https://cwsglobal.org/>

facilities and resources such as classes, gym, library, and cafeteria. For example, the father of the family currently on our campus is an artist who has use of a private studio and supplies provided by Guilford's art department. Support for each hosted family continues after they transition off-campus; we also pay their security deposits and first month's rent.

Resettlement tasks are assigned by CWS, while various cultural, social and other needs are assigned by ECAR. The CWS case manager and the ECAR program coordinator oversee the 100+ volunteers who carry out these tasks. Background checked and trained by CWS, these volunteers are Guilford students, alumni, faculty, administrators and staff; their spouses; faculty, students, and staff from nearby Bennett College; local high schools; local faith communities; and Guilford friends.

Volunteers usually provide airport welcome, prepare campus housing, raise and collect funds and in-kind donations, share meals and act as cultural brokers, provide interpretation, assist with childcare and job-hunting, meet important resettlement appointments (DSS, medical, etc.), assist with shopping, transportation, government forms, finding off-campus housing, and moving. They continue to assist with goals set during the hosting period such as GED or driver's license acquisition. Volunteers also take case notes for CWS's files.

By utilizing their personal skills towards the common goal of supporting the hosted refugees, the volunteers receive a powerful experiential education on pressing global issues of the refugee crisis and forced displacement, and local concerns such as immigrant and refugee life in Greensboro. ECAR's program coordinator and I solicit

feedback from the hosted refugees and volunteers. We communicate with the CWS director and case managers about the progress of our collaboration and the experiences of all involved and discuss the design, implementation and efficacy of the program, reflecting on and improving its best practices.

Another community partner, New Arrivals Institute (NAI),² trains the volunteers to provide ESL instruction to the hosted refugees. Reciprocally, our trained volunteers also provide ESL instruction to NAI's (non-ECAR) clients. As an asset-based community of practice, ECAR engages other community partners: our local co-ops (e.g. Deep Roots Market), local schools (e.g. Early College at Guilford, whose students receive service learning credit for volunteering); faith communities (e.g. Quaker meetinghouses). They provide human, financial, and in-kind support.

Together with our community partners, we educate our various communities on issues related to refugees and resettlement through training, panels, information sessions, film screenings, and consciousness-raising dinners and recitals. Additionally, I and ECAR's program coordinators have been invited by CWS and NAI to speak at their panels, events, press conferences, and service provider meetings/consultation calls.

Deeply Engaged Academia

In all of the above described work, our campus and local communities are learning a great deal about refugee and forced displacement issues, and our volunteers are engaging in a place-based experiential education about the resettlement process and the joys and challenges of the latter as it pertains to their own city, state, and country

² <http://www.newarrivalsinstitute.org/>

in ways that are connected to real rather than hypothetical individuals. The program also prepares our students for engaging diverse populations in their lives and future careers.

Students are also using their disciplinary skills to support the program through producing material for the ECAR website—researching and writing effective material for public audiences; creating artwork for ECAR’s public outreach material; crafting podcasts for the initiative’s public fora; taking on program coordination—organizing volunteer tasks and donation drives, carrying out hosting and resettlement tasks, and honing their organizational, fundraising, and non-profit skills; representing ECAR at various venues such as Jewish Voice for Peace and the UN among others, thus honing their public speaking and networking skills; researching the efficacy of ECAR through data collected in an ongoing mixed-methods study.

The Academics of ECAR: The Minor

Working within the CPPS framework and with support from a CPPS faculty fellowship, I was able to design the ECAR Principled Problem Solving Experience Minor³ which pilots at Guilford in Fall 2017.

The ECAR minor structures the previously described educational components of the initiative and engages students in disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and place-based experiences that facilitate:

- 1) Learning about forced displacement and (im)migration.
- 2) Prioritizing the voices, agency and perspectives of refugees and (im)migrants.
- 3) Emphasizing the nature and significance of organizing and advocacy.

- 4) Participation in the place-based educational processes of resettlement and community building.

Thus, the various elements of the minor are designed to engage the students in learning about **what** forced displacement is and **why** it happens; **who** the individuals are who experience it and what their perspectives are; **how** we can collectively address the problems of forced displacement and resettlement; the **when** and **where** of the work of principled problem-solving in refugee resettlement.

The minor calls for a minimum of 16 credit hours of required and elective courses and involves collaboration with a team of several faculty members, including an adjunct instructor, from various departments. Each faculty member designs a course assignment in discussion with the team that engages students in making and reflecting on connections between their learning in the course and their work in hosting/resettling ECAR hosted refugees.

Making an Impact

ECAR promotes a common vision and collaboration across all College units. The common goal of hosting and supporting refugees brings together faculty, staff, and students from many departments, clubs, student government bodies as well as offices such as Career Services, Housing and Facilities, and Public Safety.

Over the last year, I have also had the privilege of being able to speak about ECAR on other campuses all over the country, giving workshops and talks that outline the project’s work, including challenges and lessons learned, and discussion about how to adapt this flexible initiative to their campus.

³ <https://www.guilford.edu/sites/default/files/2017-06/EveryCampusARefugeAPPSEPrincipledProblemSolvingExperienceMinor.pdf>

Thanks to this outreach and positive media coverage such as NPR's [All Things Considered](#) with Ari Shapiro, WUNC's [The State of Things](#) with Frank Stasio, [The Washington Post](#), the 2016 State Department Toolkit on how universities can help refugees, [Inside Higher Education](#) and [NC Policy Watch](#), ECAR is now spreading to campuses large and small that are similarly partnering with their local refugee resettlement agencies to host refugees: Wake Forest University, Agnes Scott College, Rollins College, and Lafayette College among others. More are mobilizing to do so, including Princeton and Georgetown. ECAR has also received the Gulf South Summit's 2017 Outstanding Service-Learning Collaboration in Higher Education Award and The Washington Center's 2017 Civic Engagement in Higher Education Award.

Every Campus A Refuge is an easily replicable program for any type of campus. As a campus program, it is covered by the college's general liability insurance. It is affordable. When campuses provide housing, use of facilities and any available and unused materials, then raising donations in-kind and financial to cover the rest is easy. We used \$300 of our funds to purchase whatever else was needed for the eleven-member DRC family, for example.

In the face of the multifaceted disaster that is the refugee crisis, one with deep and far-reaching political, social, economic, and psychological damages, we have found that the cost of hosting one refugee family on campus grounds is truly minimal, its reward astronomical.

Intercultural Education for Strengthening Quaker Education

*Alonzo Valentine, Stephen Angell, & Susan H. de Castañeda
Earlham School of Religion & Earlham College*

The Earlham School of Religion's Board of Advisors meeting recently devoted a long session to discuss the many ways in which human diversity is oppressed. This board is composed of some thirty people, primarily Quaker, from across the US, who seek to provide ESR with insight into what is happening in their worlds. The conversation brought forward stories from women denied pastoral roles among Friends, stories of how a well-educated African-American experiences casual as well as threatening racism among middle-class white people, a non-heterosexual subjected to sexist taunts even in the midst of professional colleagues, a mixed race person who has to negotiate racism from whites and from members of this person's non-white ancestry, and stories from those who sought to be allies with other identities and then experienced rejection from "their own kind." Participants also shared their personal complicity in the denial of the humanity of those who were different. The members of this board have come to know one another fairly well, but these stories in their painful detail were powerful, disturbing, and sometimes healing.

How will Quaker higher educators engage with intercultural educations that will be deep enough and caring enough to hear the stories of diverse individuals who have often been hurt? Our FAHE conference session on intercultural education among Friends was informal, seeking discussion about three general questions of intercultural education: how to facilitate majority students entering immersion experiences in other cultures, how to welcome and assist non-majority students entering our institutions of

majority, and how to take advantage of local resources for crossing cultures. Neither that discussion nor this paper claim to present significant research, but rather we hope to open a conversation. In a way, the discussion in our session seemed to seek a path into the kind of listening and conversation that arose among the ESR Board of Advisors.

The value for educators of deep engagement with diversity is evident in examples from our conference session, as well as some informal statistics. On the negative side, we are aware of the great decline in members of the Religious Society of Friends. ESR colleague Steve Angell gathered statistics for the ESR Board of Advisors, indicating that since the middle of the 20th century, Quaker membership declined in North America by at least 60,000. Arguably, this decline is related to the lack of diversity and the lack of capacity to handle diversity among Friends. Another glaring element is one driving the splits in Yearly Meetings now: differences over GLBTQ concerns. More liberal Friends, those of us who look comfortably middle class, urban, well-educated, and white, appear more welcoming to GLBTQ persons. Among more conservative and rural Friends, there are fewer well-educated and prosperous whites and more rejection of GLBTQ persons. So, Friends have been unable to come to unity over the few struggles with diversity that arise among us: class and the GLBTQ question. It may be, then, that for Friends who are concerned about furthering and deepening Quakerism, examining how we can increase diversity in order to learn and grow is vital.

On the positive side for Quaker higher education, studies on the impact of cross-cultural immersion indicate possibilities for growth for our schools as well as for Quakerism. A 1992 study of “The International Fifty” liberal arts colleges argued that the impact of schools’ investing significantly in international programs contributed to significant growth in their students’ capacity for living with diversity and also to improved success in the pursuit of graduate education. These fifty schools included Earlham, Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore colleges. Though these fifty schools at the time of this study awarded less than 2% of all baccalaureate degrees in the country, their graduates made up over 10% of all graduate students and received over 9% of Ph.D.’s in all international fields, including over 11% of doctorates in European history, over 15% of those in Russian and over 20% in Japanese. These graduates also accounted for about 9% of the country’s foreign service officers and about 10% of U. S. ambassadors.⁴ In sum, the study suggests that those schools that systematically encourage international experiences lead to graduates who have not only experienced diverse cultures but have often found such experiences life-changing to the extent that they pursue further education and careers internationally.

Therefore, we can infer that increasing the exposure of not only our students but all of us as Quakers to diversity in its many forms can challenge and enrich lives. Further, such cross-cultural experiences may make us more aware of what is needed to welcome diversity in our schools and so increase diversity in our own Society.

The first part of our session’s discussion focused upon increasing diversity within our

⁴ International Liberal Arts Colleges: Beloit, Wisconsin, 1992

participants’ institutions by simply making sure that we included a wide range of readings, assignments, and experiential learning associated with our courses. For example, staff at the Earlham School of Religion have worked—and continue to work—on expanding the diversity of readings our students encounter so that in the key disciplines of seminary education there are diverse voices brought into biblical studies, theology, church history, and practical studies. As is the case across many disciplines in the humanities, as well as in the social and natural sciences, teachers at the ESR were often trained within Anglo-American and European perspectives. This has meant the ESR faculty had to extend themselves beyond what we were given as the major voices in our field, educating ourselves about the global diversity we missed in our own education.

However, as exemplified by the deep listening and discussion held among the ESR Board of Advisors, having contact with *living* diversity and not just *textual* diversity is critical. This means that thinking about student recruitment, and how to support the students who will come into our schools as minorities, is required. How can we support such students when we now know that their differences with our dominant institutional culture may be difficult for them, especially if there are very few such students? How do we educate ourselves to be able to explore the differences those students recognize that we do not see?

As colleague Susan Hillman de Castañeda, Director of International Admissions at Earlham, noted in our discussion, Earlham has worked to expand the number of students doing international off-campus study. At the College, 65% of Earlham graduates have participated in a semester or year long study abroad program, and that

percentage is climbing. Earlham is ranked ninth among all study abroad programs by the Princeton *Review* and thirteenth overall for percentage of students studying abroad. So, the Earlham College International Program Office (IPO) can be a valuable resource for educators at other institutions.

Before Earlham students leave for off-campus study, the IPO seeks to equip them with increased intercultural awareness, including seeing their own culture more clearly. For example, staff works with students to help them see aspects of their own cultural identities, improve their understanding of their intended host country, and assess their own preparedness for the intercultural experience. The questions for discussion of each student's own identity include an exploration of learning goals around intercultural relations, hopes and fears about the experience, understanding dominant ways our culture signifies identity, what values shape the student, and the context of those values. This guidance allows students to gain insight into their host countries, by exploring the stereotypes, ideals, and fantasies they hold about the host country, what stereotypes they think might be held about Americans within that country, what the student knows about the history of interactions between the host country and the United States, how they think their identities around gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion, communication practices will be seen in their host country, and what they think they need to learn more about before the journey.

Finally, students are asked to undertake the difficult task of assessing their own readiness around understanding their identities, their prejudices, how ready they are to see how others see them, how they handle conflict, how ready they are to learn about unfamiliar values, how flexible they

are when identities, habits, and expectations are challenged, and how ready they are to learn from mistakes.⁵

One of the key resources Earlham College uses is the *Maximizing Study Abroad* that provides both an instructional guide as well as a student guide.⁶ The instructional guide is about 500 pages and the student guide about half of that. One of the activities from the instructional guide we have found useful in preparing students is the "Core Cultural Values and Culture Mapping" (pp 225-226). This assessment instrument uses nine contrasting cultural orientations so students can better understand their own cultural context and prepare for how their host country might differ. For example, these contrasting polarities include individualism versus collectivism, equality versus hierarchy, change versus stability, formality versus informality, and directness versus indirectness.

Our FAHE session also discussed various practices to help our students process immersion experiences. We noted such practices as: (1) requiring journal keeping of reactions during the experience--the good, the bad, the ugly, (2) having time while in-country to get together and process what is going on, (3) having in-country hosts who can help the students be aware of cultural practices they may stumble over, and (4) engaging the students in debriefing the

⁵ The complete set of questions is available from the authors, or contact Patty Lamson, Director of the International Studies Program office at Earlham College.

⁶ Barbara Kapplere Mikk, Andrew D. Cohen, R. Michael Paige, *Maximizing Study Abroad: An Instructional Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use* and *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student's Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use* (2nd Edition). Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 2009

experience when they return. Believing that this last point has been missing, Earlham College now requires that students returning from a semester or year study abroad take a one credit course that meets several times over the semester following their return.

We then discussed the need for improving our orientation of international students coming to our campuses. Though we assign faculty advisors, seek out student mentors, and have orientation about our schools and academic practices, these often do not take account of the issues that come up for international students. Those in the session were aware of the academic difficulties that can sometimes lead to problems, but we acknowledged that we can see a lack of awareness of cultural issues that will arise for the international student. How people interact, interpersonal expectations, food and dress can trip up good intentions. Perhaps resources such as Earlham's that are used to prepare our students to go abroad can be used to prepare us to receive students from abroad. Further, perhaps using such materials with the international students in their orientation process can make the transition easier for all of us.

The final part of our session addressed how Service Learning practices might better take account of diversity and contribute to the organizations that help our students. In a conference organized by Jana Schroeder, Director of Community Engagement at Earlham, we were challenged to rethink some aspects of the relations between our schools and the communities in which our schools live. First, we noted that students need not go overseas in order to run into different cultural challenges. Differences in cultural practices that connect to class, gender, and race will arise close to home. So, how might we better prepare students for engaging those?

One of the keynote speakers and workshop leaders, Randy Stoecker, argued that we need to "liberate" service learning by making social change rather than student learning the top priority in such programs. He argued that service learning is usually focused upon what a student gets out of it, and sometimes that is only a line on a resume. So, we often ask those hosting our students to invest in training and supervising them, only to lose them when they might begin to be of useful service. That is, we extract resources from the organizations that serve our students rather than contributing resources to the mission of those organizations. As an epigraph to the final section of his book, *Liberating Service Learning and the Rest of Higher Education Civic Engagement* (Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 2016), Randy provides this from Ella Baker an activist in the Black Freedom Movement in the 1960's:

In order for us as poor and oppressed people to become part of a society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. This means that we are going to have to learn to think in radical terms. I use the term radical in its original meaning—getting down to and understanding the root cause. It means facing a system by which you change that system (95).

Randy's liberation proposal is built on the model of "conscientization" developed by Paulo Freire in working with peasants in Latin America. Rather than developing some plan in some office for helping the oppressed, first go listen to them about what they see as the problem and what they think might be done about it. Applying that model to service learning then means that the contribution our students and schools could make to furthering social change will start by asking those organizations what they see as the problems they are addressing and what they see could be done. Then students and faculty can use the resources of their

school to research the problem and look for various solutions that might really work to radically change the system of oppression.

The other keynote presenter and workshop leader at the Earlham conference was Kerrissa Heffernan who introduced us to building syllabi incorporating service learning components. Her book, *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction*⁷, introduces six models of service learning, sample syllabi, ideas on implementation and assignments for various ways service-learning can be used across the disciplines. In this way, we can adapt our courses to include service learning in some fashion and so provide more effective ways our students can engage in intercultural education by deeply connecting with the community around our school.

In conclusion, this informal discussion of intercultural education may lead to deeper exploration of how to education about and for diversity works to create a richer educational environment at our schools. What we learn might also be of use as Friends struggle with the conflicts we have on these issues. Perhaps with some care and some time these struggles can turn into spiritual growth both for individual Quakers and the Religious Society of Friends. If we can do this well, we may also grow in numbers.

⁷ Campus Compact: Boston, 2001

The Story of a Growing Partnership Between the George Fox University College of Education and the Ramallah Friends School

*Keelan LoFaro, Scot Headley, & Lynette Elwyn
George Fox University*

The following is a story of the first step in a growing collegial partnership between two Quaker institutions: George Fox University (GFU) and Ramallah Friends School (RFS). George Fox University began functioning in 1891 as Pacific Academy, a preparatory school. Friends settlers who had located in the Willamette Valley community of Newberg, Oregon desired a school for their children (George Fox University-History, 2017). At present, the University has grown into a thriving institution serving undergraduate and graduate students in Newberg and other sites across the state of Oregon. One of the core themes that both faculty and students at George Fox University foster in their work is local and global engagement (George Fox University-Core Themes, 2017).

Ramallah Friends School began functioning in 1869, when it was founded by American Friends to provide Palestinian youth with an education guided by Quaker values (Ramallah Friends School-About Us, 2017). Currently, Ramallah Friends School operates as a flourishing Lower School (Kindergarten to 5th grade) and Upper School (6th-12th grade) serving Christian and Muslim students together under the auspices of Friends United Meeting. Ramallah Friends School is recognized as one of the leading schools in Palestine and is the only school in the West Bank that is an International Baccalaureate (IB) school, accredited by the IB program at all levels of the school.

Background

In the Spring of 2016, a collaboration between these two institutions began when three GFU professors from the College of Education traveled to RFS to work with the faculty. Joyce Ajouny, director of RFS, asked Scot Headley, Dean of the College of Education at GFU, to develop a professional development program that addressed teacher needs in implementing the IB Middle Years Program (MYP) at the middle school at RFS.

When approached with the request from Ajouny, Scot, who has extensive experience in conducting professional development in foreign countries, sought out faculty with MYP and staff development experience at the middle school level. Professors Keelan LoFaro and Lynette Elwyn, both middle school specialists, were selected for this team. Keelan has experience teaching middle school with the MYP and conducting professional development on using the MYP. Lynette has extensive experience conducting professional development with teachers at middle schools. Scot, Keelan, and Lynette represented a range of experience with international travel, from visits to the Middle East to no previous international travel. Keelan and Lynette planned a professional development program proposal and accompanied Scot to Ramallah at the end of March, 2016. Prior to the trip, Riyam Kafri, RFS Upper School Principal, reviewed and approved a draft program of activities for the professional development.



Figure 1: Picture of the inquiry process hanging in the hallway of RFS.

Theoretical Framework

Knowing that we were working cross-culturally and that our work would be focused on MYP implementation, our team chose a conceptual framework that was a combination of cultural humility (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013) and the inquiry process (Marshall, Smart, & Horton, 2011).

Cultural Humility

The guiding cultural humility principles that we hoped to employ in our work were: life-long learning and intentional relationships (Hockett, Samek, & Headley, 2014). In using a cultural humility approach, we hoped to explicitly model that we did not see ourselves as the outside experts on the MYP, coming in to tell the teachers what to do. Instead, we wanted to identify and honor what we could learn from the teachers to make our time together a true collaboration.

We used thank-you notes as a way to communicate the intention of collaboration through life-long learning and intentional relationships. That is, whenever we visited a classroom for an observation, we left a hand-written, detailed, thank you note. The note included descriptions of what we had learned from the teacher and their students during our observation.

Inquiry Process

The inquiry process as shown in Figure 1 is a critical component of the MYP approach to instruction (IBO-Programs, 2017) and we wanted to offer a model of this approach in action. The inquiry process involves a number of steps, each one leading to another in a cyclic process. One of the main principles of the inquiry process is that it starts from the learners' curiosity and interests as they *tune in*, shown at the top of the image in Figure 1.

According to Marshall and Smart (2013), effective professional development allows teachers to bring their own context and experiences into the work. Thus, our aim in using an inquiry process to complement the cultural humility approach was to develop and implement professional development that would allow teachers to start from their own experiences and so develop a meaningful and lasting experience. We hoped to avoid a common pitfall of professional development of simply talking about what to change and why but not supporting teachers on how to implement change (Cole, 2004).

Overview of Professional Development

Following is an outline of how we incorporated both cultural humility and the inquiry process into our planning and instruction of the professional development experience for teachers.

Understanding the purpose: “Tuning in”

Knowing that our time together with teachers at RFS would be spent within the context of the implementation of MYP, the principal and the MYP coordinator at RFS identified several key objectives for our PD program.

These objectives included:

- a) determining individual and grade level progress toward MYP;
- b) presenting key concepts related to interdisciplinary planning and teaching; and
- c) reviewing assessment concepts and strategies.

As mentioned, we viewed this visit as the first step in a journey of collaboration and not as a one-time opportunity. We also knew that as Westerners immersed in Western media reporting on the Middle East, we were potentially bringing with us preconceived notions about what the needs of the school and teachers might be. Therefore, before we traveled to RFS, we worked slowly and patiently to investigate the needs and progress of the school in relation to each of the objectives previously listed. We also wanted to be careful to try to learn about the needs and progress of the school as expressed not only by the administration, but the teachers themselves.

We planned our first activity to be centered on the teachers' experience and expression of their needs. Additionally, we were attentive to the fact that collegial collaborations take time because trust and relationships must be built (see Barth, 2006). In order to address both the professional and personal side of our work with teachers, we decided to conduct four primary activities during our time at RFS: a) large group meetings, b) grade level team meetings, c) classroom observations, and d) individual meetings.

Planning the logistics: "Preparing to find out"

In preparing for the trip and planning, we wanted to better understand the culture and staff with which we would be working. We communicated via email and Skype with people living in Ramallah. Our main source of information was Elizabeth Todd, who had

served as a professor at GFU and at that time worked to connect Northwest Friends to RFS.

Elizabeth helped us determine a number of important components including the hopes of the director and administration; logistics of the scheduling of day to day work while we were in Ramallah; travel details such as getting to and from the school; and an increased awareness of cultural norms that might differ from our experience or expectations.

Starting with teacher curiosities: "Finding out"

Upon arrival at the school we conducted the first of the four primary activities. In an opening meeting with the full group of about fifty MYP teachers, teachers shared their own needs, successes, frustrations, expectations, and wishes for MYP implementation. Teachers worked in grade level groups within the large group meeting to discuss, share, and record their ideas onto posters. As teachers worked together, we were available to provide direction and assistance, or help and clarify as needed.

Afterward, we collected their papers, which provided important information to guide our next steps (Hockett, 2012). That evening when we met together as a team, we were able to evaluate whether what we had outlined prior to arrival would in fact work for the teachers. The meeting notes revealed that each grade level team had specific needs they wanted addressed.

Planning based on curiosities: "Sorting out"

We worked with the principal and MYP coordinator to create a schedule for our other primary activities—grade level meetings, classroom observations, and individual meetings. The schedule would

ensure that we were able to connect with teachers, affirm their successes, and meet their needs. Prior to leaving for Ramallah, we had gathered a wide variety of resources related to the MYP from teachers in the United States. The diversity of the resources we brought turned out to be essential in our ability to cater to the specific needs of different grade level staff members.

Implementing based on curiosities: “Going further”

Over the next four days we conducted classroom observations, met with teachers one on one, and delivered sessions in grade level team meetings. Overall, we observed and met with about thirty teachers, and participated in four grade level team meetings. Following an observation or individual meeting with a teacher we made sure to leave the handwritten thank-you note. After the grade level team meetings, we sent follow-up emails addressing any remaining questions. In these emails, we also expressed our gratitude for their valuable time to collaborate and learn with us.

Coming back to curiosities: “Making connections”

At the final large group meeting, we gave the MYP teachers a survey soliciting their feedback on the effectiveness of our time together. We received about forty surveys at the end of the session. The survey responses represented views from teachers from all MYP grade levels (6th-10th grade) and all departments (English, Arabic, Math, Science, Art, World Religions). We found the following main themes:

- Teachers felt their hard work and commitment to their students had been recognized. Teachers shared how grateful they were for the thank-you notes following the observations.

- Teachers felt that the way we used our time with them showed we had heard their voices. Teachers commented that they felt the time with us had been valuable to them.
- Teachers wanted to see more examples of what we were working on. Teachers mentioned wanting more MYP interdisciplinary unit examples with common assessments.

Based on the survey feedback, we felt that we were on the right track toward accomplishing both our personal and professional goals for this initial trip—to provide professional development that was meaningful to the teachers and develop relationships with the faculty.

Synthesizing what was done and moving forward: “Taking action”

Following the final meeting the principal asked us to share with her our overall observations. These observations came from field notes that we took while we were in classrooms doing observations, while we were in grade level and individual meetings with teachers, as well as during conversations with administration and teachers.

Strengths

We identified a number of strengths at RFS. Below is the list we presented to the principal and board for RFS.

1. Mutual respect in the classroom
2. Student engagement
3. Real life application of content that is moving the MYP implementation along
4. The principal is dedicated, passionate and committed to the school and teaching staff
5. There appears to be strong teaching evident at all grade levels (multiple strategies, good use of time, frequent check for understanding and formative assessment, collaborative learning, and differentiation)
6. The newly implemented personal project program was quite strong, and under able leadership.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

Teachers seemed to be working in isolation, particularly on MYP related strategies of instruction. We saw a need for collegiality and more coordinated planning time. Thus we recommended a move from professional development to professional learning, and move from individual learning to community learning (Barth, 2006). We noted that a focused MYP implementation plan that included all staff was needed. We recommended that the plan include stages of implementation to make it more manageable for teachers.

We heard from teachers that communication between grade levels and between teachers and parents was a challenge. We recommended fostering teacher leadership as both instructional leaders and points of communication. We had two overall recommendations as well which were to incentivize innovators, and create pilot programs for instructional change around MYP implementation.

Encouragement and Gratitude

As with any staff development, it is important to identify and recognize strengths within the program and staff. Before our travel to Ramallah we were already aware of several program strengths at RFS, including a unique and very positive approach to meeting the needs of special education students. Additionally, we were impressed with the school's mission and vision. In keeping with Quaker educational priorities, RFS places high value on excellence in education, developing the whole person, helping each person to recognize his or her responsibility to society, and equality. As described on their website, "It is upon this foundation that Friends School's students grow to be strong and sensitive members of

their families, their community, and the world in which they live" (Ramallah Friends School-About Us, 2017). Thus, our expectations for our experience with teachers at RFS were based partly on what was already known to us. We were hopeful that our time at RFS would lead to a deeper understanding of specific organizational strengths, which we intended to recognize before any specific MYP related recommendations would be made. Also, we approached our visit with a sincere interest in learning about elements of successful RFS programs, which could potentially be implemented in our own schools and communities.

Considering all of our experiences, our time at Ramallah Friends School was rich with meaningful conversations and experiences. Teachers, administrators, volunteers, parents, and students willingly shared their perspectives, concerns, and needs with us. Classroom visits were fascinating, whether instruction and activities were conducted in Arabic or English. We found that RFS teachers, although stretched to meet expectations within specific time limitations, were very resourceful and demonstrated unwavering dedication to their students. Students proudly carried remarkable personal projects across campus, chatting enthusiastically about the day's activities. It was an environment characterized by learning applied to real life situations. We are tremendously grateful for the opportunity to experience firsthand such a remarkable learning environment on the other side of the world. Our connections with Ramallah Friends School staff and students have changed the way we view our own schools, and ourselves as educators.

Within this particular context, the theoretical framework of cultural humility and inquiry directly link to our time at RFS. This

experience helped solidify for us that we should never assume what we have heard about a region or a people. It was when we were open to being life-long learners and building intentional relationships (Hockett, Samek, & Headley, 2014) that we began, and only began, to understand people and their lived experiences. Additionally, using the inquiry process (Marshall et al., 2011) allowed us to put preconceived notions aside and ground our collaboration in the teachers' experience rather than just our own. Both of these are lessons that we will take home and share with the teacher candidates we work with in the College of Education at George Fox University.

Reflecting on our visit to Ramallah, we are encouraged and inspired by the unforgettable experience of being there. There is a deep reservoir of mutual benefit in cross-cultural collaboration such as that which exists between Ramallah Friends School and George Fox University School of Education. Faculty and students in both institutions reap the rewards of discoveries made in a context different from their own. We at George Fox University have experienced firsthand how cultural humility and the inquiry process help to establish true collaboration. We are grateful for the opportunity to build upon the collegial relationship with Ramallah Friends School, anticipating future benefits for students in both locations and beyond.

References

Barth, R. (2006). Improving relationships within the schoolhouse. *Educational Leadership*, 63(6), 8-13.

Cole (2004). [Professional development: A great way to avoid change](#). Incorporated Association of Teachers of Victoria.

George Fox University. (2017). [Core themes](#).

George Fox University. (2017). [History and heritage](#).

Hockett, E. (2012). Developing a Peace and Conflict Resolution Curriculum for Quaker Secondary Schools in Kenya. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 21(1), 6-23.

Hockett, E., Samek, L., & Headley, S. (2014). [Cultural humility: A framework for local and global engagement](#). *A Journal of the International Christian Community for Teacher Education*.

Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Owen, J., Worthington, E. L., & Utsey, S. O. (2013). Cultural humility: Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(3), 353-366.

[IBO education programmes](#)| International Baccalaureate. (n.d.).

[IBO benefits](#)| [The IB teaching style](#). (n.d.)

Marshall, J. C., Smart, J., & Horton, R. M. (2011). Tracking perceived and observed growth of inquiry practice: A formative plan to improve professional development experiences. *Science Educator*, 20(1), 12-22.

Marshall, J. C., & Smart, J. B. (2013). Teachers' transformation to inquiry-based instructional practice. *Creative Education*, 4(2), 132-142.

Ramallah Friends School (2017). [About Us](#).

Controversy at Friends Central

*Stephen Zunes
University of San Francisco*

Sa'ed Atshan is generally considered one of the most highly-respected young Quaker scholars in the United States. A graduate of Ramallah Friends School and Swarthmore College with a doctoral degree from Harvard, he is currently an assistant professor in Swarthmore's Peace and Conflict Studies program. A committed pacifist, he serves on the board of Pendle Hill, is an active member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting and has worked with a wide range of organizations in conflict resolution and reconciliation. It is ironic, then, that the leadership of a prestigious Friends school initiated a series of actions against him and his supporters. In addition to bringing both the school and the professor to national attention, it has brought to the fore questions regarding censorship, racism, the rights of students and teachers, and whether students at Friends schools should be prevented from learning about such issues as violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by governments allied to the United States. More troubling is that, while the Friends Central School (FCS) case is the only one to have gained national publicity, it is just one of a number of incidents in which Quaker educational institutions have blocked presentations by Middle Easterners working for peace and reconciliation.

Professor Atshan was invited by two teachers on behalf of a student club at Friends Central School—located just outside of Philadelphia—to come speak about Israeli and Palestinian activism for peace, including reflections on his experience at Seeds of Peace, a camp in Maine for Israeli

and Palestinian teenagers. It was to be “a hopeful and autobiographical reflection aimed at a teenage audience on the power of pacifism, justice, and love,”¹ primarily based on “his personal experiences and path to peace education.”² However, head of school Craig Sellers announced just days before the February 3 event that the talk would not take place as scheduled. In response, some students stood up together during the school's weekly Meeting for Worship and read a statement “expressing their disappointment and dismay” and over 65 of them staged a walk-out.³ At the time of the scheduled talk that Friday, an assembly was disrupted when dozens of students wearing black started chanting, “Let him speak!,” holding up signs reading, “My Voice Will Not Be Silenced,” and “Bring Back My Speaker.”⁴

The following Monday, Ariel Eure and Layla Helwa—the two teachers who had invited Professor Atshan—were suspended and placed on administrative leave as well as being banned from school grounds, having their email accounts disabled, and having the locks on their doors changed. This led to further student protests, including covering the teachers' classroom doors with fluorescent sticky notes offering

¹ <http://swarthmorephoenix.com/2017/02/16/in-support-of-academic-freedom/>

² <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Friends-Central-teachers-suspended-for-inviting-Palestinian-professor-to-speak-are-not-welcome-back-nex-year.html>

³ <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Friends-Central-students-protest-cancellation-of-Palestinian-speaker.html>

⁴ <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Friends-Central-students-protest-cancellation-of-Palestinian-speaker.html>

words of love, support, and encouragement.⁵ Sellers claims their suspension was a result of them having what he referred to as a “single-minded approach to a complicated issue for the community,” which he alleged disregarded “our guiding testimonies, which include community, peace, and integrity.”⁶ However, as Kate Farquhar—a classmate of Atshan at Westtown School during the year in which he was an exchange student and daughter of the then-head of school—noted, “Surely, as a Quaker educator Sellers knows that the testimonies he references were forged out of a spiritual community committed to egalitarian decision-making, nonviolent resistance, and the courage to stand for your convictions.”⁷ Similarly, editors of the *Daily News*—Philadelphia’s most widely-circulated newspaper—noted how “it was Sellers who disrupted the peace of the Friends’ Central community. And you can hardly call the muzzling of an invited speaker an example of integrity.”⁸

In May, Eure and Helwa were informed that their contracts were not being renewed—in effect, they were fired.⁹ The two teachers—both queer women of color—have filed a lawsuit demanding reinstatement and damages. In August, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) decided, after reviewing the

⁵ <http://swarthmorephoenix.com/2017/02/16/in-support-of-academic-freedom/>

⁶ <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Friends-Central-School-suspends-teachers-over-Palestinian-speaker.html>

⁷ <http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/essayworks/102104-op-ed-friends-central-cant-keep-hiding-behind-quaker-language>

⁸ http://www.philly.com/philly/opinion/20170215_DN_editorial_Friends_Central_lacks_integrity_in_shunning_controversial_speaker.html

⁹ <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Friends-Central-teachers-suspended-for-inviting-Palestinian-professor-to-speak-are-not-welcome-back-nex-year.html>

preliminary complaint, to launch an investigation.¹⁰

The decision by FCS to cancel Professor Atshan’s scheduled appearance and remove the teachers resulted in widespread criticism, including critical editorials in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*¹¹ and *Daily News*,¹² a letter of concern from Central Philadelphia Meeting, strongly-worded statements from a number of Quaker organizations and publications, and a widely-circulated cartoon by Signe Wilkinson, a Quaker and Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist.¹³ A letter signed by over 400 FCS alumni referred to administration’s actions as “appalling” and “a sad betrayal” of free speech and open discussion.¹⁴ News of the FCS decision went viral on social media and the school began receiving hundreds of emails from both Quakers and non-Quakers protesting the decision.

As the incident began receiving national attention, supporters of the FCS administration began making a series of bizarre allegations about the not-yet tenured Professor Atshan, calling him “anti-Israel,” “anti-Semitic,” and even a “jihadist.”¹⁵ The

¹⁰

<http://www.philly.com/philly/opinion/commentary/friends-central-school-saed-atshan-swarthmore-palestine-quaker-20170808.html>

¹¹ <http://www.philly.com/philly/opinion/Inquirer-Editorial-Let-Friends-Central-students-hear-from-an-Israeli-and-a-Palestinian.html>

¹² http://www.philly.com/philly/opinion/20170215_DN_editorial_Friends_Central_lacks_integrity_in_shunning_controversial_speaker.html

¹³ http://www.philly.com/philly/opinion/20170215_DN_editorial_Friends_Central_lacks_integrity_in_shunning_controversial_speaker.html

¹⁴ <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Friends-Central-alumni-want-school-to-reinstate-teachers-suspended-over-Palestinian-speaker.html>

¹⁵ See, for example, <http://campus.zoa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/08/Anti-Israel-Speaker-Saed-Atshan.pdf>, which falsely attributed anti-Semitic statements to Atshan that he had in fact denounced:

Swarthmore student newspaper responded with an editorial saying, “Those of us who have taken courses with Professor Atshan know that he explicitly problematizes and rejects such labels. He reminds us that it is important to affirm the fundamental dignity of Palestinians and Israelis. Atshan’s scholarship and activism emphasize the need for equality, coexistence, and peace for all the inhabitants of Israel/Palestine.”¹⁶

Philip Scott, clerk of the FCS Board of Trustees insisted the administration’s decision to cancel Atshan’s scheduled talk was “not a free speech issue,” but rather “the school taking the time and effort to formulate and present intellectual, respectful, and comprehensive programs for its students.”¹⁷ He did not explain why Atshan was apparently the first and only speaker whose scheduled appearance was blocked by the FCS administration and why the school had to formulate such a comprehensive program only in reaction to a Palestinian. Meanwhile, Sellers claimed that he did not intend to permanently ban Atshan from coming to FCS as a guest lecturer, but to put a “pause” on having any Palestinian speakers in order for there to be more discussion within the FCS community.¹⁸ In a statement released by the school, the administration explained that delaying the Palestinian Quaker’s talk was because “We felt it was important that more facts and input from community members be gathered

to develop a thoughtful, respectful, and intellectual approach.”¹⁹

Of particular concern was Atshan’s support for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against institutions complicit in the Israeli occupation. Despite the fact that his planned talk at FCS was not going to address that topic, Atshan’s support for such nonviolent means of pressuring Israel to end its occupation and respect the rights of Palestinians, according to Sellers, “raised concerns from some members of our community.”²⁰ Given that the vast majority of people from occupied countries support such international pressure against their respective occupiers, this standard would effectively prevent almost any Palestinian, Western Saharan, Tibetan, West Papuan, or Crimean from speaking as well.

Given that Friends Central has had white Quakers, white pacifists, and white professors speak about nonviolence, human rights, and peacebuilding in conflict regions without interference from the administration without having their scheduled talks cancelled or postponed, the fact that Atshan is an Arab raises the specter that racism may have played a role in the decision to intervene. It raises the question as to whether, had Atshan had been a white Crimean Quaker who opposed the Russian occupation of his land, he would have been subjected to the same treatment.²¹ The school administration has denied there was any racist intent, stressing concerns over his advocacy of various forms of nonviolent resistance against the Israeli occupation.

<http://afriendlyletter.com/friends-central-school-free-speech-case-negotiations-on/>

¹⁶ <http://swarthmorephoenix.com/2017/02/16/in-support-of-academic-freedom/>

¹⁷ <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Swarthmore-professor-meets-with-Friends-Central-to-settle-dispute.html>

¹⁸ Interview with school administrators, Wallingford, PA April 2, 2017

¹⁹ <http://www.phillymag.com/news/2017/02/14/friends-central-suspends-teachers-palestinian-speaker/>

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvIs8wuRHY&feature=youtu.be>

The FCS leadership was clearly unprepared to the blowback from their decision, much of which was quite angry and bitter. Professor Atshan has remained relatively quiet about the incident and has generally turned down requests for formal interviews, only breaking his public silence in a powerful op-ed in the Philadelphia Inquirer in August, in which he expressed his support for the fired teachers, condemned anti-Semitism, and reiterated his support of Israeli-Palestinian peace and reconciliation.²² Sellers eventually requested a meeting with Atshan at which he apologized for the way things were handled and the professor accepted the apology. Sellers also extended an invitation for him to give his prepared talk at FCS. Atshan, however, stated that he would not accept the offer until the fired teachers are reinstated.²³

As is a tendency in Quaker organizations when faced with controversy, Friends Central blamed a “breakdown in process” and formed a committee (or, in this case, a “task force”).²⁴ Observing that, “We simply did not approach this very sensitive topic with adequate community dialogue,”²⁵ they appointed a Quaker, a Jew, and a Muslim as co-chairs. The majority of the first meeting was spent on debating what to call the task force. They decided to not even use the word “Palestine” or “Palestinian” in reference to the group, instead opting for the

22

<http://www.philly.com/philly/opinion/commentary/friends-central-school-saed-atshan-swarthmore-palestine-quaker-20170808.html>

23

<http://www.philly.com/philly/opinion/commentary/friends-central-school-saed-atshan-swarthmore-palestine-quaker-20170808.html>

²⁴ 2017 Feb 14. Statement has since been removed by the school, but it is quoted in full at the source cited in the next footnote.

²⁵ <http://afriendlyletter.com/breaking-friends-central-school-officials-issue-new-statement-backpedals/>

“Israel-Arab conflict,”²⁶ the preferred term of those who tend to portray the issue as that of a besieged Israel surrounded by hostile Arab states and minimize the national aspirations of a distinct Palestinian people. The task force recommended bringing in the Dialogue Institute of Temple University to work with teachers and students to promote “intrareligious, interreligious, and intercultural dialogue” and to screen the film “Wrestling Jerusalem,” which examines both Israeli and Palestinian claims to the city, followed by a discussion led by the University of San Francisco anthropologist Oren Kroll-Zeldin. Addressing the conflict from a perspective of dialogue and reconciliation was deemed to be a better approach than acknowledging the asymmetrical nature of the conflict between an occupied nation and the occupying power or related concerns regarding the US-backed Israeli occupation and ongoing violations of international humanitarian law.

The decision to block Professor Atshan’s scheduled talk and fire the teachers who invited him is part of a broader trend by Friends schools in recent years to prevent Middle Eastern peacemakers from sharing their witness with students. Shan Cretin, who served until earlier this year as executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, noted how a number of Friends schools which had welcomed other AFSC-sponsored speakers have refused to host Palestinian or Israeli speakers brought in by the AFSC.²⁷

A particularly egregious case involved the leadership of Friends Academy on Long Island, which cancelled a scheduled assembly—which was to be followed by a

²⁶ Interview with school administrators, Wallingford, PA April 2, 2017

²⁷ Interview, Philadelphia, PA March 17, 2017

lunchtime dialogue with students—by two young Israeli conscientious objectors. Neither the acting head of school at the time of the cancellation, the current head of school, nor the chair of the board has been willing to explain why they cancelled the presentations.²⁸ Given that most American Quaker COs are now in their mid-sixties or older, having two women who were close to the same age as the upper school students (they were 18 and 19 years old at that time) discussing their leadings to make the difficult decision to refuse military service would have been particularly powerful. In addition, given that a sizable number of Friends Academy students are Jewish, it would have been an important reminder that conscientious objection is not unique to Quakers or Christians. Indeed, one Israeli-American parent (whose daughter was a recent valedictorian) suspected that anti-Semitism may have played a role, since non-Jewish conscientious objectors have been allowed to speak at the school both before and after the Israelis' cancelled visit.²⁹

Others have communicated to me that since the Israeli COs might have shared their concerns about human rights abuses by Israeli occupation forces in discussing their leadings which led to their resistance to serving in the army, the Friends Academy administration may have been motivated by anti-Arab racism: specifically, a belief that the Israeli occupation is justified, that Palestinians should be forced to live under foreign military occupation, that they do not have the right to a viable state of their own, and therefore students should therefore not be exposed to any speakers—even Israelis—who believe otherwise.³⁰

²⁸ Email correspondence from May 2016 to April 2017

²⁹ Telephone interview, May 2, 2017

³⁰ Telephone and email correspondence, May-June 2016

The dispute over Professor Atshan's talk was not the first incident involving Friends Central School. In September 2016, in an unprecedented action, when a student club "Students for Justice and Peace in Palestine" was formed, the school administration removed their mission statement from the FCS website just six hours after they posted it.³¹

Another incident involving Friends Central took place in 2015. For years, Lower School students had put on a concert which raised money for the American Friends Service Committee. This was a tiny amount of cash raised by the young pupils themselves, totaling roughly \$200. However, the Home and School Association, a committee of FCS parents which oversees the concert, decided that—due to the AFSC's support for boycotting and divesting from companies that support the Israeli occupation, settlements, and other violations of international humanitarian law—the money raised should go to a well-funded non-Quaker charity instead. Even though barely more than one percent of the AFSC's total budget is directed towards Israeli-Palestinian peace education work, and only a minority of that goes to supporting boycotts and divestment from those four or five companies, the parents group decided to not allow their students to support AFSC because of that three-tenths of one percent. Given the relatively small sum donated by the students, the amount that would go to advocate boycotts and divestment of companies supporting the Israeli occupation would have been no more than six dollars.

Rather than defend that venerable Quaker organization from spurious attacks from

³¹ <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/Friends-Central-School-suspends-teachers-over-Palestinian-speaker.html>

parents, claiming that such support for corporate responsibility in territories under foreign belligerent occupation somehow constituted “racist” efforts to “delegitimize Israel” and linking the AFSC to those encouraging “verbally and physically assault pro-Israel students,”³² the FCS board went to great lengths to emphasize how Friends Central was a free-standing Friends school not under the care of a Quaker meeting or any other Friends organization and that they would insure that their students would no longer be able to donate any money to the AFSC.³³ Head of School Craig Sellers also went on record supporting the decision as well.³⁴ Given the long history of Quaker institutions—including schools—of supporting campaigns for corporate responsibility by boycotting companies supporting slavery, engaging in unfair labor practices, producing armaments, backing the occupation of Namibia, and supporting apartheid in South Africa, the FCS decision that this current AFSC campaign supporting corporate responsibility constituted grounds for no longer allowing its pupils to contribute to the organization represents a dramatic reversal of a longstanding Quaker tradition.

Some of those defending the decisions by the leadership of these Quaker schools have insisted that they were not responsible for their decisions because they were pressured by Jewish parents for whom they rely on financial contributions. There appears to be no evidence to support this claim, however,

³² e.g.
<https://www.facebook.com/karin.fox/posts/10154108838749628>

³³
<http://www.friendscentral.org/page.cfm?p=556&newsid=3717>

³⁴
<http://www.friendscentral.org/page.cfm?p=556&newsid=3711>

and Sellers has explicitly denied he has received any such pressure.³⁵ Indeed, such assumptions parallel the ugly anti-Semitic stereotype of blaming some kind of cabal of wealthy Jews behind the scenes, effectively scapegoating Jews for the decisions of non-Jewish administrators and board members. Similarly, much of the media coverage regarding Friends Central has portrayed the conflict over supporters of Palestinian rights versus Jews. However, as Professor Atshan has pointed out: “a) the student who started the Palestine Peace and Equality Club at FCS is Jewish, b) the lawyer (who is an FCS parent) representing the teachers is Jewish, c) my Swarthmore colleague (who is an FCS alum), who mobilized the alumni petition with hundreds of signatures calling on the FCS administration to re-invite me and re-instate the teachers, is Jewish and d) I have been overwhelmed by the number of Jewish FCS community members who have written to express their deep disagreement with how this was handled and support for the teachers.”³⁶

Even if there were threats by parents supportive of the Israeli occupation to withhold donations, Quaker schools have for years received pressure from parents and others as a result of their commitment to desegregation, peace in Vietnam and Central America, majority rule in South Africa, ending the arms race, climate justice, labor rights, and more, yet their administrations and boards have almost always stood up to principle. As a result, the responsibility for these decisions rests with the administrations and boards alone.

Even when Friends Schools have allowed Palestinian or Israeli speakers critical of the

³⁵ Interview, Wallingford, PA April 2, 2017

³⁶ Sa’ad Atshan, Facebook post, August 5, 2017

Israeli occupation to speak, they have at times insisted on such voices being “balanced” by another guest lecturer. The editorial in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that encouraged FCS to allow Professor Atshan to speak also suggested that FCS also bring in a “pro-Israel” speaker. Not only does this falsely assume that opposing the Israeli occupation is “anti-Israel” and supporting the occupation is “pro-Israel,” it assumes that both supporters and opponents of what is recognized in the international community as a foreign belligerent occupation have equally valid perspectives in relation to Quaker values.

For decades, various Quaker schools and other institutions have brought in people from conflict regions to tell their stories and perspectives, perspectives which—due to biases in Washington, the mainstream media, and elsewhere—Americans did not normally get to hear. Some of these speakers—who came from such countries as Vietnam, Namibia, Nicaragua, South Africa, El Salvador, and elsewhere—took positions that at times made Friends uncomfortable and contradicted many Friends’ understanding of the Peace Testimony and other forms of Witness. Yet because they were from marginalized and oppressed populations whose views were not generally taken into account, they provided perspectives that were important to hear, even if many Friends believed that some of their positions were problematic. To use a domestic analogy: White males exposed to ideas put forward by black nationalists or radical feminists may feel uncomfortable. However, even if upon further reflection, many of these white male Friends may still not agree with all they say, most will acknowledge that it was important to hear someone speaking their truth because it was something that those in a privileged position

would not otherwise hear. Such exposure has brought white males greater understanding and moved them forward in some important ways, even if they did not buy the whole package.

In exposing people to witnesses from the Global South, the leaders of Friends schools and organizations have largely understood this. They did not insist on “balancing” the perspective of a black South African anti-apartheid activist with a white South African pro-apartheid speaker; or a human rights activist from El Salvador with a supporter of the Salvadoran junta; or an East Timorese with a supporter of the Indonesian occupation. Yet there has sometimes been a tendency in some Friends institutions to insist on “balance” only if the speaker is a Palestinian or a supporter of Palestinian rights. It raises the question as to why there is often a special sensitivity regarding Israel as compared with other US-backed right-wing governments engaging in oppressive policies.

Some would argue that it is *indeed* different because—while many Israeli policies are no more justifiable than those by other repressive governments—Israel is the world’s only Jewish state. For example, if there was only one black state in the world, even if it has invaded and occupied its neighbors and was engaging in repression and colonization in the lands they had seized by force, there would likely be many African-Americans—along with white liberals—who might be somewhat defensive about criticisms, even if justifiable. As with the specter of racism, which leads many Friends to go to extra effort to not inadvertently encourage prejudice, there are Friends who feel obliged to show special sensitivity regarding anti-Semitism. There is an understandable desire to reassure our

Jewish friends, neighbors, colleagues, and others that we are not unfairly singling out Israel and that our concerns about Israel/Palestine are consistent with our Witness regarding violence and justice everywhere. As a result, so goes this argument, there is indeed a need to exercise a special sensitivity on issues related to Israel.

The question, however, is to what extent are Quakers and Quaker institutions required to show “special sensitivity” to right-wing militaristic political positions advocated by pro-Israeli national chauvinists? As a result of internalized oppression or other reasons, there are some Jews (like those of other faith traditions or no faith tradition) who are more or less set in their ways, and all the listening and re-wording and rescheduling is not going to change them. There are serious questions as to what extent Quaker schools and other institutions should limit discussion on the Israeli occupation and repression out of fear of getting people upset, particularly given the growing numbers of American Jews opposed to the Israeli occupation and supportive of equal rights for Palestinians. For example, despite the insistence by the head of school at Friends Academy that the decision to cancel the scheduled presentation by the Israeli conscientious objectors came out of a “Quaker process” of “communal discernment” which “led to a thoughtful decision,” those interviewed who were present noted that there in fact was no consensus and that the “loudest voices in the room prevailed.”³⁷

Perhaps both anti-Arab racism and anti-Semitism—at least on a subconscious level—are indeed playing a role in decisions by Quaker schools to prevent their students

from hearing Middle Eastern voices for peace or supporting campaigns for corporate responsibility. Otherwise, it is hard to explain why the leadership of such prestigious Quaker schools as Friends Central and Friends Academy would take such actions or that they would believe that speakers expressing opposition to a right-wing government occupying and colonizing a neighboring country and suppressing its population are too controversial to appear on their campuses. The issue, therefore, is about a lot more than Israel/Palestine. It is indicative that there needs to be serious discussion regarding what kind of people have made their way into leadership of Quaker educational institutions and what kind of values and principles they represent.

³⁷ Emails and telephone interviews, May-June 2016

Art + Refugees

*Laura Todd
Guilford College*

When Prof. Abdo asked me to create artwork for ECAR, I knew I had research to do. I learned that many Syrian refugees are women and children, that they often wait in limbo for years, and that many are disabled and suffering from massive physical and emotional trauma. I wanted my artwork to encapsulate that reality. For this watercolor sketch, I chose warm, low-contrast colors, broad strokes, and a simple background to create an ambiguous sense of time and place. The dark splotch in the corner I made by accident, but I decided to keep it; its ambiguity added to the piece. I wanted the figures, a woman and child, to evoke a sense of

story. The life jacket, simple orange plastic that manages to be both light and cumbersome, is a crucial part of that story. Viewers may read many things in this image: sadness, fatigue, protectiveness, vulnerability, relief, and more. The figures could be anyone: a mother and child, grandmother and child, unrelated people bound by the journey, or other people entirely. The woman could be leaning on the shorter figure for support, bowed over with protectiveness, or both. Who they are is unknown. The important thing is that they are people with their own stories to tell.

