

Jewish Life

Machete attack leaves campus reeling

We have all heard the story. It has been plastered all over the news: two Carleton University students, Nick Bergamini and Mark Klibanov, were attacked on April 5 at around 1:45 a.m. after a night on the town in Gatineau Quebec.

The two roommates were walking away from La Volt, a popular nightclub, when they were greeted with shouts of "Zionist" and anti-Semitic slurs. Soon they were surrounded. Things later escalated when one of the assailants grabbed his 12-inch machete out of the trunk of his car and further threatened the young men.

Neither Bergamini nor Klibanov can be sure who was the target of this hate crime. Bergamini, who is not Jewish, is vice-president of student issues for the Carleton Student Association and an avid supporter of Israel. In the past, he has campaigned for Israel advocacy and he has protested against Israeli Apartheid Week, making him a public figure who could have easily been recognized.

Klibanov is an Israeli student who, at the time of the attack, was campaign-

ing for election as president of the Israel Advocacy Committee (IAC) of Carleton and the University of Ottawa, a campaign that he would later win.

Klibanov says he believes the attackers were directing their comments at Bergamini, though he cannot be sure.

"We believe that he recognized Nick or me. I thought the remarks were directed at Nick, but both of us are prominent members of the Jewish community who speak out and support Israel," he said.

Bergamini called the attack "totally unprovoked,"

and both students believe the act was a hate crime. "They were yelling, 'Jew' and 'Zionist.' It's not like it was motivated out of anger and it came from an argument. We were completely passive the entire time. We were just walking home. It was motivated by what we believe to be a hate crime," he said.

Bergamini was quick to say he does not blame Carleton, but he says he does know that one of the attackers was a Carleton student.

Klibanov agreed, saying, "Carleton

campus is safe, security is very good. Heated debates have happened, but nothing that led to violence."

His new role as IAC president will give Klibanov a more active role in working to prevent events like this from arising in the future, and he plans to deal with this actively. He believes that a way to prevent violent and aggressive attacks is to put a more human face on the conflict by "trying to create an atmosphere with open dialogue with Palestinians, because that's the best way to remedy the situation."

He acknowledges that this will not end the debate, but believes that meeting and discussing issues in a safe environment may create more human empathy and discourage violence.

The attack has been reported to Gatineau police, as police spokesperson Isabelle Poirier acknowledged. "We received a call concerning an armed aggression and it's under investigation," she said.

Bergamini and Klibanov are also working alongside campus security trying to recognize who the Carleton student involved in the attack is. So far, they have had no such luck though they remain optimistic.



ON CAMPUS
By Justin Dahan

Last Sunday, thousands of Jewish teenagers took time away from their homework, extracurricular activities and extended sleep schedules to offers a few hours of volunteer service under the banner of J-Serve. Celebrating its fifth year, J-Serve is an annual day of service for Jewish high school students that crosses organizational and denominational lines.

In Toronto, youth movements from across the Jewish spectrum partnered under the aegis of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto to paint a sukkah, volunteer at the Hadassah telethon and assemble tzedakah boxes for Zareinu Educational Centre. Hundreds of miles away, I helped a group of teens distribute lunches to the homeless, clean up a local park and canvass for the ethical treatment of restaurant workers.

It's hard to argue against the value J-Serve. As the organization says, it "provides teens with the opportunity to fulfil the Jewish values of gemilut chasidim, acts of loving kindness, tzedakah, just and charitable giving, and tikkum olam, the responsibility to repair the world." All this while instilling a sense of peoplehood that blurs denominational lines and engaging teens who would usually snub a Jewish event.

J-Serve has filled an important niche.

It's also emblematic of a growing tide of Jewish service learning. In this column, I have previously described the powerful experiences of Jewish

Jewish service isn't zero-sum

students doing disaster relief work in New Orleans, delivering Passover food to Toronto's hungry and volunteering in a rural Mayan village. These experiences have a three-fold purpose: they serve those in need, they teach Jewish values and they offer a forum for the exploration of active Jewish communal living.

Repair the World, a new umbrella organization established by funders such as the Schusterman and Jim Joseph foundations, is investing millions of dollars to make service a defining part of Jewish life.

This mission has come under fire. In the March edition of *Commentary* magazine, Jack Wertheimer bemoans the Jewish service learning movement as yet another example of Jewish philanthropic money and volunteer hours being sunk into non-sectarian causes. Wertheimer argues that in the current economic climate, with Jewish organizations and Jewish families devastated by economic hardship, this movement is funnelling resources away from Jewish needs.

Wertheimer recognizes that "Jews in their teens, 20s and 30s are deeply invested in contributing to the world at large... and to get their attention, Jewish organizations must harness their idealism and teach young people that their quest to aid fellow human

beings is in fact congruent with the deepest teachings of Judaism."

He asks, however, why this effort to repair the world can't extend to aiding fellow Jews? Instead of Teach for America, we should create teaching fellowships in day schools. Instead of disaster relief in New Orleans, we should seek out those in need in our own community.

This debate between the particularistic and universalistic ideals of service was given voice in Sunday's J-serve experiences. Toronto teens volunteered at a synagogue, Hadassah, JACS and other Jewish organizations. The teens I worked with served the homeless, the parks conservatory, and restaurant workers. I can't say if the points of service were chosen based on convenience, ideology or any number of other factors. The distinction, however, is clear.

Wertheimer is correct is saying that we often gloss over the needs within our own community. Today, an unprecedented number of Jews are living under the poverty line, while day school tuition has reached a critical level and communal institutions are threatened by shrinking budgets.

What Wertheimer doesn't recognize, however, is that service isn't a zero-sum game. The investment in young Jews living, working and learning together to serve those in need - Jewish or not - will, in the long run, pay dividends for the Jewish community and the greater world.



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By Daniel Held

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