



# IRFWP Series on Religion and Peace and Interreligious Dialogue

## Event Report:

### *Evacuation of Settlements in the Holy Land*

On Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, IRFWP successfully hosted the first of its current series on **Religion and Peace and Interreligious Dialogue**, *Evacuation of Settlements in the Holy Land*. The event took place in the Skylight Lounge of the New Yorker Hotel, attended by approximately 25 guests and participants.



IRFWP director, Dr. Frank Kaufmann interviewed Professors Charles Selengut, Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies at Drew University, and Lonnie McLeod, New York Theological Seminary, and Unification Theological Seminaries, and Pastor, The Living Hope Church in Harlem.

Four elements of note comprised the exchange. One arose during the speakers' opening remarks, three arose in the interview.

In the opening remarks one speaker represented the view that conflict is grounded most essentially in inequality and disparity in resources and opportunity. He summarized the requisite order for steps leading to peace as soup, soap, and salvation. The second speaker recommended that mutually exclusive or contradictory divine injunction and religious obligation is the deeper ground of conflict. An audience member sought to sharpen the difference by asking, "If every Jew and every Palestinian made 100,000 a year, and lived in a 250,000 dollar house, do you think there would then be peace among them?"



These diverging views were not presented in stark opposition. Both speakers readily embraced and acknowledged the validity of the other person's views. A fun part of the night became the playful emergence of sentences with the word, "but" and "however" ... "You are right *but* ..." "I agree with everything you say, *however*..." As the night progressed, the audience members recited the words "but" and the "however" at appropriate junctures in the speakers'

remarks. The debate was genuinely engaging, pleasant, and edifying, while retaining an intellectual and emotional intensity. The program moved at an efficient and crisp pace, transpiring respectfully between 7 and 9 pm



# ...Report Continued

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The interview revolved around three questions that similarly drew important insights and responses:

1. The evacuation was painted and portrayed especially in the media as a pursuit of peace, but the rhetoric leading up to the national decision was couched in a voice of enmity, hostility, and self interest. Does the inherent duplicity of the event bode greater trouble ahead?
2. A nation (or any entity) divided is never in a good position to engage in harmonious relations. Did using the Israeli army to evacuate settlers split Israel to the extent that it would become an unhealthy dialog partner and a problem country in the family of nations.
3. All rhetoric leading up to the evacuation blared an incessant claim of faithfulness to the United States and George W. Bush. Is the United States and the Bush administration helpful or hurtful in its role and influence in affairs between Israel and Palestine?

The liveliness of the exchange kept the speakers and guests together in informal conversation for close to an hour past the formal close of the event.

Our next conversation in this IRFWP series examines nuclear development in Iran under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

*The IRFWP Series Religion and Peace is not a program of “interfaith encounter” per se. It is one in which qualified and knowledgeable religionists provide for world leaders and the general public greater understanding of the religious and spiritual dimensions of progressing global affairs.*

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