

Panel Discusses Efficacy of Cultural Exchange

BY COLIN MORRIS

In times of rising global tensions and political strife, can cultural awareness, dialogue and exchange be functionally promoted through the arts?

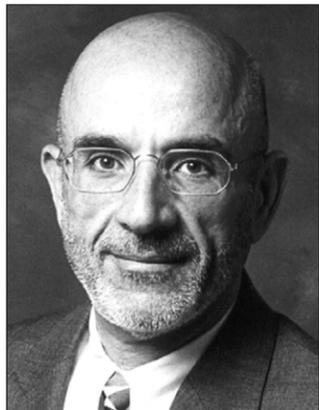
The nature and efficacy of cultural diplomacy, specifically in regards to improving the U.S.'s standing in the Islamic world, was addressed by an expert panel during the School of Journalism's "Arts & Minds: Cultural Diplomacy amid Global Tensions" conference.

Overall, panelists found today's examples of cultural exchange between the U.S. and the Islamic world problematic at best.

Samer Shehata, professor of Arab studies at Georgetown University, believes that there is currently more State Department spawned propaganda aired in the direction of the Islamic, and in this case, Arab world than actual cultural diplomacy. Shehata criticized numerous initiatives by the State Department's Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Office, which he described as failures in improving how Arab people view American culture. One month after September 11, the State Department hired ad executive Charlotte Beers—famous for branding such commodities as Uncle Ben's Rice—in the hopes of boosting the U.S. image abroad. She has recently stepped down after citing health problems. Shehata described U.S.-made media projects, such as "mini documentaries" promoting Arab American life, which he said were basically U.S. commercials as opposed to tools for cultural exchange. According to his data, compiled from Zogby and BBC research, the Arab community generally shares this view. Most of

the U.S. projects have proved unpopular.

One Western media company who has proved to be extremely popular in the Middle East is Radio Sawa—operated and funded by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), another agency of the U.S. Government. Radio Sawa is the first station to provide a format of mixing Middle Eastern and Western music back to back on their play lists. Bert Kleinman, senior managing consultant to Radio Sawa, insisted that his group were not merely selling the U.S. to the Mid-



Dean Peter Awn

dle Eastern community. Apart from pop music, Radio Sawa also dedicates a small part of each hour to news—from a distinctly American perspective. Shehata read from a British Broadcasting Company (BBC) interview with young Arab men, all of which said they very much enjoyed the station but were suspicious of its news, often tuning to other stations for that portion of the hour. Kleinman countered this argument by highlighting a possible bias of the report due to the BBC and Radio Sawa being competitors in the region.

"We're projecting the spirit of America," Kleinman explained. "Sawa tries to be what everyone likes about the U.S." The format has proved immensely popular, especially among the younger target audience.

Perhaps the most multilateral example of cultural exchange came from panelist Faouzi Skali, founder of Morocco's Fez Music Festival. The event, which takes place annually, features sacred music by world-renowned artists from across the globe. After the first Gulf War, Skali felt compelled to take action against what he saw as a widening void between Western and Middle Eastern cultures. "Through [Western] media we have a very false understanding of what Islam is," Skali explained, citing the same problems in Arab media in regards to Western culture. Skali feels that events like these can create understanding of cultures through the appreciation of such master musicians, traditionally representing their own people. "The event says more than you can by word," Skali said, "because it is experiencing another culture."

Peter Awn, dean of the School of General Studies and professor of Islamic and comparative religion, voiced frustration at what he called a fundamental lack of familiarity with foreign cultures by the U.S. population. Awn feels that the U.S. still perceives the many cultures and races of Islam as monolithic. One reason for this, Awn suggested was the U.S.' inability to critique religious society. This affects the way in which we deal with religious fanaticism, especially in the Middle East, Awn argued.

"We hand our power to the religious right in this country and elsewhere because we're too afraid of

Kathleen Savage Remembered

Kathleen Savage, a Columbia employee for more than 32 years, died recently of cancer.

Through more than three decades, Savage held positions in General Studies, the American Language Program, the Department of History and, most recently, in the Institute for Research on Women and Gender (IRWaG), where she was assistant to the director.

Born in Kingston, N.Y., Savage lived most of her life in New York City, where she raised her son.

At IRWaG, she was remembered for the care and warmth that she extended to the students who studied and worked there, many of whom received hot meals from her. During her brief but heroic battle with cancer, Kathleen was surrounded by friends and family.

Rosalind Morris, director of the IRWaG, said Savage would be remembered by all of her co-workers for "her extraordinary capacity for generosity and deep affection."

Morris added, "For her



Kathleen Savage

magnificent friendship, her fidelity and her great wit, we at IRWaG, and all who knew her, shall miss Kathleen for a long, long time to come."

Savage is survived by her son, John Dydo, her sister and brother-in-law, Meg and Don Siewert, her brother and sister-in-law, Andy and Cheryl Savage, and by many nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held on Monday, April 28 from 6-8 p.m. in Saint Paul's Chapel.

standing up and saying 'keep your nose out of public discourse, and stop trying to shape the way society functions.'"

Citing Shehata's calls for more policy changes, Awn lamented the decline of institutionalized exchange through fellowships and many sponsored programs with countries like Iran. We, as Americans, would now be forced to play catch-up, Awn explained. He

stressed that much more money needs to be put towards education, which he said was its own cultural exchange. Awn called for more money towards secondary schools as well as institutions of higher education. "Our credibility would be much more serious if we were working with groups and institutions in a number of areas," Awn said. "We're not selling toothpaste."

Columbia's Institute of War and Peace Studies Named for Arnold A. Saltzman

BY KATIE MOORE

Columbia inaugurated The Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies on March 31 in a ceremony featuring remarks by SIPA Dean Lisa Anderson, Arnold Saltzman, and Senator George Mitchell, senior fellow at Columbia's Center for Conflict Resolution. The naming of the prestigious War and Peace Institute in honor of industrialist and diplomat Arnold A. Saltzman, and the initiation of two new Saltzman professorships, renews the University's focus on programs devoted to the study of conflict and resolution.

"At a time when issues of war and peace are a daily concern, the naming of the Saltzman Institute and the creation of the Saltzman professorships demonstrate Columbia's determination to play a role in supporting the resolution of critical international issues," said President Lee C. Bollinger. "We are deeply grateful to Arnold Saltzman and the Saltzman family for making this renewed commitment possible."

"The Institute of War and Peace Studies was established over 50 years ago by Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was then president of Columbia University," said Arnold Saltzman. "That it will forever carry our name is a distinct honor bestowed by Columbia on me and my family."

The Saltzman Institute of War



RECORD PHOTO BY EILEEN BARROSO

Arnold A. Saltzman, second from left, with his family, from left: daughter, Mimi; wife, Joan; and son, Eric.

and Peace Studies will nurture research in a growing number of fields, including military and security studies, international conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy. Pursuing a broader mandate, it will also foster dialogue between scholars and statesmen, academics and activists, and professors and policymakers.

Mr. Saltzman shared his vision of the future of the Institute: "No bugles blow for peace—and peace is not simply the absence of war," he said. "There is no mechanism in our government to wage peace, to look beyond immediate crises and

plan for a peaceful future. This Institute can help move us in that direction. And Columbia, whose sons participated in the formation of this nation, is a most appropriate home for these endeavors."

The renamed Institute will continue to be based in Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

"The School thrives at the juncture of world-class interdisciplinary scholarship and real-world problems and problem-solvers," explained SIPA Dean Lisa Anderson. "We are delighted to recognize Arnold Saltzman's contributions

both to the University and to national and international public policy by associating his name with one of Columbia's oldest and most distinguished research centers. This will ensure that the Institute will continue to draw together leading scholars and practitioners from across the University and around the world to address some of the most pressing issues of our time."

The University also has established two Saltzman professorships, the first held by the Institute's director, Richard K. Betts. Betts is a political scientist and a leading scholar on contemporary military and security issues. He gave the inaugural Saltzman Institute lecture at the March 31 naming ceremony entitled, "Three Visions of the Future of International Security." The second chair will allow distinguished practitioners to come to Columbia as visiting professors to teach, conduct research and otherwise bring the wisdom born of real-world experience to Institute programs.

Saltzman, who graduated from

Columbia College in 1936, has served the United States under five presidents in a wide range of policy-level diplomatic and economic assignments in Eastern Europe, Latin America and within the United States. He also served as a naval officer in World War II. He was recently awarded the Order of Honor from the Republic of Georgia, and he has received a Presidential Commendation for his efforts on the International Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

A devoted Columbia alumnus, Saltzman has served as chairman of the Columbia College Board of Overseers, the Columbia College Fund, the John Jay Associates and other bodies. He is co-founder of the Double Discovery Program, which assists under-achieving minority high school students to rise to college entrance, and he helped create the first advisory board for the School of International and Public Affairs, of which he is still a member.

Columbia founded The Institute of War and Peace Studies in the wake of World War II to promote understanding of the "disastrous consequences of war upon man's spiritual, intellectual and material progress." Since the Institute's inception, researchers have gone beyond the military aspects of international relations to probe the political, economic, moral, psychological, legal, historical and philosophical dimensions of war and peace.