

31:37:29: the Jewish community relations council is the public affairs voice for the organized Detroit Jewish community. We 125 member organizations, Jewish organizations throughout our region and we speak on behalf of the general community and The Jewish community relations council is the public affairs voice for the Jewish community in Detroit and we have about 125 member organizations, Jewish organizations in southeast Michigan. We speak on their behalf and the Jewish community at large, primarily on issues of concern to the Jewish community but also of concern in the general community

32:25:27: I'm the lead staff professional; I've been in this position for almost three years. The Jewish community's relations council functions are to engage in connecting the Jewish community through the community at large and with the other ethnic and religious communities of metro Detroit. The work we do includes Israel advocacy, explaining Israel's concerns and its needs and the things that it does good to the community at large. We also engage on government issues such as economic distress to generate funding for local social service agencies and we're also involved in promoting volunteerism

Fixing shot... small talk with Geri

34:25:28: Our member organizations range from the Jewish federation of Metro Detroit which is comparable to the united way, it's our major fundraising organization to a variety of social service agencies such as JVS to Jewish family service, kadema which is a mental health service agency all the way to the smallest organizations like the Israel stamp collectors association

Geri's question about the Nolan Finley editorial...

35:07:29: Well I read it and I can give you my response to it if you want. The Palestinians made a choice. They chose a terrorist organization to be their government in Gaza... (Had to turn off his phone)... the Palestinians chose a terrorist organization to be their government and this is an organization committed to violence. It cannot be, it hasn't been recognized as a legitimate government by the United States or by numerous other countries in the west. Hamas does not adhere to the norms of civilized society where violence is not considered to be an acceptable way to run a government. So when I look at the column he (Nolan Finley) I think that what he's saying is true that the Palestinians made a bad choice and they have to live with the results of that

Geri's question about the July 2006 war

36:44:19: During the war, leading up to it and afterwards, our role was to explain to the general community and to a large extent, that means through the news media, to explain Israel's situation, its concerns, what the facts were regarding what led up to the conflict and what the Jewish community's concerns here were about what was happening over there and the Jewish community was concerned, first and foremost, what was happening to Israel and its residents. The Jewish community was also concerned about the people in Lebanon who were caught in the middle of the fighting.

Geri's question about the organization holding press conferences, their reaction to the war

37:38:19: We, on an ongoing basis, have relationships with the news media; we engage them throughout the course of the year. During the war we were contacted almost daily either for comments or to help the media find families here that had family or relatives there they were concerned about. We arranged interviews, we wrote op-ed pieces and letters to the editor. We are a main resource for the news media for dealing with Israel and with other issues dealing with the Jewish community and we're usually the first place a reporter or editor calls when they want to do a story on that subject. So what was happening in July of 2006 is that we were working 24/6, closed for our Sabbath, but we were accessible to the media around the clock and they often called us around the clock asking us for either help in doing a story or for comments, or for corrections

Did your organization sponsor any of the rallies?

38:54:20: We sponsored the first rally in June of 2006 calling for the return of illal shalid (sp?) and we worked with the federation for the community wide July stand with Israel rally.

Characterization of those rallies?

39:20:02: The rallies were a statement of solidarity with our friends, relatives and fellow Jews in Israel concerned about what was going on the need for Hamas and Hezbollah to return the kidnapped soldiers and to bring an end to the terrorist attacks they were waging on Israel. So at these rallies you hear speakers talking about what was really going on in the conflict and why it was so important for the Detroit community, not just the Jewish community, but the Detroit community overall to stand together in support of Israel and why the Israeli/ American relationship is so important.

Opinion of News coverage?

40:25:03: On an ongoing basis, we monitor news coverage. When it's in any way problematic, whether it's unbalanced or inaccurate, we contact our contacts at the newspaper whether it's editors, reporters or radio stations or television stations and we express our concern and we try to give them the information they need so that when they do the next story they'll do a better job on it. What we found during the war is what we found during our ongoing basis which is that the media, locally (can't hear) coverage of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. And a lot of the coverage is good, some of it's problematic because it's either unbalanced or at times, inaccurate or doesn't provide a framework within the events which the reporting on needs to be viewed in order to understand what's really going on.

41:43:25: We just did a look-back survey of three months of newspaper coverage and basically coded the articles as to whether we thought they were fair to Israel, unfair to Israel, inaccurate and I would say that about half the stories were accurate and fair, and when I say accurate and fair, I mean to both sides.... (Audio and video messed up) based on one piece of the story their talking about rather than another, or sometimes there would be articles that contained the Palestinian explanation for what happened but not any kind of explanation from the Israeli government as to why things happened as they did. Those are really problematic for us. I will tell

you when we meet with editors and reporters of the local media, either on one of our scheduled bases or if we have to have a conversation right away if something happens when we talk to the media and express our concerns, they are very responsive, by responsive, I mean they listen to what we have to say, they give it fair consideration and they acknowledge when they think they could have done a better job and our relationship with them is professional and is mutually respectful and our job as an agency is to on an ongoing basis help them do the best job they can.

43:52:24: Sometimes a newspaper story will cover an event like a... (Redo) There's a news cycle, through the 24 hours, the news cycle is such that if there's an attack, a terrorist attack during the day in Israel, often there has been a responding action taken against the terrorists by the Israel military, several hours later. Because of the time lag, when the newspaper reports on that sequence of events, the latest information is about the Israeli response. That often is the lead on the story and why that response took place is further on in the story is downplayed and as a result, a reader who is just reading if for the first time, will come away with a sense of focusing on the Israeli action and not what led up to it.

Local example?

45:12:20: I think that Don talked to you about how the newspapers fail to vet the background on some of these people who spoke at the Dearborn rallies. He's more knowledgeable about it than I am, but that would be an example I would appoint to. But I can't speak to that.

Freep and DetNews?

45:43:09: I think both newspapers did comparable work in terms of accuracy and fairness and in terms of when there were deficiencies in the coverage. They are to a large extent victims of the changes in the nature of the newspaper business. They have less space in order to provide coverage of events particularly overseas, they are dependent on wire services for events overseas and when the stories come out of the Palestinian territories who are written by journalists who do not have freedom that the reporters in Israel have for reporting, the newspaper is not even in a position to evaluate that difference between the conditions in which the story was written. So, the local newspapers today can only do so much in covering Israel and Palestinian territories and its mostly headline stories.

47:00:18: The free press sent a reporter to Lebanon. He traveled with a delegation of Arab community leaders here. We asked for that reporter to also go to Israel to see what was happening in the northern part of Israel during the war and that didn't happen. The Detroit news I believe had a reporter that went to both locations. The coverage in this country of what was going on in Lebanon, not just in Detroit, but what was going on across the country, the coverage of Lebanon, really gave a distorted picture of the extent of the destruction and the impact of the conflict. The impression that you get when you read the newspaper or watch TV reports of what happened back then, it appeared that Lebanon was being completely devastated particularly in Beirut. The reality is that a very small portion of Beirut was affected and it was the areas where Hezbollah was based and most of the city was completely untouched and in fact went about its business normally. That did not come across to people in this community and that's unfortunate because it conveyed a false impression of the nature of the conflict.

48:45:04: we asked the free press to send a reporter there and we're still hopeful a reporter will go at some point. Why they didn't, is a question you need to address them. My presumption is that it was a resource issue which is a question of the bodies that are available and the cost of sending someone there and they have to make that decision as to what they can and cant do??

49:41:09: when we interact with reporters or editors on a story in the works, sometimes we provide spokespersons, other times we connect the outlet to the right people, sometimes those right people are members of our organizations or council, sometimes they're not. Our job is to help them get the story and get them to talk to people who are most capable of helping them with their stories. We also provide resource material to them (audio and video out)... require them to cover a story they have a background to evaluate the story with critical thinking skills

51:07:05: I think that the caliber of the reporting of the Palestinian conflict during the three years I've been here, I'd say was gradually increasing and it was gradually increasing because of the work we do in advocacy on behalf of our community and Israel but also over time people and institutions learn to do a better job

How can journalists improve coverage?

51:52:06: Well my first goal would be to get more journalists to go to Israel and that's what this documentary is concerned about, media coverage for the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. There's nothing like going there and seeing it for yourself and we organization trips to Israel for media, community leaders and so forth on an ongoing basis and we give them the facts and they get to see a variety of people with different viewpoints including the Palestinians and what we would want the journalists who are going to do... (Audio and video went out)... in a very complicated conflict.

53:21:09: the 2006 war in Lebanon affected relations between the Jewish and middle east community in Detroit, more than anytime I believe in recent history, because it was so personally felt by community leaders in both communities. The Arab community has very extensive connections to south Lebanon. The Jewish community here pays great attention to what happens to the Israeli civilians in the north and in this case where a million people were forced to live in shelters for extended periods of time. So the feelings were so keenly agitated by the conflict so it was very difficult for the Jewish and Middle East community to interact... (video and audio lost again) ...

55:22:09: It's not so much a specific thing that's been cancelled. It's difficult for us to conceive of activities to do that may have nothing to do with the Middle East conflict but where we might work together. We still have hope that we might have areas where we can work together but as the public affairs voice for the Jewish community it's very difficult for me and the council to interact with the agency in the middle east community that has the same role, we don't have enough common ground right now.

(Inaudible question....)

56:09:14: No, no, no ... there's no exact parallel to our organization there so depending on the nature of our interaction might be there's a variety of organizations, we don't interact with them the way we might of in the past.

Interfaith partners question:

56:54:12: Well the Jewish community is still present in interfaith partners. The council had a leadership role in that for a number of years but that has since rolled over to the American Jewish committee is acting that role

Question of outreach:

57:20:07: because of how key feelings are, there are connections going on under the radar and it's best to keep them that way because if they come to the surface... (audio/video)... editorial, there is some good work going on but it's difficult to publicize that or to deal with that in a public way

58:19:00: no it hasn't, I think the leadership in the middle east community, as strongly as they feel they want to advocate for the Palestinians they all know we live together as neighbors and we have to continue to do that so I'm not surprised there hasn't been violence and we have to continue to do that

Audio and Video out....

59:18:13: Some of my colleagues think I'm too optimistic and I don't have a sense of a timetable. That in the last year, things have become even more problematic and complex, I just hope we will see progress and peace in the region and I can't predict how soon or what that will look like

Bob's question about relations improving here

1:00:04:24: We're not going to solve the problems of the middle east in Detroit, mi, so there's a possibility of the two communities, the Arab and Jewish communities, of coming closer together her even if that doesn't happen in a significant way in the middle east. However, things are not going to stay unchanged in Israel and its surroundings. And because of that, you're going to see an echo of the relationship there in terms of the Jewish and Arab community here.

Bob's question about Nolan Finley op -ed

1:01:39:25: the points Nolan Finley was making in his column, or the important point, was that the Palestinians in the Palestinian territories made a very bad choice and have to live with the consequences of that choice and that makes sense to me.

Bob's question on how we can uncover examples of collaboration and cooperation.

1:02:35:02: you might see some examples of collaboration and cooperation at the clergy level and I would talk to rabbis and imams here and see what they might be doing and there might be things going on the radar screen or off the radar screen that would be the kind you're looking to find out about. Clergy have the freedom of the pulpit where they can do what they feel individually is the right thing to do at any point in time. Organizational leaders are responsible to its members and the community at large so we have less latitude in some things than clergy would have and we need to represent the consensus of our community and clergy and are willing to sometimes go on the edge a little further and they have the freedom of the pulpit to do so