

Considering Israel's position

by Jonathan Friedland
Editorial Editor



The Erez crossing, the only border crossing between Israel and Gaza, processes a mere 400 people per day following the conflict between the two states that ended after 50 gruesome days. In stark contrast to its usual capacity of over 45,000 people each day, the only legitimate way to travel

between the state of Israel and Gaza has all but shut down because of the war.

The build up to the conflict began on June 12, 2014. Three Israeli teenagers, Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer, and Eyal Yifrah were abducted and murdered. Hamas initially refused to accept responsibility for the attacks, choosing instead to congratulate and praise the killers for their service. However, a senior Hamas leader later admitted accountability for the horrific murders. When investigators uncovered the bodies of the three missing Israeli teenagers on June 30, a Palestinian teenager was kidnapped and also murdered. Three suspects were brought to trial as the Israeli government condemned their actions.



courtesy R. Blackwell

Arabs living in Israel and Gaza did not view the situation as an isolated incident of idiocy that every country has. Instead, Israeli Muslims initiated destructive riots and Hamas began launching rockets into Israel at the pace of nearly one hundred per week. Hamas defended their actions, calling the killing of the Palestinian teenager a reason that "all Israelis have now become legitimate targets." As a result, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) launched an air and ground offensive on the Gaza Strip, successfully infiltrating and destroying Hamas's tunnels into Israel and killing over 1,000 terrorists.

Despite the rocket barrage that Israel underwent during the fifty day conflict, the nation still receives heavy criticism from pundits who call its response overzealous and unwarranted.

However, imagine you lived in a country the size of New Jersey, as technologically advanced as America, and bordered by nations, five, ten, or twenty times your size, all trying to obliterate you. Imagine having to live in a state of constant rocket fire and the threat of Iranian nuclear weapons. Imagine living in a country where terrorists dig sophisticated tunnels

that according to the Israeli military were, "intended to carry out attacks such as abductions of Israeli civilians and soldiers alike; infiltrations into Israeli communities, mass murders and hostage-taking scenarios." And imagine living in a world that criticizes you and your country for taking defensive measures to prevent terrorists from firing rockets and killing civilians.

For instance, Israel has been unjustly criticized for the heavy civilian casualties that happened during the war. In its air assault on Hamas militants, Israel was forced to target heavily populated areas as terrorists purposely took cover in homes, apartments, and other civilian-inhabited buildings. Hamas used their own people, whom they are supposedly fighting for, as collateral. As confirmed by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, the IDF warned Palestinian civilians of an incoming attack through leaflets, flyers, phone calls, and roof knocking to counteract Hamas's barbaric strategy.

In addition, the majority of injured Palestinians were treated by Israeli doctors who volunteered their time to help the Gaza civilians. However, Hamas did not embrace Israel's humanitarian efforts, forcing evacuees back into their buildings and violently assaulting those who attempted to escape.

The root of all the conflicts between Israel and Gaza has been the Palestinian belief in "land for peace." However, the same Palestinian government that uses this slogan constantly in negotiations disproved the notion themselves. For instance, in 2005, Israel relinquished control of Gaza, removing all of their troops from the territory and permitting Palestinian sovereignty. Israel aspired for the territory to become a prosperous state that would co-exist with its neighbor to the north. However, Gaza established itself as a safe-haven for terrorist activity, choosing to spend its money on rockets and building tunnels instead of in the domestic sphere; the Gaza government fails to provide even the most basic sanitary needs for its people. According to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, only 55 percent of Gazans have access to a sewer system and around 200,000 have no access to running water. Thus, Israel's noble experiment proved unsuccessful as all it received in exchange for land was an augmentation in rocket fire, not peace.

Overall, Israel, a nation just two thousandths the size of America, does everything in its power to save civilian lives. Yet Hamas fails to stop the only policy Israel has ever requested of them since 2005: the ceasing of rocket fire.

Drought is good

by Aidan Adams-Campeau
Humor Editor



The current California drought gets a lot of press, but nearly all of it is one-sided. The critics of the drought point to potential environmental and economic impacts, and they make some good points. However, while statistics and environmental projections are immaterial to the common person, the rarely interrupted sunshine

and beautiful weather is tangible and should be appreciated more, rather than constantly attacked. We should acknowledge that for all the harms the drought may cause, there are also positive effects including the unending pleasant weather that the absence of much-vaunted rainfall allows.

According to a recent Harvard Health Letter, spending time outdoors and in the sun is good for your health, as it leads to a rise in vitamin D levels, more exercise, and being happier, as light exposure has been shown elevate people's moods. On the other hand, colder, rainier weather can lead to seasonal affective disorder, often called the winter blues, a condition which affects an estimated ten million Americans and whose symptoms include depression, loss of energy, and weight gain. Despite these positive health benefits that the drought provides, a family making the healthy decision to go hiking on an unexpectedly sunny January afternoon doesn't make the news, since frightening headlines are better for grabbing the attention of an audience. Despite the blatant disrespect and unkindness, many Californians are to display towards it, the drought silently perseveres, without thanks or commendation, in making lives healthier.

Though the physical state of being in the sun can improve moods, overall happiness is much more a matter of outlook. A study that compared the happiness levels of people in California and those in the North West found that happiness levels were the same, defying expectations that better weather might lead to greater happiness. Paul Dolan, a professor of behavioral science at the London School of Economics, explains this discrepancy, stating that "if it is sunny every day you get used to it and the sunshine doesn't make you any happier." Despite the sun's natural mood-heightening effects, an unappreciative attitude towards consistently pleasant weather, such as that displayed by those who find only fault in California's persisting sunshine, ultimately undermines the happiness that nice weather can provide.

Dolan offers this advice: "Most of our anxieties come from what might be. If you want to be happier, pay attention to the things that make you feel good." The potential negative effects of the drought fall into the 'what might be' category of negativity and anxiety, and currently this category is what people tend to focus on. Instead, Californians should become happier by paying attention to the things that make them feel good, like being outside, in nature, in the sun, all year round.

Nailpolish detects date rape

by Violet Wallerstein
Center Editor



Lately there has been a lot of media buzz over a nail polish developed by North Carolina State University students that changes color when it comes in contact with a date rape drug.

This has not been the only product that makes an attempt to let people know when their drink is drugged; I have read articles about straws, cups, and coasters. However, few of these products ever reach the market and it begs the question, are they worth it?

With one in four women experiencing rape or sexual assault in her lifetime, date rape drugs cannot be the only source of this problem. If we could find other more major sources of rape and cut them off, we wouldn't need a fancy new nail polish.

Teaching women to detect date rape drugs will not prevent the majority of rapes. Instead we have to change the way rapists are prosecuted. According to RAINN.org, only 40 percent of rapes are reported, and not without reason. Many victims are not aware that what happened to them is classified as rape, and many of those who know are afraid to report it. Even if the case does get reported, only eight percent of rapists are prosecuted, so reporting a case does not do much good. Many rape kits

never even leave the police station. In the Houston Police Department, there are up to 7,000 rape kits that have been left untested, and according to TIME Magazine, "The majority of rapes are not because many men are all raping different girls, but one man is raping multiple girls and not being stopped." If we could improve the justice system's approach to catching rapists, many possible rapes would be prevented.

Before anyone protests that I am only presenting this with females as the victims, I would like to clarify. It has been shown with a variety of statistics that women all over the world get raped more often than men. This isn't to say that men are not in danger of sexual assault or rape, just that it occurs more often to women than to men. Also, within this discussion, the product in question is targeted towards women. Not to say that nail polish cannot be worn by men, but it was created with the intention of helping females.

This specific tool that is creating a great deal of media buzz does not solve the main issues. It is also only a solution to one issue, a drugged rape. There are many other scenarios, such as rape by a partner or spouse, kidnap and raping, or gang rape. While other devices could be made worthwhile to help protect women, a nail polish will not solve a great deal of the problem, a shift in the way rape is handled is more necessary.



courtesy Feminya

Don't judge celebrities

by Rowyn van Miltenburg
National Editor



Receiving criticism seems to go hand in hand with being a celebrity. From countless nude photo scandals to risque wardrobe choices, everyone seems to find something

wrong with one celebrity or another. We tend to believe that all celebrities are supposed to be role models and we judge them when they don't live up to our standards. Our criticism is not warranted in this situation - these celebrities never asked to be our role models. As a society we choose to look up to celebrities when, in reality, we barely know anything about them. We are prone to choosing complete strangers as role models over our own family members.

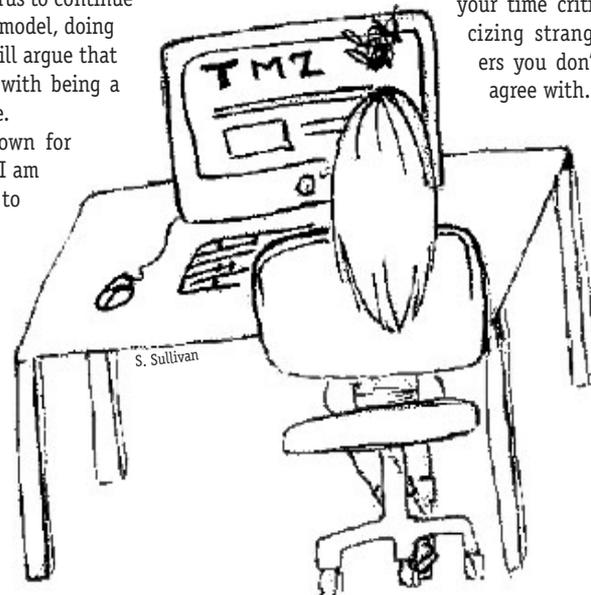
After Miley Cyrus performed at the VMAs in 2013 there was a lot of backlash. Yes, her performance was raunchy, but the criticism that came in response to it was not at all necessary. The majority of the criticism came from parents claiming that Cyrus was no longer a proper role model for their children. While we may have expected Cyrus to continue her career as a scandal-free role model, doing so is not her obligation. Some will argue that setting a good example comes with being a celebrity, but that's not the case.

Jennette McCurdy, best known for her role as Sam in iCarly, said, "I am not a role model. I don't claim to be, I don't try to be, and I don't want to be." That's understandable - she never signed up to be a role model. She's an actress and, if anything, people should criticize her acting, not her morals or actions. As an actress she puts her acting on the line knowing full well that it may be criticized, and people have a right to criticize her acting. But criticizing her personality and her ability to be a role model is not

anyone's place - she didn't go into acting to have who she is critiqued left and right.

McCurdy put it beautifully when she said, "Calling a celebrity a role model is like calling a stranger a role model. The knowledge you have of a celebrity is no more than a caricature drawn by media tastemakers specializing in selling you an image you're dying to buy." She makes a valid point: we don't know more than what we see or hear in the media. Regardless of how the media portrays celebrities, it is not our right to criticize the morals and actions of people we don't know.

We shouldn't be judging celebrities based on the headlines we read, and we shouldn't be criticizing them for having opinions and morals different from our own. They aren't our role models, they are complete strangers, and the way we criticize them is unnecessary. If you want a role model choose someone you actually know, choose someone who is willing to set an example for others. Stop critiquing celebrities, it's not worth your time. Criticize actors on their acting and singers on their singing - not on their opinions, morals and actions. Instead, focus your energy on something more important and, preferably, more worthwhile - don't waste your time criticizing strangers you don't agree with.



S. Sullivan