

Intellects Inspire Youth to Speak out about Global Security
BY NATALIE HEIN

With the world on the brink of anarchy and the United States' President Bush pushing for a "surge" of troops to Iraq in an effort to suppress the increasing violence in Baghdad, the Tenth Annual WorldLink Youth Town Meeting could not have been timelier. Held at the University of San Diego, the conference on "Countering Terrorism: Addressing Global Security Threats and the Use of Torture" commenced with a Morning Plenary in the university's Shiley Theatre. Delegates crammed into the theatre and waited for the conference to begin, some with looks of enthusiasm on their faces, others with looks of apprehension or apathy.

At 8:30 am, WorldLink was called to order. Representing a student view of the day's topic was high school student **Zealan Hoover**. Hoover effectively engaged WorldLink delegates in the subject at hand with an overview and slideshow that touched on the history of the U.S.' current war with Iraq and its deviation from the United Nations' original counter-terrorist agreement. He then proceeded to tell a starfish anecdote to encourage them to take action when they see fit, no matter how small and insignificant their actions may seem.

William Aceves—principle author of the Amnesty International USA report on torture and impunity, and professor of law and director of the International Legal Studies Program at California Western School of Law—was the next speaker. He began his introduction with a series of questions that presented his topic, "Is it ever time for Torture?" Aceves, paralleling most other speakers, alluded to the Geneva Convention (adopted August 12, 1949 to protect victims of war) and discussed the U.S.' noncompliance with the agreements. The line of questioning, Aceves prompted, is no longer "does torture take place, but rather, should it?" He made a point to his young audience that torture requires the making of assumptions, such as whether or not the person being tortured really has the information they are being persecuted for, or if the cause of torture is more than just a premonition. In the real world, and not some 24, Jack Bauer-can-bring-justice-to-anyone pseudo-world, we "seldom find a situation where there are no assumptions," Aceves conceded. He reinforced his point by asking the auditorium, "How many people do you need [to be defending from terrorism] for torture to be justified?" Aceves then concluded by requesting the reinstatement of anti-torture laws, and for them to once again have meaning in the protection of basic human rights.

Kamal Beyoghlow, Ph.D., professor of Security and Strategy, the Middle East, North Africa, and Islamic Studies at the National War College; former Foreign Affairs Officer in the office of the U.S. Coordinator for Counterterrorism; and (again similar to most other speakers of the day) a preacher of human rights, followed William Aceves. He discussed the political undertones related to terrorism, and thus the tie between a government's actions and terrorist responses. Beyoghlow also mentioned the Geneva Convention, and brought to light the hypocritical perception that the U.S. has special privileges and exceptions that allow the use of torture and the structuring of foreign policy in a unilateral manner. He then discussed the expansion of presidential powers since the Cold War, and how the ironically unbalanced "checks and balances" system has allowed Americans to be swept to war under Bush's "far-fetched rational." Thus, since September 11, 2001, these unchecked presidential powers have led to the U.S.' conduct of "unethical, immoral politics." By urging delegates to look at the war from a political standpoint, Beyoghlow concluded that terrorists rarely attack civilians simply to cause violence, but rather stage the attacks to act as catalysts for political action. Despite being cut off by Hoover for surpassing the time allotted, Beyoghlow's speech provided delegates with crucial parallels between expanded presidential power and internationally unlawful war crimes, and the importance of government responsibility and honesty to create global security.

Succeeding Beyoghlow's introduction was that of **Marjorie Cohn**, professor of Law and Human Rights at the Thomas Jefferson School of Law. Cohn gave the audience background information on the United Nations, and the purpose of its establishment: creating global security. Her speech shunned the Bush administration's violation of the Geneva Convention and stated that as a consequence "we are now less safe!" The U.S.' usage of torture as a dominant war strategy has angered many of the countries with whom relations are now strained and has thus provoked terrorism. Cohn ended her speech with a plea pertaining to the war on Iraq, saying that it is "up to us to say no to another unnecessary war!"

Next, with commentary on the way in which we make enemies through stereotyping, was **Dipak Gupta**, Ph.D. Gupta is the Fred J. Hansen Professor of Peace Studies and chair of International Security and Conflict Resolution (ISCOR). His captivating story about his grandmother's anti-Muslim town killing an innocent, elderly Muslim man portrayed an incredibly tragic result of ignorant hatred. "This is how we make enemies," Gupta lectured. "We can paint them with one sweep of a collective brush, and feel no remorse for killing them, torturing them." Gupta warned that terrorists usually set up traps for organized societies who quickly overreact to any violence due to ignorant hatred, and he ended with a request for delegates to ask themselves "Who are we fighting?"

What are we fighting for?"

The four introductions were poignant, especially when combined with each of the speakers' concluding comments. The morning speakers truly embodied the first amendment and were audacious enough to pronounce to delegates what others were too meek to utter. Collectively, the statements of the morning plenary sent the message to delegates that the world they are to inherit is full of critical decision making, and it is important to remember that "we all are internationalists," as Aceves would label, and thus are all part of one world working for coexistence. Thus, with ideas of using technology to unite us as one human race, and with heightened intellectual comprehension and interest, the Worldlink delegates filed out of the Shiley Theatre, ready to be informed and fight for human rights, apathy subdued by enlightenment.