

Penn State University is now the first major college to have seen the Genocide Awareness Project and even our detractors agree that the campus will never be the same. From Sunday, March 29 through Saturday April 3, 1998, we broadened student understanding of "genocide" by displaying huge photo panels depicting the mutilated bodies of Jewish Holocaust victims, blacks lynched by racist mobs and aborted fetuses. Most of Penn State's forty thousand students and a high percentage of the faculty, staff and administration were confronted by these images every day for a week. Like thousands of other schools in this country, Penn State is a public college. We have every right to be there and to be heard. And these are rights we plan to exercise at other schools in days to come. According to the local newspaper:

The [sign] display made Ronald Keene, a sophomore, re-think his pro-choice position. 'This is mind-blowing,' Keene said, staring in amazement at the display. 'It looks like a baby. I've never seen abortion I think it's time to reconsider how I think.'

The signs also helped draw hundreds of students to the four formal presentations (including one debate) which I gave during the week. Andre Wilson, an African American doctoral candidate in materials science and engineering, sent us an e-mail in which he generously described one of those lectures as "by far the best pro-life presentation that I have ever seen." He also enthused that "The comparison of abortion to other forms of genocide (slavery and the Holocaust) is brilliant. The comparisons are accurate and startling."

The University administration was remarkably open-minded about our presence. Referring to GAP, James Stewart, Vice Provost for Educational Equity, affirmed the Institution's

"commitment to allow debate and free speech about competing ideas" in the school paper. In that same spirit, Penn State's campus police, despite some initial apprehension, were very cordial toward us throughout the week. Though careful to avoid "taking sides," several officers privately thanked us for coming and one said he believed students needed to see these pictures. Another told us he was "thoroughly impressed" by the way our staff interacted with the students.

Unfortunately, not everyone exhibited the same tolerance for truth that offends. On Tuesday evening we displayed the panels in front of the campus auditorium in which Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel was delivering a lecture to thousands of students and faculty. When asked about our signs, Mr. Wiesel told the press, "I feel that its wrong. Once you start comparing, everyone loses." What Mr. Wiesel failed to grasp is that unborn children are "losing" precisely because we *haven't* been "comparing" their slaughter to more widely recognized forms of genocide.

We were there to applaud Mr. Wiesel's opposition to *some* genocide, but also to invite him to join us in opposing *all* genocide. Ironically, the current issue (April, 1998) of the *Central Christian Observer* (published by Central Christian Church, Wichita, KS), features an article - written by a contemporary of Mr. Wiesel's who does, in fact, compare the Holocaust to abortion. She refers to her upbringing under Hitler and the extermination of the brothers and sisters of her Jewish mother. She concludes that ". . . in Nazi Germany and in America today, millions of innocent human lives are taken by the arbitrary but legalized acts of those who have the power to do so."

A similar sentiment was recently expressed by Orthodox

Jewish Rabbi Yehuda Levin in Brooklyn, New York, who says that:

Each form of genocide, whether Holocaust, lynching, abortion, etc., differs from all the others in the identities, motives and methods of its perpetrators. But each form of genocide is identical to all the others in the systematic slaughter, as state sanctioned "choice," of innocent, defenseless victims, each in denial of their own "personhood."

But Tuvia Abramson, director of Hillel, The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life at Penn State had a different point of view, which he petulantly expressed by attempting to censor our point of view. As the school newspaper reported, he, along with 20 other members of the University's Jewish community "covered the photos with his jacket while standing in front of the images. "This is an unacceptable use of their political agenda to promote their ideology' Abramson said. "It takes a sick mind to use the Holocaust for one's agenda."

I doubt, however, that Mr. Abramson thinks it was "sick" for Steven Spielberg to use the Holocaust for *his* agenda (reducing the odds of future Jewish exterminations) by producing the movie *Schindler's List*? "His" agenda ("never again") is also part of "our" agenda ("respect all life"). We only wish that "our" agenda were part of "his." We also reject the provincial notion that the Holocaust is anyone's private property. It's images and the lessons we learn from them must be used by people of conscience everywhere.

Later in the week, another of many Jewish students indignantly declared that he was offended because he had lost relatives to Nazi genocide. I asked him whether he might

also have lost relatives to abortion genocide? After a startled pause, he guessed that perhaps he had. Amazingly, there followed a thoughtful discussion.

Less thoughtfully, the president-elect of the student Black Caucus told campus news reporters that she was "offended" and denounced the display as "racist." This allegation was beyond bizarre since, at various times, 15 to 20 of the volunteers who helped us hold our signs were pro-life *African Americans*.

Not to be outdone, Kenneth Clarke, director of The Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs at the University also entered the fray. "It is comparing oppressive systems against an issue of choice" he suggested to the school paper. Dr. Clarke didn't seem to understand that with genocide, everyone gets a "choice" but the victim.

All of this was quite predictable and the price which must be paid to reach the more objective segment of the university community. It is always easier for a people victimized by genocide to acknowledge their own pain than the pain of other victims -- and it is easier yet to acknowledge the genocidal guilt of others than the genocidal guilt that is our own. Said another way, genocide that is long ago and far away is safer to condemn than genocide that is here and now -- especially genocide which most Americans are now committing or permitting. It was much less costly, for instance, for the International Red Cross and the Catholic Church to apologize, as they recently did, for their silence when the Holocaust was occurring than it would have been to have spoken out at the time. It was much less costly for Bill Clinton to go to Africa and speak out against slavery, as he recently did, than it was for Abraham Lincoln, who lost his life speaking out in his time.

Nevertheless, thousands of students were drawn to our signs during class changes each day and hundreds paused for 10 or 15 minutes of dialogue with our volunteers. The pictures, whose locations changed daily, forced these discussions to center on the incontrovertible visual evidence that abortion is an act of violence which kills a baby. Reactions ranged from thoughtful to angry. An April 2, 1998 Associated Press wire story described the scene: "Dozens of students crowded around Cunningham to debate the display and abortion. Others walked by covering their faces and scowling. Some stood thoughtfully off to the side." This highly visual generation was beginning to think of abortion in terms of a child instead of a choice.

One student informed us that her philosophy professor canceled his lecture to permit a discussion of the sign project. Another student reported that her American studies professor did the same. A sociology professor brought his classes out to observe student reaction to the signs. For nearly a week the project was featured again and again on the front page of the campus newspaper (*The Daily Collegian*) and two weeks after the signs were first displayed, the editorial page was still filled with letters discussing issues related to the displays. Much the same thing happened with the local newspaper (*The Centre Daily Times*). Coverage of this epic event can be accessed by visiting the respective web sites of the two news organizations at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/> and <http://www.centredaily.com>.

CBR was on campus at the invitation of a coalition of student groups which included the Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ, Alliance Christian Fellowship, Reformed University Fellowship, Christians in Action, Asian-American Christian Fellowship, New Life Christian Fellowship, Chi Alpha,

International Christian Fellowship and Students for Life. And the sponsorship of these organizations helped create innumerable opportunities for Christian ministry.

Ellen Wu, a Penn State freshman majoring in chemical engineering, e-mailed us the following note:
Holding these posters was a great growing experience for me. It was the best week of my life. I learned so much I was persecuted Many of my friends, including some of my close friends were angry Some of my friends are not speaking to me anymore. However, God really taught me how to stand up for my faith. He even provided several opportunities to share the Gospel with non-Christians.

Sarah Fassman, a freshman science major, e-mailed a similar account:

At first I was hesitant to help hold the signs around campus. I pictured angry people yelling in my face and I didn't know what I would say or do if that happened.

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When I first saw the signs I was startled. I didn't know what to expect, but I hadn't expected them to be that big or that graphic.

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While I helped out that first day I realized how important it was to have the students on my campus see these pictures.

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Each day of the week found me more and more absorbed in helping out. I found that I couldn't stay away from the signs.

There were so many opportunities to talk to my peers who agreed and disagreed with our stance. I talked to so many people that week who I never would have talked to if not for the signs. Several of my friends came and helped out as well and we all agreed that no one on campus would forget that week.

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I learned a lot from watching Gregg, Lois, David, Dina and Austin [CBR staff members] calmly talk to people who yelled in their faces.

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It also gave us the chance to share the life saving message of Jesus Christ with people.

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If I wouldn't have helped out I think I would have still had my reservations about the whole thing, but being there and actually helping made a huge difference. I could see first hand that we were making a difference in peoples lives.

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I am so glad that I trusted in God to help me. We should not be afraid to tell the truth. The truth will most definitely offend and convict people of their sin, but that is what will make them see their need for a savior -- Jesus Christ. I am so glad that GAP came to our campus. I learned so much about God from this experience.

I never pictured abortion being like that, I couldn't believe (and even thought at first that that the pictures must be fake)

that it was true. I had read the methods of abortion in many books. I had studied biology and general anatomy (since my major was originally pre-med) but I never pictured abortion being like these pictures. No wonder the books I read didn't have any pictures.

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Hearing Gregg and being involved during the week definitely changed me. I'm very grateful to God for opening my eyes and for you guys taking the time to come here and making a difference.

In addition to CBR's daily display of a confidential phone number which could be called for crisis pregnancy or post abortion help, Campus Crusade for Christ offered aid in the campus newspaper:

If there are any women (or men) out there who don't feel they've fully resolved the pain of having an abortion, please contact us and allow us to love you as Christ does, listen to you and help you to work through the pain. You can contact us by e-mail at: beh7@psu.edu. There is hope!

Staff members of several campus Christian ministries helped hold our GAP signs each day and leaders of seven of these organizations also published a joint letter offering post-abortion healing in Christ, urging adoption over abortion and listing the phone number of the local crisis pregnancy center.

The only cleric to condemn the project in print ("unacceptable") was Fr. Fred Byrne, the priest who directs the Penn State Catholic Community. But many members of the Newman Association (Catholic students) nevertheless participated in the project and the pastor of the local Catholic parish, Rev. Anthony J. Petracca wrote the following in a

guest column he penned for the local paper:

I am happy that this display appeared on campus, in an academic milieu, where students are not to be fed some party line, but taught to think by being exposed to different points of view.

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Jesus has been recrucified in lynched blacks, gassed Jews, and now in aborted babies. How long are we going to permit such inhuman violence to continue?

Before setting up a display on the edge of campus which adjoins a major shopping district, CBR placed several warning signs a block away from the abortion panels, cautioning parents of young children who might wish to avoid the area. A mother nonetheless ventured forward, picking up her four-old and turning him away from the display. She wrote the school newspaper to describe having resisted pressure to abort this child and to say: "I've never written a letter like this before, so I thank those who put up the billboards . . . for making me face the truth of all the terrible crimes against human lives and impacting me so deeply."

Amid much student disapproval, a columnist for the school paper wrote that:

The posters serve as a positive influence on campus, not only to preserve free speech, but also to remind people of what is going on in the world.

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It's easier to allow things like abortions to go on if you can pretend that they don't happen, or if you don't understand

what they really are. "Out of sight, out of mind." But with posters like the ones displayed on campus you can't hide from the truth.

The campus newspaper itself editorialized that:

No matter what anyone thinks about abortion or the week-long demonstrations, it cannot be disputed that the display and the issue generated discussion throughout much of the community.

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If nothing else, the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform and its display made the majority of us think.

Seeing an abortion is traumatic. But having one is immeasurably more so. And experience teaches us that people who have seen an abortion are far less likely to be willing to have one -- or to tolerate their unrestricted availability.

GAP has proved itself to be astoundingly effective but it is almost equally controversial. Prior to our arrival at Penn State, one local pro-life organization so vehemently opposed the project that they refused even to help provide lodging for our volunteers. To their credit, after spending two days surreptitiously observing student reaction to the displays, two of the group's leaders conceded to us that they had been wrong in predicting disaster. Even more graciously, one of those leaders later wrote to encourage us to repeat the project "at every college campus in America."

The pro-life movement has unwittingly made itself part of the abortion cover-up. We care more about what people think of us than what they think about abortion! We are telling

society, "you don't bother us and we won't bother you."

GAP at Penn State was the first time in the history of the pro-life movement that so many Americans in the age group that is prime for abortion vulnerability have been so effectively engaged on this issue. There is no way of ever knowing how many lives were saved but easily thirty thousand students could have seen these photos and a considerable number of them were either pregnant at the time or soon will be. Some of them will no doubt choose life after seeing a truth that mere words could never adequately convey; images they will remember until the day they die, revisiting these pictures again and again. And they will go on to be leaders in government, science, education, business and the professions. Their influence on this nation's future will be immense. We believe that historians will look back at this week as a turning point in this country's struggle to end abortion. Although the gains were great, the expenses were not. This may be the most cost-effective pro-life project ever conceived.

CBR waived our honoraria and absorbed all of our expenses for food, lodging and travel (including very expensive truck rental to transport 26 signs, 8 generators, outdoor lights, power cords, etc.). The students were not charged a penny for our presence on their campus. There are many reasons that it was wise to not accept any money from the University, not least, that The Department of Police Services nearly went broke paying overtime to officers assigned to provide us with security. We also distributed video tapes, posters and training manuals (already in use by students writing academic papers, speeches, etc.) free of charge.

We plan to repeat our success on every major college campus in America but we need your help in funding this

exciting new venture. We need \$15,000 to buy a used truck to transport and store the signs and related equipment (a 24 foot box-bodied diesel truck would be ideal) and approximately \$5,000 must be raised to fund each campus visit. This is hard work. But if you can help us, it would be difficult to imagine a more worthwhile way to invest your pro-life dollars.

P.S. One last letter from Penn State freshman:

. . . [A]s I walked closer to read and compare pictures, I began to cry. These large and eye-catching pictures depicted the harsh truth of today's society and my tears were shed for that little helpless body that could have been our next president if he or she was only given a chance. I entered college last fall with a strong religious background and my opinion on abortion had fallen to just thinking it was not good for my own life. After really looking at these pictures, I realized that perhaps this opinion stemmed from the fact that I could not stand up for myself and these children of God on such a liberal campus. . . . I admire the strength of those who peacefully stood together for their beliefs and welcomed all concerns, complaints, and even opposing protest This message was powerful and I pray for your safety and strength.