

## Controversial Journalist Questions Democracy In Israel



Journalist Ben White spoke at Brooklyn College, despite criticism from elected officials and others. PHOTO/ Faraz T. Toor

BY DAVID BELTRAN

After February's Students for Justice in Palestine event incited protests and rallies, Thursday's event, featuring a speaker accused of being anti-Semitic, went without interruption.

Journalist Ben White, whose appearance was preceded by two Daily News editorials which criticized the sponsorship of the event by academic departments, spoke at Brooklyn College at an event called "Israel: Apartheid not Democracy."

After students, faculty, and other visitors went through metal detectors as they entered SUBO,

SEE WHITE, 3

### Inside This Edition

News, 2-3  
Arts, 4  
Opinions, 5-6  
Sports, 7-8

Con't from pg. 1.

White spoke about what he deemed to be apartheid in Israel and made a case for a one state solution in the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

White questioned Israel's label as the only democratic nation in the Middle East and pointed out, and criticized, Israeli law and policies that he believes lead to Israel becoming an ethnocracy instead of a democracy. White said he recommended one point for the audience to take home.

"The only reason why Israel has a Jewish majority today," said White, "is because of the forced expulsion of the Palestinians, particularly in the Nakba, and the prevention, until this day, of their return."

White also pointed out a 2012 report from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which found that in Israel there was a regime of de-facto segregation within the West Bank that was "severe enough to prompt them to remind Israel of the prohibition of apartheid." White claimed this was the first time that the committee felt forced to

Members of SJP held signs after the event. PHOTO/ Faraz T. Toor



remind a state party of the ban on apartheid, since the time of South African apartheid.

White said he supports one democratic state where Jews and Palestinians are living as equals and has an objection to a two state solution that's based on ethnic separation because he thinks it is not sustainable.

"He's out to try to convince us that this is apartheid and everyone will decide on their own," said

Louis Fishman, a Political Science professor at B.C. who attended the event. "These weren't facts that we're fabricated, they're well documented"

ed and I think that's the strength of his talk."

The Political Science department, which also sponsored an SJP event advocating for the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) of Israel in February, received criticism for co-sponsoring Thursday's event. Over the summer, Brooklyn College drafted a Student Event Planning and Implementation Handbook which stated that co-sponsors, now labeled supporters, only lend their name to encourage attendance of an event and co-sponsorship didn't imply an endorsement of views.

Not everyone agreed though as Assemblyman Dov Hikind said on his blog, "It is one thing to support our Constitutional freedoms, it is another thing entirely to take part in biased events."

"Brooklyn College's continued co-sponsorship of anti-Israel hate-fests is abhorrent," Hikind wrote.

Melanie Goldberg, who was one of four

students removed from the BDS event, attended Thursday's event to see if the policies had changed. She also added that she was happy that White had agreed to come because she thought it was important that, "they [both sides] acknowledge each other," and it promotes academia.

SJP member Carlos Guzman, who has been with the B.C. chapter since its inception last year, said that when the club sends out emails asking for co-sponsorships, they make it clear that co-sponsorship, "entails forwarding the announcement and encouraging their members to attend the event."

While the co-sponsorship of the Political science department has drawn criticism, Fishman says he believes much of the debate comes from outside the university and said every organization has a right to bring who they want to. Some critics have called for SJP to bring speakers with opposing views in an attempt to be balanced but Fishman says that doesn't interest SJP.

"It's there full right as a student organization to bring who they want," said Fishman. "If it's controversial, it's not because of them. Obviously Palestinians will bring pro-Palestinian people."

Although the college has drawn criticism for being host to these events, the B.C. administration has stated that it will pro-

tect speech regardless of if they strongly disagree with the content. Guzman said that school has a right to uphold academic freedom and can't deny them from holding events that are, "barely talked about but that are inherently important..."

Last week, the National Coalition against Censorship sent a letter to President Gould which praised the administration's commitment to academic freedom despite calls to not hold the event or to be more balanced. The organization stated that critics who called for balance had a desire to control the terms of the debate. However, they also pointed out that they're unaware of any situation where BC Alum Alan Dershowitz, who is pro-Israel, has "called for a pro-Palestinian rights speaker to provide 'balance' at his public appearances."

As long as an organization doesn't bring someone that supports violence but promotes discussion, Fishman says, "the more the merrier."

White continued his tour at John Jay College on Friday and heads to Ohio State University before finishing his tour in Canada. After Thursday's visit, White thanked BC SJP on Twitter and tweeted, "more people are 'getting it' about Israeli apartheid."

