

# VIEWPOINTS



**PA district web cam access  
Orwellian**

**w/ Hillary Lindwall  
Managing Editor**

I am sure that, by now, everyone is aware, that freshmen next year are scheduled to receive Dell™ net books to use for schoolwork and other purposes and that District 219 plans to provide each subsequent class with the laptops.

Although this is a very exciting addition to the curriculum, the tactics of a Pennsylvania school district with similar laptop use could make District 219 freshmen a little apprehensive about using their net books at home.

According to [www.computerworld.com](http://www.computerworld.com), the Lower Merion school district of Ardmore, PA, remotely has activated the webcams of Macbooks™ distributed by the school. According to school officials, the webcams were accessed to determine the thieves who stole the laptops from the school. However, subsequent investigation revealed that the district accessed students' computers 42 times, Reuters reported.

The invasion of privacy might have gone unnoticed had not the school's assistant principal admonished a student for "improper behavior in his home," using photos taken by the webcam as evidence. A class-action lawsuit subsequently was filed against the district.

**It is understandable why the Merion district would want to recover the laptops...however, the strategy seems more like Big Brother's policy than one designed to recover stolen**

It seems that George Orwell's vision of the future in *1984* has come to life. In the novel, the protagonist, Winston Smith, is spied upon by the leader of Oceania, the ominous Big Brother, through a "telescreen," a two-way television that allows access into citizens' homes. Smith does not realize until the end of the novel that others can observe him as he watches the screen, a feeling to which the Lower Merion students can no doubt relate.

It is understandable why the Merion district would want to recover the lost laptops—Macbooks™ are not cheap. However, the strategy seems more like Big Brother's policy than one designed to recover stolen property.

By remotely activating the webcams on the Macbooks™, the Lower Merion school district is overstepping its boundaries. Home life should be private. However, the district seems to feel that not only do parents have the right to discipline children in their homes, but that schools should have this option as well. A school should be able to discipline students for disobeying school rules, but home should be the disciplinary domain of parents and guardians.

If the federal government were engaging in such activities, conspiracy theorists would be screaming at the tops of their lungs and demanding the resignations of elected officials.

What does this national news story have to do with Niles West? According to [www.pcmag.com](http://www.pcmag.com), remote activation software is available for any computer with a built-in webcam. It is up to the installer to decide whether or not to utilize such a function.

Would District 219 personnel be bold enough to enable this feature if the new net books are equipped with it? Would they invade the privacy of students and risk being sued just to enforce this anti-theft policy? One hopes not.

Although the feasibility of this policy being applied at West is not certain, the possibility is nonetheless unsettling.

## Student activities revitalized under new director

Staff Editorial

Throughout most of the four years that this year's senior-laden *West Word* staff has attended Niles West, the term "school spirit" has seemed an oxymoron. That has changed this year in the form of a dynamic, rollerblading student activities director who has changed the tenor of the school.

This school year, West has seen a surge in school spirit. The word "resurgence" would not be correct to use in this case because this *West Word* staff does not remember a year where red shirts, school sport event attendance and noise level during pep assemblies were more prominent.

Many of the benefits related to increased school spirit may be attributed to new student activities director Jessica Ogulnik.

A difference was first seen by the school at the fall pep assembly in which Principal Kaine Osburn commented that he had not seen that much red and white and school spirit during his time at West. That day, there were loud, boisterous chants in the hallways leading up to the pep assembly.

**Although Ogulnik's promotion-savvy mind has helped West in many ways, it is her openness that has helped to raise school spirit best**

Although Ogulnik said that the previous student activities director Peter Geddeis was responsible for much of the homecoming dance organization, Ogulnik took the dance to a new level through shrewd marketing. Ogulnik seems to have a flair for these sorts of marketing ideas, especially when it comes to dances.

Traditionally, there has been a spring dance every school year. Coming on the heels of the enormously popular homecoming and a few months before prom, the dance usually has been poorly attended and traditionally has been somewhat of joke.

Last year, for example, approximately 60 students attended the spring dance. However, by changing the dance to a turnabout and marketing it through various techniques, Ogulnik boosted attendance at this year's dance 285%, up to 250 students. Granted, this is still less than 10 percent of the student body, but it is an impressive start.

One clever idea to promote the dance emerged in a brainstorming session with student government, in which a class officer suggested sandwich billboards to promote the dance.

Ogulnik processed the idea and added a twist: instead of information on the dance, Ogulnik decided to advertise the lack of dates for willing male students. Ogulnik helped guys craft signs to announce their availability for the turnabout dance.

Another shrewd marketing technique employed by Ogulnik was the competition to ask a date to the turnabout dance. Students were asked to send in proof of asking their dates in a creative way, and the best would win. Many students were inspired to go to creative lengths to win that contest.

One student lured a boy she liked into a deserted gym. In the gym was a plain box stating that the girl would go with the boy to turnabout when pigs fly. When the boy opened the box, several pink, helium-filled balloons crafted in the form of pigs flew out.

Another girl was inspired to employ the school's public address system to ask her boyfriend to the dance; the boy quickly proceeded to the main office and made a positive reply via the loudspeaker.

Throughout several lunch periods, the disc jockey for the turnabout dance was invited to host a dance off. During the last few minutes of lunch, students battled with their smoothest moves to win tickets to the turnabout dance.

Ogulnik has also gone to considerable lengths to foster new clubs and help existing ones. Break Beatz is just one new club that has grown very rapidly under Ogulnik.

She also has instituted a new flyer system for clubs. Instead of each club sending a student to each display board to put up notices, a process that can take up to 30 minutes, some students use seventh period as a monitoring period and put up the informational materials for the clubs. A club only has to compose a flyer, get it approved and print out several copies to drop off in the Student Activities Center for distribution.

Although Ogulnik's promotion-savvy mind has helped West in many ways, it is her openness that has helped to raise school spirit best.

Ogulnik has an open-door policy through which she regularly talks with walk-in students. The topics can range from starting a new club to talking about pictures from a dance.

Her office is also infamous for its abundance of free candy, cookies and games.

*West Word* applauds the efforts of this welcome addition to student activities and looks forward to more Ogulnik-inspired activities during the remainder of the school year.



## WestWord Staff

EDITORS IN CHIEF  
Zoe Ljubic\*  
Rexly Penaflores II\*

VIEWPOINTS EDITOR  
Suhail Ansari\*

SPORTS EDITOR  
Naomi Prale\*

BUSINESS MANAGER  
Mary Basic

MANAGING EDITOR  
Hillary Lindwall\*

AROUND TOWN EDITOR  
Hira Malik\*

PHOTO EDITOR  
Sarah Espinosa\*

REPORTING, PHOTOGRAPHY AND DESIGN  
Sadia Ansari Daniel Friedman Sofiya Pershteyn  
Kathryn Booker Dan Machalinski Irfan Qurashi

NEWS/WEST WIRE EDITOR  
Uzma Ahmad\*

WEST WORLD EDITOR  
Adriana Zalloni\*

COPY EDITOR  
Morgan Quilici\*

INSTRUCTOR/ADVISER  
Michael Conroy

\*Editorial board member

# WestWord

## west opinions

### Students respond to Goldstone Report column

#### Letter to the Editor

We, the undersigned, would like to respond to the November 24 article written by Suhail Ansari about the Goldstone Report. First, we would like to say that we appreciate and respect the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of our school, which we believe makes us all stronger and more tolerant. Our school newspaper should reflect Niles West's spirit of unity, even though we, the students, represent such diverse backgrounds. Therefore, we were surprised to see this respect compromised when the *West Word*, typically devoted to issues affecting Niles West, printed a one-sided and divisive article about an international issue. Additionally, the article itself has flaws, the two most important being the amount of misinformation presented as fact, and the amount of essential information omitted altogether, leading to a misrepresentation of the facts. We respectfully offer our response.

The biggest misrepresentation in the article is the failure to state that Hamas is a terrorist organization, so designated by our government and others. The goal of the organization is to destroy the State of Israel, not to make peace with it. Just read parts of its charter. From its preface, we have this: "Israel will arise and continue to exist until Islam abolishes it, as it abolished what went before." From Article 13: "...There is no solution to the Palestinian question except by Jihad. All initiatives, proposals, and International Conferences are a waste of time and vain endeavours."

All background information as to what caused the Gaza conflict, which is the subject of the Goldstone Report, is omitted. The article does not report on Israel's voluntary evacuation of the Gaza Strip in August, 2005. This was carried out to stop the deadly mortar and rocket fire that for years had been raining down on Israel's southern citizens. It was also done to combat underground tunnels to and from Egypt which were used in part to smuggle in weapons. This "good faith" gesture to the Palestinian people was a unilateral step towards peace. The evacuation was painful and unprecedented, as Israel removed some 8,000 citizens and all military personnel from the territory, even dragging some people out of their own homes in the process.

What did Israel receive in return for this? Worse violence, especially after Hamas took control of Gaza in a bloody 2007 coup against fellow Palestinians. The rockets and mortars into Israel never stopped, nor were the smuggling tunnels closed. (As of late last year, even Egypt blocked the underground tunnels from their side.) Imagine living in constant terror that missiles, rockets and/or mortars from Canada or Mexico would kill or maim you, your family, your neighbors or destroy your homes, hospitals, schools. It is hard to believe that the U.S. would wait the eight years Israel did to launch a defensive attack on its attackers.

The Goldstone Report was supposed to be a fact-finding mission and not an investigation. Yet, the report has been read as if accusations aimed at Israel have been indisputably verified. This simply is not true. Richard Goldstone himself said this on October 2, 2009, "We had to do the best we could with the materials we had. If this was a court of law, there would have been nothing proven."

The article consistently references the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) as an information source, without noting its notoriously anti-Israel bias. In fact, its predecessor, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), was dismantled in 2006 largely because of this documented bias. Today's UNHRC seems no more objective than its predecessor—in its first year, it passed some ten resolutions against Israel while not passing even one resolution against Darfur, where hundreds of thousands of people have been slaughtered. This is the same UN body that commissioned the Goldstone Report.

The following are excerpts from the testimony of Colonel Richard Kemp, former commander of the British forces in Afghanistan, as presented before the UNHRC in Geneva, Switzerland, on October 16, 2009, at its 12th Special Session for a debate on the Goldstone Report:

"...During Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli Defense Forces did

more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a combat zone than any other army in the history of warfare...Israel did so while facing an enemy that deliberately positioned its military capability behind the human shield of the civilian population...Hamas, like Hizballah, are expert at driving the media agenda. Both will always have people ready to give interviews condemning Israeli forces for war crimes. They are adept at staging and distorting incidents..."

"The truth is that the IDF took extraordinary measures to give Gaza civilians notice of targeted areas, dropping over 2 million leaflets, and making over 100,000 phone calls. Many missions that could have taken out Hamas military capability were aborted to prevent civilian casualties. During the conflict, the IDF allowed huge amounts of humanitarian aid into Gaza...Despite all of this, of course innocent civilians were killed. War is chaos and full of mistakes...But mistakes are not war crimes..."

Journalistically, the article misquotes sources. Much disparate information and out-of-context phrases are thrown together, mixed with the author's words, and then attributed to a single source. For instance, the article states that Haaretz, an Israeli newspaper, "...reported that funding for Israel's offensive came directly from Americans' tax revenues (\$30 billion dollars over 10 years)." No actual article, by title or date, is cited. In fact, we could not find this quote.

More striking, though, is the misleading way in which that sentence is written. It reads as though it is unusual for American taxpayer dollars to fund foreign aid to Israel, when the fact is that our tax dollars fund all foreign aid, including to the Palestinians and numerous Arab countries. It also makes it sound as though the amount quoted already had been transferred and used, specifically to fund the Gaza conflict, when, in fact, the yearly apportionment was slated to begin in the fall of 2008.

Finally, the author exhorts American citizens "...not to endorse the commission of war crimes on [his] behalf..." The unproven accusation of "war crimes" is part of an opinion statement. Newspapers typically use the word "alleged" for such accusations. Why doesn't the *West Word*?

To paraphrase the article, what would "right-thinking" Americans do if they were surrounded, from within and from without, by enemies whose main goal is to obliterate their sovereign nation, their fellow citizens, their co-religionists? How would a "right-thinking" American combat such intense, indoctrinated hatred based not on who you are, but on the fact that you even exist?

Israel investigates, prosecutes and punishes its own when warranted. Currently, there are several ongoing investigations into the Gaza conflict. This would happen regardless of a UN mandate. Would a terrorist organization condemn or punish its own members for intentional violence against civilians when that is the methodology by which it operates?

The idea that the Israeli government or military would deliberately target a civilian population, under the watchful eyes of the entire world, is counterintuitive and offensive to many readers.

We all live and study peacefully in the same community. Therefore, if the *West Word* chooses to tackle another complex, international issue, we hope it does so in a more fair, informed manner.

**Ricki Esses, Andy Rapoport, Felix Angelov, Cody Lefkowitz, Natan Ostro, Nicole Ostro, Lauren Wilkin, Maddy Weil, Ari Lazar, Sam Stein, Danny Heller, Danielle Edelstein, Jason Block, Harris Miller, Merrill Miller, Melanie Albaum, Dena Kahn**

*Editor's note: for the record, it should be noted in response to the contention that West Word is "typically devoted to issues affecting Niles West," that West Word has established a long tradition of regularly addressing national and international politics in opinion pieces. Also, the Haaretz article mentioned in the letter may be found at this link: [www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/894255.html](http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/894255.html)*

Would you prefer to read *West Word* online or in print?

#### Staff



Thomas Jodelka

In print, because you can't curl up with it [if it is online].

#### Senior



Emma Mall

In print, because reading online can be distracting.

#### Junior



Ben Artymowski

In print, because [reading] the paper in print is more portable.

#### Sophomore



Justin Andrada

In print, because it is easier to get a hold of.

#### Freshman



Jeremiah Jordan

In print, because it is easier to attain rather than going online.

## WestWord Staff

**West Word** is a student-produced newspaper published monthly during the school year. Bylined columns reflect the views of the individual columnists, not necessarily the opinions of the *West Word* staff. The staff editorial reflects the consensus of the *West Word* editorial board. Neither columns nor editorials reflect the views of District 219 staff, administrators or board members. Replies to pieces from *West Word* are strongly encouraged as are letters to the editor reflecting the views of the school community. This correspondence may be delivered to *West Word*, located in room 3160. Letters also may be mailed to *West Word*, 5701 Oakton, Skokie, IL, 60077 or submitted to [westword219@yahoo.com](mailto:westword219@yahoo.com). Where noted, pictures courtesy of MCT Information Services are used with permission.