

This was not Said's failure. He did more than could fairly be expected of any man but was denied by the arrogance and ignorance of others. Thus his efforts to increase Western acceptance for the Palestinian cause were rewarded at one point by Yasser Arafat's throwing him from the Occupied Territories because he criticized rampant corruption in the Palestinian Authority. His work to help Americans overcome their misconceptions about the Arab-Israeli conflict earned shameless accusations of anti-Semitism and other vicious attempts at character assassination.

Said's heroic battle with the disease that eventually killed him is lost forever. But his lonely campaign to foment mutual

understanding, a worthy one to which he devoted so much of his life, still needs recruits from all backgrounds. The greatest representatives of the human race are never properly appreciated during their own lifetimes. For all the accolades he has received, Said was no exception. Only when there is a full and fair peace between Arab and Jew in the Middle East will it begin to dawn on most people just how much has been lost with the death of a single individual and how much time has been wasted on the petty claims and counter-claims of decidedly lesser minds. Only then will both of his peoples, East and West, even begin to deserve his legacy.

A TRIBUTE TO EDWARD SAID

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Today we express our deep sadness about the death of Edward Said, and send our love and condolences to his family and friends. His incredible vitality and spirit throughout his long struggle against terminal illness gave us the hope (and perhaps the illusion) that this day would not come so soon.

At the same time, we must not forget to celebrate his extraordinarily rich and productive life. Edward Said was never afraid to explore and express his inner convictions, often against the overwhelming tides of conventional wisdom. His particular genius enabled him to reshape discourses and spawn an entire academic discipline by virtue not only of his qualities of heart and mind, but also and especially the resonance his ideas and sentiments found within each of us. He was that rare individual able to give voice to a universal conscience, to awaken within us a collective yearning for a better world right now, in this particular time and place.

The importance of his life's work cannot be denied even by his avowed political opponents. Consider how Professor Said's crowning academic achievement—the publication of *Orientalism* is more relevant today than ever, not as grand theory to discuss in intellectual salons, but as a life-affirming and life-saving prescription for a world on the brink of endless war. With literal-minded religious and political figures seemingly committed to an apocalyptic unfolding of the "Clash of Civilizations" we would do well to remember his central message: that dialogue between cultures and peoples can be either repressive or liberating. He articulated clearly and forcefully the fundamental distinction between an imposed discourse of conqueror to conquered based on an imbalance of military might and a respectful exchange between equals based on shared principles of human rights at the heart of every true civilization.

Professor Said took sides, choosing to fight against oppression in all of its forms. Throughout his long career he fought with insight, erudition, compassion, courage, perseverance, and a stinging wit. Perhaps because his own identity was based on the merging of opposites, West and East, citizen and exile, he chose to defend all humanity, and not just the Palestinian cause as some critics like to suggest. (Who has more brilliantly dissected the flaws of Arafat than Edward Said?). Each of us faces the same matrix of moral choice as he did, and we are thankful to him for showing us an honest and honorable path.

Of his many outstanding writings, one that always remains with me is a short essay called "Decolonizing the Mind." Written in 1994, at a time when Professor Said stood virtually alone among Western intellectuals in denouncing the false peace of the "Oslo process," this essay affirms the value of cultivating mental freedom to face the overwhelming crush of sorrow and oppression that blankets our world. In response to the abuse of words, the abuse of concepts, the abuse of politics, and the abuse of people, Said offers us the decolonized mind as an expression of the human rights mind, a mind that recognizes universal principles of common humanity first, before focusing on the myriad differences that can either be understood to enrich all of us together or exploited to divide us from them, me from you.

Edward Said represented the best face of the hero, a public intellectual with unflinching integrity, and we will miss him greatly. But we must celebrate as we mourn, for he is survived by a growing community of family, friends, and strangers inspired by his passionate belief that "Speaking the truth and fighting for right" is our only real choice, and that neither illness nor death will slow our march towards universal justice.