



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GILLESPIE

Performance artist and anti-oppression activist Joe Carr.

rector Lynne Carey said the crowd for the potluck dinner that preceded Carr's presentation was evenly distributed among high school students; college students, and adult members of the community. More adults arrived for the program itself, bringing the total number of those present to about 60.

Asked how he felt about a perceived lack of interest by his generation in political activism compared to youth activism during the Vietnam War, Carr said he was disappointed by the amount of activism and organizing across all American generations. In the young activist's opinion, disinterest and lethargy are caused by mainstream media programming that distracts Americans with misinformation.

Carr arrived from Kansas City via Des Moines, where he had performed the previous night at the Central Senior Center. Following his Ames performance, he was scheduled to appear in Grinnell, Wartburg, Cedar Falls, and Iowa City, then continue on to St. Louis and Columbia for performances in Missouri before returning to Kansas City for yet another performance. It's a grueling schedule even for a young, talented, and energetic activist who has no time for lethargy and whose audiences are anything but disinterested.

"Peacemaking in Palestine" was sponsored by the Alliance for Global Justice, Ames High School Progressive Club, Ames Public Library, Catalyst, Time for Peace, and the United Nations Association.

—Michael Gillespie

## Diplomatic Debut Ambassador Nabil Fahmy Discusses Egyptian-U.S. Trade

Trade between the United States and Egypt was the topic of a Feb. 9 luncheon meeting hosted by the United States Egypt Friendship Society (USEF) in Washington, DC. Addressing an eager audience at the sold-out event, Egyptian Ambassador Nabil Fahmy said the relationship is "based on three pillars": the peace process, security and economics. He expressed guarded optimism that the opening of negotiations toward a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) may be announced after further trade talks in March.

Egypt has a "defined vision of where we want to go and how to get there," he said. "This is in our national interest. The FTA will be a global seal of approval."

Asked why Egypt has not already signed an FTA with the U.S., as have Jordan and Morocco, Fahmy emphasized the need to progress in a number of areas. "Egypt is not just planning economic reforms," he explained, "but reporting results, including reductions in customs duties and income taxes."

Over the last 15 years, he noted, the Egyptian economy has made great strides in the transition from state control. Roughly 70 percent of GDP now comes from the private sector. Foreign direct investment has increased, he said, and financial sector reforms have continued, including the privatization of banks. Clearly, he stated, "almost nothing is taboo."

Ticking off further evidence of the success of Egypt's economic reforms, Fahmy enumerated: "the stock market is up 100 percent over last year, tourism is up 30 percent and the projected economic growth rate for 2005 is 6 percent."

Building bilateral trade relations toward

the FTA has involved signing of other agreements along the way, the ambassador told his audience. The Trade and Investment Framework agreement (TIFA) is in active negotiation, and the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) trilateral agreement among Egypt, Israel and the U.S. has already been signed. This agreement eliminates tariffs for Egyptian exports to the U.S. assuming an 11.8 percent Israeli component, Fahmy said, enabling Egypt to "preserve its market share in the U.S." The ambassador continued, "We needed to do it to compete against other competitors bringing their products to the American market. It buys the textile industry time to be able to compete globally," he explained, "and even in the Egyptian marketplace."

Fahmy conceded that "opening an FTA doesn't reduce tariffs that much, maybe 6 percent reduction from tariffs today." But, to pursue the targeted 7-8 percent growth rate and create 700,000 new jobs, he argued, Egypt needs the FTA to ensure global market access. Egypt must successfully compete and attract investors. The FTA will provide what Fahmy called "the blue ribbon indication that our economic policy is sound, and has been acknowledged by the U.S."

Overall, Egypt expects to increase its exports to the U.S. by 50 percent, while U.S. exports to Egypt should rise by 40 percent. Realistically, Fahmy remarked, "the U.S. stands to lose market share to the Europeans if there's no FTA."

During the question-and-answer period, topics turned toward politics. Responding to a question on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Ambassador Fahmy was unequivocal: "This conflict will not end if there is still an occupation, if there is no Palestinian state."

A career diplomat who has served in Washington since 1999, Ambassador Fahmy is internationally recognized for his expertise in the field of disarmament and international security. He speaks English, French and Arabic.

—Najwa Saad

## Jordanian Embassy Showcases Photographs of Petra's Bedouin Tribes

"...you will never know what Petra is like, unless you come out here. Only be assured that 'til you have seen it, you have not had the glimmering of an idea how beautiful a place can be." So said T.E. Lawrence describing Petra in 1914.

The Georgetown Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS) and the Jordanian Embassy hosted a Feb. 7 lecture about the Bedouin Tribes of Petra. Jordan's Ambas-

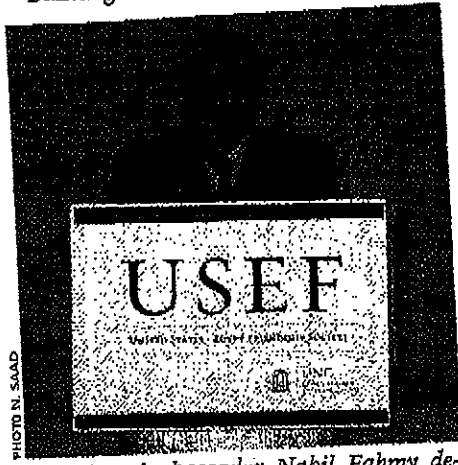


PHOTO BY NAJWA SAAD

Egyptian Ambassador Nabil Fahmy describes his country's economic reforms.