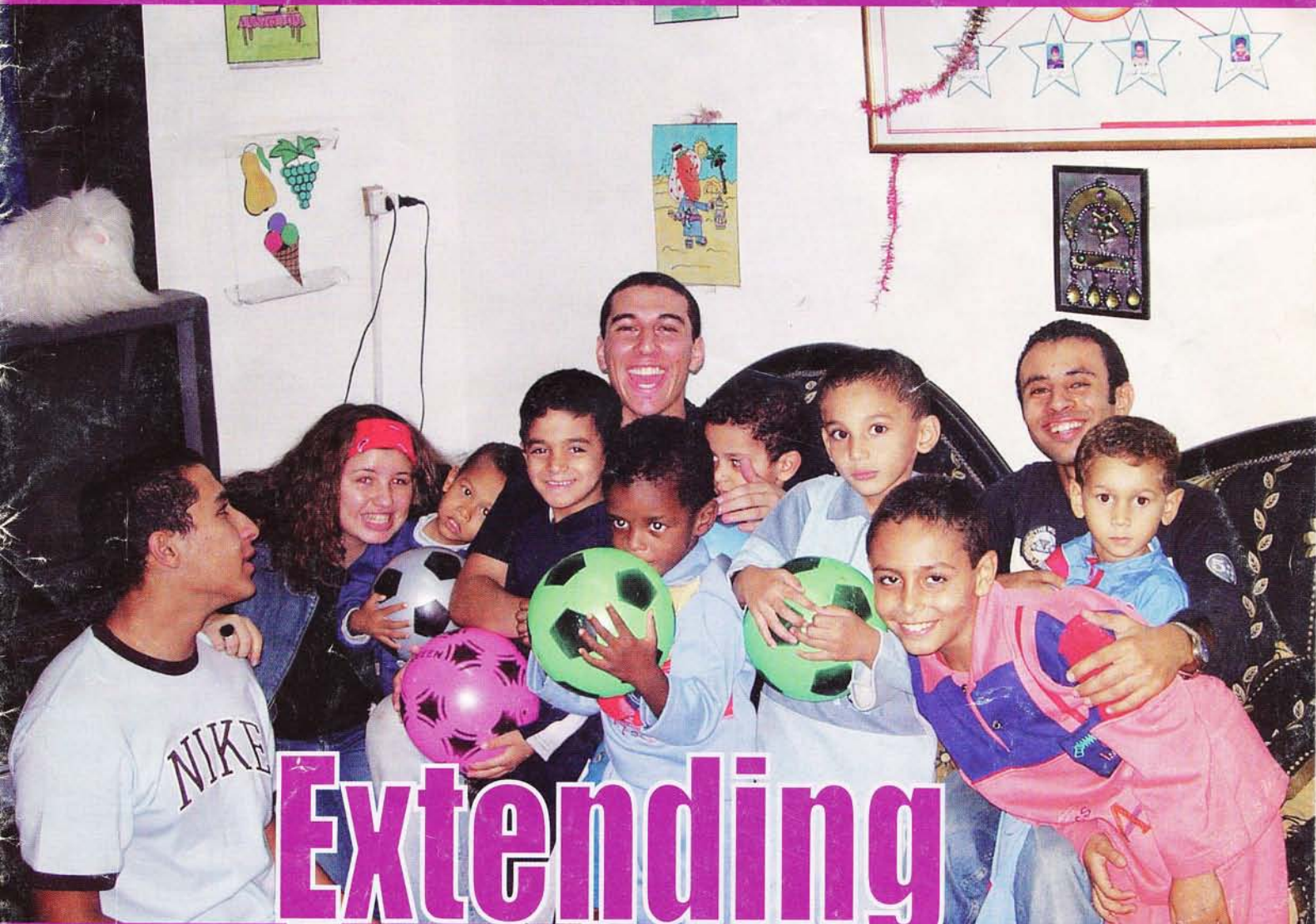


# THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of Seeds of Peace | Volume VIII Issue III | Fall-Winter 2004



## Extending our Reach



**A Summer of Fun: International Camp in Maine and Summer @ the Center in Jerusalem**

**Beyond Borders 2004: Bringing Arab and American Teens Together**

**Pakistani Seeds Visit their Neighbors in India**

**Egyptian and Jordanian Seeds Volunteer during Ramadan**

**Reactions to the Death of Yasser Arafat**

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**Studying Abroad: Is it the Right Thing to Do?**

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The Olive Branch is written and edited by youth from Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, India, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Macedonia, Morocco, Palestine, Pakistan, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen and the United States, who are part of the Seeds of Peace program. All opinions expressed in the magazine are solely those of the writers and not of Seeds of Peace, The Olive Branch or its staff.

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The Olive Branch is printed by Kol Ha'ir and designed by Paul Segal

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Seeds of Peace is a non-profit, non-political organization that helps teenagers from regions of conflict learn the skills of making peace. Set at our own camp in Maine, a safe environment is created where youngsters can air their views and learn the leadership and conflict resolution techniques required to end the cycles of war.

Front Credit: Egyptian Seeds play with children at the Nasr City Orphanage in Cairo (Credit: Genny Adel)  
Back Credit: Avital Zajac (Haifa)

# Letters

Credit: Jared Willis



The Israeli Steering Committee, pictured here in Tel Aviv, are responsible for planning on-going programs for Israeli Seeds

## Thank You to Camp

When I was selected to come to camp for the first time, I was having the worst time academically, my confidence was shattered and some people had discouraged me so much that I began to think I would never be able to give my best to my studies as I had been doing in past. But getting selected for the camp, and coming to it changed me inside out. I had a new confidence built up inside me and the loads of love I got here was enough to last me for life. I am so happy how beautifully camp helped me, whenever I was down or sad, I just told myself, "It's OK; there are people still in this world who really care about me and think that I can do everything." Thank you Bobbie, Tim and the counselors for making camp so special. I don't have words to thank John (Wallach) for the big thing he has done for us all.

**Saba Mumtaz (Lahore)**

## Letters to the Editor

Read something you would like to respond to? Please send an email to [olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org). All submissions are property of Seeds of Peace, and may be edited for length, content or style.

## Dear Seeds of Peace,

Since my first encounter with Seeds of Peace as a camper in 1998 I have had very little contact with others from the camp, except some friends from Palestine. I live in war now, my people are being killed. I lost friends, family members and security. Deep down inside me I still act as a Seed, but I am waiting for this storm to go away, and to become the tree I want to be, to spread peace. I wish that things around me could be better, because I seeing my people being killed. I'll keep on trying and I'll keep on praying. The experience I went through that summer is remembered everyday. I never thought that I would keep remembering those precious camp memories. I never did regret my participation in Seeds of Peace.

God bless you for your great work. Keep on respecting and having endless understanding for individuals, and listen to everybody. What you have made is what you are, which is a blessing from God.

**Ayah Al-Rozzi (Jenin)**

## A Tribute to a Great Counselor

Cecily Barber was the American PS in Session 1 2004, and was in the best bunk-the one and only BUNK 3!!!! Along with being an awesome

PS, she was my favorite person at camp. She was everything one would look for in a friend. Though we've been brought up very differently, it didn't take us much time to get to know each other, and we became best friends. She was one person to whom I could pour out my heart's contents.

Cecily accepted me for who I was and didn't try to change me in the slightest way . . . she was extremely sensitive and knew that I thought the world of her, so without me even asking, she was in the front row in the big hall for the Hindu services. It was these little gestures of kindness that really touched me.

"To love someone deeply gives you strength;  
Being loved by someone gives you courage."  
**Nazaqat Lal (Mumbai)**

## Correction

In the Summer 2004 Edition of The Olive Branch, Sami Ammous was incorrectly identified as being from Cairo. He is from Amman. Sorry Sami!

**The Olive Branch Staff**

# F rom the Editor

During my first experience working on The Olive Branch two years ago, I was made aware of an important ritual that occurred during the editing and layout process: thinking of the front cover title. Most of you Olive Branch readers might think this silly - how long does it take to come up with a title for a magazine cover? But I have come to appreciate why this ritual occurred - not only must the front cover title grab the reader, it must also make him ask questions that he could only answer by looking through the pages of the magazine. What does "Taking the Initiative" (Volume 8, Issue 2) mean? Does "Facing Tragedy Together" (Volume 6, Issue 1) only refer to a specific tragedy, or are there others that we must face? In the issue commemorating the life of Seeds of Peace's founder John Wallach, "Keeping the Dream Alive," (Volume 7, Issue 1), we wanted the reader to know how we were going to keep the dream alive following the passing of our founder and guiding light.

For this issue, however, finding a title was easy. Knowing what has happened in Seeds of Peace - especially in the Middle East - over the past few months, coming to the title "Extending our Reach" was pretty obvious. In Israel and Palestine, our structural framework extends past our Center of Coexistence building in Jerusalem. We have built partnerships to secure offices in Ramallah, Tel Aviv and Haifa, and we are making sure to include Seeds from the south of Israel with program coordinators responsible for engaging campers who hail all the way from Eilat. In Egypt and Jordan, we have built a tremendous program that includes offices in Amman and in Cairo.

But "Extending our Reach" does not just refer to office space - it also refers to our programming. In the Middle East, Seeds in Israel, Palestine, Egypt

and Jordan have been involved in numerous community service and social action projects, spreading the ideals of peace, tolerance and community involvement by working with those who are less fortunate than them. Increasing numbers of our older Seeds are working with the staff (or even are staff members themselves) to coordinate programs for younger Seeds. Our older Seeds continually show their desire to remain involved in the organization; for some, a decade after they attended camp. Currently in the works are initiatives for ongoing programs in Morocco, so the link for Seeds there is not confined to three weeks each year. And finally, who can forget our Beyond Borders program? Taking place at Seeds of Peace International Camp, the program, in its inaugural summer this past August, brought Americans and Arabs together to discuss perceptions of each other, in a world increasingly dominated by stereotypes and visions of "East" and "West."

As we at SOP have extended our reach, we must also remember those who have taken us this far. This past summer we saw the departure of Ned Lazarus and Jen Marlowe, program directors at the Center of Coexistence in Jerusalem. These two maintained the spirit here during four years of a downward-spiraling Intifada and have influenced hundreds of Seeds with their selflessness, love and commitment. I ask that you turn to pages six and seven to read what their colleagues, campers and friends have to say about them. I for one have known no one else as dedicated as these two and even as we enter 2005, I see Seeds everyday whose lives you have touched.

Seth

## From the Desk of Timothy P. Wilson, Camp and Center Director



November 16, 2004

Dear Wonderful Seeds:

My desk here at the Center looks no different than it does at Camp. There are still different piles for different things; it's just that most of the piles here relate to what is going on in the region.

Let me first start off this issue of The Olive Branch with belated holiday wishes to all the Muslim Seeds. My wife Jacquie and I enjoyed many wonderful Iftar meals with so many families during the month of Ramadan. The one Iftar that we will remember for the rest of our lives was with the late President Arafat, just six days before he went to Paris.

Jacquie and I also want to wish the Hindu and

Sikh Seeds the best at the conclusion of their Holiday of Lights.

And, finally, to all of our Jewish and Christian Seeds, happy holidays!

Well... it has been like a travelogue for me here. Jacquie has accompanied me all over the region to meetings with most of the 2004 Seeds and their parents. These meetings have been very fun and successful. Jacquie and I also traveled to Bir Zeit University in Ramallah. It was wonderful to be invited to Bir Zeit, where I met with professors and many Seeds alumni. It was just marvelous.

You'll all be happy to hear that, as a result of meetings with Seeds and their parents, as well as Seeds alumni, our staff has begun working on projects that are decided on by Seeds. I'm really excited about the changes being made within Seeds of Peace; this organization is beginning to develop ideas brought forth by Seeds and managed by them. There are now Seeds at every level of the organization. Also, the Seeds of Peace branches in Cairo, Egypt; Amman, Jordan; Eliat to Jerusalem, Israel; Tel Aviv to Haifa, Israel; Ramallah to Gaza, Palestine; Lewiston, Maine, USA; and Portland, Maine, USA are in different stages of growth but they are moving on with new ideas.

Finally, in this issue, you are going to read about two amazing people who helped Seeds of Peace

to where it is now. You will read about Mr. Ned Lazarus, who taught me about good hummus and falafel as well as Ms. Jen Marlowe, who introduced me to the soft and smelly commercials used at Camp. Please join me in this tribute to their Seeds of Peace legacy as we all wish them well in their new journeys.

On another note to all the Seeds from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Cyprus, and the Balkans: Please do not give up hope on me yet! You are all doing good things, too. I really hope that I can visit you soon and see some of your great accomplishments in person.

And, to the Beyond Borders Seeds: Welcome to the club! I hope you enjoy this first edition of The Olive Branch since your involvement with Seeds of Peace; I know that many of us look forward to reading your insights in this issue and in those to come.

My short time here at the Center and within the region has given me more than I can give back, but I am going to try! I look forward to continued success for Seeds of Peace in the immediate months and through years to come. Until then, enjoy the issue.

Be safe,  
Tim



## A Tragic Loss: Ashley Abron, April 3, 1988 - June 29, 2004

Seeds were shocked to hear that our friend Ashley Abron died in June 2004 after a tragic accident. Ashley was part of the Maine delegation and attended camp twice, in 2002 and 2003. Her friends in Maine and around the world share their memories and condolences

### Remembering a Far-Away Friend

Gent Salihu (Pristina)

I attended camp in 2003, during the same session as Ashley. Ashley was a great girl. I will always remember her as a person with whom I could share different things. After I heard what happened to her, I felt so sad. I still can't believe that she's not with us anymore, but I'll never stop remembering her.

I first met Ashley at Art Club. She explained to me in detail the US map and I explained

to her the European one. It was interesting and funny because while we were drawing, sometimes we made totally different maps with bigger and wrong territories.

After we left camp, in those emotional moments, Ashley and I were sitting on the bus next to each other. We were talking about camp and how much we would miss it. She was a little bit stressed because she was traveling alone on her return flight to Chicago.

I am so happy that I have her words in my SOP book and her photos in my album.

### Missing Someone Who Changed My Life

Sarah Pelletier (Lewiston)

I'm Sarah Pelletier from Lewiston, Maine. I am 15 years old and have lived in Maine my entire life. When I first attended the Seeds of Peace Camp, there were two other girls that came along with me. Their names are Tchotcho Teko and Ashley Abron. Ashley and I became great friends in a matter of days at camp. She always knew how to make me laugh and I could always tell her my problems. She was the kind of girl who would always dance, rap and laugh. You could see her smile from miles away. If she had something to say, she would say it as it was. She never really kept anything that was bothering her inside. Ashley was her own person in every way possible.

Ashley moved to Chicago with her family after her first year at camp. But she attended camp for a second year with me, and I think that was better because we were so much closer, and it was fun being with her at camp again. When it was time for everyone to leave, it was hard to say goodbye to her since Ashley didn't live in Maine anymore. We said our goodbyes, we had tears in our eyes and it was a sad day. That was the last time I saw her.

Ashley passed away on June 29th, 2004. I got a phone call from Tchotcho saying she got into a terrible accident and might not make it. I was terrified. I didn't know what to do or what was happening. Well, time passed and our facilitator, Debbie, gave me a call telling me Ashley didn't make it. I just

### In Memory of My Friend

Kate Curley (Portland)

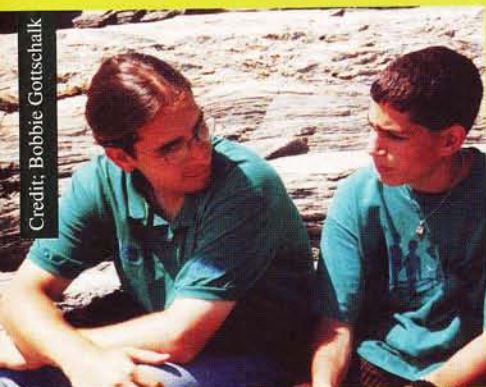
This past summer, one of my best friends, Ashley Abron, passed away. I remember the shock I felt as I read the email on SeedsNet. I was angry, confused, and upset. She was just 16 years old. I met Ashley in 2002, our first year of camp. She was a kind-hearted person, she never said a mean word about anyone and she loved life. Although she was on this planet for just a short while, she left an impression on every person who ever met her. Ashley loved people and cared for them. I wrote this poem for Ashley when I was at camp this summer. I'd like to share it with the Seeds community, and express my deepest condolences to Ashley's family. She will be forever loved and missed.

I miss you  
I miss you so much  
I miss you like a child misses summer in the  
deathly cold of winter  
You held me for a while  
Up there  
You held all of us  
You held our hands and kissed our tears and  
made sure we felt loved  
It didn't matter who we were  
You loved us  
I miss you  
When the wind blows  
And the leaves rustle in the trees  
I miss you the most  
When I hear that song  
The one we all used to dance to  
I remember you  
Completely  
Your laugh, your smile, your eloquence and  
grace  
The way you said on the last day of camp  
"I'm going to miss you Kate!"  
You were always so sincere  
And now I'm left with empty hands  
And hopeful thoughts in mind  
Left to pick up the pieces  
Left with bittersweet memories  
We miss you  
Your brothers and sisters back here  
Who feel you around us  
With every smile, laugh, and tear  
And we love you  
We'll always love you  
Our Ashley

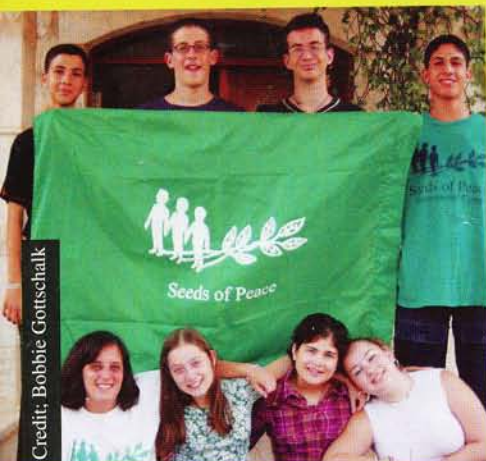
started bawling; it tore me apart. I didn't think it was really happening. It was a moment you think would never happen. Then suddenly, it did.

I knew I wanted everyone to remember Ashley. So, I and other Seeds of Peace in Lewiston have created a garden dedicated to her. The name of the garden is The Ashley Abron Garden. We started it in October. We planted all the bulbs so they will grow in the spring, bright and beautiful. The garden is in the shape of a peace sign. I've been taking pictures every time we work on it so after the garden is done, I will send Ashley's family pictures of the garden so they can see that she is remembered. Ashley and Seeds of Peace have both changed my life. I love you and miss you, Ashley Abron. Rest in peace.

# The End of an Era



Ned talks with a Seed at International Camp, 1998



Jen with Israeli and Palestinian Seeds at the Center in Jerusalem



Anna and Jen pitch for sunscreen

The summer of 2004 marked the departure of two Seeds of Peace fixtures. Ned Lazarus came to Jerusalem in 1996 and over the course of eight years transformed Seeds of Peace from a bedroom and a Ford Transit to an official program with a real building. Jen Marlowe arrived in 2000 to work at Seeds of Peace in Jerusalem, right when the second Intifada broke out. Over four years, she maintained a positive attitude and enthusiasm matched by few. Seeds, colleagues and friends share their memories and good wishes for these two as they begin a new chapter in their lives

Ned and Jen, Jen and Ned -

To me, they are synonyms for Seeds of Peace in the Middle East, or SOP @ the Center (as our 2000 gray T-shirts proudly boast). I was lucky enough to spend a combined three summers in the region, working with these two big hearts and bubbling spirits of fun, generosity, and compassion, amazed by the fact their batteries just never seemed to run out.

Jen and Ned, simply by being who you are, by walking the walk, you have taught me the meaning of love, openness, service, and - most importantly - the power of one. From the days of 1999, working from Ned's bedroom to prepare our first SOP exchange trip to Jordan - amidst piles of Olive Branches stacked atop his no longer visible bed, onto the days of 2000, where Jen and I bonded in female solidarity to show the SOP boyz staff how to get the J-O-B done, and finishing it off right by being drenched in chocolate syrup, shaving cream, and baby oil in front of 150 of our closest Seeds friends and their family. Onto the summer of 2004, where I learned the value of courage and determination in forging forward with programming despite the most complex logistical barriers posed by the realities of the conflict . . . and by Old City stray cats! May I raise a toast to both of you, two of my biggest role models and beloved friends . . . you have taught me what it means to be truly human - to live fully, to love deeply, to laugh often, to give much, and to never, ever let go of the hope. I love you both.

**Ahsiya Posner**

Unlike many who came before me, I did not have the opportunity to meet Ned nor Jen. I only know of them and what they have accomplished, through stories told at camp and with my own eyes. I recently met someone in Boston who knew Ned and raved about the Seeds program. It was a joy going down memory lane and sharing with her my experience as a counselor. It is truly amazing how many people around the world have been touched by the Seeds family. Thank you for opening our hearts and freeing our minds.

**Roger Wong**

Dear Jen!

From the drama project staff, you were the only one who continued working for Seeds of Peace with great efforts. I believe that's because you

were and probably still are the most affable grown person to youngsters, always willing to heed and help, solve and hug when needed. You are one of a kind. I wish we had more of you in our world.

**Inbal Shaked**

I have known Ned since his first summer at SOP. Whatever tribute you make for him will be inadequate. He, himself, deserves an entire edition of *The Olive Branch*. His ability to work with the colorful cast of characters at SOP as well as work in a region fraught with chaos and instability are a testament that Ned is as cool and level-headed as they come. On top of all this, he is a nice guy, the kind of person with whom one wants to sit down and break bread. He always put me at ease when we were together. I am glad that he offered the cause of education and peace his enormous and incalculable time and energy. I hope those who remain in his place earn the high level of respect that he earned while serving SOP.

**Jerry Smith, Jr.**

When I think of the person who inspired me the most, I think of Jen Marlowe. During the year I had the chance to know her, she was always the one who gave me hope, who made me believe that I can really do something. She was the one who helped me and Soad get to know each other better by taking me to visit Taybe. She helped us organize our Bring-a-Friend event. It was not only this; I knew for sure that if I needed advice, or cheering up, I could always turn to Jen.

**Daria Ratiner**

One of the scenes I will never forget featuring Ned is one I saw during the summer of '97. Ned claims he can speak French. We had Moroccans in camp and he was trying to explain something to one of them in Americanized French. He was taking a typical Ned stance: back slightly bent, head tilted a bit to the right, his right hand moving imaginary objects from in front of his chest to the Moroccan guy's face with each syllable he uttered (Ned knowers: you know what I mean). The guy was looking with a blank expression at Ned. Turned out he didn't understand a thing.

**Sami Ammou**

Jen, I thank you for the many times you made me smile!

Ned, I share with you a memory which to me

# ra at the Center

depicts the determination of Seeds. It was at the New York conference, on the last night. We are working on the "Declaration of Principles" with our group. After much discussion, lots of writing, hours go by and our group can't agree on the FIRST sentence. Out of desperation, I mention the surprise - that there is going to be a dance in a short while, expecting the group members to just cave on their principles so we can make progress. There is a brief silence and someone says, "Well we aren't going until we get this figured out," and there we stayed, not joining the group until the end of the dance! We were so proud of them.

## Debbie Belanger

Jen Marlowe has been a central figure for me in the SOP family. I clearly remember the first time we met - it was during the Israeli seminar in Jerusalem in the beginning of June 2004. She came with our PS's and Jared. They stood in front of us, explaining what Seeds of Peace was all about, sung songs to us, and showed us a video. I remember the twinkle in everyone's eyes after they were finished. Linor Grissario and I approached Jen right before lunch to ask her if we could return to be PS's. She smiled at us warmly, but I don't believe she understood the full impact she had on us that day. The next time I met Jen was during the first week of camp, this time in Otisfield, Maine. It's ironic that although we all came from a war-struck region, the most emotional stress we've experienced was on a shore of a peaceful lake somewhere in the Northeast US. I told Jen I could barely handle it all, that it was all getting too difficult to cope with. She listened to my stories and encouraged me. It was that encouragement that kept me motivated to accept the other and to join together in a mutual goal - peace. Jen, you will always be in my heart. Thank you for being such a tremendous positive impact, a guide, on my life and everyone else's in Seeds of Peace.

## Michal Brosh

Imagine this: Ned and Jen running a coexistence session for all of the Israelis and Palestinians in the world at once. 14 million people? No problem. Ned would start by getting caught up on his email and memorizing everyone's phone number, Jen would probably start by driving to Afula. Everybody else would go home for the weekend and talk about what an impossible idea it was. There would be some long meetings and some long emails to the states. Ned and Jen would talk on their telephones a lot. In the end, there would be peace in the Middle East and everyone would know that Ned and Jen cared deeply about them.

## Larry, Fish, Roy, Ben, Adam, Huwaida

*"The world needs dreamers and the world needs doers and the world needs dreamers who do" - Eleanor Roosevelt*

It is quite appropriate to have a "thank you page" for Ned and Jen in The Olive Branch. Both of them share qualities that Seeds of Peace needed in order to survive the past several years of strife in the

Middle East. Both of them are idealists and dreamers, creative to the extreme, but never miss the chance to do something practical and important in the current reality. Their days are filled with good deeds but they would never call them "good deeds" themselves. For them, it is a way of life to actively help others continuously, day in and day out.

After many years of service, Ned spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to extricate himself from his job at the Center so he could finish his higher education. When Jen came along, he saw that he would be able to do that because Jen understood how to replace him. They were both in love with their SOP jobs, though. Separating from their jobs was the hardest thing either of them ever had to do. I don't think this escaped the notice of anyone who ever visited the center for longer than an hour.

The countless number of Seeds who were supported when they needed it, and encouraged to take wing and fly, when they needed that, will always keep those good memories as reminders that goodness is still alive in this world.

Thank you a million times, Jen and Ned. I hope your Seeds of Peace memories will spur you on to amazing creativity and productivity. No amount of thanks is enough to reflect our gratitude and love.

## Bobbie Gottschalk

Ned and Jen,

I have so many memories from both camp and Jerusalem of the two of you . . . from smiles, to crazy adventures that my parents still don't know about, to picture-taking at midnight before the Olive Branch deadline, to coffee late at night before the co-ex marathon, to text messages to check if I'm OK or what I'm up to, to little kittens underneath the couch . . . you have both been present and caring and excited about life. I hold you both up as examples in my life because I admire the way you live your life and the people you help and lead. Please keep in touch, we will miss you both and I know that you will both do amazing things that we will all want to hear about.

## Hannah Lantos

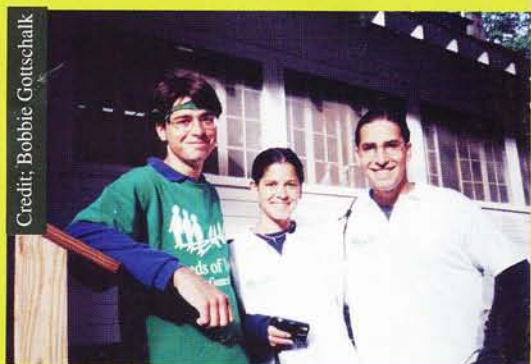
I don't know what to say, but I really feel overwhelmed by those moments when I start writing about someone who meant a lot to me as a friend and who did a lot for Seeds. Jen - it's you who I owe for getting me to feel the spirit of Seeds of Peace and thousands of other things I can't count. Just one of the things to wish for you: a happy, peaceful and long life. And hope to see you here in London.

## Khaled Jamoos

Over the last seven years in SOP, I knew lots of great people who showed interest and a willingness to help and give to the ones around them. You, Ned and Jen, were the most caring and loving. The



Ned, Jen and the Center for Coexistence staff, 2000



Ned with two Seeds at Camp, 1997



Israeli Seed Golan Yarden with Ned in his office

times I had with you I will never forget, and you will always be in my life. All the best.

## Kheirallah Bazbaz

Ned:

As time goes by you get to meet people who show you the way, people that help you to get through - I was lucky always to have you, to get enough of your time and attention to remain in Seeds of Peace when it was the hardest for me. Thank you for being a guide, a teacher and most of all, a friend.

Jen:

For the will, the trust, the time and the faith in me: Thank you!

Eldad Levy

# SEEDS TAKING



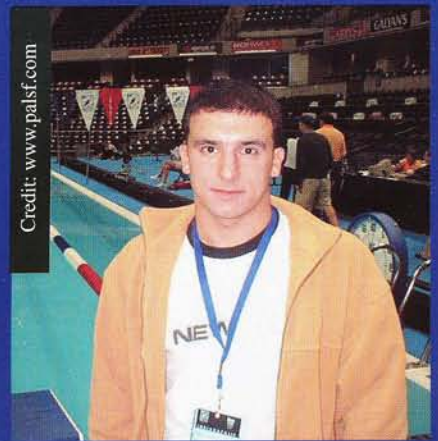
# the lead

A binational group of Cypriot Seeds were champions in the "Peace Cup 2004" soccer tournament with fellow Cypriots from both sides of the island. Four bicomunal groups - campers from the School of International Training, Youth Encounters for Peace (YEP) members, Bold Leaders and Seeds of Peace - formed football teams. On the SOP team were Huseyin Zorba (Turkish Cypriot), Ozcel Cangul (TC), Savvas Savva (Greek Cypriot), Manolis Charalambous (GC), Charis Christofi (GC), Suleyman Gelener (TC), Ozkem Oge (TC), Ali Ozdengiz (TC), Cemre Mangu (TC) and Marinos Constantinou (GC). The tournament lasted for four hours and the final was between Seeds of Peace and the YEP. The match ended in a draw and after the penalty shoot-outs, Seeds of Peace won the cup. According to team member Ozcel Cangul from Nicosia, "This was a unique experience for all of us with players in the field and the other Seeds cheering. This tournament is just the first of many Peace Cup tournaments, including not only these four groups but also all the youth groups working for peace in Cyprus. Although there are not any changes toward ending the divisions on our island on the official level, the people of Cyprus, themselves, are creating peace between each other."

**Sherife Abdel Messih from Cairo, Egypt** has won the Onsi Sawiris Scholarship, the most competitive and prestigious scholarship for high school students in Egypt. He was ranked first out of the four people chosen for the scholarship, which includes payment of all fees to any of the top ten colleges in Europe or the United States, a stipend and a guaranteed position in one of the companies owned by Sawiris, who owns companies in the electronics, construction and tourism industries.



Sherife Abdel Messih with Naguib Sawiris, son of Onsi Sawiris



Credit: www.palsf.com

**Sadeq Damra from Amman** swam for the Palestinian National Team in the FINA World Swimming Championships in Indianapolis, Indiana in October. He placed 33rd in the world in the 200 meters breaststroke and set a new country record at 2:38.83 seconds. Sadeq grew up in Jordan but swam for the Palestinian National Team during this competition "to express his values and principles through sports in order to achieve world peace." Sadeq is in his senior year at Mahattanville College in New York, where he is studying Math and Computer Science. He holds the school record for the 100 meter breast stroke at Manhattanville.





Ahsiya, Shira, Rochelle and Roy enjoy dinner at Neve Shalom

### Arab Seminar:

Arab Seeds relaxed in Amman and discussed pressing issues affecting their local and national communities

### Israeli Seminar:

Israeli Seeds converged on Neve Shalom (Oasis of Peace) to learn more about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict

### Widen Your Horizons:

Seeds learned a wide range of skills including photography, conflict mediation, dance and language

### Spreading the Word:

Seeds performed service projects in their communities

## Summer @ the Center 2004: Spreading the Word, Widening Horizons

In its third consecutive year, Summer @ the Center brought together Seeds from Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan to enjoy "camp away from camp"



A discussion group at the Arab Seminar in Amman



Ramzi helps a new friend at Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem during the Spreading the Word Seminar

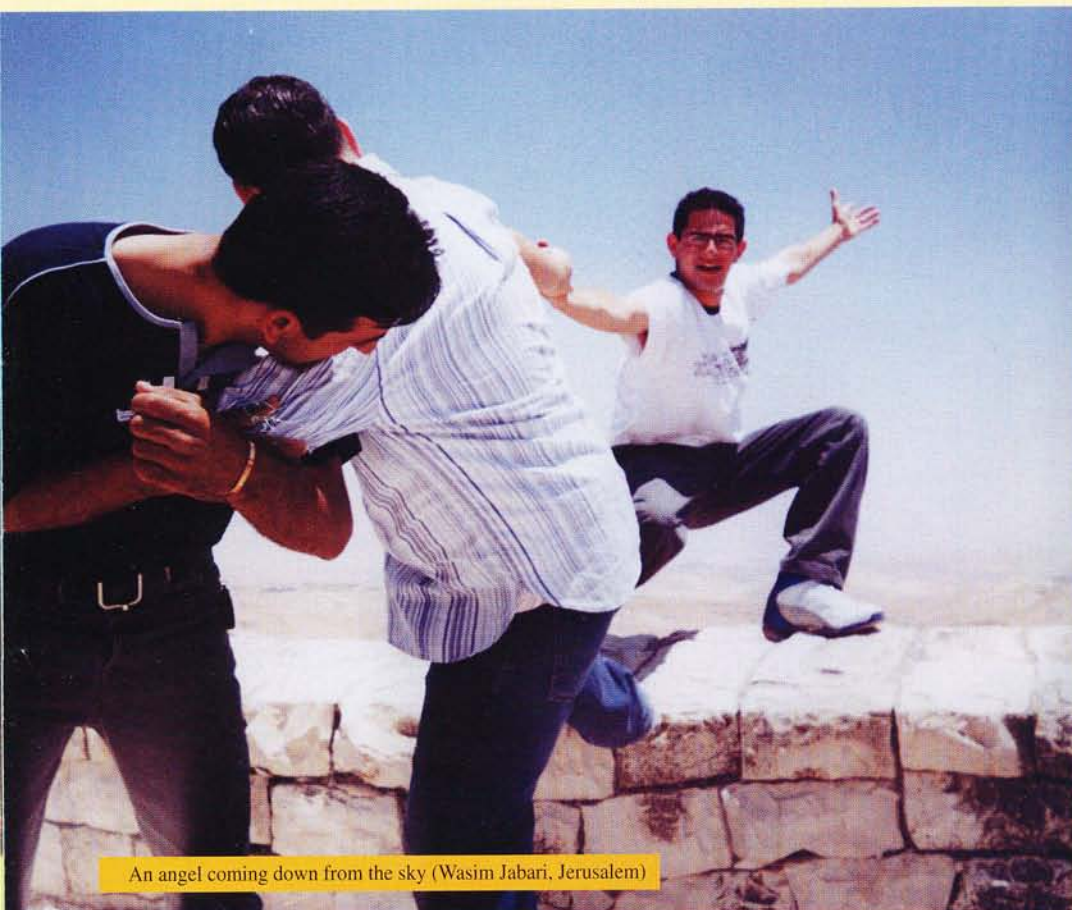


Untitled (Raghda Taha, Daburiyya)

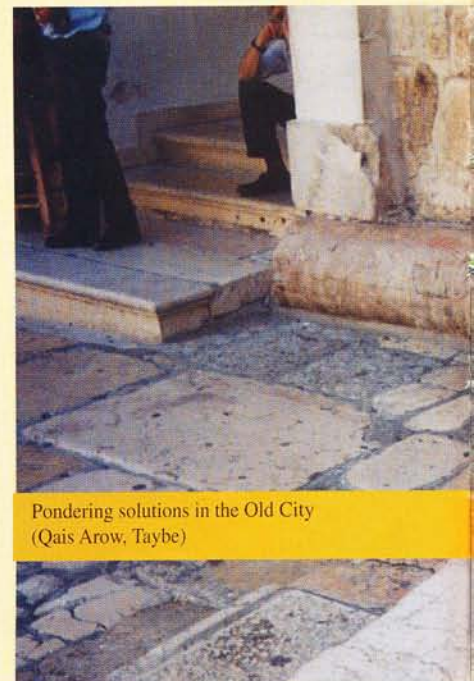


# Jerusalem Through the Camera Lens

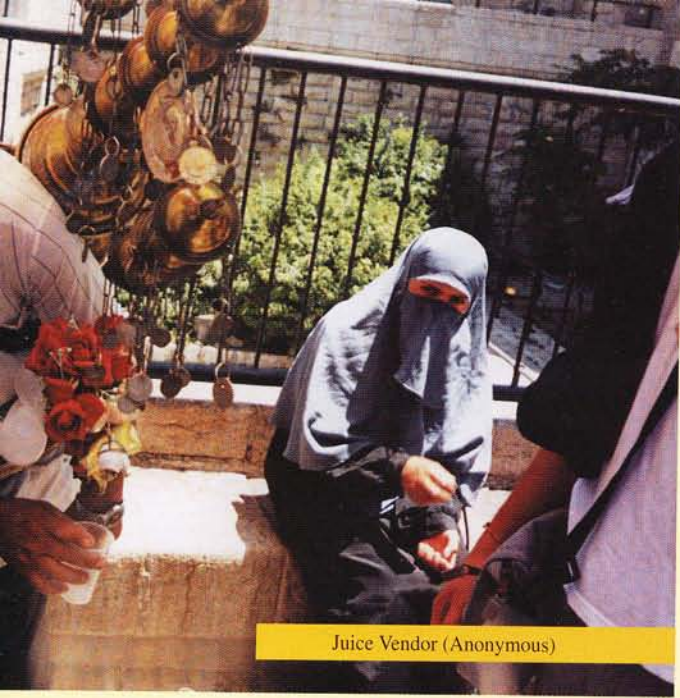
Seeds present unique views of Jerusalem during the Summer @ the Center photography workshop



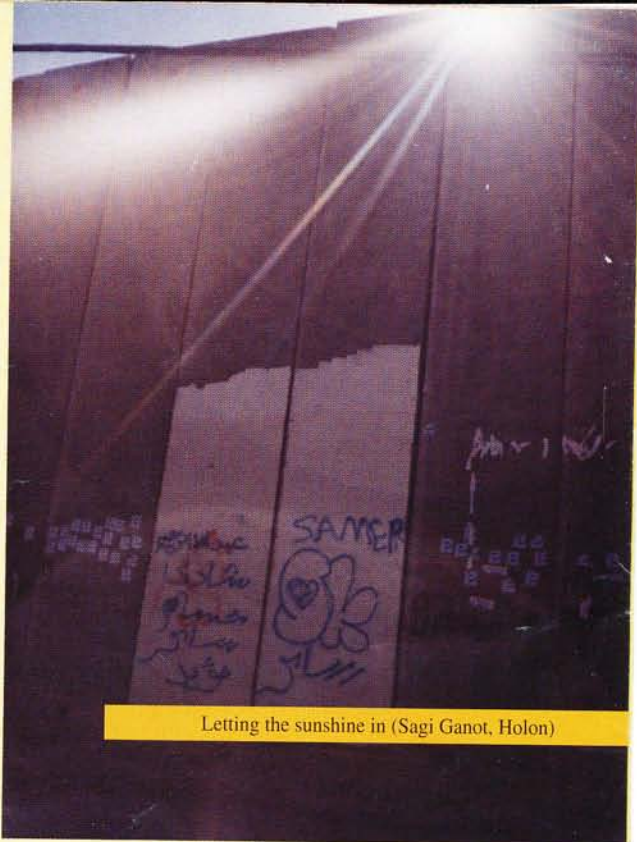
An angel coming down from the sky (Wasim Jabari, Jerusalem)



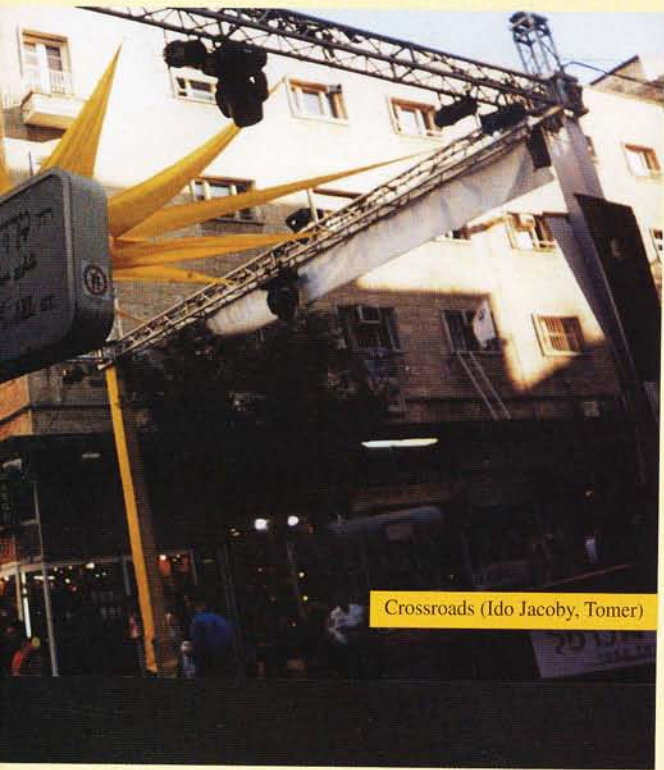
Pondering solutions in the Old City (Qais Arow, Taybe)



Juice Vendor (Anonymous)



Letting the sunshine in (Sagi Ganot, Holon)



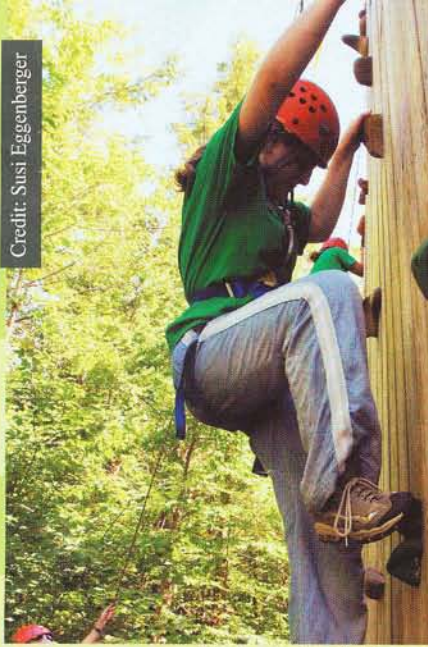
Crossroads (Ido Jacoby, Tomer)



[Redacted]



Shadows: People hide their secrets from society, but they continue to follow (Lionel Daich, Ashdod)



Adventure on the climbing wall

## Oh Otisfield! Camp 2004

Blue. Green. Dialogue. Coexistence. Group Challenge. Color Games. They were all there at the twelfth Seeds of Peace International Camp, welcoming new campers from around the world. Newly-planted Seeds share their eye-opening experiences and stories

### He Was My Friend, Just Because Devon Cohen (Dallas)

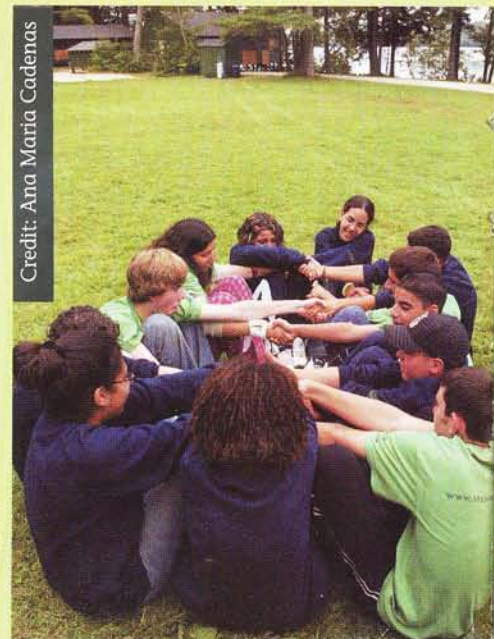
Although my camp experience was profound and meaningful in a way I feel many cannot imagine, I'm sure I had a similar camp experience to most American Seeds who walk through the gates of Otisfield, Maine. However, we all have our own unique and unforgettable moments and memories. Something that will stay with me forever is the unusual relationship I formed with one camper, a boy from Palestine, in my dialogue group.

From the beginning of our very first dialogue session, I could tell he had lived a very difficult and sad life. He spoke mostly Arabic and one of the facilitators would translate for him. The first time I realized the true separation between me and this young man was when we were asked to tell the most important turning point, or moment, in our lives to date. In Arabic, he told one of the most tragic stories I have ever and will probably ever hear. It was something along the lines of watching your best friend die in front of you without reason and without questions being answered. Immediately, my "sympathies" were with him. I only wish I had the ability speak Arabic so I could build a stronger friendship with him.

However, my feelings, to my shame, dissipated the next day when we were discussing the role of freedom fighters/suicide bombers and their importance to the conflict. He stated he would have no problem becoming a suicide bomber and had considered it seriously in the past. This both shocked and scared me beyond belief. He was 15, half my size, and has a full life ahead of him. I didn't take the time to consider all that he has been through and what it must be like to walk a mile in his shoes. I was confused as to why Seeds could let such a person in. From then on, I shut myself off from him and tried to avoid him outside of dialogue. I no longer wanted listen to him or his arguments because all I could see him as were they scary militants shown daily on CNN.

On the last day of camp, everyone was signing each other's scrapbooks. Surprisingly, he asked to sign mine. So, we exchanged books. I signed something like: I will miss you, it was good to meet you; nothing thoughtful or to my embarrassment, meaningful. What he wrote to me, however, is one of my most coveted messages and memories of my whole experience. He wrote: I will miss you very much, I was happy because we play and discuss together. I hope to get a best life in the future, as do you. With love,

I spent so long arguing and sidelining him because he never acknowledged, accepted, or considered my views. But, neither did I consider his. He did the right and compassionate thing. He was my friend just because. It didn't matter or affect him what I thought about the situation. We come from two different, opposing worlds. Yet, he was open nonetheless and considered me his friend. I considered myself open and willing to listen and learn. But, I wasn't. He knew how to respect and leave out his ideas and opinions when not necessary and be my friend. He helped me to re-evaluate how I interact and learn from others who both are very similar and very different. I have so much hope for these conflicts because of people like him; those who are willing to push aside opinions and standards for friendship.



Credit: Ana Maria Cadenas

Not just a simple handshake: Group Challenge participants make a human pretzel

## Caught in the Middle, On Both Sides

Mariam Haj-Yahia (Taybe)

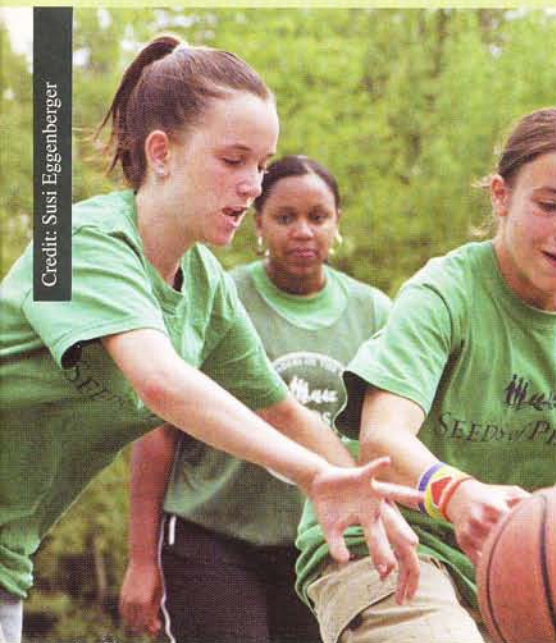
To be an Arab girl and live in Israel is hard, to live with people who are the enemy of your nation, of your brothers, who don't love you and don't want you here. But I always says that there are a lot of people who want peace, who love me and would never treat me like second-class citizen.

I decided to do my best and go to to camp. At first, my goal was to see how Palestinian and Israeli teenagers can get along, meet new people from other countries, have fun and be in a place where I can say what I want without hurting other people. Where I can do what I feel is true.

Camp was better than what I had imagined. It was a place with people from all over the world who came, like me, searching for a safe place, a place of peace. On the second day at camp, campers and counselors from each delegation represented their country; each delegation sang their national anthem near their flag. For every camper it was a regular event . . . but not for Israeli Arabs, or '48 Arabs as we are known. For me, the situation is complex. I live in Israel, I learned in the Israeli system and Israel gives me my rights, but I look like, talk like, and feel like a Palestinian. So where should I have stood, and with who? It was hard question! In the end, I chose to stand with both the Palestinian and Israeli delegations. I stood with Israel as an Israeli girl and with Palestine as a Palestinian girl.

During the dialogue session, the campers in my group respected my opinions and knew that I am part of both sides. When we had to choose with which side to be with, I chose to be at one time with the Palestinians, and another times with the Israelis. It made me feel good and that I did what I did as someone who is caught in the middle of this war.

## *I stood with Israel as an Israeli girl and with Palestine as a Palestinian girl*



Credit: Susi Eggenberger

## Unlimited Kindness, Love and Toothpaste

Wardah Khan (Lahore)

As I am writing this down, my thoughts are mingled up and I don't know where to begin describing my Seeds of Peace camp experience in Maine. Before going to camp, I had a lot of apprehensions. I wasn't sure if we were going to be allowed to say our Muslim prayers or be served halal meals. My grandmother thought that I would be brainwashed during camp and my sister had strong reservations about the presence of Indians there.

On reaching camp, however, I realized that the whole atmosphere was very cozy and homely and I was warmly welcomed as a family member. I had lost my luggage during transit and was empty-handed when I arrived at camp, but I did not really face any complications as people at camp were helpful and kind enough to share things with me. One counselor gave me a sweatshirt and another lent me her night trousers and a pair of socks. My Indian friend gave me her pants and rest of my bunkmates lent me shoes, deodorant, sunblock, hairbrush and toothpaste. In the end I had so much stuff that I needed another suitcase. The way I was helped out was simply inexplicable.

That was just the first day and the subsequent days brought with them more fun and excitement. All my pre-camp apprehensions were dispelled. All the campers were at liberty to practice their religion with freedom. Special Friday prayers were arranged at the big hall, preceded by the Friday Sermon. It was a wonderful experience.

I will never forget that day when I had a fever and was unable to attend most of the day's activities. I was lying in the infirmary feeling tired and lonely, when I heard some footsteps approaching the room. I curiously looked up and found out that it was one of my Indian friends, looking worried and anxious. She sat beside me and asked me how I was feeling. She stayed there for almost fifteen minutes and I really felt comfortable to have her company. After I came back from the infirmary, she still was worried about me and kept on asking me to rest. She made sure that I had taken all my medicines and did not let me feel for a single moment that I was away from my country and family. Experiencing such friendliness from someone across the border was something enough to change my perspectives towards them.

Now that I am bringing up my experiences of camp, I am overwhelmed with emotions and my mind is wandering in the pleasantness of those wonderful days. After returning back from camp, I realized my grandmother was right - I had been brainwashed. Even the slightest amount of hatred, pessimism and stereotypes were removed and replaced in my heart by hope, love and peace. I wish everyone on earth could be brainwashed like this.



Credit: Susi Eggenberger

Hindu Seeds participate in a religious service

## My Enemy is . . . Normal!

Pavlina Antoniou (Larnaca)

As a young child, I believed what my parents, teachers and the people in my community said about the history and past of my country, Cyprus. I did not have the chance to know the real facts, only the opinions of the people that told me what they wanted me to know. Growing up, I learned that the Turks are our enemies, and that they occupied half of Cyprus. But, as I said before, I just knew what the Greek-Cypriot community taught me about my country's history. But I knew at camp that I would have to face Turkish-Cypriot opinions, and learn if they were different than what I had learned for so many years.

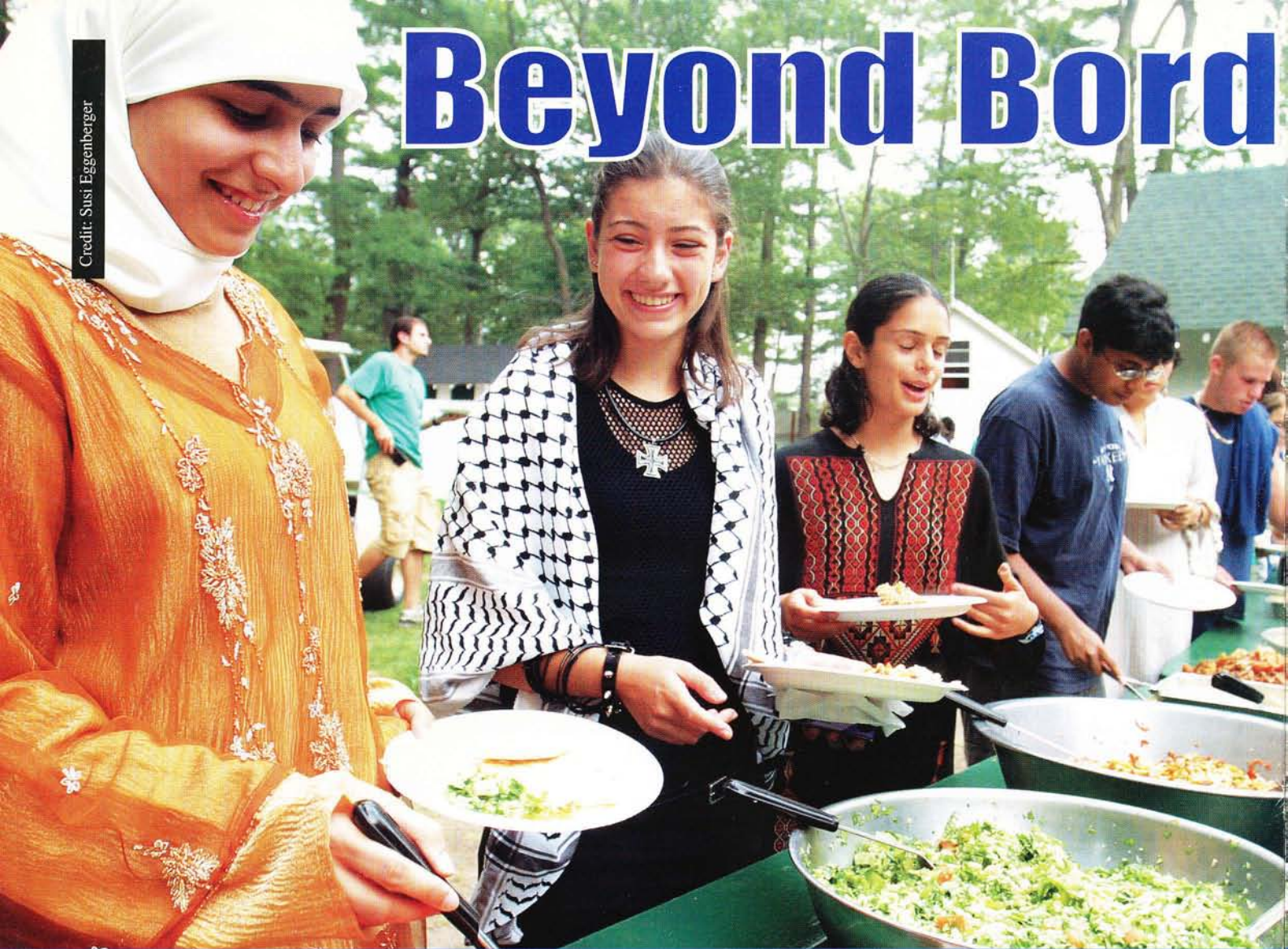
When I met the Turkish-Cypriots, first of all, I found them were friendly. I was surprised because I had been taught that they were mean! At first, we introduced ourselves to each other. When I talked to some of them, we shared stories of each other's lives, likes and dislikes . . . the normal conversation two teenagers would have. I understood then that we had lots of things in common. We lived together in the same bunks, we ate together at the same tables and we had to co-operate together everyday. I did not face any of them as Turkish-Cypriots. I faced them as individuals. And that made us build a true friendship.



Credit: Susi Eggenberger

Seeds participate in a writing exercise during their dialogue session

# Beyond Bord



**Our post-September 11 world increasingly focuses on the differences between "Arabs" and "Westerners," Muslims and non-Muslims. In this environment, Seeds of Peace designed a special camp session for Arab and American teens to meet and discuss conflicts between their two peoples**

**Ryan Ingram (Boston) and Sarah Fakhraldeen (Kuwait City)**

### **Learning What "They" Are Really Like**

Coming to Seeds of Peace was an exciting and challenging experience for both of us, young women living on opposite sides of the globe. Being a teenager in the Middle East, I (Sarah) was raised in a society that taught me both stereotypes and facts about the Western world. Although I came across and befriended several American teenagers and adults, I never once had in-depth discussions with any one of them about the issues facing our world today. However, when I learned about Seeds of Peace International Camp, and how they were hosting Beyond Borders 2004, I thought that it would be a great experience for me to learn the thoughts and beliefs of the true American mind. I thought that ever since September 11, 2001, many Americans had different opinions about Arabs and Muslims, and many Arabs and Muslims had different opinions about Americans. Hence, I believed that by actually meeting them and conversing with them all misconceptions could be corrected on either side.

And being a teenager (Ryan) in the United States, I had similar motivations for joining Seeds of Peace. I had watched the media's portrayal of Arabs on American television and in newspapers for years, but I finally realized that I wanted to understand Arab culture on my own, without the influence of biased newscasters and journalists virtually dictating my every thought. After 9/11, many Americans had come to fear Arabs, but I wanted to discover for myself what people living in the Middle East were really like and exactly how they perceived Americans. I grew more eager to learn about Islam and to understand the beliefs and laws significant to each country in the Middle East. Most importantly, however, I wanted to become informed so that I could form intelligent opinions about political situations and not only understand what I was talking about, but feel passionately about my ideas.

By working together, learning the truth about each other, and assisting each other, Americans and Arabs will be able to achieve peace. If Americans and Arabs achieve peace amongst themselves, together they can achieve world peace.





**Sammie Sevilla**  
(Chicago)

### Re-examining What I've Been Told

To fully understand the other side, to really learn and grow, you must not only open your ears, but also your mind. This is what I learned at camp this summer. Before camp I had many misconceptions and stereotypes that I didn't even know that I had. I put a lot of trust in the media and assumed that things were what they seemed to be. Once I arrived at camp, from my very first meetings with my roommates, everything I knew was challenged. Meeting people for the first time from a completely different country was less of a shock than I thought it would be. Although we may not look alike, or have the same homeland or the same experiences, we all had a common goal and similar visions for our lives and the world. Every moment together we learned things that I would never have been able to grasp out of a textbook.

During camp we Americans were able to show our Arab friends our favorite sports and watch them swing a bat for the first time. During art, drama, music, and dance, we saw each other's talents and strengths, encouraged one another and had so much fun doing it. During our dialogue sessions we were pushed out of our comfort zone, to be truly honest with one another, so we would be able to go back home with a new understanding of the world around us. We discussed religions, politics, cultures, rights, history, and most importantly, who and

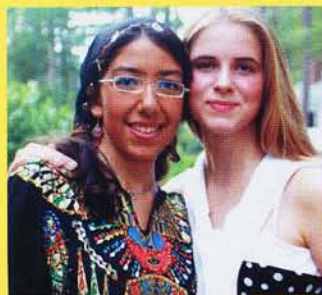
what we are. By being able to question each other and hear the REAL stories that each of us have gone through, my outlook on life has completely changed. I now look at the world in a different light than I used to. I question what I hear and know that many of the things I do hear are biased. In order to get the whole story I need to get other sources. I don't take things for granted, as I used to. I am a lot more active in educating others on my experiences and the knowledge that I received from camp. After camp, I am much more aware of what is going on in the world and trying to find ways to solve its problems. I find myself defending people thousands and thousands of miles away from me because I know how great those people are. Not only have my personal views changed, but where I see myself in a few years has changed as well. This experience altered my world. I found myself singing to Latin songs with girls from the Middle East, learning Arabic, and playing Ultimate Frisbee with someone from Jordan. Looking back on the experience I know that I was truly blessed to be given the opportunity to grow in such a way people can only imagine. At camp we had such respect for one another - if only we could bring that to the real world.

These people are more than my friends, they are a group that has touched my life and has changed it forever.



Credit: Eva Gordon

Shadi al-Shargabi (Taiz, Yemen), George Brown (Dallas), Ahmad al-Shammari (Kuwait)



**Sawsan Badr**  
(Cairo)

### The Most Amazing Experience of My Life

At camp, I learned from Tim, the director, that we must give our love to everyone even if we don't love them; we must give them our love even if only a part of us loves them.

I loved the challenge groups at camp. My group and I enjoyed the teamwork and the act of trying to reach the same goal. I felt the dialogue sessions were the strongest activity at camp because everyone had the chance to talk about everything happening around them. In our dialogue group, we talked about the relationship between Arabs and Americans. We talked about Iraq, Israelis and the Palestinians and we also talked about religion, specifically the hijab, the head covering for Muslim

women. We talked about the role of women in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and in Saudi Arabia and the similarities and differences between them. For example, in Egypt and Jordan women can drive, but in Saudi Arabia and in Kuwait women are not allowed to drive. During the dialogues, everyone listened to each other's points of views and ideas. Our group was amazing.

My bunk was the funniest bunk in the world. My bunkmates and my counselors - Eva, Sarah and Maha - were so sweet. Every night we were talking together and laughing. All of them were like my sisters and I loved them all from my heart. I will never forget them and I can't wait for the day when I will see them again at our reunion in Jordan in the spring of 2005.

Seeds of Peace was the most amazing experience in my life. I will never forget anything from the camp; it will be in my memory forever.

# Staying Connected in the US and Morocco

Although separated by an ocean, the United States and Morocco both send annual delegations to International Camp. Seeds from each country write about maintaining the connection with their fellow Seeds and the long-term impact of their camp experiences

## Maintaining our Connection in a Country of Tolerance

Charaf El Mansouri (Casablanca)

I come from a country that is located at the northern tip of Africa. It is right at the gates of Europe, just an ocean across from South and North America. It makes up the Western extremity of the Arab

World (known in Arabic as the Maghrib, or the West), and was colonized by the French and the Spanish. Given all this, it is obvious to say that my country, Morocco, knows quite a bit about cultural differences. Morocco is a country of peace and tolerance, where people from all over the world are able to live together.



Credit: Charaf El-Mansouri

Charaf and friends on the Corniche in Casablanca

World (known in Arabic as the Maghrib, or the West), and was colonized by the French and the Spanish. Given all this, it is obvious to say that my country, Morocco, knows quite a bit about cultural differences. Morocco is a country of peace and tolerance, where people from all over the world are able to live together.

During the Holocaust, Morocco welcomed thousands of Jewish people fleeing the oppression of the Nazis. Many of these Jews have now gone to Israel but remain attached to their native country. Since the 1960's, demonstrations all over the country for the Palestinian cause gathered over a million and a half people, a number never seen before in a country where demonstrations are not common.

Yet Morocco was caught up by the events around the world, and on May 16, 2003, five simultaneous explosions in Casablanca killed over forty people. Three of the explosions occurred at Jewish sites: a Jewish restaurant, a Jewish alliance group and a Jewish cemetery. The two others were a Spanish bar and a hotel.

The incomprehension and stupor that followed this event led me to rethink many of the idealistic images I had of my homeland. Morocco is a third world country, where terrorists who claim they act in the name of Islam exploit the rampant poverty here. What did they have to lose, those fourteen teenagers who blew themselves up that day? Nothing - they had no future and wished to take the future of others. But things have now started to go back to normal, showing that Moroccan values, just like the American ones after 9/11, have prevailed.

But I wanted to know more. That's when I turned to Seeds. Along with four members from areas as diverse as Casablanca, Rabat, Ifrane and Tangiers, we headed for Maine, not expecting the wave of happiness and the dream we would be surfing on for the three most incredible weeks of our lives. I strove to understand what in the world had happened back home. At a minimum, I can say I opened my eyes and my heart in a way that will mark me forever. Today, I deeply regret that Palestine is not a nation with clear boundaries and without occupation. I regret that "Jew" and "Israeli" are considered by many people to mean the same thing around the world. If peace does not come to the region, the region will bring violence to the world.

Back in Casablanca at the Casablanca American School, an SOP committee has continued for the third year running. Since Morocco has a small delegation and is so far from Israel and Palestine, it is difficult for us to keep up the SOP dream after we return from camp. Some of us allow ourselves to just sink back to our routine, leaving the dream we had believed in so much at Seeds behind in the US, or in a photo album on a bookshelf. But having a Seeds of Peace Committee at school where we are free to discuss and give our opinions gets us back, at least for 45 minutes a week, in the SOP spirit. But we would like to be more connected.

## Bringing American Seeds Together

Zach Ruchman (Cos Cob)

The question, "How many Seeds can fit in an elevator?" has been asked many times. Now, finally, there is an answer. On November 26th and 27th, forty American Seeds from across the US gathered in New York City for the first ever American delegation meeting. The event was the culmination of much hard work by a few American Seeds who had the idea for the conference and organized it entirely by themselves. By getting in touch with Americans from camp sessions dating back all the way to 2001, the Seeds were able to connect with the delegation outside of Maine. The Seeds set up a website and Internet bulletin board, allowing everyone to stay updated on the organizational process as well as assist in planning. One Seed designed T-shirts for the meeting, and a contest was held on the website for the best slogan, which was printed on all the shirts.

After months of preparation, the weekend of the conference arrived at last. Seeds came from as far away as Los Angeles and greeted each other enthusiastically. Old friends who had not seen each other in more than a year were reunited and new friends were made. Historically, the delegation's biggest problem has been that Seeds from different camp sessions do not have opportunities to become acquainted with one another, but the Thanksgiving conference remedied that.

The meeting had a number of set agenda points. First, since the delegation is spread across the entire US, the Seeds divided the country into regions to become more active in their respective communities. Some Seeds volunteered to act as regional coordinators in order to keep people in their areas in touch with one another and develop local programs. The Seeds attending the conference also reviewed the best ways to make presentations, both to students

and to adults. Finally, a number of fundraising ideas involving the entire American delegation were discussed with the goal of adopting at least one as a long-term project.

On the first night of the Thanksgiving event, following a fabulous dinner in the shadow of Madison Square Garden, the Americans headed uptown to socialize at one New York Seed's apartment. Everyone was so eager to be upstairs that no fewer than thirteen Seeds attempted to squeeze into the elevator (answers the question, right?). The elevator, however, promptly became stuck halfway up the shaft and petulantly refused to move for the better part of ninety minutes. Luckily, everyone was alright and the thirteen who were trapped had a bonding experience they are not likely to forget soon.

In the words of one Seed, the weekend's greatest accomplishment was that the Americans "achieved a sense of unity, especially since this was the first time that the American Seeds had an official meeting." Additionally, the Americans established for themselves an after-camp program, which will hopefully continue to generate enthusiasm and be highly successful.

Seeds from across the US reunited for the first-ever American delegation meeting during Thanksgiving 2004





Credit: Mariete van Woerkom



Afghan Seeds meet with US Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad

Credit: Mariete van Woerkom



# Afghans Look Toward the Future

**With the first democratic election after two decades of violence, Afghan Seeds look forward to a new era in their country's history. Yet they are aware of the many problems that plague Afghanistan, and discuss them with their peers in on-going dialogues**

## Educational Problems in Afghanistan Mustafa Nassery (Kabul)

It is clear to everyone that the last two decades of war have had negative effects in Afghanistan. Thousands of people have been killed and disabled, and millions have immigrated to foreign countries. All of our economic, political, social, cultural and - most importantly - educational foundations have been destroyed.

Over 85% of the Afghan population suffers from illiteracy. Most Afghan students face very serious

problems. There are no good buildings for students; most students study in tents and some of them study outside in the hot summer or in the cold, rainy and snowy winter weather. Most students sit on the bare ground outside because they do not have enough desks and chairs.

The educational standards are very low in Afghanistan. Students use books that were written at least ten years ago. These books are of low quality and are not very useful. Yet these books are used by "lucky" students in some provinces, though in some villages they don't even have these sorts of books. The number of schools is small in

suburbs and villages. The other serious problem which students suffer from is lack of teachers, especially professional or expert ones. In most provinces, teachers have just graduated from secondary school and they have no experience teaching. Finally, it must be said that some girls are not even permitted to go to school in some villages because of security problems.

All of these problems cause students to waste their formative years. We are waiting for a day to have a better educational system and to see all of our children and teenagers study in modern schools with modern facilities.

## A Historical Day Remembered Shabnam Sahar (Kabul)

On October 9, 2004, after 23 years of war and misery, million of Afghans voters across the country showed enthusiasm and courage by heading to polling stations for the country's first-ever direct presidential election. Security forces like the Afghan National Police (ANP), the Afghan National Army (ANA), Combined Force Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) provided the tightest security in memory.

Voters waited in line for hours outside polling stations at schools, mosques, hospitals, and other

locations. Women and men formed quiet queues waiting for their turns to cast their ballots. About 10.5 million people registered to vote in Afghanistan. Our people are tired of war and violence and we wanted to elect a person who could reconstruct Afghanistan, who could bring peace and real security. We stood in the lines for hours and hours because important acts demand patience. People showed how interested and glad they were; one group of Afghans celebrated Election Day with drums and national dancing.

Election results showed that Hamid Karzai won 55.4% of the vote, and thus was elected as president of Afghanistan. He has a big

responsibility for the future of our damaged home. I hope our future president and parliament will work together to improve our country's and people's future.



Credit: Mariete Van Woerkom

Afghan Seeds discuss gender issues

# Learning from our Neighbors

Following the Lahore homestays of 2003, Seeds from Pakistan returned the favor and visited their Indian counterparts in Karjat this past summer, seeing "the other side" with their own eyes. Indian and Pakistani Seeds also discuss what their governments can do to improve their international standing and relations

Credit: Marieke van Woerkom



Soccer match between 2001 and 2002 Seeds in Karjat

camp and the excitement and intimidation that I first experienced at camp returned when we all visited India this year in 2004 in July. I was unsure how it would be to visit our friends in a country where one billion people hold on to the age-old belief that we are their enemies. But staying in India for six days made me realize that hatred and bitterness were all relative perceptions and that it was wrong to generalize people under one label. It all felt like I was reliving co-existence sessions from camp.

In the initial days of the homestays we went to the Satya health farm in Karjat, a place three hours away from Mumbai. We had dialogue sessions

## Responding to Pakistanis in India Radhika Lalla (Mumbai)

It almost never stopped raining that week in July. From the day of their arrival to the afternoon they left for Lahore, Mumbai was at its rainy best. After having seen and experienced the Lahori way of life, I was all the more eager to show my Pakistani friends ours.

As part of our week's schedule, we divided ourselves up into groups in order to visit schools and make presentations. Rahil and I, along with Bilal and Fareed from Pakistan, were working together, and we decided to go to individual classes with a very informal approach. We planned a little exercise where first Rahil and I walked into the room and asked the students to produce adjectives that they associated with Pakistan and Pakistanis, and then introduced Bilal and Fareed as two teens from Lahore.

We could not have anticipated the reaction we got. Fifth graders refused to believe that the two guys with us were actually from Pakistan; we had to produce I.D. before they decided that we weren't playing a prank on them. Reserved ninth

## Seeing India for the First Time Aneeta Nagi (Lahore)

Have you ever not known if you'll see someone and yet still feel hopeful that you will? This was what I felt like when I left camp - uncertain about sharing my tomorrow with people I got close to, yet still felt strong that I will one day.

I had never met an Indian before going to

amongst ourselves that were facilitated by Seeds of Peace staff members and delegation leaders, and had an interactive session with documentary film maker Anand Patwardhan. We were shown the movie *War and Peace*, which was about the nuclear arms race in the subcontinent and the effects it can have on our social and economic status. It raised some very important points about the harmful effects of developing nuclear weapons.

One needs to stay in India to actually see what it is. What I thought of India was totally different from what I really saw. Being a recipient of Indian entertainment and news is not just enough to give the real picture. In my mind, the image was of India "shining," a vision which was in conformity to the portrayal by the Indian media. However this was not as true as I had expected it to be. India is a progressive nation with a massive middle class and with people who are well-educated who possess sound judgment. But the educated class is less prone to acceptance than the Pakistani educated society. Their simple lifestyle makes me ashamed of the society I am a part of. Living in Lahore, we have become so obsessed with status and class that in our race to get the best of material things, we lose our self-respect and dignity.

Going across the border was perhaps one of the most enlightening experiences of my life. It has made me think a lot. I can't thank Marieke, Aneela, Meenakshi, Raeshma, Sajjad Saab and Feruzan enough for coming and teaching us so much, and Seeds of Peace for giving me the opportunity to experience something that I otherwise would never have.

and tenth graders did not express themselves as openly as the younger kids did. Extremely inquisitive seventh graders profusely apologized for the negative adjectives listed on the board.

One of the best parts of that day was listening to the questions that came up as the students not only got bolder, but also more comfortable with the situation - as well as the fact that Fareed and Bilal were not at all what the students expected Pakistanis to be. From tame questions about food and lifestyle, to potentially fiery ones concerning the governments and the people in charge, the questions were dealt with in a calm and composed manner as neither Fareed or Bilal let anything get to them.

A moment that stays in my mind when I think about the homestays occurred in the seventh grade classroom. One of the students requested that the Pakistani national anthem be sung for them; then the whole class was on its feet with Bilal and Fareed, starting off the Indian anthem once they were done. It symbolizes for me the beginning of a growth process, however idealistic it may sound. This whole experience highlighted

the importance of starting out young, for it is then that one questions, but with a limited fear of reactions.

This was an opportunity to follow through and do what we have been trying to for so long: facilitate what could possibly be, for some, the only chance to actually meet the people we call our enemy.



Pakistani Seeds arrive in Karjat

## Small, Positive Steps in Bilateral Relations

Siddharth Shah (Mumbai)

Call it a political gesture, but the move of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to call back troops from Jammu and Kashmir this winter will aid the peace process and improve the condition in the Kashmir Valley. The Indian Prime Minister's initiative comes on the heels of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's proposals to demilitarize Pakistani-occupied Kashmir and Jammu.

Singh's announcement may be viewed as an attempt by New Delhi to wrest the diplomatic high ground on Kashmir. So be it - any step that promises to reduce violence must be applauded even if it is mere political symbolism. In this case, the benefits are huge. Even if the government has not yet announced the details of the PM's proposals, it can be assumed that the initiative will reduce the army's operational costs. According to a recent study, the armed forces save the equivalent of \$90 million US annually on ammunition since the ceasefire on the Indo-Pakistani border. The troop reduction will give the Indian government more leeway to negotiate with the alienated sectors of the society. Of course, all this will turn out only if Pakistan turns off the terror tap and prevents any further leakages. New Delhi should also call the bluff on Musharraf's grandiose but unrealistic proposal to dismember Jammu and Kashmir on religious and ethnic lines. But this is easier said than done because Musharraf's

grandstanding has takers among the international community. The Indian government, led by the United Progressive Alliance, has already indicated its willingness to consider the demand of the Hurriyat Conference - composed of 23 different Kashmiri separatist groups - to visit Pakistan for talks. New Delhi should go a step further and call a human rights conference in Srinagar where even non-state actors can propose and judge measures to usher in peace.

A permanent solution to the Kashmir dispute is a long haul. But there are issues that the Indian Prime Minister can settle without having to walk a tightrope. The state has a large number

of internally displaced people who need urgent attention and care. Over 50,000 people were forced to flee the villages along the Line of Control and international border in the Jammu region following heavy firing and shelling from across the border. Some have returned home; many continue to live in tents, or worse. With farms lost to border fences and mines, it is impossible for them to return to their original homes. As with the exiled Pandits (the native inhabitants of Kashmir), the state should take immediate steps to rehabilitate these helpless victims. Peace is meaningful only when the state cares for its people.



Indian and Pakistani Seeds exchange friendship bracelets

## Pakistan Must Learn from India

Aadil Iftikhar (Lahore)

It appears that most Indians and Pakistanis are finally convinced that blaming each other for past incidents will yield nothing. It's a healthy sign indicating a new ray of hope for peace-loving citizens of India and Pakistan, whom I believe to be in the majority. Whenever I encounter people who hold a claim upon optimism like most of the Seeds, they always repeat a sentence such as, "Dialogue is the only way out . . . war is never a solution suitable for any instance . . . we need a spirit of sacrifice."

I somewhat disagree with these ideas because I don't consider them to be universally applicable everywhere, all the time in all circumstances. Not every problem can be tackled the same way because of its own certain limitations and complications. So maybe we need not restrict ourselves to these repetitive phrases.

One thing which has really encouraged me a great deal is the fact that my fellow Seeds tend more to deal with the future rather than the past. So, I was pondering over how in many practical fields, we Pakistanis can learn a lot from India. Look at the information technology (IT) industry that India has developed over the last decade.

When I talk of Pakistan following India in this field and seeking its assistance, many of my fellow Pakistanis get emotional about the matter and express a degree of prejudice and biases. When the entire world is turning to India for its software demands, why we should we not look to our neighbor as an example?

Pakistan has an underdeveloped economy and to our disadvantage we are forced to spend almost 65% of our budget on defense matters. We are really lagging behind educationally and economically. It only makes sense that we look to a neighbor successful in these areas for assistance. If India assists us, we will compensate her; it has nothing to do with national dignity. Isn't it better to approach your neighbor rather than knock on Western or Chinese doors? We must always keep the Indian option open because it will help us survive and progress. Jointly working with India in some sector wouldn't let us down.

We must put a stop to finding excuses; going ahead with India wouldn't harm the Kashmiris, but rather would benefit them as the relations between the two countries improve.

Taking India as our role model in IT and related branches wouldn't be a national humiliation and

I hope as relations between the two flourish, Pakistan could benefit from Indian assistance. When talking of democracy, our eastern neighbor again stands as a model for us to some extent. We and Indians share similar problems but our political scenario is time and again marked by military takeovers and coups. Pakistan is a country that has endured dictatorships from 1958-1971, 1977-1988 and 1999 to the present. What is the realistic future for such a nation? We Pakistanis have never enjoyed a sincere leadership even when under democratic regime. At least India never suffered from a military dictator!

Let us also look at other Indian advancements, such as her film and music industry and her progress in the field of science and technology. The Indian official literacy rate also projects a better future and who has doubts about their educational standards. Their degrees are recognized worldwide. While Pakistan undoubtedly produces one of the best pools of bright minds in the world, we must combat our poor literacy rate.

The list goes on and on of what we can learn from India. I just hope and pray to see better conditions between the two neighbors.

# Egypt and Jordan: Looking Beyond Camp

## Bringing Joy to Others

Muna Hadid (Amman)

Unfortunately, Ramadan is over, but during this holy Muslim month I learned a lot of things, felt the blessings of God and became more aware of how lucky I am, that I have so many things that others lack. During Ramadan, which was from the middle of October through the middle of November, Jordanian Seeds participated in a number of community service projects. We organized three break-fast meals (called Iftar in Arabic) for needy and poor people. We held the first Iftar in the King Hussein Cancer Center. We walked down the halls and through various rooms, giving children and adults presents. We talked with them and tried to cheer them up.

When I walked through the cancer center and saw all of the patients, I had a weird, confusing and strange feeling deep inside me. I felt that I live in a different world filled with stupid and shallow issues that I consider my problems. These people are fighting so hard so they can keep themselves alive. Have you ever wondered how much pain they're going through? Or how many times they taste bitter medicine or go through hundreds of painful sessions of chemotherapy so they can get rid of cancer that is spreading in their bodies?

Many unanswered questions and thoughts rushed into my mind as I searched for answers and clarity. Our second Iftar was held at the Jordanian Society for Child's Care. There, we shared food with poor children and families, and I watched the children ask politely for more food so they could give some to their families.

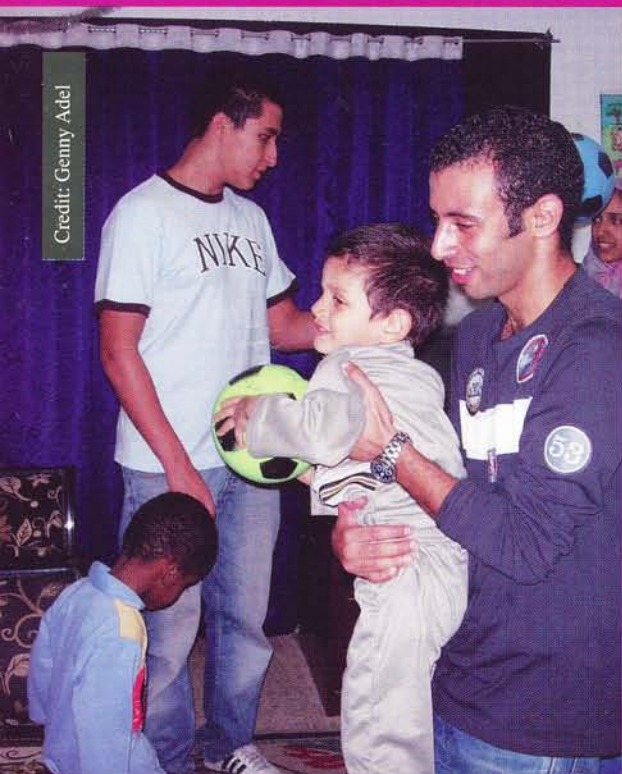
After those experiences I realized how lucky I am to be healthy, to live my life as a normal person, knowing and feeling the blessings and care that God gave me, so I can live in a cozy home and with a family that provides me with security and health.

I empathize with those unfortunate people who lead a life that does not have the same advantages as mine, but we as societies shouldn't accept the fact that these people should fight this fight for health and happiness by themselves. We must stand hand-in-hand and side-by-side with them to show them that there is some hope and good out there, and for the chance to live equally in a society that offers opportunities for all of us. I hope I'll live to see this dream come true.



Credit: Genny Adel

Dana Kayed talks with two children at the Al Hussein Society for the Disabled



Credit: Genny Adel

Khaled Rasmy plays with a new friend at the Nasr City Orphanage

## Remembering What Matters

Randa Farid (Cairo)

During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast all day and break their fast at sunset. This month is marked with an abundance of charity. Socially, Muslims gather for Iftar - the breakfast meal - with family and friends. In November, a number of Egyptian Seeds organized an Iftar for children in an orphanage in the Nasr City neighborhood in Cairo.

Genny Adel, the coordinator for Egyptian and Jordanian Seeds, went with seven Seeds to the orphanage, which is for boys only. There were twenty kids, aged between four and ten. We brought them food, and at sunset we all gathered around the table and ate. Only the boys aged eight to ten were fasting and the others were sleeping. Afterwards, the boys went to pray and the small kids joined us. We played with the little ones on the one slide they have at the orphanage. Also, we brought balls for the kids to play with, and we could see they were excited and happy. This filled us with joy, knowing that we brought so much happiness to them. The older ones joined and we kept on playing for a couple of hours after Iftar. The kids showed us some of the

photographs they had taken on other occasions, and then they showed us around the place and their bedrooms.

We ended the visit with photos with the kids and many warm hugs. But for us Seeds, this was not the end of the visit. Many of us promised we would come back on other occasions and visit these kids again. I was truly impressed by the reaction of the Seeds who wanted to help cover the day's expenses and felt that their financial contribution was as important as the visit itself. There is a wonderful potential in all of us but there are very few occasions that trigger this goodness. We are so occupied with our lives and our friends that when we spare a thought for others and make them happy, we suddenly discover another dimension that makes us happy.

To me, this visit meant a lot and really made a great difference in the way I see things. For the first time in my life I felt I did something for someone. It seems that I have always thought of myself and worried about little things. But after the visit, seeing how such a simple effort made twenty kids so joyful, I realized that real satisfaction is concentrating less on myself and making other people happy.

Over the past year, the Seeds of Peace program in Egypt and Jordan has developed dramatically. Between permanent offices in Cairo and Amman, ongoing programs and community service initiatives, Jordanian and Egyptian Seeds of Peace are engaged as never before

### A New Horizon for Peace

Khaled Rasmy (Cairo)

It's pretty obvious that Seeds of Peace in this region has been going through a hard time since the beginning of the Intifada in 2000. Such great peril was a test for both Seeds and the organization as a whole. Many concepts had to be redefined. I would call this time our transition period.

Transition to worse or better has to be determined by the will of the young men and women who are part of Seeds of Peace in the Middle East. Nevertheless, I, like many other Seeds, felt that the situation was not going to get any better. Things were only getting worse. Old Seeds disconnected, as they lost hope of real progress toward peace.

New participants were reluctant to participate because they did not see the light at the end of the seemingly never-ending tunnel.

To complicate matters, the concept of Seeds of Peace was being rejected more and more among students, a category essential to ensure the continuity of the program in the region. Fortunately, there was a major turning point for Seeds of Peace, especially in Egypt. There was a revolution in the concept of running the program. It started from revising the after-camp follow up and reconnecting with old Seeds. This positive shift in the transition period was due to the determination and the enthusiasm of Genny Adel and the help of Seeds in both Egypt and Jordan.

To continue in this positive spirit, a seminar was held in Sharm al-Sheikh. The agenda of the seminar included the selection process for camp and community service projects for local Seeds. We discussed how to attract more participants in order to have a better chance in selecting the best candidates, how to spread the word about Seeds of Peace and future projects we wanted to initiate. The feedback from the seminar was more than a success; we drafted strong guidelines for the creation of a better future for Seeds of Peace in both Egypt and Jordan. We have witnessed a positive integration between old and new Seeds and have learned a lot from our mistakes. This seminar was just the beginning of a new era for Seeds of Peace in the region.

### Building for the Future

Farah Al Kayed (Amman)

This past summer, Seeds of Peace took an enormous step toward enlarging the role of Middle Eastern countries (other than Palestine and Israel) in regional activities. We, the Seeds in Jordan and Egypt, held two seminars, began our Sesame Seeds project, set up an office in Amman, which keeps Seeds in contact with each other, and facilitated many activities like the charity events that we had during Ramadan.

Both seminars concerned regional activities. The one that took place in Sharm al-Sheikh for

Jordanians and Egyptians focused on regional activities that we planned for this year and the long term.

The Sharm al-Sheikh seminar was a significant event for all of its participants, because it was the first time we really talked about vital issues that had not been discussed earlier. In addition, the Sharm seminar was a unique experience for me since I led one of the discussions, for the first time ever in SOP! The discussion was about outreach and how to make SOP a better organization not only for us, but for the public as well. We wanted each group to make a brochure, and the process of creating it inspired extremely creative ideas

Seeds never knew they had. Moreover, the Seeds did their best to make the brochure as interesting as possible, since they knew that it would be the key to attract the public's attention and persuade them to change any negative thoughts they may have about the organization.

Those activities caused a major change in the Seeds' vision towards SOP. We Seeds in Jordan and Egypt don't look at SOP as just a summer camp, but as a program that will continue in the region for years to come.



Haytham Borhan, Dana Kayed, Nour Kamel, Mohammed Badour at the Sharm al-Sheikh Seminar this summer

# Palestinian Leader

On November 11, 2004, Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian people for over forty years, died after battling illness. To different people around the world he was one or a combination of a leader, a terrorist, a peacemaker, a symbol, a revolutionary, a tireless advocate for his people and a caring individual. Palestinian, Jewish Israeli and Arab Israeli Seeds react to his death and share their views on the man who played a pivotal role in the Arab-Israeli conflict



Yasser Arafat meeting with Center Director Tim Wilson and his wife Jacquie in Ramallah, October 2004

## A New Era in Palestinian Politics

Aaron Miller (President, Seeds of Peace)

The passing of Yassar Arafat - a symbol of Palestinian national identity and aspirations - has introduced a new reality to Palestinian politics. A formal succession process now in train may well mask a more complex dynamic of generational and political change. The process of Palestinian governance may well be shifting from a dependence on individuals to institutions, and from a concentration of authority in an executive to a more diffuse structure of competing groups, the legislative council and other institutions.

These changes on the Palestinian side are joined by the prospect of significant new realities on the Israeli side. There is great uncertainty in Israeli politics at the moment; both in expanding Israeli government and new elections are now on the table informing all of these developments is the prospect of Israel's disengagement from Gaza sometime next year. These changes have already resulted in increased contact and dialogue - and even cooperation - between Israelis and Palestinians.

## He Lived His Life For His People

Tareq Arow (Taybe)

I never was a big fan of the leaders on either side of our conflict or other conflicts all over the world. I never saw them really helping or advancing the problem toward any solution. It always came back to the fact the people themselves demanded the solution, and not the solution initiated by the leaders.

Still, some of them deserve appreciation for what they have done and the way they have led, one of them being Yasser Arafat. The late president of the Palestinian Authority Mr. Arafat lived his life for his people, and that's something that can be said about few leaders. Arafat devoted himself and most of his life to his nation. He refused to live the life of the rich. He always saw himself as his nation's hope, not a leader. That, among other things, made his people love him.

As an Arab citizen of Israel, Arafat was not my country's leader, but I guess in a way his decisions affected me just the same, and that means something. It means that one nation's leader is a leader of all nations involved, especially if in a state of conflict. Moreover, "his people" are not just any other nation or "enemy" I have: they are the Palestinians, who are also my people.

The day Mr. Arafat passed away, the day he became ill and started drastically deteriorating, were days that not only I, but Arabs in Israel and Arabs in general started thinking of the worst and imagining a world without Arafat. Only a great character could have triggered those feelings.

Every end brings a beginning, and we are now facing a new era, and I think, undoubtedly, the Palestinians should be proud of how organized they were moving ahead, dealing with the loss of their leader, installing a temporary one, and starting procedures to elect a new one. Arafat, himself and his government, have taken the Palestinian people, despite all difficulties, to a state of organization only official countries have.

We are on the doorstep of a new time, and every new time is an addition to the previous one. I am hopeful that what Arafat has taught the Palestinians and the world will not become obsolete, but will stay as a basic element of all that can be achieved. I hope we are moving ahead towards a better future, a future the late Mr. Arafat - may he rest in peace - has always strived for.

# Yasser Arafat Passes On

## Arafat's Ever-Changing Image in Israel

Zachi David (Holon)

From time to time, we in the Middle East have to part from leaders who have been with us for a long time. Recently, Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestinian National Authority, passed away, and I would like to send my condolences to our Palestinian friends who have lost their leader.

When I was first asked to write this article, my basic instinct was judgmental: Arafat, in Israeli eyes, was a terrorist. For others, he was a leader and the founder of a nation. The only thing one can agree on, when talking about Arafat, is his major influence on the Middle East and his success in putting the Palestinian issue on the table. I don't intend to, neither can I, judge Arafat, the leader and the person. It is, moreover, important to remember that he has always been a great supporter of Seeds of Peace.

The crossroads where we're standing today is a very dangerous one but in it lie great opportunities. If we miss them, it will be horrible.

I want to describe, in a few words, the changes in the image of Arafat in the Israeli media. A few words that will tell us about Arafat, and mostly about media, politics, and us - the Israelis.

When I was a child, Arafat was *muktze* (a word in Hebrew which can mean isolated and hated). Every kid that wore a beard and a kafiyya on Purim would get the negative response: you look like Arafat. In the Israeli media, the politicians would use various derogatory different phrases to describe him.

And then the major change - Oslo.

Ever since then, the Israelis didn't know what to do about this man. Politicians from the right wing have not changed their attitude towards him. From the left wing, they praise him, as a partner for peace. Rabin, the first Israeli prime minister to have recognized Arafat as the leader of the Palestinians barely shook his hand, while Netanyahu - who didn't support Oslo - embraced him.

In those years Arafat was even a "member" of a famous Israeli satirical puppet show, called "Hatzurim," where he was described as a lovely grandfather who buys rockets in the markets, but makes peace. In those days it was impossible to not like Arafat, or at least, the Arafat visualized as a puppet on TV every Friday night.

But then the Intifada started. Arafat's old image was back - as Israel's worst enemy. Prime Minister Ehud Barak talked about "discovering his true face," as if he was a character in an action movie. Ariel Sharon tried to convince Israelis that Arafat was not relevant anymore.

After four years of "irrelevancy," he's passed away, and the Israeli media suddenly remembered that "he was the only one who could do it."

The complicated relationship of hatred/fear/admiration/love will not pass with his passing. That's the nature of such strong characters in history. I, for one, will always remember Arafat the hartzuf, the puppet: it was the most brilliant representation of a debatable and charismatic personality.

## Abu Ammar's Memory Will Live On Tamara Qaraqe (Bethlehem)

Since I was a little girl, there was just one president for my people and me, with no other competitor, a president whom people supported and loved all the time. He is President Yasser Arafat. Arafat was a man who could make everyone in all around the world respect him, whether or not they agreed with his opinions and decisions.

He was a great human being and leader during his life. The day he passed away was one of the saddest days in human history. All of humanity lost on that day a real peacemaker. Abu Ammar spent forty years as the president of the central committee of Fateh, 36 years as a president of the executive committee of the PLO and ten years at the top of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) pyramid in the West Bank and Gaza. Along the way, which no doubt formed an important stage in Palestinian history, the personality of Yasser Arafat was unique in how he dealt with struggle.

Arafat, who was known as Abu Ammar (father of a nation) was known to keep to a strict daily schedule which barely gave him a chance for any rest, and he used to work through the night. He wasn't a speaker who used complicated political phrases and words when he spoke to people, but he was clever in making people give him their attention, whenever he spoke.

During my life I met President Arafat twice. During those two times, he impressed me with his simple and direct way. He never let you feel that he was more important than you, or that he was the President and you were just a citizen. In fact, you would feel that you were equal or even more important than him. A friend of mine, a Palestinian journalist, told me a story that shows who Arafat really was. She said that she remembered that President Arafat visited the Palestinian TV building in Ramallah in 1996 and when the President arrived, she and her co-workers thought that he would hold a meeting with us and ask them about journalism. He climbed five floors on foot and when he arrived at the last floor he asked Radwan Abu Ayyash, the general director of the Palestinian Public Broadcasting Corporation, while looking at the southern window, "Where is Jerusalem? Can you see Jerusalem from here?" This story shocked me and showed me how this man insisted on the Palestinian basics in a unique way. Everybody else was shocked by his question and his way of asking it; he was like a person looking for a treasure his whole life.

That was Yasser Arafat, Abu Ammar, one of the greatest leaders to lead his people, a man who sacrificed his personal life for his country and his people.



Arafat with Seed Fadi al-Salameen from Hebron

Credit: Bobbie Gottschalk

# Catching the Olympic Spirit

A Greek Seed and a Turkish Seed describe their experience volunteering at one of the world's finest venues for international cooperation, competition and coexistence

## Coexistence from Antiquity to the Modern Age

Alp Kutlualp (Istanbul)

After I returned home from camp in the summer of 2002, like most of you, I was living and sleeping by my computer, constantly checking my email box around ten o'clock every morning for our SeedsNet listserve. Quite naturally, one of the first questions my Greek Cypriot friends and I initially had was the soonest possible date for our reunion. My hilarious friend, Zach, suggested a historically significant date chronologically far beyond our expectation at the time, but only a glimpse away from now: The Olympic Games in Athens, in August, 2004.

I was jumping up and down the morning I learned that I was selected as a volunteer for the Olympic Games by the Athens 2004

Organizing Committee. I joined the Volunteer Program that provides individuals from around the world the amazing opportunity to participate and contribute to the Olympic Games, which celebrated humanity in its city of revival, Athens, this past August. I wanted to serve as a volunteer because of the long-lasting friendships with my Greek friends that I established during my Seeds of Peace summers of 2002 and 2003. In Athens 2004, I wanted to offer my volunteer services to the universal Olympic Games and Greece, desiring to give something back and add to the peaceful relations in the region on an individual level.

I realized the significance of the skills I learned in our coexistence sessions throughout my Olympic journey, as I did not only interact with my Greek and Greek Cypriot colleagues at the validation accreditation center at the airport during eight-hour shifts, but also with

a sixty-five year old tour guide with whom I shared my views on the simplicity and complexity of the temples of the millenarian Acropolis; the bus driver and a member of the Greek Ministry of Education who enjoyed my conversations with them on the future of Aphrodite's island; and my Greek Cypriot friend who kept calling me "Istanbul boy," with whom I shared an affirmative vote for the Annan plan that sought to unify Cyprus.

In Athens, I looked at the Acropolis, where the Athenians brought distinct building traditions - the Doric and the Ionic - together. There was a state of peace and harmony where the Dorian Greeks of the mainland and the Ionian Greeks along the coast of Asia Minor coexisted. Centuries later, it was my turn, as a Turkish student, to represent the coasts of ancient Ionia where antiquity and modernity met in harmony.

## An Ambassador and Volunteer for my Country

Alexander Mattheissen (Athens)

To me, hosting the Olympic Games sounded exciting and something I would really want to be part of. Therefore, I became a volunteer at the OAKA Olympic Complex, where most of the competitions took place, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies. I was working at Spectator Services and was there to provide information and answer any questions that spectators had. It was a rough schedule since I worked for two weeks everyday for approximately eight hours. It was like a full time job under the boiling sun. My job was to assist the people coming to the Games with the program of the day, the areas of the complex where the different stadiums were located, how to go there and such. Even though it got tiring at times, it was more than worth it. Due to the fact I was working at Spectator Services, I had the privilege to talk to different people from different parts of the world. Some of them would come everyday to watch a game or two, and then afterward we would go downtown for ouzo and Greek appetizers. During the Olympics the center of Athens was an ongoing party. Places like Thiseio, Plaka, Syntagma and Monastiraki, which are part of the old town, were packed with people carrying flags with the colors of their countries, chatting, singing, dancing and partying the night away.

It was amazing to see volunteers who had traveled all the way from their country of origin to help out. My team consisted of Greeks, Australians, British, Americans, and a man from Turkey. He had traveled from Ankara where he lived to Athens to work as a volunteer for ten days. He had taken twelve days off from his job in Turkey. Amazing! Some of the volunteers were devoted to the Olympic Games and had been following them for decades. I met Mike from the US, who had been a volunteer in all the Games since the ones held in 1972 in Munich, Germany. He had thousands of collectible pins and was always in a good mood and ready to assist spectators.



Alexander Mattheissen (third from left) and fellow volunteers at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens

The Olympic Games was not just about the competition and the athletes, but about the people that for two weeks forget their daily routine; they put on a smile, get excited and start reaching out to people. They socialize with people they would never imagine they could. The environment of the Olympic Games plays a vital role, setting the basis for people to communicate, participate and realize there is more to this world than hatred. Let us remember it was the same way it was in Ancient Greece when the Games first began: During the Olympic Games of antiquity, all the disputes and wars had to stop so that individuals could come together for competition. Working at these Olympics, assisting others and meeting people from all over the world was my chance to help my country achieve something we could all be proud of.



# Elections, Democracy and Representative Government: Reality on the Ground

In the Fall of 2004, three countries went to the polls to pick their new leaders: Kosovo held its second democratic elections, Afghanistan held its first and Americans selected their President for the next four years. Does the reality of democracy and representative government measure up to rhetoric in these countries? Read what Seeds write

## Unreal Elections in a Real World Mir Hamidullah Akhgar (Kabul)

According to most of the world, the two decades of war in Afghanistan was a civil war, but for the majority of Afghans, this war was not a civil war but a consequence of direct and indirect interference by some countries in Afghan affairs. This includes the United States of America, a country which had the aim of occupying Afghanistan, and to achieve this aim implemented a number of its policies in Afghanistan.

When Russian forces occupied Afghanistan 35 years ago, we had a group of fighters called the Mujaheddin fighting against the Russians. Afghans joined the Mujaheddin to kick the foreign forces out from the country, taking part in their holy war. Some of the Mujaheddin, after winning the war, saw that their US sponsors forgot them, so they learned not to trust others.

Following this experience, they created a group of fierce people called the Taliban, which was terrible for Islam, and created a reason for the direct interference of the US in Afghanistan again. Although the Taliban were not able to defame Islam, they were able to put the people in such a condition to accept any kind of government in Afghanistan except the Taliban, which was a great success for the Bush administration that occupied Afghanistan following the events of September 11, 2001.

After the US occupation of Afghanistan, the Western countries held many conferences to decide on its fate. Some countries decided to help Afghanistan and agreed to millions of dollars in reconstruction money. Yet today, after three years of work and millions of dollars spent, we see no change in our society. In this manner, the countries who have said they want to help us are just playing games.

Now, they have started to play another game, elections. Clearly, anyone who hears the word "elections" in a country that suffered two decades of violence and only two years of relative peace cannot stop laughing. What is the meaning of elections in a country where 60% of people are armed? What is the meaning of elections in a country which has no army and police, and the current president (Hamed Karzai) is guarded by one hundred American soldiers? What is the meaning of elections in a country which has no asphalt highways that connect the center of the country with the provinces? And what is the meaning of elections in a country where it is clear to every citizen that the president of our country will be selected by the American government and not by the Afghan people? In my opinion, it would be better if they had used the millions of dollars to improve the situation of our people and towns, then on useless elections in this war-torn county.

## What Democracy? Whose Democracy? Elizabeth Nguyen (Lewiston)

Democracy. It's a magic little word that spurns revolutions, launches dreams, squashes dictatorships, and today, shapes the Western ideal of government. American schoolchildren have been deeply indoctrinated with the rhetoric that democracy is the answer to all the world's woes, a political panacea. Democracy will end all wars, stem all inequality, ease all injustices, and deliver nations from the proposed evils of

communism, authoritarianism, and theocracy. But that is not what I see. I see a country, America, who, despite its claim as the home of democracy, elects its officials through an archaic and inherently unfair system. Its so-called "representative Congress," consisting of only 14% women and 5% minorities, is found in a nation that is composed of about 50% women and 25% minorities, whose presidents have always been white, male, and wealthy, and insist on imposing their very imperfect government on other nations. I see another nation, Ukraine, whose democracy has been exposed as corrupt

and false. And I also see two nations, Iraq and Afghanistan, whose people have been devastated and whose lands have been destroyed all in the name of this democracy. In the pursuit of a theory, we have lost sight of the reality. The reality is that this democracy may not even be the answer. I ask for reform and evolution. Democracy need not be stagnant and immutable. In Switzerland, provinces are experimenting with a new kind of democracy where all citizens have a direct say in every piece of legislation. This can be the future of democracy and that would be a future worth spreading.

## Kosovars Decide Their Future Ereblina Elezaj (Pristina)

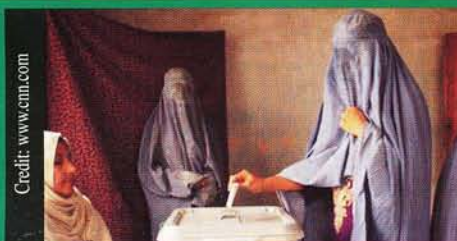
It was a dark Saturday morning when the polling centers opened their doors for Kosovars to vote. These elections were the second democratic ones for parliament and governmental organs in Kosovo. They were held peacefully and without incident. These elections are considered to be the ones that will have an impact on the decisions about Kosovo by mid-2005. Even the elderly who had problems coming to the polling centers voted. I worked as a polling center staff member and my opinion is that the elections were very well organized. People had been

informed of the process and there were no problems regarding the voting itself. There was sufficient staff and local and international observers were present as well.

In contrast to some other democratic countries, people voted for 'closed lists,' meaning that they voted for parties, not the specific members of a party. There are 120 seats in the parliament, with ten automatically given to Serbs and ten to other ethnicities in Kosovo. However, very few Serbs voted. They were either disappointed with the way they have been treated, what they have received from the government, or boycotted them because they did not recognize the local government and other organs. While Oliver

Ivanovic, a Serbian pro-voting leader, encouraged the people to vote, and praised the ones who actually 'took destiny in their hands,' Bishop Artemije (also Serbian) called for a boycott, saying that these elections are 'equal to national suicide.'

At the end, results of the elections were similar to the ones of four years ago. The three biggest parties, the Democratic League of Kosovo, the Democratic Party of Kosovo and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo won most of the votes. These parties are currently discussing the possible coalitions among themselves. In the meantime, it remains for us to hope for better living in the immediate future.



Afghan, American and Kosovar citizens cast their ballots

Almost one-third of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are school and university students. For we Palestinian students, the occupation affects us a lot. Everyday we have to pass checkpoints or bypass roads to reach our schools or universities, and sometimes we miss our classes and exams.

Everyday, students and teachers have to walk a different distance, sometimes they walk ten minutes and sometimes they walk thirty minutes; it all depends on the soldier's mood. Sometimes they close the road so no students and teachers are allowed to pass checkpoints in order reach their schools and universities. In recent months, the separation wall adds more difficulties and humiliations to Palestinian life. Some schools become impossible to reach because they are located behind this wall.

Palestinian schools and universities have always been regarded by the Israeli authorities as hotbeds of resistance that harbor young activists, and thus they were constantly attacked by Israeli forces. During the Israeli incursions into the West Bank and Gaza, schools and universities were searched, and property such as computers and papers was confiscated. The Israeli forces have arrested high school and university students, depriving them of their right to education. In addition, some school and university buildings have been hit by Israeli shelling.

Because of all of the above reasons, the number of students enrolled in schools and universities have dropped. All of these actions by the Israeli occupation violate the right to education and international law requiring that civilian lives and their rights to receive education are protected.

It is difficult for schools, university administrators and academics to plan academic and administrative activities. But in spite of all these difficulties our schools and universities have managed to continue academic life due to the cooperation between students, teachers and administrators. We will continue to live our daily lives in spite of all difficulties the occupation is trying to impose on us.



At checkpoints, Israeli soldiers daily check the bags of Palestinian students on their way to school

# Education under Intifada

## Education under Occupation

### The Last Remaining Island of Sanity?

Noa Epstein (Mevaseret Zion)



After having spent my high school years abroad at the United World Colleges School in Norway, it was not an easy decision to come back to

Israel and

study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. It was very calming and convenient to live by the side of a fjord, in the most peaceful environment one could imagine; the scariest experience I had was getting slightly lost at the top of a mountain next to the college. I was afraid to take the obvious route down because a flock of sheep blocking the way stared at me suspiciously. But I made my decision to study International Relations at Hebrew U., and in the back of my mind I comforted myself with the knowledge that "Hebrew U is a safe place. After all, there are many Arab students there and there is no reason for it to be a target for terrorists."

I was wrong. I remember going to the sports center one morning a few weeks before the first semester started. As I was exercising and watching TV, the television program stopped and there was a newsflash. I knew immediately that this spelled trouble, but even as I read on the screen "pigua be'har ha'Zofim" (a terrorist attack at Mount Scopus) I could not believe my eyes. I ran out of the gym to tell my grandfather and sister who were sunbathing next to the pool. I felt like the last hope I had was shattered. Now even the university, which I had thought of as a haven from all the violence, an island of sanity amidst the horrific things that were going on outside, was stained with blood. I am now in my third and last year at the university, I sit in the Frank Sinatra Cafeteria where a bomb exploded in August 2002, killing nine people. Like most other students, I think, I have become somewhat immune to the fear, the anxiety that terrorism tries to instill. Why? Because I have absolutely no choice.

But I would like to tell you about a person whom I regret not having had the chance to get to know better. George Khoury, who studied IR in my year, a Palestinian from the Shoafat neighborhood in East Jerusalem, was a victim of this war. George was murdered by two Palestinians who mistook him for a Jewish Israeli as he was jogging in the French Hill neighborhood of Jerusalem March 19th, 2004. Unfortunately I did not know George personally, but I went with some of his Jewish friends (and he had many) to visit his family after his death. It was a very powerful experience; all the cards had been re-shuffled, all the so-called "roles" were muddled up. But that was exactly the point - bullets really don't discriminate, especially when it comes to the nature of the violence carried out in the past four years. At the beginning of the first lecture following George's death, I asked my fellow students to stand up for a moment of silence in his memory. Everyone stood up; Arabs, Jews, Israelis and Palestinians, left-wingers and right-wingers; and after the lecture, students kept approaching me and saying how important it was for them that we had done that.

Many times I walk through the corridors at the university and wish that I would see groups of Arab and Jewish students sitting together. It can be seen, but it is not common. Life has changed a lot in these four years of war, more so for some than for others. My friend, Marketa, from the Czech Republic, came to the university with me one day and said she felt like she was at an airport - because of all the screening machines and bag checks. There is a bomb scare in the library at least once a day, and people gather outside with their philosophy books and indifferent looks on their faces, and it's all part of the routine.

At the university, it feels like Jews and Arabs are equals; we are all trying to develop ourselves, we all have ambitions, we are stressed from our studies, we don't get enough sleep and eat at Frank Sinatra before our lectures. I wonder how confusing this feeling is (if it at all exists) for the Palestinian students, especially once they leave this so-called haven. But at least for those number of hours each day, I feel that each of us students is a small part of a microcosm of rational, intelligent, young and vibrant human beings who have more to offer to and demand from life than occupation, terrorism, suppression, discrimination and violence.

Since 2000, Israeli and Palestinian students have had to cope with new realities affecting their education. Israeli checkpoints and closures prevent Palestinians from arriving at school, or school is simply cancelled. Palestinian bombing of public places and transportation have elevated alerts for Israelis, making a normal routine impossible. How do students deal with the new reality under such difficult circumstances?



## Medical School, Health Care on Hold

Suha Tazami (Jerusalem)

I am in my final year of medical school and as I look back at the past six years, I become more aware of the significant impact that the collapsing political situation has had on the academic aspect of my life. I study at Al-Quds University, a Palestinian university located in a village named Abu Dis in the suburbs of east Jerusalem.

I started medical school in 1998 in the "Peace Era." Life wasn't as hard. It only took me ten minutes to reach campus. We had many foreign professors teaching, classes were on schedule. It was as close to normal as can be.

In 2000, however, the second Intifada broke out. There was reoccupation, more restrictions, checkpoints and things started going downhill. We missed school for a couple of months and even when we were able to start again, students and professors could not always make it to lectures.

The question we all asked was, "How will we go on?" Those basic years in medical school are vital and there should be no compromise on any part of the curriculum. Closures, curfews, strikes, assassinations, checkpoints and invasions placed us under much stress but we were always able to survive. And one day on my way to school, I was shocked to see a one-meter wall in the middle of the main road, splitting it into two halves. I was amazed that people could see such a thing as their only resort to handling the conflict.

I couldn't accept that and was denying the fact that it was there, although it was growing taller each day. People and students trying to go to campus from the other side of the wall were climbing and jumping over it. Currently, it is a ten-meter tall wall totally separating us from campus. It encircles the campus like a cage, sometimes making it impossible to go there. Each day they close a gate that lets people in and out between the two sides of the wall, and

hence people will search for some way to bypass the wall; sometimes you end up hiking in order to make it to school.

The area around the wall became a dangerous spot where car crashes take place, and it is usual for Israeli soldiers to start throwing tear gas and shooting haphazardly for no reason. You can never tell how smoothly things will go, and you take risks in order to get your education. It became a real struggle.

As part of my studies, my clinical training is held in the Palestinian hospitals of East Jerusalem. My colleagues who are not Jerusalem residents and unable to receive permissions due to their age are many times not allowed into Jerusalem where the major hospitals affiliated with our medical school exist. This drove many of them to practice in local hospitals and clinics in other areas in order to avoid the risks of trying to get into Jerusalem. Sometimes guys are caught on their way to hospital and they get arrested and spend the day in prison. Patients both have a smaller pool of doctors to choose from and are denied the right of having available medical access. Many only come to hospital in emergencies and are unable to follow up with their specialists.

The policy of the Israeli government has turned Jerusalem into a cage imprisoning Palestinians living in it and preventing other Palestinians from entering the city. They should be aware that they are investing in hatred and adding to the frustration of Palestinian youth. This age group makes up a major proportion of the community and they should be allowed a decent education since they are the future of the region. As long as all these restrictions are imposed on us, how can we ever keep up the good spirits and keep thinking of peace or see Israelis as friends? What more compromise can be made on our side?

My student life is inseparable from my personal life. Thousands of students like me attending Palestinian universities in the region go through the same difficulties each day yet we are very determined to learn and achieve our goals and ambitions, never losing hope.

## How Israeli Education Suffers

Gal Sasson (Jerusalem)

As a student living in Jerusalem, I can safely say that the security situation has taken its toll on the status of education in the city, and in Israel in general.

Intensified security in the streets makes it difficult for some students to reach their schools. The continuing fear of suicide attacks is affecting the way of thinking of the educational staff in schools. We are being taught to suspect everyone we see to be a suicide bomber, and this approach, sometimes bordering on paranoia, goes a long way to preserve negative opinions against the "other side" and prevent us from seeing them as people just like us.

Israel's security expenditure per citizen is by far the highest in the world, and indirectly, the educational system suffers from under-funding. The psychological consequences of suicide attacks make it hard for me, and for many other students, to concentrate on our studies. It's hard to do math when you don't know if you'll get home OK.

The situation leads to some teachers daring to express their political opinion of this "war" in their classrooms. Those who are supposed to educate us sometimes attempt to manipulate our political opinion, at a stage in our lives where education is highly important in shaping our way of thinking. I personally think that the way things are going, these negative effects the security situation have on our education are going to prove much more lasting than the damages we have sustained in four years of conflict.



Credit: www.mifa.gov.il

The Frank Sinatra Cafeteria at Hebrew University, following the August 2002 terrorist bombing

Seeds ranging in age from their teens to their mid-20's have many opportunities open to them, one of them being studying outside of their home country. We received some interesting answers when we posed the questions below:

*Over the past few years, we have seen many Seeds leave their home countries to study abroad. Is studying outside your home country a good thing? Are Seeds who study outside their home country looked upon differently by their peers who stay? How do you, Seeds who study abroad, look at your home country, and the world, once you finish your studies? Are Seeds who study abroad more or less likely to return to their home country? Can you be a "leader of your community" without staying in your community?*



**In Search of Diversity and Challenges**  
**Sana Shah (Lahore)**

My name is Sana Shah and I am a Seed from Pakistan. This fall I started university in Canada, at the University of Toronto. Ever since I have actually known and understood the concept of a college education and realized that there is indeed a possibility of receiving one in a country other than my own, I've always looked at the US and Canada as two countries that I'd want to end up in. Therefore, when the time finally came to apply to colleges I didn't even bother applying in my own country. Not because I look down upon the colleges in Pakistan, but because for a person of my beliefs and interests, the colleges here offer very limited opportunities. There are only a few really good colleges with excellent faculties in Pakistan, and even these concentrate on a few particular degrees. I needed a more diverse, open, challenging environment; in short, an environment more conducive to my growth as a person and a citizen of the world. I wanted the opportunity to be able to interact with people from different cultures and religions. If nothing else, it leaves you with a more global and tolerant perspective as well as an

independent nature, which gears you for the ups and downs that life has to offer. Both my elder siblings have studied abroad and I have some cousins who stayed here in Pakistan. At the end of the day, maybe the quality of education that they received was the same, but the knowledge and independence that my siblings gained and the way these shaped them, left them a step or two ahead. In Pakistan, due to financial constraints as well as strictly-held beliefs, some children, especially girls, aren't even given the opportunity to apply abroad let alone go and study. For this reason I feel very grateful to belong to a family with liberal and just views, a family which believes in giving equal opportunities to both their sons and daughters and believes in them equally.



**Better Opportunities**  
**Loai al-Haddad (Gaza City)**

I have been studying abroad since I was 16 years old and it has so far been a very important experience in my life with many advantages and a few disadvantages. Last May, I finished my International Baccalaureate at the United World College (UWC) of the Atlantic in the United Kingdom. Since September, I have been studying Economics at City University in London on an Olive Tree Foundation scholarship.

In my own point of view, studying abroad is a very good thing for anyone who gets the opportunity to do so. I chose to study at a high school and university in the UK because I like the British educational system and I wanted to have an excellent education. Studying abroad gives me the opportunity to widen my horizons; I get the opportunity to meet different people from many countries all over the world. I learned a lot about their cultures and beliefs and I challenged myself many times. In addition, I talked a lot about Palestine and my experience in Seeds of Peace, and that amazed a lot of people.

Other students in Gaza don't look upon me differently since I am studying abroad and they are studying in Gaza. They actually admire students who are studying abroad because they know it's tough and requires effort and responsibility. On the other hand, the disadvantage of studying abroad is that you are living away from family and home friends. A lot of students, especially Palestinian students, don't come back to work in Palestine, because of the lack of job opportunities due to the conflict.

I think a leader who has been abroad and has experienced many cultures and met different people can be more successful than a leader who has not been outside his home country. However, that doesn't mean that a person who is studying at his home country cannot be a leader in the future.



**Studying Where I Want to Live**  
**Dana Naor (Holon)**

I have to start with a confession: unlike many people in Seeds of Peace, the thought of studying abroad never once crossed my mind before applying to Tel Aviv University. You can call it provincial or narrow minded, but that's the case. It's not that studying at TAU was a dream of mine from early childhood or anything like that. It was just so obvious to me.

I never thought about studying abroad, because I see my future here, in Israel. Leaving the country at the age of 20, for me, meant not coming back, although I know that many people do come back.

I know that studying law at Yale, Harvard or another Ivy League school would have made me a better lawyer, in a way. However, it would not have made me a better ISRAELI lawyer, and that is all the difference for me.

I want to live here, in Israel. I want to fight for the changes I would like see here. I want to do all those things, and to be able to do it in my country, in my community, where I speak my language, and know my culture and heritage. I know some people may think studying in their homeland means "giving up" on academic benefits and other privileges. Not to sound corny, but I think it is a privilege to study in Tel Aviv, to go to campus demonstrations, and make a change - from within. It is also a privilege to study in the language that my grandparents knew only from the Bible, and is now alive. It is a privilege to learn about the law system in the Arab countries, and then about the uniqueness of Jewish law. It is a privilege to study in a class with Jews and Arabs, secular and religious, and to talk about the conflicts in my society. It is a privilege to go to classes in the morning and later to volunteer with my people, who need legal help. Schools in the US might have more money, and more world-renown researchers, but, to me, they lack something that is more important.

I think that each of us should live with our choices, and I think this is another issue where you just need to go with your heart: stay, or leave, if that is what feels right. For me, studying in Israel and trying to be an active student in my community was the right choice. It might not be for everyone.

# Re-enacting an Ancient Story

**A group of Jewish, Muslim and Christian teenagers from the Detroit area connect the biblical story of Isaac and Ishamel to today's religious and ethnic conflicts through a stage play. Participant (and Seed) Gal Ben-Josef discusses the project**

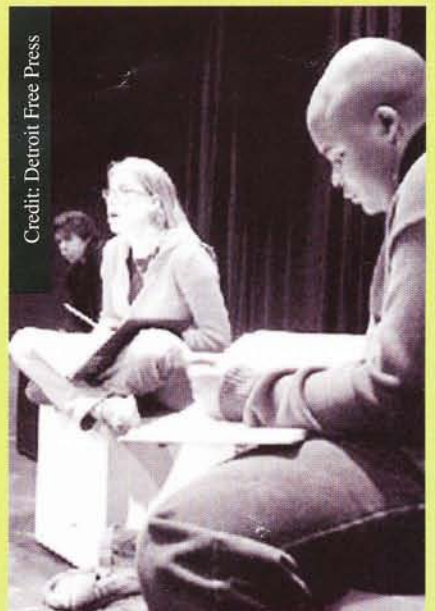
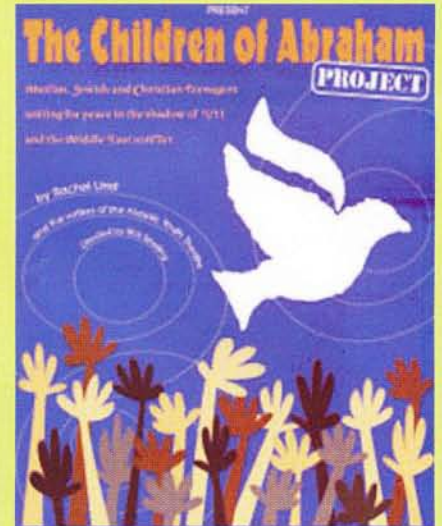
## **Gal Ben-Josef (Detroit)**

When I returned home from Seeds of Peace Camp in the summer of 2003, I was disappointed to learn that there were few opportunities that could ever match my camp experience, especially here in Michigan. Since camp, I've been working with the Michigan chapter of Seeds of Peace to draw more teenagers from my community into my realm of peaceful understanding and activism. Last year, I became involved in a small project that has since morphed into the most extraordinary method of communicating my goals and spreading peace throughout my and other communities. This endeavor is entitled "The Children of Abraham Project."

"The Children of Abraham Project" is a play, written as a product of several meetings between myself and a group of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim teenagers from the greater Detroit area. During these meetings, we shared our stories and personal experiences regarding our religions or cultures, acted out stories and improvised possible scenes for the play. We discussed stereotypes and biases which many people still have toward each of our religions, and how these biases are passed down the generations. We connected our struggles today with the biblical story of Abraham and his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. The two brothers were separated as young children due to the tension between their mothers, both wives of Abraham. Their mothers' hostility toward each other was passed down to their sons. Just as the two brothers suffered from the conflict between their mothers, so people today endure the consequences of misunderstandings and biases passed down to them over time. The whole thing reminds me of camp, where Arabs and Israelis consider each other archenemies until they meet face to face. So with the help of a professional playwright, our dialogues, scenes and stories grew into a full-fledged play.

The play is not intended to touch people in a religious sense. It is simply meant to portray the similarities between Christianity, Judaism and Islam, as the story of Abraham appears in each religion's texts. The play points out parallels between current events such as the attacks of 9/11 and the ensuing mistreatment of Arabs and Muslims, and the biblical tale of the misunderstandings between Isaac and Ishmael which led to their hatred of each other. Yet like the two brothers, who eventually overcame their hatred and anger as they met to bury their father, the play expresses hope for the future, indicating that perhaps one day, we two can accept our differences and come together in peace.

Today, the play has traveled around Michigan, to schools, churches, synagogues and mosques, and will soon be performed in other states. With luck, the play will travel throughout the United States and perhaps even around the world. The play even contains a few lines about the Seeds of Peace Camp: just another way to spread the message of peace throughout our communities and our world.



Participants rehearse for a production of the play



Pizza brings together Children of Abraham Project participants during a break

# from seed to staff

**Sami Ammous, a Seed from 1997, is now the Program Manager for the Seeds of Peace office in Amman. He describes his work with SOP, the reactions he receives from others when he tells them what he does, and answers the question of whether doing what he does is worth it**

## **Sami Ammous (Amman)**

Suspicion. If there was one word to describe the first reaction I get when I tell anyone that I work for Seeds of Peace, it would be suspicion. You can see their friendly welcoming smiles fade into stressed fake smiles to cover intense mental activity. Now the time between welcome and suspicion varies: some people know SOP and hate it, so they show their reaction immediately. Others ask (with polite smiles still on) what SOP is. After a few minutes of explaining, their suspicion settles in. Others never show it. But there's always that look of scolding, sometimes of pity even, to welcome me as a representative of SOP.

People are suspicious of SOP when they hear it brings youngsters from Israel and the Arab world together. Comments and questions like, "Aren't these kids too young to be exposed to something like that?" or "This sounds a lot like brainwashing" or "Be careful when dealing with something like that." Some even volunteer suggestions: "You know what you should do? Your organization should come up with some unified political statement condemning so-and-so." Some of them are a bit more informed or educated than that, and they pose intelligent questions. But overall, it's not easy. I usually need to spend an hour or so discussing SOP, camp, the offices, what we do here, and a whole bunch of politically-oriented questions. Sometimes you see that people better understand what SOP is about, and some still maintain their fake smiles.

Is it worth it? I have been involved with SOP for seven years now, eight if you count the time when I knew about it but didn't get the chance to go to camp. And, as anyone who's ever worked with SOP knows, SOP is highly controversial. Even in the times when the peace process was alive (but not quite well), SOP was sometimes a hard sell. But throughout that time, even though my confidence sometimes faltered and several things in my life drew me away, SOP was always something that was there. I used to do a lot of things on my own to promote SOP (even if it was just talking to people about it), but in the end, it always boiled down to a difference of opinion. And concerning the peace process, there was plenty of that going on. But now things are different. I am the SOP Program Manager in Amman (at our new office along with fellow Seed Njoud Soudani, recently hired as the Program Assistant). That means that not only do I believe in its ideals and methods, but that I represent them, and support them, and put an effort to make them better known.

My enthusiasm for SOP puts the looks of suspicion back on the faces of people. So is it worth it? You better believe it. Working with SOP means going beyond camp, which is more like an initiation than an aim in itself. I haven't been to camp in six years but I feel my work here is just as rewarding. For one, it's really fun. Meaning, there's a lot of work to be done, a lot of



Credit: Genny Adel

Sami with Program Coordinators Jared Willis and Genny Adel at the Arab Seminar in Amman

things to be coordinated, but there is always that fun element of SOP, even in Amman. I work with SOP part-time, so I still have my "usual" job, but in all honesty, I enjoy my work with SOP more than my other work. At SOP I get to work with a lot of bright young people with many ideas and an energy that is always impressive. I get to meet a lot of interesting and inspiring people. I get to make friendships which I hope will last a very long time. I get to try to make a change rather than curse the dark.

So again I ask, is it worth it? Yes it is. I love and enjoy every moment of it. And those looks of suspicion are not deterrents, but incentives for me to work harder to make SOP in Amman something we can all be proud of. Like many in SOP, I enjoy a challenge, and bringing out SOP as what we all believe it to be is a challenge I'm happy to face.

# poems

**Amal Khan (Lahore)**

## *Kept The Faith*

The printer's boys were up all night,  
For hours, words they hurled,  
For tomorrow was another day,  
To entertain the world,

Children played with rubber tires,  
And babies touched their toes,  
While truth was waged across the world,  
And freedom forced on foes,

And in rooms reserved for gentlemen,  
Trash crushed below their boots,  
Sat the officers of power,  
In their black Armani suits.

And here I was on my broken bench,  
Watching fireworks at night,  
Watching pickled stars erupt in flames,  
My lashes wet with light.

The litter of your glory,  
And the medals for the brave,  
Lie scattered in the backyard,  
Of the poorest, wretched slaves.

The men, they keep on talking,  
And the printer's working still,  
While the cameras shine down upon,  
What's not supposed to spill.

And backstage, boys are dying,  
While they ordered this show on,  
The salt on cheeks is drying,  
A thousand dreams have gone.

I hear you call me youthful,  
And I taste the sneer, the gloat,  
But the thousand dreams within me,  
Won't die inside my throat.

Below my broken bench,  
In a box till I heal the men,  
I've kept the faith, the faith, my faith,  
I've kept my faith till then.

**Marisa Gorovitz (Maitland)**

## *Untitled*

Silence  
Stillness  
Serenity  
and the unmistakable wail -  
Another siren  
Screams  
War  
A hellish nightmare.  
Eyes squeezed shut  
Head locked under the pillow  
To escape the inferno  
And slip into oblivion  
Where the only sound  
Is the sound of music,  
The only sight,  
Sheer beauty.  
Where violins dance and  
Roses bloom  
Where children play,  
Lovers embrace,  
Enemies unite,  
And time ceases.  
Surely such a place exists,  
A reality beyond that which I know,  
A paradise of  
Sweet harmony  
That I intend to find  
When I dare awaken.

**Alia Lahlou (Fez)**

## *Brainwashed*

How could I forget any of it?  
I can't now, I'm on top, I'm on the earth's  
summit  
Going there I thought I had a stinky enemy  
Coming back that idea makes me laugh  
like comedy  
From the moment we entered Bunk 3  
To the moment we left with tears from  
D.C  
I kept thinking about something in my  
mind  
How could people at home understand my  
friend of the other kind?  
And just as I guessed, they wouldn't  
And just as I feared, they didn't  
No one understands I was in heaven  
So peaceful, so sincere, so fair and even  
In the midst of the bitter hatred in our  
countries  
We found a way to live together as  
brothers, and not as enemies  
From basketball to soccer to the Oh! So  
fun Color Games  
I eventually learned everybody's names  
And as I think back to those names that  
became part of me  
All I want to do is flee  
Flee this place of intolerance that prevents  
us from being free  
But I can still feel the warmth of Tali's  
hug  
Still see the light in Aviva's smile  
Still hear the laughter of Agam  
And still feel Alina's tears as I wipe them  
with my hand  
So some would ask if I have been  
brainwashed  
And I would say, "No, I haven't. At least  
not the way you think  
I have been brainwashed from the stupid  
ideas I was brought up thinking  
Brainwashed from all the hatred I was  
feeling  
And so I am proud to be brainwashed  
Thank you Seeds of Peace."





*"My only prayer to the human race,  
Is to make the world a better place."*

*Divya Moorjaney (Mumbai)*

