



THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of Seeds of Peace

Fall 2008
Volume XI Issue I

Camp '08

Next generation
counselors

Gaza
through
the lens

India—Pakistan
Homestays

Final
Status:
Jerusalem

Plus
your letters,
art & poems

SEEDS OF PEACE CAMP, MAINE

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SARAH NORTON

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Fall 2008 Volume XI, Issue I

The Olive Branch is a magazine written, edited and produced by youth from regions of conflict who are part of the Seeds of Peace program. All opinions expressed on these pages are those of the Seeds who write and edit for the magazine and are not necessarily shared by Seeds of Peace, USAID, *The Olive Branch*, or its staff.

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All submissions are the property of Seeds of Peace and may be edited for length, content or style. Send correspondence to olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org.

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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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Seeds of Peace is a non-profit, non-political organization that develops and empowers young leaders from regions of conflict to work towards peace through coexistence and conflict resolution. A safe environment is created at our camp in Maine where these teenagers can air their views and learn the leadership and conflict resolution techniques required to end the cycles of war.

From the editors

WE ARE VERY EXCITED TO WELCOME new readers from Israeli & Palestinian schools to **The Olive Branch**. This is our 13th year of publication—since 1996 we have been a platform for young people in regions of conflict to share their opinions and experiences with each other, and now, with a wider audience.

As always, the magazine is edited by Seeds of Peace graduates. This year, the editors are Lama Mashni, a Palestinian from Jerusalem, and Eli Steinberg, an Israeli from Tel-Aviv. Both of us attended the Seeds of Peace International Camp in Maine back in 1999.

In this issue, we focus on what happens at that Camp. Each summer, hundreds of young people from conflict zones around the world spend three weeks together; we find out what they learned and hear from older Seeds who have returned to Camp as counselors.

Our next issue will focus on what happens when Seeds come back to their communities after the Camp program. For those of you who are Seeds, we are looking



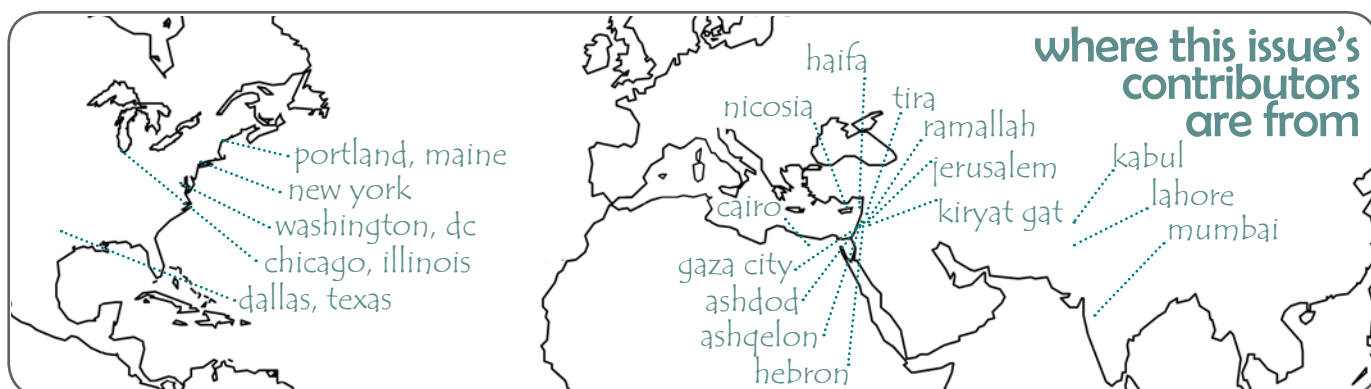
for regional editors and writers for the next edition.

Contact us at olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org if you are interested.

And please send us your feedback to the same address.

As always, we hope you find **The Olive Branch** thought-provoking, challenging, and informative.

Eli. Lama



KEY CAMP TERMS

SEEDS: Members of Seeds of Peace whose participation began when they attended the organization's summer camp in Maine between 1993 & 2008.

MAINE: This state, home to beautiful lakes, trees and moose, is located in the northeast corner of the US and is where the Seeds of Peace Camp is located.

DELEGATIONS: Seeds attend Camp as members of an official delegation. In 2007 & 2008, those delegations were Afghan, American, Egyptian, Indian, Israeli, Jordanian, Pakistani, Palestinian and our program for youth from the State of Maine.

BUNK: The 22 lakeside cabins that house the 170 campers and 50 counselors. A shared living environment for 10-15 people is an integral part of the program.

DIALOGUE: Daily 90-minute sessions run by professional facilitators during which Seeds are given time to discuss issues relating to their conflict with campers from the 'other side' of the conflict.

GROUP CHALLENGE: A Camp activity that parallels the dialogue process and uses a series of high and low ropes course elements to challenge the Seeds and reinforce trust and communication.

COLOR GAMES: A 3-day period toward the end of Camp during which campers are divided into two teams—Green & Blue—and compete against each other in a variety of athletic & artistic events. Color Games intensifies all aspects of the Camp program and takes teamwork, trust, communication and leadership to a new level.

Camp

2007•2008



culture night



pleasant lake



picture time



flag raising



culture night



sports day



true



ropes course



line up



otisfield



dialogue



culture night



nba day



bbc



rain



color games



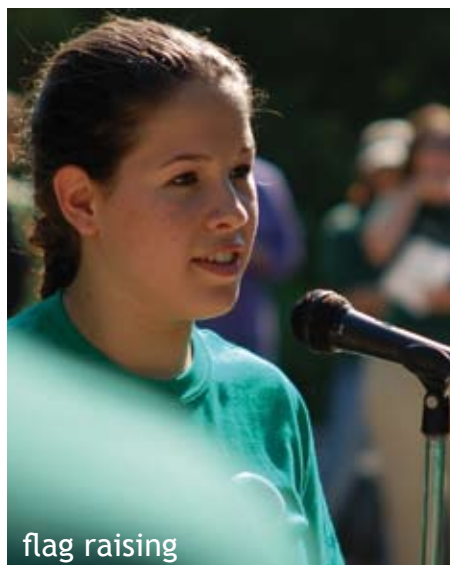
softball



dialogue



group challenge



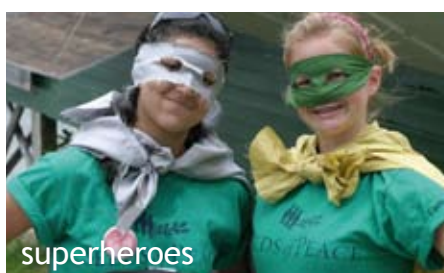
flag raising



parade



color games



superheroes



canoeing



more rain



team work



culture night



sports day



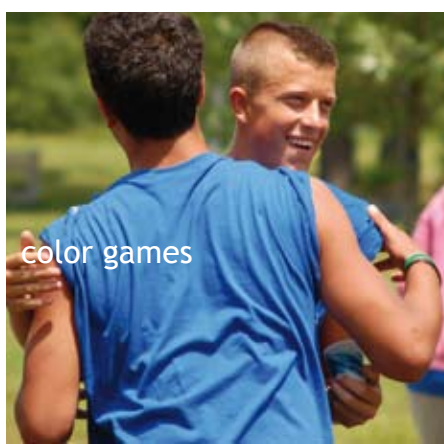
group challenge



sailing



camp fire



color games



Letters

olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org

CAMP REFLECTIONS

Seeds of Peace is a community that has influenced me in an infinite number of ways. It has taught me so much about myself and the world I live in. It has taught me to become a better listener and to understand where others may be coming from with their opinions.

Being surrounded by so many incredible and brilliant people has helped me to realize my own potential. I hope that as an individual, I will be able to bring some of what I learned at Seeds to my school community, as well as the other communities that I am a part of. I hope that I can help to influence others to be better, more aware people and that I can help others reach their full potential.

I have so much love and respect for Seeds of Peace that I believe that I would be letting down the organization and myself if I did not try my hardest to make a difference in the community I live in, and just as importantly, keep on trying to improve myself.

Nick (Washington, DC)

"Campsickness." It's one thing I'm sure every single camper has felt after coming back from those three incredible weeks at Seeds of Peace.

Everybody I met before going to Maine talked about Camp being a "life-changing" experience. I didn't understand how that might be—it was just a camp, after all.

Well, I can now say that I've never been more wrong in my life: it turned out to be one the most challenging, but nevertheless incredible, experiences I've ever had.

Never before did I think I would cry for someone from the "other side." Again I was wrong; the last day I cried plenty.

I only really understood how life-changing this experience has been after coming back and talking to my old friends.

You feel you've been changed: the way you argue, the way you listen—actually the way you pretty much do everything. It's so hard to come back to your old routine, your old life, after making those friendships.

One of the things I miss most about Camp was also the toughest part—dialogue. Even though I faced many, many frustrating and difficult moments, I enjoyed myself most when I was sitting in that dialogue hut. It was amazing to see how everybody listened and sympathized. I'm sure all of you know what I'm talking about, and I hope I was not the only one having a hard time explaining the "process" to my non-Seed friends.

I figured out that whether or not my opinions change is not the important thing. What's truly important is how I can listen and understand the opposite point of view, even if I disagree with it completely.

To me this is one of the most valuable lessons I've learnt at Seeds.

When someone asks me why those were the best three weeks I've ever had, I don't know where to start. Was it all the activities and trying new things that made it special? Was it the amazing staff that helped us through this experience? I guess both, but even more importantly,

all those Seeds who made the Camp what it is. I don't think there was a single person I knew at Camp that I don't miss.

I just want to thank you Seeds, for truly opening my mind.

Maged (Cairo)

WHY WAIT FOR THE FUTURE?

If you ask any of us Seeds studying in the US, almost everyone would say their purpose is to get "a good education to help their country in the future."

We—myself included—tend to focus on goals that are way too large and unrealistic for the people we are, and forget that little things matter.

With the kind of opportunities we have studying in the United States, we can do specific things in the present that seem very small here, but have the potential to make a huge difference in our communities back at home.

I too used to wait for the future to do something substantial, but during my community service work in the past couple of years, I have realized that projects that are easily within our power in the present can make massive difference. I've realized that taking action now, though it might seem minimal compared to what someone can do from a position of power, can make a remarkable difference.

My old school in Kabul, Afghanistan, is a public institution that serves 10,000 students daily in three shifts. During two decades of war, the school was turned into a bunch of classrooms with broken windows. Desks and chairs, the shelves from the library, as well as most of its books, had been used as fire wood during the rough winters by displaced families taking shelter in the school.

But, with very little to no resources, a new principal has turned the lifeless campus into a most conducive environment for learning.

After studying for two years at Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts, I took my first trip home and was absolutely amazed by the amount of progress made in the school that once was taking its last breaths. Witnessing the headmaster's work and the revitalized energy on campus, I felt obliged to make full use of my contacts at Deerfield and help my old school.

With a grant from Deerfield and a summer internship grant from Seeds of Peace, I re-established the school's library during the summer of 2006. We painted the room, built shelves from scratch, got new curtains and furniture, and started a book drive.

The library project, however, was only the beginning. Upon my return to Deerfield, I decided to raise funds for another project. With the help of friends, I wrote letters to Deerfield alumni, families, and personal friends asking for donations. I raised close to \$3,000 for the construction of a small pool with a water fountain in the middle of the campus.

Last summer, I started a computer lab. The most difficult part of this project was finding transportation for the used laptops that my Deerfield science teacher had personally repaired. After a long search, we finally found a shipper and the computers were delivered after three months and many phone calls and assur-



PHOTO CREDITS: BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK, SARAH BIGNEY, AJAY NORONHA, RADHIKA LALLA

ances that they were for academic and humanitarian purposes only.

Two groups of 20—one faculty group and one student group—now go through basic computer literacy training in the lab. The Ministry of Education has also promised to provide an Internet hookup to the school. Students will be able to connect to the outside world through the computers provided by Deerfield.

I never felt the need to have had a college degree or “a great education” in carrying out any of these projects. All I needed was the help of my understanding friends and acquaintances that I have made throughout the years in the US, a few phone calls, some paperwork, and a little time and commitment. The results and the impact were hugely surprising.

Coming from a place like Afghanistan, I realize that things that feel tiny here in the US have the potential to make a huge difference back home. All I had to do was to convince myself that I didn’t have to wait for the future when I could take action for the betterment in the present.

That is the question I want to pose by telling you my story: why wait for the future when your actions can make a huge difference now?

Mujib (Kabul)

PAKISTAN INITIATIVE

Every year my school holds a bazaar. A few days before the start, the state of emergency was declared in Pakistan. For a moment I found myself trapped in feelings of anger and hopelessness.

But we went ahead and created a Seeds of Peace (SOP) information stall to create awareness about the organization.

Fasiha, Narmeen & Sana joined me in putting up pictures and posters and arranging an art competition.

I never thought people would be so interested in knowing about SOP—we got a wonderful response!

This is just so that you guys know that no matter how bad the problems your country is facing are, carry on with your objective and you will surely succeed.

Nur (Lahore)

THE TWO WOLVES

This story was sent to me by my mum, and I immediately thought of Seeds of Peace. I hope that all of you get a chance to read this and really think about it.

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, “My son, the battle is between two ‘wolves’ inside us all.

“One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

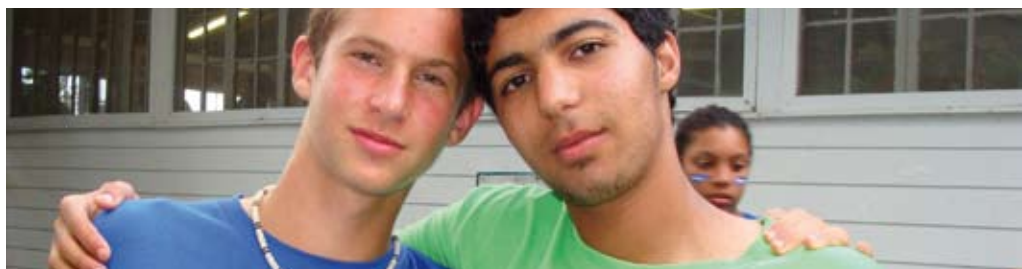
“The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

Do great things and keep in touch.

Meg (Kents Hill, Maine)



See something to which you’d like to respond?
Your letters are most welcome!
Letters are edited for length, content
and style.
E-mail submissions
to olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org

Ahmed Helal (Cairo)

AHMED (2006) HELPED ORGANIZE a series of sports events to help a school for hundreds of Sudanese & Somali refugees. A group of Egyptian Seeds began fund raising in 2007 when they discovered the school had no athletics facilities.

During one event, the group rented out a football field and coached games for 150 boys. At another event, they added basketball & volleyball for the school's girls.

Through these interactions, Ahmed says he learned a lot about Cairo's refugee community and the issues it faces.

"The level of education they receive is not good, the UN is not helping,



and the energy they have that is not put into activities is taken to the streets."

Ahmed's next project is to organize a Color Games sports event for the school.

Hannah Lantos (Chicago)

HANNAH (1999) HAS BEEN IN Zambia for almost a year and a half as part of a two-year commitment to the US Peace Corps.

Her project is called the "RED" project, which stands for Rural Educational Development. She lives in a thatch hut in a village called Kamwanya with her two cats. She works with the local Ministry of Education office on a number of projects—including monitoring and evaluating teachers, working to implement a radio program for grades 1-7 that supplements the Ministry's curriculum, starting a youth group, trying to raise money to get books for a library and renovate an existing library structure, training women's groups in savings & credit and business management, and more.

She writes: "As I look forward, I increasingly think that my next step will be business school—trying to think about ways to make development more of an investment and less charity, or aid. People who give money



PEACE CORPS: Hannah (right) is working on rural education projects in Zambia.

or spend their careers doing work in development need to see their time, energy, and finances as investments, with development and social change as the "profit" of our work.

"Though business school and a focus on income generation may seem miles away from my 15 year old self at Seeds of Peace, I know and feel the link each day."

"Seeds got a hold of me, and allowed me to be more independent and more of a leader than a follower."

—Doug
(Portland, Maine)



PHOTO CREDITS: AHMED
HELAL, HANNAH LANTOS,
ALLISON VISE

Allison Vise (Washington, DC)



ALLISON (2005) WAS RECOGNIZED for her work in Seeds of Peace and other organizations by the Princeton University Prize in Race Relations. The prize aims to "promote harmony, understanding, and respect among people of different races by identifying and recognizing high school age students whose efforts have had a significant, positive effect on race relations in their schools or communities."



nominate a Seed in the Lead
olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org

Doug Alston (Portland, Maine)

BY JAY COHEN
(BOSTON)

"I USED TO BE VERY QUIET," says Doug Alston, a Maine Seed who attended Camp third session 2003 and second session 2005. "But Seeds got a hold of me, and allowed me to be more independent and more of a leader than a follower."

For Alston and the Cheverus High School basketball team, those leadership skills translated into a Maine state championship this past winter.

The senior point guard guided his squad to victory in a major upset of defending champions Bangor, who had come into the matchup riding a 31-game win streak.

Leadership is central to the way Alston plays basketball. At the point, Alston is the team's general on the court. Earlier in the season he had been moved to shooting guard, but the position just didn't feel right.

"I looked very uncomfortable on the court," Alston said. "I'm used to controlling the tempo."

After switching back to point guard, Alston was able to once again direct his team's play on both offense and defense, and use the voice he says he gained from attending Camp.

Cheverus got off to an extremely fast start to the season, winning its first 14 games. But a three-game losing streak close to the start of the playoffs put the great season in jeopardy. The Stags were able to rebound in their final regular season game before defeating Windham, Portland, and Thornton Academy in the playoffs to reach the state finals.

However, after leading his team all season, Alston hurt his ankle in Cheverus's regional final victory and was struggling to regain his fitness in time for the championship game. But when snow pushed the game back, providing him with a few extra days of rest, Alston knew that he had to take the opportunity. Cheverus overcame a 10-point deficit in the 48-43 win, and it was Alston's three-pointer midway through the fourth quarter that gave his team the lead for good.

Alston will most likely continue his basketball career next year for Guilford College in North Carolina. With him, he will bring the leadership skills he has developed at Camp and on the court.

COURT LEADERSHIP: Doug (with basketball) helped his high school team win the Maine state championship title this year.

PHOTO CREDIT: © CHRIS GRIFFITH, GREATMOOSE.COM



LOOKING AHEAD

FOUR JERUSALEM SEEDS SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS IN THE CONTESTED CITY



PHOTO CREDITS: ERIC KAPENGA, ORON MICHAELI



THE ISSUE OF JERUSALEM IS NO doubt one of the toughest parts of negotiations over a future peace agreement, mainly due to the fact that it involves religious, national, demographic and economic considerations.

Personally, as an Israeli, I believe that every territorial relinquishment is not easy.

However, I believe, with all my heart, that every nation deserves to have its own sovereignty. Jewish history led me to believe this is the only solution, even if it is not a perfect one.

Therefore, with the two-state solution as a starting point, I've tried to find a solution that on the one hand gives every person the option to be part of the country he or she identifies with, and on the other hand results in the evacuation of the lowest possible number of people from their homes.

I acknowledge that as an inhabitant of Jerusalem, I do not really recognize many of the Arab neighborhoods as a real part of "my" city—I barely go there. Some Israelis might question this, but they will probably agree that it hurts Israel to define these neighborhoods as parts of Jerusalem. Economically, Israel is obligated to provide the inhabitants of East Jerusalem with

CONTINUED: SEE AMOS, PAGE 13



JERUSALEM IS STILL A DIVIDED city. It has two different people with different cultures, who live on different sides of the city.

The Israeli government, which says the city is united, makes the separation even more clear by building houses for its citizens while demolishing those of Palestinians. While Jews from around the world are invited to live in Jerusalem, my Palestinian relatives and friends from places like Ramallah (10 km away) and Bethlehem (5 km) are not allowed to even visit.

Palestinian residents of the city have suffered great injustice. Many have lost their land in the city, including my family. In 1968, after East Jerusalem was occupied by the Israeli army, my father's land was confiscated on the basis that it was needed for military training. It had been inherited from my grandfather, and he had hoped to build homes on it for us.

In 1992 my father appealed to the High Court, since the government had not used the land for any purpose. He won the case with three judges sitting, but lost the case on appeal with seven judges. Sixteen years later (and 40 years after the confiscation) the land is still not used for anything.

CONTINUED: SEE HIBA, PAGE 13





LIVE IN A CITY OFTEN FILLED with religious tolerance. A city which wakes up every morning to the wonderful ringing of church bells and the voice of a dozen minarets.

Every day I go to Saint George's School. Even though I am Muslim, and my school is obviously Christian, I feel at home. I

love my city as if it were the blood that is flowing through my body or the oxygen that I breathe.

But there are difficulties. There is racism between Arabs and Jews throughout the city, and Palestinians do suffer.

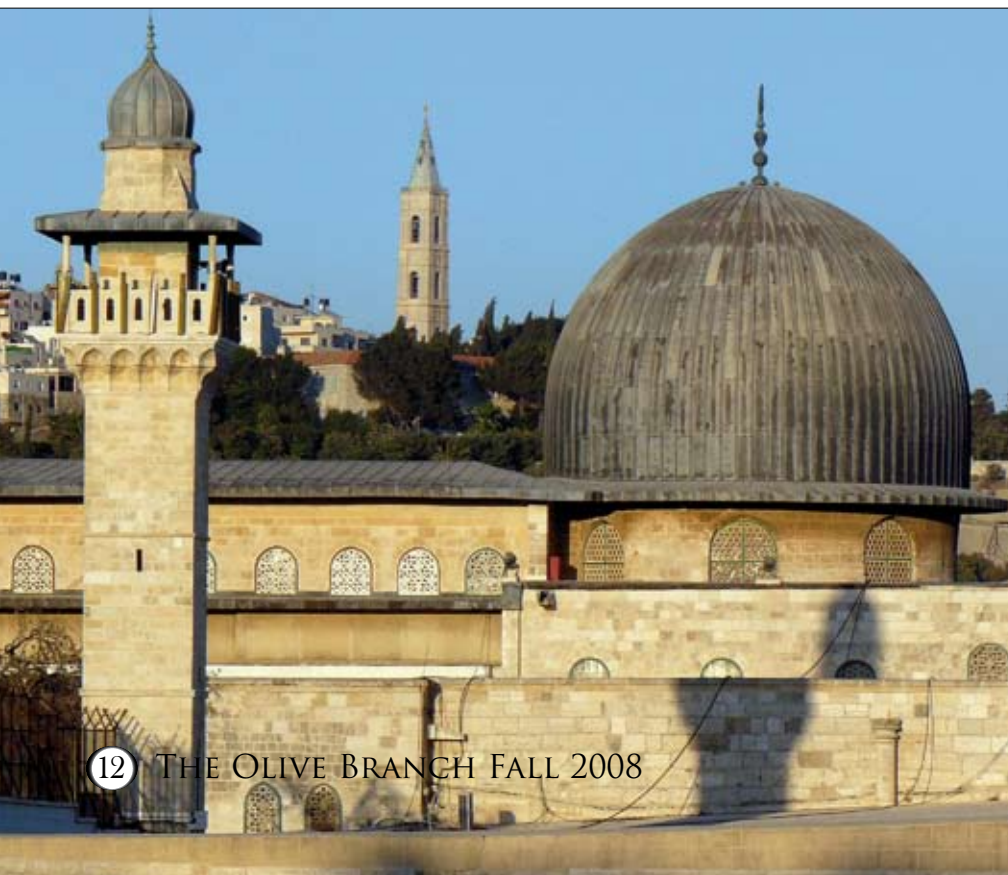
For example, if a Palestinian father wants to build a home, on his own land, he is most often unable to obtain a construction permit from the Israeli authorities. If somehow he is able to get one, he often isn't allowed to build more than three floors. It is painful for me to see a three-story Arab building with a ten-story Israeli building behind it. And if he is not able to obtain a permit, and builds anyway, the Israeli authorities will demolish the house.

We are also losing homes which we inherited from our ancestors to armed Jewish settlers, who come and live there instead. The Israeli government continues to build the Wall that separates Jerusalem from other Palestinian cities and prevents Palestinians from visiting their relatives here or praying at the religious sites like the Al-Aqsa Mosque. And Israel continues to build new settlements around Jerusalem, and expand old ones.

When I think about the future of Jerusalem, I don't expect there to be a quick, fair solution. In the end I just wish that the Palestinian dream will be reached. I wish to see every Palestinian from the West Bank and Gaza Strip able to come and pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque or the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in peace with their fellow Jerusalemites whenever they want.

► **Mahmoud**

Al-Aqsa Mosque



THE HOLIEST PLACE IN Jerusalem is the Old City: holy in Judaism because of the Western Wall, in Christianity for the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and in Islam for the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock. The location of the last two is also a religious site for Jews, because the Temple was once located there.

This has been a cause of much tension between Jews & Muslims, and the broader conflict affects it very badly.

I believe that every person has the right to pray at her holy site. Right now, this is not happening. The conflict is hurting this right. Jews can't pray near the Dome of the Rock, and Muslims have many restrictions.

As a person who lives in Jerusalem, this really disturbs me.

I'm very realistic—I know that chances of the conflict being solved soon are very low. But let us think how beautiful it would be if it were. If we are smart enough to understand and respect each other, maybe someday we'll all have the right to pray where and when we want to.

"Don't be afraid to see someone who is the complete opposite of your opinion and think that you could make peace with him. This is the main idea of peace: to try very hard to have peace between two opposites."

— Rabbi Nachman

► **Tzuf**

Church of the Holy Sepulcher



medical treatment and other social benefits. And since Palestinians who live in East Jerusalem have the Israeli identity card, and are therefore able to move freely within the city and Israel entirely, it is much easier for the radicals among them to attack Israelis. For instance, all four attacks in Jerusalem this year have been committed by Palestinian inhabitants of Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem.

I do not agree with those who claim that a division of Jerusalem is, in fact, a betrayal of our ancestors, who prayed for an eternity to re-build the city. In fact, most of the Arab neighborhoods now defined as Jerusalem were not even called Jerusalem before the 1967 Six-Day War.

This issue is not the problem it seems to be; including Arab neighborhoods in the future Palestinian state does not, in fact, hurt the completeness and unity of Jerusalem.

A reasonable solution could thus be the separation of Jerusalem on a national basis, meaning Arab neighborhoods go to the Palestinian state, while Jewish neighborhoods stay an integral part of the State of Israel.

Some object to this solution, arguing that if Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem were not ruled by Israel, many parts of Israel would be threatened by Palestinian rockets. However, the scenario under discussion is not dividing Jerusalem as a unilateral act, but as a part of a true peace agreement. This is therefore not a relevant problem: if rockets are launched towards Israel, a peace agreement will not be signed.

This solution is, however, lacking because it does not address the issue of holy sites, which is one of the central pillars of the Israeli-Palestinians conflict. One proposal is that a multi-religious committee should be established to supervise every holy site in Israel and the future Palestinian state.

There are a few problems with this, such as which side

would rule the areas around the holy sites. For example, even if the Western Wall is ruled by the Jewish part of the committee, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Muslim part, who would rule the areas surrounding these sites?

Our Seeds of Peace dialogue sessions never yielded a document which contained a breakthrough solution; the disputes between us have been the same ones that keep our greatest politicians busy.

I believe that if we keep trying, even this issue, which is probably the toughest, will be solved sooner or later.

Moshe Dayan, an Israeli military leader, said that "If you want to make peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies."

Personally, I am certain that if these enemies become friends, peace will be much easier to make.

► **Amos**

HIBA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

I think that sharing Jerusalem would be the fairest solution, since Jews also have a religious connection to the city. However, I do not think that Israel should claim it as its capital. Freedom of access to different parts of the city should be allowed. No one party should be in charge of the entire city. Rather, it should be shared by creating one united police force, and one united municipality. This needs to be done without forgetting the right of each side to make independent political decisions.

The holy places should not be divided on the basis of religion, especially since there are certain places that are shared by two religions. Instead, these sites should be under the control of the united police force and municipality.

Unless a solution is found, the issue of Jerusalem will continue to be one of the main reasons for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

► **Hiba**

Western Wall





BACK AGAIN: Once campers, now staff, Seeds are playing an increasingly important role helping new Seeds.

Next generation counselors

Older Seeds return to Maine to run Camp

“ONE DAY YOU’LL BE running this camp,” said Seeds of Peace founder John Wallach, many times. And I believed him.

Seeds are not yet running the place all by themselves: non-Seeds are still the core of the staff, bringing their vast experience and heart to Camp. But slowly, former campers are becoming an important part. They bring perspectives that only they can have. They feel the crazy collage of emotions that only a former camper can feel: solidarity, anger, fear, love, excitement, frustration, affection and confusion. All in a concentrated dose.

Only in an alternate universe called “camp” can one grasp certain realities. Only there do they make perfect



Eldad
(Kiryat Gat)

sense. Seeds of Peace creates these impossible situations. That is, it creates absurd situations which could never take place in the ordinary world. Take for instance the following: A 24-year-old Israeli counselor has to make sure his young campers—among them Palestinians from refugee camps—drink at least four cups of water per meal and finish all the peas on their plates.

If the reader of these lines is a Seed, they know this is pretty normal.

We got to Camp about a week early, giving us time to acclimate, not only

to the weather, but also emotionally to what lay ahead of us.

My main concern was, “will I be any good—will I be able to give the same support I received from my counselors years ago?”

I had to deal with tough questions asked by brilliant teenagers. Some of them about my identity, some about history, others about my opinions.

But what they all had in common was that they were all questions of legitimacy—the legitimacy of me as their counselor.

In the end, my fears were turned aside as they taught me an important lesson in acceptance: with time, patience and sensitivity, people accept people for what they are deep inside.

PHOTO CREDITS (CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT): BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK, BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK, SARAH BIGNEY



HUMMUS SONG COMPOSER: Ahmad (right) with his dining hall table. Ahmad returned for a second summer as a counselor in 2008.

Seeds take on new role as counselors at Camp

ONE OF THE MOST vivid memories from my first year at Camp in 2001 is that of our last night together as a bunk. United Bunk 17 (“The Boom-Boom Room”) decided to steal some canoes just before dawn and paddle to the creek on the opposite shore of Pleasant Lake. I remember looking around and thinking how much I would miss everyone there,

that this was one of those once-in-a-lifetime moments that I’d always remember.

I had a chance to repeat my once-in-a-lifetime moment last summer, but this time with a twist. As one of the counselors organizing the little trip, I found out that our bunk night in 2001 was not as impromptu as it looked—it seems that everyone from Camp Director Tim to the doctor knew about it.

The planning and preparation that had to be done took nothing away from the experience, however. As I was paddling to lineup with UB 17 (“The International Brothers”) I

ILY HAIR, A BEYOND-smelly blue shirt, and an utter sense of completion are my last clear memories of my job as a counselor this past summer at Seeds of Peace.

The inevitable lack of showers was something I had anticipated: my mother tried to throw out everything I brought home after my time as an American camper in 2004.

What I had not expected my second time around was the sense of fulfillment, coupled with the same questions and confusion I felt leaving Camp in ’04.

As a camper, I came to Seeds believing I was well-versed on the Middle East conflict and was ready to bring peace to a situation I thought I had all figured out. I left with the realization I knew next to nothing.

Unsure of my role, use, and overall feelings towards the experience that forever changed my life, I went home an emotional wreck to grapple with and try to answer these questions. I tried to stay in touch with my



L’ARTISTE: Eldad shows off his brush skills while introducing Camp activities to 2007 Seeds.



Loizos
(Nicosia)



Devon
(Dallas)

CONTINUED: SEE LOIZOS, PAGE 17

CONTINUED: SEE DEVON, PAGE 17



FACE OFF: Ahmad (front), along with other Seeds turned counselors, compete in a rope tug during staff Color Games.

“ROSE & THORN” IS A GAME that my bunk counselors taught us when I was a camper in 2004.

Before we went to sleep, each person in the bunk gave account of the best and worst parts of his day (the rose and the thorn, respectively). It was the only moment of each day when the otherwise-rambunctious and loud bunk environment became quiet and respectful, marked by collective reflection.

Since 2004, I hadn’t thought of “Rose



Leo
(New York)

& Thorn” until the first evening in the bunk with the campers this summer. We had taken care of all the night’s logistics, the campers were tired out from traveling, and we three first-time counselors were faced with a question: “What do we do now?”

At that moment, “Rose & Thorn” came into my mind, along with a vivid recollection of how useful that time of reflection was for me as a camper. I quietly suggested it to my co-counselors, they approved, and we tried it.

This summer, not a single night passed in our bunk without listening to each other’s roses and thorns.

I was proud to pass on this ritual of reflection, an exercise that represents an essential part of my experience at Seeds of Peace. Each day there, campers and counselors alike are engaged physically as well as mentally. It is at once a challenge and a joy to balance the physically-taxing elements, like Steal the Bacon, with the mentally-taxing ones, like Dialogue.

As a camper and as a counselor this summer, I find that striking this balance is an exhausting endeavor, such that by day’s end, and after a quiet round of “Rose & Thorn,” I feel healthier than I have in a long time and ready to fall asleep.

I STARTED MY JOURNEY WITH Seeds of Peace four years ago. As part of the Palestinian delegation in 2004, I headed to Camp determined to represent Palestine, to talk to other people from different parts of the world and understand their opinions and backgrounds, to make a change and communicate. Waking up in a bunk full of different people with different cultures, languages, backgrounds, and lifestyles was a whole new experience in itself.

Last summer, I applied and was accepted as a counselor—I was full



Ahmad
(Ramallah)

as much as I could, giving them their own space to think about themselves and discover something unique inside each one of them that will motivate them to learn as much as they can.

of happiness and couldn’t believe myself for a moment.

I soon began to realize what it truly feels like to be a counselor. I felt the love and the trust as a counselor. I tried to help the campers

I also wrote a song called “The Hummus Song.” Everyone loved it. People started singing it all the time: around Camp, in the dining hall, in the bunk. It was everywhere!

I tried my best to remain close to my campers, especially since I had been in their shoes. (And I have to point out here how great it was working with people who were my counselors four years ago.)

After experiencing all these different positions at Camp, I realize what it truly feels like to be part of the Seeds of Peace realm, and how special it is.

PHOTO CREDITS: SARAH BIGNEY

looked around and thought about how much I'd miss them all.

In retrospect, my canoe ride with the bunk captures my whole summer experience at Camp.

Going back to Otisfield as a counselor reveals the massive effort that goes into creating the camp experience—from the kitchen, to the ropes course, to the infirmary.

Knowing how things work takes none of the magic away. The butterflies still fly in your stomach on the first day of Camp, flag-raising is still difficult, the Sea Dogs baseball team still lose all their games, Casco lemonade is always fresh, and Color Games is still the best part of Camp.

And on top of that, there's still a lot to learn from everyone around you—campers and counselors alike. Being able to stay behind after all the buses are gone and everything turns quiet again, revealed to me the essence of Camp: that Seeds of Peace is not the bunk-line by the lake; it is the people who wear the green shirts.

Camp magic exists because of them.

DEVON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

friends and work with Seeds outside of Camp—anything to get closer to what I thought would answer my questions.

While Seeds became a motivating force in other aspects of my life, I remained ill-at-ease and moved from one interest to the next, trying to do as much as I could to find the same sense of inner-calm I found at Camp.

However, questions remained unanswered, and these feelings unfounded until the last day of my job this summer, when I had the opportunity to address the entire Camp after coaching the Blue Team during Color Games.

I had not planned what I was going to say or had even truly reflected on the amazing experience of coaching.

But standing next to the bonfire and looking at all the kids who had come off a bus just three weeks ago apprehensive and unsure—and now seeing them hugging and crying, feeling like I had a part in bringing some of them together, and forming friendships with many of them—brought me



BACK IN GREEN: Eldad (top, on right) belays a Seed high off the ground. Below, more counselors in 2007 who were once themselves campers.

back to the inner peace I had desperately sought the past four years. I felt like I had finally started and finished something from start to end, and I could see the fruits of my labor right in front of me.

I'm just as confused as I was four years ago. I think one of the amazing qualities about a Seeds experience is the unsettling feeling it leaves you with. If we all left resolute and sure of our friends, our enemies, and ourselves, no one would come back to Camp, or go to seminars to seek out past friends or unresolved issues. Dialogue would never improve or change as time passed, as we would all move

on to different parts of our lives the day we left, not needing to look back. Conflicts would rage on because every side is sure of themselves and the others around them. We wouldn't question our own surroundings or actions in regard to others—a very dangerous thing especially when it involves human suffering and the ongoing struggles we face in our daily lives.

After being a counselor this summer, I have learned to recognize the necessity of this uncertainty, and will use it to pursue my passions and goals in life. Who knows—maybe as a counselor again in 2009.

Using dialogue & film to break down barriers

Two Seeds participate in Peace it Together's program to empower young Israeli, Palestinian & Canadian leaders through film-making.

IHAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO work with young people from the other side of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict this summer at Peace it Together's camp on Bowen Island, near Vancouver, Canada. Ten Israelis, 10 Palestinians, and 10 Canadians came together, each with his or her own opinions about the other side—opinions based mostly on the information received through the media.

The first week involved tough dialogue between the Palestinians and Israelis. Each side tried to present the other as the guilty party, sharing very emotional stories about the difficult



Mahmoud
(Hebron)

experiences about how the Wall separates their lands and their life and how they feel humiliated at the checkpoints.

The Israeli participants spoke about their suffering from the Qassam rockets fired from Gaza and the suicide

situations in which both sides live.

The Palestinians focused on suffering from the Separation Wall and Israeli checkpoints located inside the Palestinian territories, and shared their personal

bombers, and how these affect their daily life—how they can't ride buses or do normal things that most other people in this world can.

The dialogue process imposed respect by giving every side the freedom to speak. Everyone had to listen to the other side completely, before they had the right to ask questions and comment.

At first it seemed hard for both sides to keep listening, because you could only speak when the other person was done. But day by day, we become more aware of the importance of

PHOTO CREDITS: AVI GOLDSTEIN, AMBER HOUSSIAN



discover more online
www.peaceittogether.ca



CAMERA MAN: Shadi, an Israeli Seed, films a scene for "Heaven Forbid."

AT FIRST, THE DIALOGUE sessions were not that hard, because no one wanted to hurt anyone's feelings. But as we got deeper and deeper into the history of the conflict, people started to open up and talk about the way they see the conflict and their real thoughts about the other side.



Shadi
(Tira)

After dialogue, we started making movies. First we learned about different types of film. Then we were separated into three- or four-member groups that included all nationalities. My group decided to create a story connected to the conflict that would represent all of our thoughts and feelings about it,

and that would be balanced to both sides.

Our film, called "Heaven Forbid," is a drama about two girls that meet on an island after escaping a drowning death. Neither one has any memories about their past. They become friends discovering the island together, until at the peak of their relationship, they begin to recall their past: one of them is Palestinian, the other Israeli. They meet on the beach, facing each other, and the film ends with a final flashback of them at the Separation Wall, one as an Israeli soldier holding a gun, the other as a Palestinian holding a rock.

We had great communication within the group, and I think the result was very good. After completing shooting and editing, we screened the film for 500 people in Vancouver.

FILMMAKERS: Palestinian Seed Mahmoud learns about making movies with an Israeli & a Canadian.

this process—how important it is to listen and feel what other participants have to say—which in turn helped us realize how similar our connections, dreams, hopes and problems are.

We spent the second and third weeks learning how to make films. Israelis, Palestinians and Canadians worked together in small groups based on the subject of their film. It was the start of having one goal. The groups were like a small family; people started caring about each other.

It was also very emotional. At one point, Avner (an Israeli participant) requested that his group adjust focus and show more about Palestinian life

in its film. The moment inspired Majd (a Palestinian participant) who continued to be inspired by Avner.

As we ate together, laughed together and thought about each other, the human connections became stronger than any other feelings, and we started to understand one another more and more.

Each side found the other to be normal people who want to live and to be part of the democratic nations. At some point, both sides found they had the same needs—both want to feel safe.

We also found that the image the media presents about the other side was not reflected at camp. Instead, we discovered that all of us teenagers have very similar dreams and wishes.

This leads to something impor-

tant and something that is ignored by many people, which is that our common humanity is the main link between us. It is therefore possible to break the fear and boundaries which were created inside us. Fear that is the result of what the media shows us or what people who do not represent the majority of our societies do.

Respect, listening and understanding are the principles that we took back home with us. These are not easy concepts, but they will stay with us forever as tools to improve communication between Palestinians and Israelis.

We will be showing the films that we made to our communities, each one of us in his own way, improving ourselves as young leaders who are willing to fight for peace.

Where are they now?

THE SEEDS film

Ever wonder what happens to Seeds after Camp? We find out where people from '02 & '03 who appeared in the SEEDS documentary are now.

PHOTO CREDITS: PARISA TAGHIZADEH, BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK, YANA GORSKAYA



Koby (Tel-Aviv)

I graduated from Yale in 2006, after which I decided to travel around the world a bit to clear my head. I then joined McKinsey & Co. in New York City. I am still very much involved with SOP, helping out with fund-raising & programming in the US, and am still in touch with many of my Seeds friends. Seeds of Peace still holds a special place in my life.



Zaqjoub (Bethlehem)

I graduated from Earlham College with a degree in Economics. During the summers I returned to Camp as a counselor. I returned home in 2004 to work for Seeds of Peace full-time as the Palestinian Program Coordinator in Ramallah. I just finished my MBA from the University of Chicago, and am working in New York City.



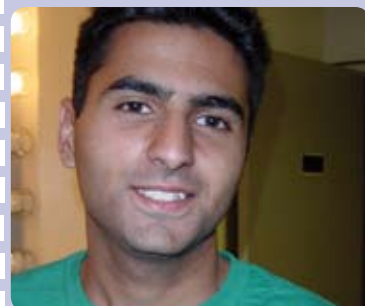
Teju (Mumbai)

After my brilliant Camp experience, I went on to finish school. I am currently in my 3rd year of a Fine Arts program, specializing in painting & having the time of my life. I hope to do my Masters in graphic design, and work in the same field. SOP has remained an important part of my life all these years, and I'm sure it will continue to do so.



Sami (Abu Ghosh)

I worked for SOP in 2005, helping with a media project for younger Seeds. I received my degree in Biology from the Hebrew University. I also picked up a degree in Musicology (and still play the piano). I'm currently doing medical research, in parallel with an engineering program, and in anticipation of a PhD in Biotechnology.





Adir (Ashqelon)

After my military service as a producer & editor with army radio, I became involved in areas related to society, politics & media, and am now the spokesperson for the Tel Aviv University Student Union. I'm still involved with coexistence programs, and recently went to Jordan with the Geneva Initiative to dialogue with Palestinians.



Tamer (Cairo)

After Camp, I worked at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where I conducted research on promoting democracy & rule of law in the Middle East. I then received a law degree and Masters in International Politics from American University. I'm now married and living in Washington, DC, where I'm an attorney.



Ariel (Givon Hahadasha)

Since 2003, I managed to finish high school, served in the army for three years, and traveled around Central America, New York and finally India.

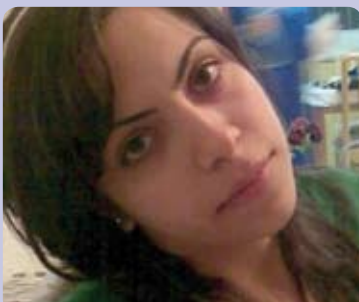
These days the only thing I do is study computer engineering and physics at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (and look forward to vacations to come).



Areen (Haifa)

Right after my high school graduation, I started my undergraduate studies in Occupational Therapy.

Thankfully, I managed to graduate, and I'm currently a certified occupational therapist working with disabled children.



Tareq (Jatt)

I participated in various SOP activities up until 2005, when I started working as a program coordinator for newer Seeds. I'm now studying medicine at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (in fact, I'm writing this while studying for the final exams of my fourth year). I'll be done with my studies by 2010, at which point I will be a doctor.



Marj & Joe (the filmmakers)

Since shooting SEEDS, Marj Safinia moved to Los Angeles, got married and is now busy working on several new documentary projects. She continues to be involved with SEEDS, and thanks to Facebook, with many of the subjects of the movie!

Joe Boyle also got married, and is now the father to a beautiful baby boy,

Sebastian. He now works producing reality shows for the Discovery Networks.

The SEEDS DVD is currently available for purchase by schools, colleges and community groups. Visit www.mergemedia.tv for more information, and if you'd like to reach Marj or Joe, e-mail seeds@mergemedia.tv.



GAZA CITY THROUGH THE LENS OF GAZA'S SEEDS

PHOTOS BY HOMAM, OLA & AYA



SKYLINE: Gaza City's many apartment blocks. "It's is one of the most heavily populated places in the world" (Aya).



CANDLELIGHT PROTEST: "Children demonstrate against electricty cuts by Israel" (Ola).



UNIVERSITY STREET: "I think Gaza is a beautiful place" (Aya).



BEACH: A man plays near the Gaza seaport. “The sea always makes me think of freedom” (Homam).



EMPTY: A street is car-less due to fuel shortages. “Gaza in this period is like a city without a soul. As you walk in the streets, it’s as if there is no population” (Ola).



LAHORE: In August, 18 Indian Seeds and seven Indian Delegation Leaders were hosted by their Pakistani counterparts families in Lahore for a week of dialogue, workshops and sightseeing.

Indian Seeds visit Pakistan

Camp friends get rare opportunity to cross border, meet families

THE INDIA-PAKISTAN Homestays Program takes place almost every year. One year Indian Seeds visit Pakistan, and the next year Pakistani Seeds travel to India. The point is for Seeds to see the “other

side” for a week and live with the families of the friends they made at Camp and experience their culture.

After a lot of hard work and convincing, most of us got permission from our



Rayan
(Mumbai)

schools, colleges, and parents, and in August, 18 very excited Indian teenagers were on their way to Pakistan.

We were welcomed by loud cheers and warm hugs from our Pakistani friends.

I had the pleasure of living with Zain. At first I was nervous about how easily his family would accept an Indian living at their house, but on meeting them, I realized that I had been accepted way before I had even arrived. I had not expected the warmth, love, and generosity that I received from them during the course of the trip,



REUNITED: Rayan & Zain at the border between India & Pakistan.

and I can easily say that they were one of the nicest families I’ve ever come across.

Homestays was a memorable experience, and I am very glad and fortunate to have been a part of it.

It was truly amazing to experience the culture and tradition of a Pakistani family. I am privileged to have had the opportunity of visiting Pakistan, an opportunity that not many Indians have, unfortunately.

AS THE GREEN SHIRTS made their appearances at the airport, screams of excitement ended the silence. Everyone was overwhelmed with joy, delighted to see the friends they had made at

Camp.

I introduced my family to Rayan, my Indian guest, and we made for home and dinner together. This was followed by a long series of discussions between him and my family. We



Zain
(Lahore)

had much more to share, but eventually we had to sleep since we had to wake up early the next morning.

The Homestays now seems like a sweet dream, so short and so delightful. In the guise of sharing good moments, we enhanced our leadership qualities and enlightened our minds.

It’s really hard to forget about those nights we spent chatting and those days we spent laughing.

I believe Homestays truly bridges the gap between Indian and Pakistani Seeds developed after Camp.

PHOTO CREDITS: PAUL MAILHOT, RAYAN MODI

THERE WERE BUTTERFLIES in my stomach the moment the aircraft wheels touched the ground. It was hard to believe we were finally there—we were finally in Pakistan! I had been waiting for this day ever since Camp.



Niyati
(Mumbai)

Seeing my friends again after three years was an emotional moment. Living with them in their homes, gorging on the famous Lahori food (yummy), getting to know their

culture, way of living and their families was a great experience.

We are just the same.

I met new people and made new friends. We visited their schools, went sightseeing and shopping together, gossiping and remembering old Camp memories.



SIGHTSEEING: Seeds toured the Old City of Lahore, including the famous Badshahi Mosque, experiencing the city's rich culture and history.

THE FIRST TREMORS OF anticipation came only when I saw the familiar faces emerging. It was hard to tell or realize that we were meeting them after a gap of several years.



Tooba
(Lahore)

After four unsuccessful attempts to obtain visas and a two-hour flight delay, the Indian Seeds finally arrived. Needless to say, we welcomed each other screaming, shouting,

and hugging, drawing the attention of quite a few people waiting at the arrivals terminal.

Homestays at last!

Arriving home and staying up till about 3:30 a.m., I already knew we were going to be late the next day. Turned out that everyone else was late as well.

In a short span of about five days we attended a day-long workshop, gave school presentations, and did all the other things that we were scheduled to do. But an integral part of the Homestays program was to show our friends from across the border our city.

The first thing one of my friends did

as we exited the airport was to turn around, stand still and look at it. "A unique blend of culture and modernization," is what she called it.

In those five days we tried to achieve the impossible: showing someone Lahore in five days. Of course, no one sees Lahore for what it is in that short a period. But we visited Lahore Fort, the Badshahi Mosque, and the Sikh holy site of Gurdwara Panja Sahib. We visited cafes, malls and restaurants, which (if I'm reading the reaction correctly) the Indians quite enjoyed.

The visit to Wagah Border between India & Pakistan and the daily flag raising and lowering ceremonies deserves special mention. On one side is Lahore, on the other side is Amritsar, India. There was excitement and a kind of disturbance as well, a rare clash of patriotism and irony. Here were Indian Seeds, standing on the 'enemy' side and watching their own people sitting but a few yards away, hearing them cheer for India and yet not being a part of them.

"It's like realizing what we're really up against," said one Indian Seed.

By the first ride back home in my car with my Indian guest, I had already begun to look at every familiar road

and turn in a new light. As if it was my first time here as well; as if I had never really looked at my city. There is rich culture and centuries of history: British, Mughal, Sikh, Hindu. Architecture and art abound and the city is beautiful at night with its glittering lights.

The true experience was, without a doubt, for the Indian guests. We parted at the airport, and now have to look forward to next year.

DURING HOMESTAYS, the Indian & Pakistani Seeds met to watch a film about Partition. After the movie,

Indian educators had a question &

answer session with Seeds, followed by a seminar with older Pakistani Seeds. They asked us all to list the historical events taught in our respective history books.

They are now planning to publish both

versions in one book, side by side, for the public of both countries to know what the other side thinks of the same event.



Sana
(Lahore)



PLANTING TREES: Indian & Pakistani Seeds plant a tree at the Lahore Grammar School after making a presentation about Seeds of Peace and taking questions from the school's students.

THE SECOND OUR PLANE landed in Lahore, to the annoyance of our fellow passengers, we all began screaming and shouting—we were finally in Pakistan!



Jahnvi
(Mumbai)

We raced our way through baggage claim, customs and foreign exchange, until we finally got to meet the Pakistani Seeds, who we hadn't seen since Camp. Many hugs and shrieks later, we set off for our host family's home.

The following week was one which no one will forget. Workshops, sight-seeing, school presentations, tree planting and of course, shopping!

We also went to the Wagah Border. The Border was really different from what I had imagined it to be. I expected a barren, deserted area with some kind of large, heavily-guarded wall between the two countries. I was surprised to instead see green fields and crowds of people. At places, the border was just a fence with barbed wire on top. We were sitting on the

Pakistani side, but we could see all the Indians cheering just across the border. It felt a little strange not being able to cheer along with them.

What I saw that week, was that no matter what the media made out the 'conflict' to be, on an individual level, there was absolutely no bitterness. When people found out that I was an Indian, I can almost say they were extra nice, maybe trying to show me that they felt no hatred towards us.

AS EXPECTED, THE TRIP to Lahore was amazing. After all the depression of not receiving visas at first, we couldn't believe that we were going to Pakistan until we finally



Spruha
(Mumbai)

landed. We all actually started clapping and gasping, "Oh my God! Oh my God, I can't believe it!" as soon as we landed on Pakistani soil. It seemed surreal—until we rushed into the arms of our friends who were waiting eagerly to receive us.

No one slept that night; we were all busy catching up with each other.

The whole of the next day was a workshop, where we met a lot of Pakistani Seeds from different years, saw a film on Partition and engaged in various activities. One of the days we also had a mini-Color Games of our own.

When it comes to the city, Lahore is very pretty, with houses and vast open lands. We went to the Wagah Border one day, which actually was markedly ironic for us Indians, as we were going to see the border for the first time—but from the other side. I cannot describe our feelings when we saw our flag and Indians sitting just a few yards away from us. We felt like opening all the gates and cutting the barbed wire which marks the Line of Control.

It was an experience we will cherish forever.

Then the day came when we had to leave. People were choking back tears and passing around gifts at the airport, bidding goodbye with big hugs. The only consolation for a few of us is that we are going to see some of them the next year in our city, Mumbai.

PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL MAILHOT



THE INTERVIEW

Steve Kerr

the 5-
time NBA
champion
& current
Phoenix Suns
President &
GM talks to
Iman Azzi
(Cairo) about
his family's
ties to the
Middle East
& using
basketball
to bring
together
youth from
areas of
conflict »»»

PHOTO CREDIT: NATHANIEL S. BUTLER/GETTY IMAGES

With a family history rooted in the Middle East & education, and a passion for hoops, Steve Kerr has come full circle with PeacePlayers International.

By Iman Azzi (Cairo)

THE HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST IS A SERIES of overlapping histories, each one weaving a narrative through the region, establishing roots and stressing an unbreakable bond to the land, to the people, to family.

For Steve Kerr, an American born in Beirut, this pattern proves no exception.

Kerr's paternal grandparents moved to Lebanon around the turn of the century as relief workers and became teachers at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Kerr's father, Malcolm, was born in Beirut and went on to become one of the most respected 20th century Middle East scholars and president of AUB before his assassination in 1984 in the middle of Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war. His mother, Ann, met Malcolm as a study abroad student at AUB, taught in several cities alongside her husband and now works at UCLA.

Like all good families with Middle East roots, Kerr believes he would have ended up in the family business—education—had it not been for his skills on the basketball court. Teaching (his favorite subjects being English and history) is “in my blood;” his older sister and brother both obtained PhDs, from Harvard and Stanford.

NBA Career

Instead, Kerr followed his passion and pursued a 15-year career in professional basketball, becoming a five-time NBA champion (three titles earned as a member of the world famous Michael Jordan-era Chicago Bulls) and remains the most accurate three-point shooter in NBA history.

He may have traded three-ring binders for three-pointers as a career move, but at 43, Kerr remains deeply committed to the importance of education and the value of learning beyond the borders of one's own culture.

Of his time spent playing in the NBA, he has only positive memories.

“I was pretty lucky to play with Michael Jordan,” Kerr says, modestly, of the three-time champion Chicago team. Later he won two titles as a member of the San Antonio Spurs.

“It was pretty amazing to be part of history,” he says of his titles.

As part of the NBA for over 20 years, Kerr has also witnessed history as the organization has expanded from a handful of international players to close to 100.

“It's pretty remarkable to see the global division. This is the best part of American culture: multi-culture. Different backgrounds make the league more interesting. And it's helped kids all over the world identify with the NBA.”

Global Education

Kerr was five when he started playing basketball, taking

shots with his family. As a child growing up in California, he played “whatever sport was in season,” but found he kept coming back to basketball.

When his parents moved the family to Egypt, Kerr attended Cairo American College (home to several Seeds) for his first two years of high school, representing the team in international competitions in Greece and elsewhere.

He also spent part of his childhood in Tunisia and France, and is forever grateful to his parents for the exposure, the ability to meet kids from all over the world, and an education that reached beyond classroom walls.

PeacePlayers

After retiring from playing, Kerr worked as a sports journalist before landing his current job: General Manager and President of the NBA's Phoenix Suns, whose roster currently includes Shaquille O'Neal and Steve Nash.

In his spare time, when he's not with his wife and children, Kerr sits on the board of PeacePlayers International, an organization with a vision similar to Seeds of Peace that uses basketball as a medium to help students around the world face conflict.

PeacePlayers has worked with over 45,000 children in the Middle East, South Africa, Northern Ireland and other regions since 2001.

“My passion is basketball, obviously. Basketball combined with getting people together made perfect sense. That's why I got involved with PeacePlayers,” said Kerr by phone. He had just landed in San Diego to spend the weekend with his children, Nick (15), Maddy (13), and Matt (10).

“PeacePlayers was a natural fit for me because my family history has been involved in education and the Middle East. Also, basketball is fun; the exercise is therapeutic. I don't care who you are, you always feel a bit better if you break a sweat.”

He has high regard for programs like Seeds of Peace as well, as he is a firm believer that peace begins with people.

For him, the trouble between the US and Middle East these days is not just terrorism and wars, but the disconnect and misinformation that people receive about others.

Tension between Americans and Arabs has been “frustrating, especially since 9/11.”

“There's obviously been mistakes made. But what bothers me most is that people don't make the human connection. That's why Seeds of Peace is so important—you go over and play basketball with someone and realize they're pretty much like you.”



“That’s why Seeds of Peace is so important—you go over and play basketball with someone and realize they’re pretty much like you.”

Assassination in Beirut

After two years in Cairo, he finished high school in California before attending the University of Arizona. It was at this time that his father returned to Beirut, to the campus by the sea that he had always loved, and Steve promised to tape Arizona basketball games for him to watch.

Kerr played college basketball for the Wildcats from 1983-88, but his freshman-year was shattered halfway through basketball season with the news of his father’s assassination in Beirut. Unknown assailants shot the AUB president on campus. Like so many deaths in Lebanon during the 15 years of war, no one has been brought to justice.

Kerr’s mother once wrote of her husband: “His enthusiasm for taking the job was summed up by his statement, ‘The only thing I’d rather do than watch Steve play basketball is be president of AUB.’”

The news of his father’s death brought incredible heart-break and Kerr had to find tremendous strength in order to continue playing through the season. The lowest point came days after when students from a rival university taunted Steve during warm-ups over his father’s death.

“It was a scary time in life,” he admits. But Kerr says he was fortunate to be on the basketball team. “I had support. I had people to lean on.” Instead of sitting out the

game, Kerr played his best, helping his team to victory the ultimate revenge over those jeering students.

“My dad wasn’t the preaching type. He loved his job and his family and lived by example,” Kerr says. “He had a great sense of humor. He had millions of friends throughout the Middle East and I just saw how important that part of the world was to him.”

And the Middle East has remained important to the rest of his family as well. His sister taught elementary school in Jerusalem before moving to Cambridge, England, and his brother worked in the region with Catholic Relief Services for a few years. His mother coordinates the Fulbright program at UCLA and makes frequent visits to the region. Kerr is eager to get back and introduce the Middle East to his kids, but needs to plan the best time for the reunion with history.

“When the time is right, I’d like to get back to Beirut and Cairo with my kids and show them where their roots are,” he says. “I have to pick the right time.”

Kerr might well begin that introduction with a stop by Pleasant Lake. They’re more than welcome.

Iman Azzi (2001) is a native of New Hampshire whose grandparents are from Lebanon. She is currently working on her Masters in Gender & Development at the American University in Cairo.

PEACEPLAYERS INTERNATIONAL

PeacePlayers International (PPI) is a lot like Seeds of Peace, only without the bunks in Maine and a sole focus on basketball as a tool for bridging divides. The organization’s core principle is that “children who play together can learn to live together.”

PPI was founded in 2001 by Sean Tuohey, who moved to Ireland after college and wound up coaching Protestant and Catholic children. In doing so, he realized the role sports can play to get youth to learn about others. With the help of his younger brother, Brendan, and \$6,000, PeacePlayers International was born.

PPI’s four main goals are to bridge social divides, develop future leaders, educate children to lead healthy, constructive lives, and build

community involvement to ensure long-term sustainability.

From Ireland, PPI moved to South Africa (where coaches also incorporate a life skills program teaching players about the dangers of HIV/AIDS), Israel/Palestine and Cyprus.

Following Hurricane Katrina, which tore through many southern US states, PPI opened a program in New Orleans in 2007, seeking to use basketball to assist in the transformation, education and unification of the city hardest hit in the storm.

Since its inception, the organization has impacted over 45,000 youth.

— Iman Azzi

PHOTO CREDIT: PHOENIX SUNS

In memoriam

OMAR SHEREIN
BUNK 12 (I) 2006
CAIRO

Omar was killed in a car accident on April 7th, 2007.



Omar was in my Dialogue Group at Camp. He almost always had a smile on his face, and when we needed a group effort, he was always a leader, pushing us forward, fighting for his principles.

Omar talked about what he believed—he was true to himself, even when the dialogue sessions got tough. That was one of the reasons I respected him so much.

— Dana (Mazkeret Batya)

We were bunk neighbors, we were teammates on FC SOP, and on the winning Green Team for Color Games.

He was funny & supportive—just such a good person. In Dialogue, we talk about war in our country, but here is a sad story about the war in the streets.

We hear about so many deaths on the roads in any country, and I am sad that a good friend was killed in a car crash.

— Ariel (Zor Yigal)

**MEHZABEEN
PALGHARWALA**
BUNK 5 (I) 2004
MUMBAI

Mehzabeen was killed in a car accident on March 26th, 2008.



I would not say that Mehzabeen lived life; I'd say that life had the privilege of 'living' in her. Meju stood for energy, enthusiasm and excitement. — Shaili (Mumbai)

To me, she wasn't an Indian Seed. She was a very special friend.

— Neeta (Lahore)

I remember once bumping into her on the road in the rain—both of us were happily getting wet and enjoying the Bombay monsoon.

— Friyana (Mumbai)

Mehzabeen: the smiling beauty of Seeds of Peace.

— Akruti (Mumbai)

While most people tend to focus on the negativities of life, she didn't, and that's honestly quite a feat.

— Ayyaz (Lahore)

Loveliness we've lost, these empty days without your smile.

— Nazaqat (Mumbai)

ALEIGH MILLS
BUNK 8 (III) 2003
BUNK 9 (III) 2004
WAYNE, MAINE

Aleigh was killed on July 10th, 2007.



Aleigh will always be remembered for her loving and caring nature.

Aleigh was happy whenever her friends were happy and did everything in her power to guarantee that a smile was never out of reach. She truly had a way about her, unlike anyone else.

Her friendliness and outgoing personality provided her with the special ability of giving a little piece of herself to everyone she met.

Anyone who knew her can remember her ability to make people laugh, generally during times when it was inappropriate. For example, at meetings she'd always be sure to make a clever comment that would have everyone desperately trying to hold in their laughter.

This space isn't nearly big enough to describe the joy Aleigh brought to our lives. Although she is not with us physically, her soul undoubtedly lives on and will never be forgotten. I am honored to have known her so well. She taught her friends the value of true friendship and appreciating life, and for that we are forever thankful.

— Natasha (Portland, Maine)

PHOTO CREDITS: BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK, NAZAQAT LAL, KATHRYN BISPHAM

poems/art

The Music That We March To

Red hot blood always running through
the fire
We do not understand that we have the
same desire
Running and hiding, denying and crying
Confronting our own fears takes more
courage than flying
We're the same, not in name, but we're
one in the game
Only we can choose to lose so we'd
rather refrain

And as we walk through the valley of
the shadow of death
We step side by side to the beat of our
breath
Tension, relaxation, debate and
conversation
Our shoulders hold the weight of the
global people's nation
To respect, not neglect, the silhouette
across the wall
Takes bravery and maturity that our
parents can't recall

We're the next generation and the
power is ours
So we look to the future building hope
like steel towers
Older dissonant undertones serve as a
blatant warning
But the music that we march to is dew
on a cool spring morning
We work and toil together, wiping
blood, sweat, tears, and grease
So that our children may live in a world
founded on peace

— Gus (Cos Cob, Connecticut)

Do You Believe It?

It's a constant war; it doesn't stop.
Each side fights back, think it'll take it
to the top.
So I ask myself, what is the top,
To see the other people dead, or your
people alive?

Sometimes we fight so much we forget
The cause is to make our people safe,
Not to make others afraid.



"Furat & Achinoam"
—Achinoam
(Kiryat Tivon)

And we wait for the peace to come, we
can even see it,
But the problem that stops us is that
we don't believe it.
I mean it, because I've lived it and I
can see it.

I can see it coming because I'm tired
of seeing people dying.
I don't want to watch the news,
because I'm afraid to see people
crying.
Crying because their son didn't come
back home as promised.

It's not a video game, you don't get the
New Game option,
After Game Over, there is no
continuation,
There is only suffering and
Finding ways to deal with this situation.

No one wants it, we want to stop it now,
But we don't know how.
So, we hate the other side, thinking it
will help, somehow.

It doesn't make it better, it just make it
worse.

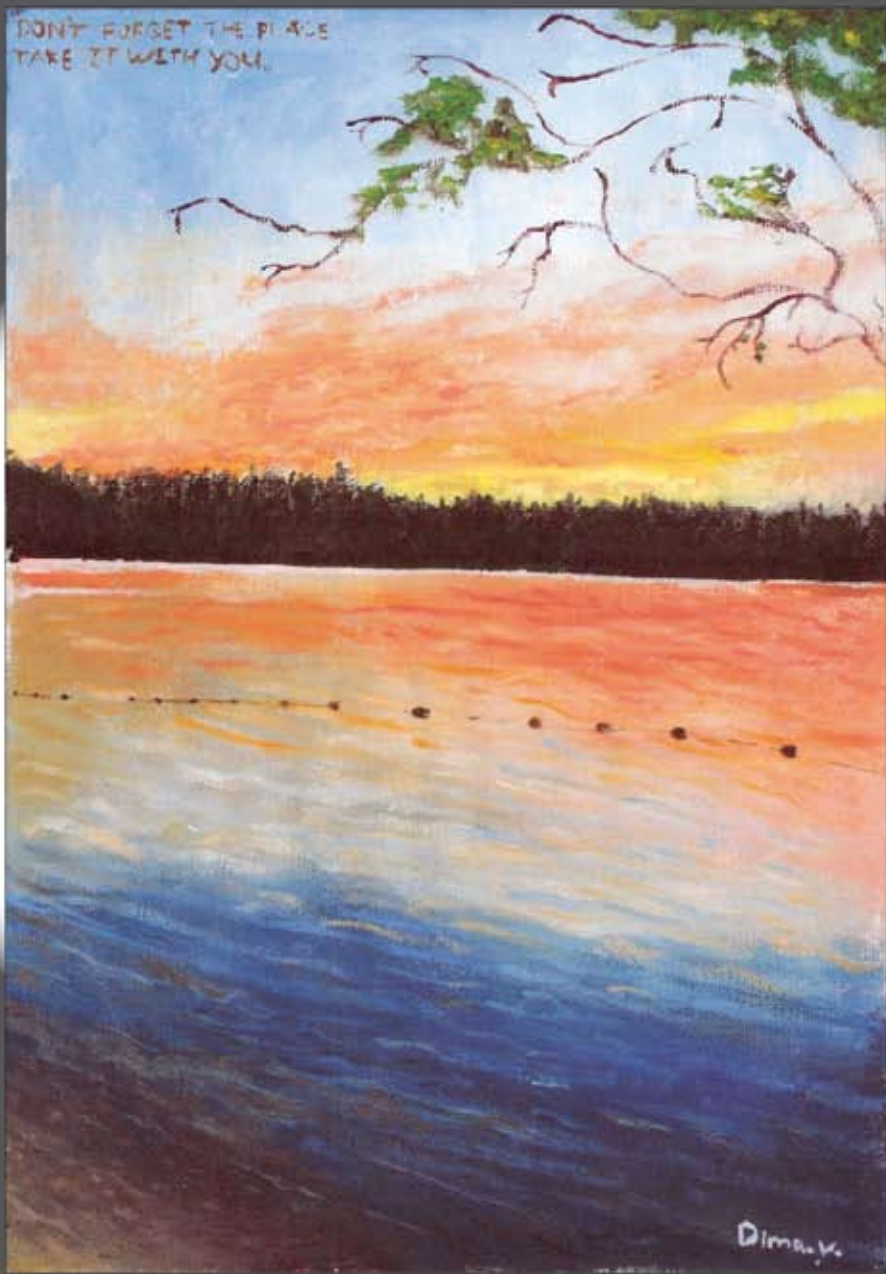
It's easier to get used to it, thinking the
towns that are bombed are not yours,
but it's harder to believe it will change.

So, do you believe it?

— Shani (Ashdod)



"Conflict"
—Allison
(Washington, DC)



“DON’T FORGET THE PLACE.
TAKE IT WITH YOU”

Dima (Ashqelon)