



# THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of Seeds of Peace

Fall 2009  
Volume XII Issue I

## Bringing it Home

Camp is just the start







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## Fall 2009 Volume XII, 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](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org).

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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

**W**E WELCOME YOU ALL BACK TO another edition of **The Olive Branch**. As always, the magazine is edited by Seeds of Peace graduates. This year, the editors are again 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.

Last issue, we focused on what happens when young people from conflict areas around the world spend a summer together at that Camp.

In this edition, we take a look at what these 'Seeds' (now numbering over 4,000) do with their experiences once they return home.

One of the programs they participate in is called dialogue. During dialogue, the Seeds engage in intense discussions about the core issues of the conflicts that divide their peoples.

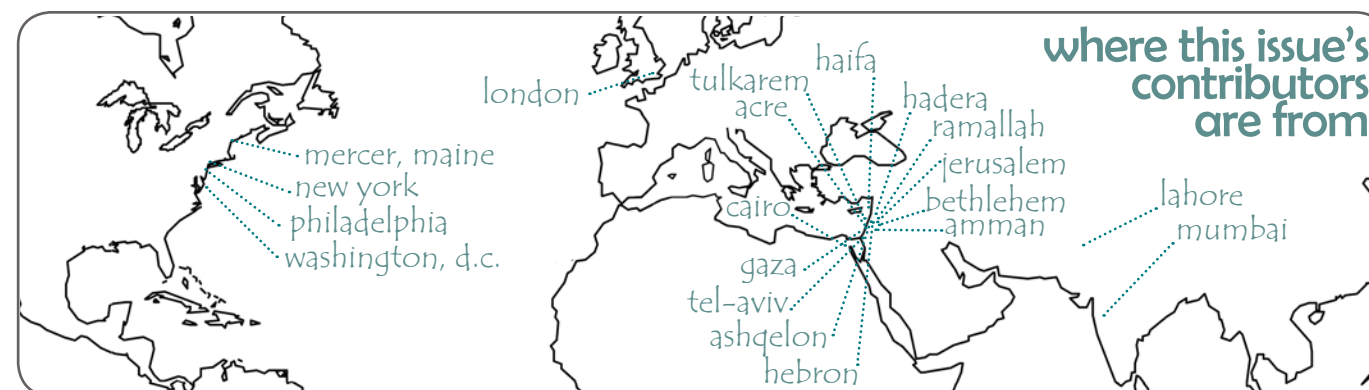
For example, three times this year, 100 Israeli and Palestinian Seeds met here in the Middle East for several days of dialogue—and fun. Pictures of this and similar



events appear on the next page, and reflections by participants on Page 9.

As always, we hope that you'll find **The Olive Branch** thought-provoking, challenging, and informative. You can let us know what you think by writing to [olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org).

*Lama El.*



### KEY SEEDS OF PEACE TERMS

**SEEDS:** Members of Seeds of Peace whose participation began when they attended the organization's summer camp in Maine between 1993 and 2009.

**DELEGATIONS:** Seeds attend Camp as members of an official delegation. In 2009, those delegations were from Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan, Palestine and the US state of Maine.

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

**BINATIONAL:** A Seeds of Peace event held back home in the conflict region for Seeds from two delegations. This type of event will usually include dialogue sessions.

**UNINATIONAL:** A Seeds of Peace event held back home in the conflict region for Seeds from only one delegation. This type of event helps prepare Seeds for binational or multinational events.

**GROUP CHALLENGE:** A series of activities that parallels the dialogue process and uses an array of high and low ropes course elements to challenge the Seeds and reinforce trust and communication.

**COLOR GAMES:** A three-day period of athletic and artistic competition between two teams—Green and Blue—each consisting of members of many delegations. Color Games intensifies all aspects of the Seeds of Peace program and takes teamwork, trust, communication and leadership to a new level.



# Programs



binational | reunion



binational | desert



binational | negotiation



binational | reunion



multinational | aqaba



binational | spring seminar



multinational | amman



binational | field seminar



multinational | aqaba



multinational | aqaba



binational | field seminar



binational | field seminar



binational | field seminar



binational | nba clinic



multinational | aqaba



binational | reunion



binational | bedouin village



binational | haifa



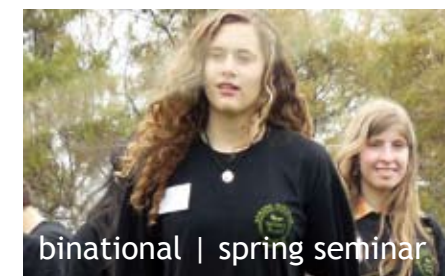
binational | field seminar



binational | nba clinic



binational | haifa



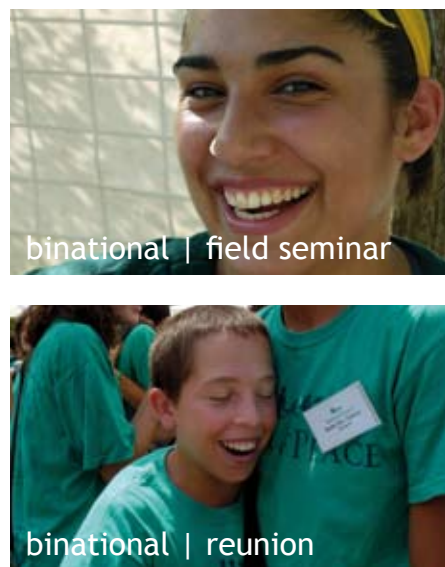
binational | spring seminar



binational | jaffa



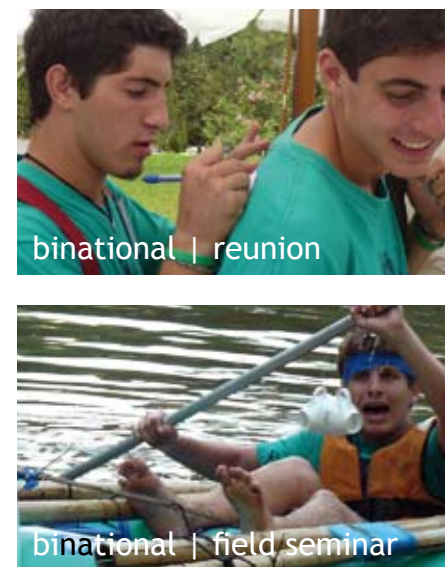
binational | bedouin village



binational | field seminar



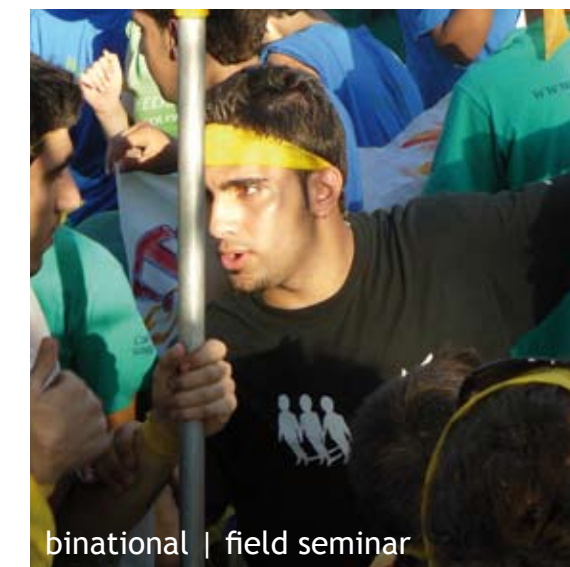
multinational | aqaba



binational | reunion



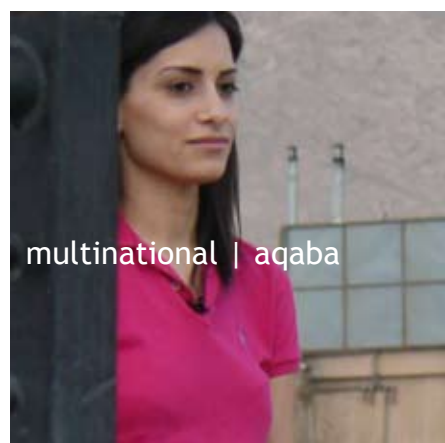
multinational | aqaba



binational | field seminar



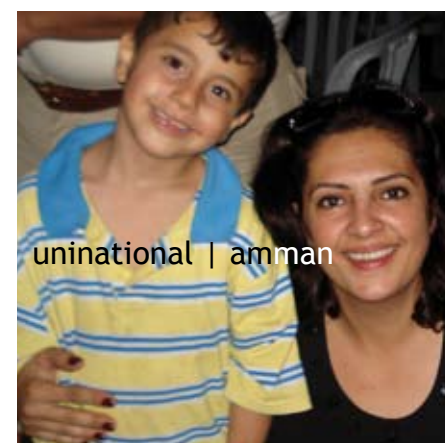
multinational | morocco



multinational | aqaba



binational | spring seminar



uninational | amman



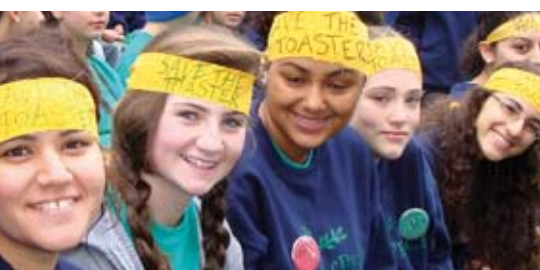
binational | desert



binational | reunion

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## GAZA WAR PANEL

There were times during which I was not involved with Seeds of Peace for months, times at which I doubted what I thought I'd learned at Camp.

But what has gradually become clear to me is that my Seeds of Peace experience left a mark on me that is impossible to erase.

It truly is the case that no matter where I go, the Seeds experience follows. In March this year, I worked with two of my Palestinian classmates and one other Israeli to put together a political panel at Macalester College (Minn., US) to discuss the 2009 Gaza War.

We had observed that many students had formed opinions on the topic that did not speak to any of our hearts.

Mostly, we wanted to join together and show people that the loss of hope they were suffering is well familiar to us.

The preparation process was as expected—rough, lengthy and emotionally draining. Still, we soon found that, just as I had experienced at Camp, human emotions speak louder than facts and numbers.

Before the panel, the four of us were nervous. We held the discussion in the multi-faith chapel on campus and were surprised at the impressive attendance.

We spoke mostly about our own experiences, of the daily emotional and practical struggles of living in countries such as ours. If you listened carefully, you could hear the stories resembling each other at the core. We were all pained at the realities of our nations, but we were all hopeful.

I told the audience about a day I will never forget. My mother and I were hiding under a sink. We heard terrifying explosions; dust was shaken off the walls around us.

My life was saved by a miracle. Later I found out that some of the rockets that were launched to kill us had landed in Jenin and taken Palestinian lives there.

That day, my eyes opened to the understanding that life and death do not ask for passports. Borders are drawn and enforced by humans. But if rockets and birds can fly over them, why can't we?

**Jenny (Acre)**

## PROVING THE SKEPTICS WRONG

It's been over a year since I was at Camp, and to this day I cannot fully verbalize what Seeds of Peace means to me. Many might pass this off as exaggeration, but what they don't understand is how I found my true self at Camp.

Despite knowing the importance of the Egyptian delegation, before Camp I

didn't think it would affect me as much as it would a Palestinian or Israeli. And I did not think that I would face as many obstacles in my path after Camp. I was wrong about both.

I spent weeks trying to explain to my family and friends back home what I'd just lived, but they simply couldn't understand.

There was constant taunting: "So what are you, a spy now?" Or, "You think you can change the world now?" And the occasional, "Zeena, what's wrong with you? Why have you changed?"

What they do not understand is that I never changed. Camp just exposed the person that was hiding inside of me the whole time. The person I feel most comfortable as.

I later came to understand that it was inevitable for many to not comprehend what I was trying to tell them. But those who *do* open their eyes and see what Seeds of Peace really is symbolize to me a flickering, but growing, light in a world with so much despair.

Tim Wilson once told us that every one of us must find and live out their "legend."

I have not yet discovered what mine precisely is, but I do know that a better world is exactly what I want to work towards, and Seeds has paved that road for me.

Memories of Camp are what pushed me through it all and fueled my efforts to keep making a difference. Memories of Camp are my refuge; those very same memories are also my motivation.

There are so many skeptics out there, but they haven't seen what we have. They will remain skeptical, but it is us who will prove them wrong.

**Zeena (Cairo)**

## LESSONS ON RESPECT & TRUST

One of the most interesting things we did this summer was talk to the Indians and Pakistanis about the Israeli-Arab conflict, then switch as they told us about their conflict.

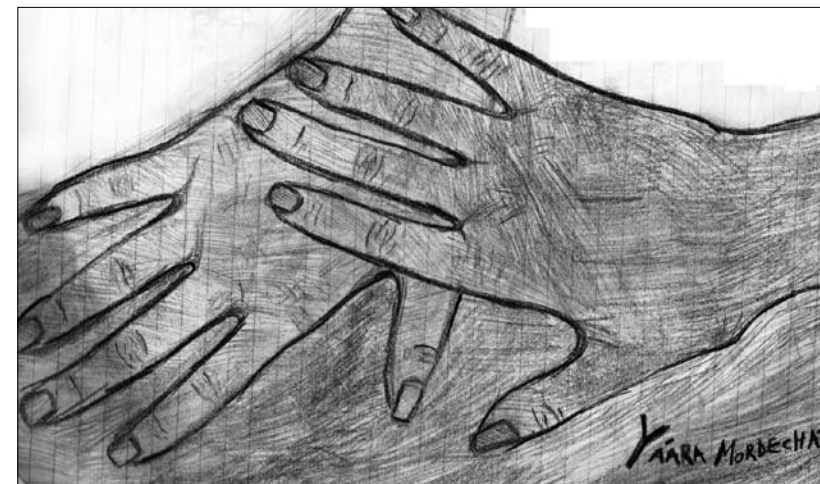
But Seeds of Peace is not just the place where youth from all over the world gather to discuss conflict. It's also a place where you learn the real meaning of respect, friendship and cooperation.

My experience made me realize that while the world is a big place, our dream of peace is bigger.

My experience as a returning camper helped me learn to be a leader and a good friend at the same time.

It helped me learn how to listen to others, to respect their views, and gain their trust.

**Areen (Amman)**



YARA MORDECHAI

## COLOR GAMES IN THE REGION

This summer, we held a four-day binational activity in the north with 90 Israeli and Palestinian Seeds. During this Field Seminar, we held a surprise Color Games, and I was one of the Green Team coaches. I was also on the Green Team as a camper—it's just my destiny to be Green!

This was my first time as a Color Games coach, and I must say that my favorite part was when we introduced ourselves to the Seeds. I was wearing all Green: a green hijab, tie and face paint. There were green sheets on the beds at the place we were staying, so I was wearing one of those too.

We won, *alhamdulillah*. It was a wonderful experience—one of the best things I did this summer.

**Afaf (Abu Dis)**

*[Eds. note: The win by Afaf's Green Team is especially significant because, combined with the two Green wins at Camp this summer, it marks the first time that the Green Team has swept all Color Games in a year.]*

## GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

Camp has taught me how to be a good listener, and how to express my views on the conflict and the problems it creates in my life. Coming home is just the beginning—the journey has just started. Sometimes I feel like I now have the hardest job in the world: to get our message out everywhere and to everybody.

**Mai Hasan (Hebron)**

## HOPE FOR A NORMAL LIFE

The greatest wish for me is that the example set by Seeds of Peace will help reshape the bitter reality that the peoples of the Middle East have been suffering for so long.

Camp was like a paradise on earth. We trusted each other—Palestinians, Israel-

is, Jordanians and Egyptians. We shared every single moment, playing, eating and discussing political issues.

The reality at home is so very different, but I have hope that one day we will live a normal life of mutual acceptance, like we did at Camp, with no more killing.

**Shuruq (Jerusalem)**

## OVERCOMING BLIND LOYALTY

I've been back from Maine for a while now, but I'm only beginning to come to my senses about the last few weeks. If I should put it in short, the time I spent at Seeds of Peace was truly one of the hardest, yet most meaningful, experiences of my life.

Now, looking back at the last year, I find it incredible how much I've progressed.

One of the things I've found most difficult on my return home is talking about my experience. Sure, I can tell people about the activities I participated in and such, but the truth of the matter is that there's always something—thoughts, feelings—that those I'm talking to will never understand, unless they get to have the experience themselves.

Every day at Camp, we were reminded that there are thousands out there who did not get the opportunity that we did. I want those people to get that chance, to experience what I have.

I now feel permanently bound to the mission of Seeds of Peace. I honestly have never felt this passionate in my life about any other cause and, as a Seed, I am fully committed and willing to help out whenever needed.

I feel indebted to Seeds of Peace because I truly believe that there is no other cause as big, no other experience as difficult, and no other place that can push people to follow the true calling of their hearts over the blind loyalty of their minds.

**Vivek (London)**







Your letters are most welcome! Letters are edited for length, content & style. E-mail your submissions to [olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org)

## REPLACE SWORDS WITH WORDS

I never thought that I'd cry on the shoulder of someone from the "other side." Nor did I think that I'd live, smile, laugh, play, help or eat with someone from "the other side."

But Seeds of Peace made all these things happen, and I now have friends from different sides of this conflict who I love and trust.

More than words can say, I miss being around the really special people who have changed my whole way of living. (I finally realize what a "life-changing experience" really is.)

I have to admit that dialogue was difficult and it might have been easy to hate the person sitting across the circle from you. But you move on, and I truly think that we can replace swords with words.

**Saba'a (Amman)**

## EMERGING AS A LEADER

The journey through Camp was the greatest experience of my life. No one wants to live a life encircled by boundaries, torn apart by demarcations, and Seeds of Peace transcends all boundaries.

The most important lesson for us is that of tolerance and the ability to live together and to coexist underneath one banner of humanity and friendship.

After Camp, I was full of enthusiasm to get down to work and do something fruitful. I then had the opportunity to attend a workshop for young women from all over Pakistan.

The "Spaces for Young Women" workshop was held at a college in Lahore. I was one of the youngest participants.

The workshop aimed at strengthening ties between South Asian women.

Professors travelled all the way from Delhi, India, with the message that in this age of violence and materialism, we have forgotten about service to humanity and the necessity of global ties and friendship.

They also emphasized that women are emerging leaders in this era.

During the workshop, we were taught how to better express our opinions and formulate ideas. Writing is a very powerful means of expressing oneself, and we learned the depth of what the use of pen and paper really have.

This experience is a first step towards putting all that I learned at Camp into practice for the betterment of my country.

I wish everyone good luck in achieving their aims. I hope you all remember that seeds grow and mature into big plants and trees, but they can never reach their full potential without hope, help, and encouragement.

**Mehreen (Lahore)**

## 'ENEMIES' UNITED IN HOPE

Over this past year I've thought a lot about Camp and the conflict in its millions of aspects. The aspect I want to share with you doesn't necessarily have to do with just the Arab-Israeli conflict—it has a lot to do with every conflict between nations.

After Camp, I did a lot of reflecting on the nature of stereotypes, racism, wars, boundaries and states. When there are two countries in conflict, both sides involved tend to see the other side as objects—as people without feelings, thoughts or a right to exist.

Too often I hear sentences like "death to the Arabs!" or "*itbah el yahud!*" ("slaughter the Jews!"). These expressions that come out of people's mouths with surprising ease deny the existence and the right to life of millions of people. Millions of unique, special individuals who can contribute immensely to this world we are living in.

Isn't it childish and absurd to always see the enemy as evil? I think we can all agree that human beings are by their very nature social creatures. I find it so sad that we prevent ourselves from knowing, meeting or working with other human beings just because they happen to be a part of a nation our country is fighting. It is tragic—a great loss to all humankind.

Some say this is unavoidable. But we have all been to Camp, where we spent a busy month with our alleged "enemy."

Despite all of our differences and lack of agreement on certain subjects, I think there is more that unites than separates us.

We are united in our hope to lead better lives, to have a better future for us, as individuals, and for us as something much bigger.

We are always stronger when we are together.

**Ya'ara (Jerusalem)**

## PEER LEADER PROGRAM

We were recently introduced to a new (but old) term: Peer Leader.

The Peer Leader Program is exclusively for Israeli and Palestinian Seeds with two years of experience who have decided to take an active leadership role in their communities. They will be leading activities with other Seeds and staff.

As a Peer Support, I was taught the different types of leadership, and now with this great opportunity, I feel we have the chance to show what myself and the rest of the 2007 Seeds can do.

We are very enthusiastic and are ready to make this upcoming year one of the best Seeds of Peace has ever had in Israel and Palestine.

**Amit (Hadera)**

IT'S  
MORE  
THAN  
JUST  
TALK

SEEDS take you behind the CLOSED DOORS of  
DIALOGUE







Ahmed  
(Gaza)

At the beginning, dialogue sessions are so difficult. Everyone has hard feelings for the other side. No one wants to listen.

But we learned how to really listen and to understand, and at some point I started to see the good in people from the other side—I realized they are just humans.

I found that the best moments are the ones when you see the rest of your group listening to your stories, paying attention to every word you say about yourself, your family, your life. You then feel safe, among people who care about you.

There are things I won't forget, like fulfilling a difficult task with a girl from the other side. At that moment, there was no "other side."

PHOTO CREDITS: BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK



Ophir  
(Jerusalem)

REMEMBER THE SHOCK ME AND my friends went through during the first dialogue sessions. I remember people crying on both sides; it was apparent that both sides were having a hard time.

I remember shouting, sometimes even yelling, out of anger and despair.

At the beginning of dialogue I was sure that our debates would be based on facts, just like those you see during university lectures, or on the news. I soon realized, however, that debate is not the essence of dialogue. I realized that both sides have two different versions of history and facts. And when both sides try to convince the other that they are on the right side, the other side rejects the attempt, with anger.

I realized that if you want to learn and really know what is going on, you must listen to personal stories. During the last sessions of dialogue, both sides took a harder look at their facts. They then realized, sometimes, that these facts are distant from the tiny personal stories that create reality as we see it.

Telling all this to people who aren't involved in Seeds of Peace is very difficult—it's even harder than dialogue, sometimes. This process demands bravery from all Seeds. May you all be blessed, Seeds, for having this courage.



Yasser  
(Ramallah)

IF ANYONE HAD A ROUGH TIME during dialogue, it was me.

It was difficult hearing people who were against my thoughts, against my beliefs, against what I think is completely right.

Roni is a Seed who was in my dialogue group. There was a lot of yelling and screaming between us at first, and the facilitators couldn't control us.

It was especially hard because what I was saying comes from something I have lived, something I have experienced; what I was hearing is against all of that. There is a big difference between defending something you have lived, and defending historical facts—someone else's experience. I'm sure Roni had a tough time, too.

The facilitators talked to us, calmed us down, and encouraged us to have a more respectful dialogue and to listen to each other.

At first, neither of us understood this. But then a Counselor talked to me about what was happening. He told me he knew how hard it was for me, and that I should find a way to solve my problems with the dialogue sessions. He told me something that I didn't understand right away: "Speak with one mouth and hear with two ears."

Then, during lineup, [Assistant Camp Director] Wil said that "dialogue isn't about winning." I thought about all this, then decided to apply it. The results were successful.

Roni and I started talking outside of dialogue. We apologized for hurting each other's feelings. We started having fun in Group Challenge, and over time, we developed a positive friendship.

While we may be from different countries, have different nationalities, and have different thoughts and opinions, we discovered we are actually on the same side: the side of peace.

I think we both wish we could have started dialogue the way we finished.



Netser  
(Maale Ephraim)

EVERY SUMMER AT THE Seeds of Peace International Camp in Maine, several hundred kids from conflict areas go through a rather unique experience: dialogue.

During Camp dialogue sessions, Seeds break into small groups to discuss some of the most serious topics related to the conflict between the countries they come from.

The dialogue process doesn't necessarily end when Seeds go home. After Camp, in the actual locations where the conflict is taking place, like the Middle East, the Seeds still have the opportunity to continue participating in the dialogue program.

Every year, for example, Seeds of Peace organizes binational seminars between Palestinians and Israelis. At these events, Seeds are divided into new dialogue groups, and work with new facilitators. Only this time, instead of three weeks, we only have two days.

Due to the time limit, these sessions tend to be even more intense than the ones in Maine.

During these seminars, you have to get to know your fellow dialogue group members, gain trust with them, talk about very serious topics (and hopefully create new and significant friendships)—all in two days!

What is truly amazing about the regional dialogue program is that most of the time the group members really do achieve all of the above.

One of the reasons this is able to happen is the fact that everybody in these groups has already been through the experience of dialogue, so they know how it works and how to handle it.

As a general overview of the regional dialogue sessions, some can be really great, and some can be really frustrating and tough.

How well things go has a lot to do with who your fellow group members are, the timing of the seminar, the facilitators who guide the dialogue, and your own personal feelings during the seminar.

Thanks to these regional dialogues, you can always learn things you didn't know before, get to know new people and their opinions, share your thoughts and feelings with people from both sides, and more than anything, listen.



Aya  
(Jerusalem)

WON'T CLAIM THAT DIALOGUE sessions are easy. We often have stressful conversations, and many of us have been left in tears. But they are worth it.

I've reached a point where I am able to listen, understand and put myself in the shoes of others, even if I totally disagree with them.

I've been with a great dialogue group that is willing to understand and tolerate differences, and I have been able to communicate the justice of the Palestinian people's right to live in a peaceful state.

Dialogue continued >>



## Dialogue



**Jiya**  
(Mumbai)

**B**ELIEVE IN LISTENING TO others, but I believe in telling others what I think. I believe that no inhibitions should come in the way of expressing my opinions. I believe that the spoken word is mightier than the sword. I believe that arguing with a person and coming to no conclusion is better than agreeing and compromising just to come to a conclusion. I believe in a lot of things.

And after three weeks of dialogue, you should be agreeing with me.

I think it's those times in dialogue, in the quiet serenity of Maine, that I learned the most, and made the best friends. I know it was hard on some of us. I know that it hurt so much, we cried.

But deep inside, it was very much worthwhile.

If Camp had been only about singing, dancing, sharing a bunk, and having fun, I don't think we'd enjoy the same special friendships that we do now. It's dialogue that made us Seeds, and dialogue that will keep up Seeds.

We've heard it often enough: Camp is just the beginning of a long (very long) journey on the way to making what we say, do (and write) count. To being true "ambassadors of peace."

We have it all: the resources, the confidence, the title. But most importantly, we have the friends of a lifetime, be they from any corner of the world, to support us through.

So let's make use of what we learned in dialogue to make a difference.

I know it's idealistic. I know it's not going to be easy. I know that we didn't reach solutions at Camp and we won't reach solutions right now.

Dialogue was a small insight into the big bad world, and the truth hurts. Let's face it, and get on with some more dialogue.

We shall overcome our differences only if we believe we can.



**Ibrahim**  
(Bethlehem)

**W**HEN I FIRST MET ISRAELI Seeds, I thought they had come to talk about us. I did not think they came in peace; I thought they hated us. I soon discovered in dialogue that they came to talk to us. That they had come to talk about peace.

Through dialogue, I learned how important it is to listen, and not just talk. If we listen to them, they will listen to us.

I did just that, and found they respected what I had to say. I, in turn, respected their thoughts.



**Noorzadeh**  
(Lahore)

terrorism, the conflicts between our respective countries—specifically the Kashmir Issue between India and Pakistan, and the Durand Line conflict with Afghanistan—and the effects these issues have on us individually.

Our dialogue sessions involve an interesting and intense clash of opinions, with free expression of all points of view. It is amazing hearing other sides of the story, and learning that what they have been told differs from what our history books say.

I think the first step to making peace is, no doubt, clearing up all misconceptions, and our dialogue sessions certainly served this purpose.

On a personal level, I spoke as an individual, not a staunch supporter of my government's stance on every conceivable topic.

During the last days of dialogue, we succeeded in agreeing on several things. At this point, all of us were in a position where we recognized the root causes of these problems between our countries, and could analyze what is lacking in our respective government's approach towards dealing with them.

Dialogue was an enlightening experience. It taught me the valuable skill of listening to the opinions of others, no matter how contradictory they are to my own.

There is a saying at Seeds of Peace that "you have *two* ears and *one* mouth for a reason."

This is true, because although freedom of speech is a fundamental right of every human, we also need to put aside preconceived notions and biased opinions and learn to listen to one another.

Dialogue taught me how to get my point across effectively in a large gathering. The sessions helped me emerge a more confident person, and I learned to embrace my individuality, at the same time accepting that of others.

The neutral atmosphere of Seeds of Peace was truly valuable. I never once felt as if I was being judged by anyone for anything I said or did on the basis of my nationality, religion or ethnicity. In short, I was there as an individual.

Probably the most important aspect of Seeds of Peace is that one learns to put aside all the preconceived notions, doubts and misconceptions one has, to get to know people from other countries for what they are—not what stereotypes label them to be.

Now that I have lived with, and had some very meaningful conversations with, people from India and Afghanistan, I can say from experience that they are just like people in Pakistan. We all have similar dreams and ideas, and if given the opportunity, each one of us can be agents for peace.

**E**VERY YEAR SINCE 1993, young people from areas of conflict meet to pour out their hearts and souls into a series of discussions about the violence, terror, and uncertainty their lives are subjected to—as well as their aspirations for positive change in the future.

This year, my fellow Pakistani delegates and I met for dialogue with the Indians, Americans and Afghans. We covered



# Rhythm & harmony

Ten Israeli & Palestinian Seeds record album together

**O**UR JOURNEY, AS I remember it, really began with our driver screaming "Where is Mat Nas?!" in Hebrew at an innocent woman in the streets of Haifa after we gave up on finding this supposed street on our own.

"We" consisted of two ouds, a drum-kit, two MCs, and a piano. The six of us were



**Amanda**  
(Bethlehem)

vocal chords.

We slept in neighboring sleeping bags, laughed to tears together, wrote songs from our hearts, and shared our feelings and favorite music styles.

We became friends, ignoring the politics of fear when it comes to meeting with "the enemy."

It was hard at first, but we got over it, remembering what we learned at Seeds of Peace about understanding the others as human beings and as peers.

We were on a mission: to make this a better place, not through war and hate, but through music.

It was confusing for me at the beginning, and a little scary. I was afraid if I

PHOTO CREDITS: ARIEL VEGOSEN, AARON SHNEYER



**RECORDING** | Nahida (Ramallah) gets ready to record in the studio.

wrote a song about how I felt and what my message to the world is, I would insult my fellow band members.

But when I told them about bad encounters with the IDF [Israeli Army], they showed a lot of support and understanding.

We took a break during and after the Gaza War, letting our emotional wounds heal at their own time.

One by one, though, we began writing songs, and then discussing between us what message we were shouting at the world.

I was one of the last to record, and thus I had the honor and pleasure of seeing my friends' songs turned into beautiful melodies. It brought tears to my eyes seeing our dream come true.

**W**HEN I RECEIVED a call last year about joining the Seeds of Peace band, it wasn't the first time I'd ever heard of a music project that brings together people from the two sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

I ended up auditioning to be one of five Israelis in the band, and now, after

recording some of our original songs, I'm writing as a proud member of that group.

Our songs talk about peace and war, and our daily lives as a part of this conflict.

Every one of us has a say in the

album, whether it's something we wrote, sang or played.

Music actually brought us together, although meetings were (and still are) a bit problematic for us, considering that Palestinian members of the band require IDF [Israeli Army] permits to meet.

The album will be out soon; we're very, very excited about it. We sound great together, and I'm really proud to have my words and voice be a part of it.

Creating the album together taught us that we can really work together to create something amazing, with all of us bringing ourselves and our experiences to the group.



**Danna**  
(Ashqelon)



## Qasim Aslam (Lahore)

QASIM (2001) HAS BEEN ACTIVELY involved in organizing and conducting Seeds of Peace workshops on a range of issues, including one examining the underlying interfaith tensions between Muslims and Christians in Pakistan.

He was part of the first Indo-Pak Homestays Program, during which Indian Seeds traveled across the border into Pakistan and stayed with the families of Pakistani Seeds.

The program later saw the historic independence day events during which Pakistani Seeds celebrated their independence day on Indian soil by singing their national anthem.

This reciprocated the historic gesture initiated in Pakistan when the Indian Seeds celebrated their national day on Pakistani soil.

Qasim also spearheaded the Seeds of Peace History Project for which Indian and Pakistani Seeds compiled the competing versions of their history contained in educational curricula.

The two narratives were then published side-by-side and distributed on both sides of the border. The project was well-received by academics and government officials.

Apart from his leadership in Seeds of Peace, Qasim has captained his university rugby side in the International Dubai 7's Rugby Tournament.



He is currently running his software house, Telos Solutions, making him one of the youngest entrepreneurs in the business.

Qasim completed his BSc degree from the Lahore University of Management and Sciences.

## Lior Friedman (Tel-Aviv)



Lior (1999) IS AN ANCHORMAN FOR Israel's Channel 2 news. He broadcasts the station's morning, afternoon and nightly news bulletins.

He started his career in journalism as a radio reporter and editor.

In addition to his anchoring duties, he works on the editorial staff of the Channel 2 Evening News edition, and covers Internet and technology news for the channel.

"I believe that the media can impact the way people think, in many cases, with the way it delivers the news, even more than with the news itself," Lior says.

"I try to be as objective as I can in my work, and therefore I will not change reality—which is not always optimistic here."

"But we will always bring both sides of any conflict together for a civilized debate on the air, and if that's not possible, give voice to the side that's not represented."

"We don't 'sugarcoat' the news for our viewers, but give them the real picture from both sides."

*"I wanted to let people know that even though we're young, we can make a difference."*

—Khadrah (Tulkarem)



PHOTO CREDITS: QASIM ASLAM, LIOR FRIEDMAN, KHADRAH JEAN ABUZANT

## Khadrah Jean AbuZant (Tulkarem)



KHADRAH (2004) WAS THE Palestinian winner of this year's Simcha Bahiri Youth Essay Contest.

"I wrote about what steps need to be taken to get us back on the path to peace after the Gaza war," Khadrah said.

"I especially concentrated on the role young people can take in the process."

Her submission, titled "If our leaders can't do it," was subsequently published in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper.

"I also wanted my friends in Gaza who were killed in the war to be remembered," she said.

"I wanted to let people know that even though we're young, we can make a difference."

"I really hope it inspires people to be a part of the solution, not the problem."

During the award ceremony in Tel-Aviv, Khadrah met the Israeli winner of the essay contest.

"She was really kind [and] seemed dedicated to making a difference in the community and the conflict."

Both are about the same age, and have since kept up contact via Facebook.

Khadrah is a junior psychology student at An-Najah University in Nablus.

 [nominate a Seed in the Lead  
olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:nominate.aSeed.in.the.Lead@olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org)

## If our leaders can't do it

BY KHADRAH JEAN ABUZANT  
(TULKAREM)

DECEMBER 27, 2008, will be remembered by Palestinians as the beginning of the massacre in the Gaza Strip. To many Israelis it was the day the Israel Defense Forces began its response to Qassam rocket attacks from Gaza. Despite these differences, I believe everyone can agree it was a day that pushed us back several steps on the road to peace. Now is the time to think about how we can regain the ground that was lost.

Although many of us are frustrated with this 60-year conflict, we must set aside time for healing before starting the peace process again. This time, greater efforts must be made toward creating a solution that will bring lasting peace. The process cannot simply be forced into motion: People must be willing for it to continue.

The healing process will not be quick. There will be long-term psychological repercussions among the Gazan population, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and "survivor's guilt." Children will require special care to ensure that they have an emotionally stable future. As it is they who will provide the next generation of Palestinian leaders, it is imperative that we not forget them.

It's time to employ the measures needed for reconciliation. First and foremost must be the rebuilding of Gaza's infrastructure and economy. This should be an international effort, but wouldn't it enhance the process of reconciliation if Israelis were at the forefront? Israeli public support for the rebuilding would allow Palestinians to distinguish between their perceptions of Israel's military and government (and the actions they take) and those of its sympathetic citizens.

When healing, engagement and reconciliation have taken place, the next step is to reach an accord. If governments cannot reach an agreement during negotiations, then it's up to the public to press the issue or to take matters into their own hands.

Various organizations, at both the grassroots and international levels, have worked for years to push their leaders toward peace—but none with more diligence or intensity than youth peace groups. These proactive

youth have met on a personal basis by living together, playing sports and games together, learning empowerment techniques, holding mock UN sessions and participating in serious dialogue. They have learned how to listen compassionately, speak frankly and respect one another's rights to exist without fear. They have put their differences aside and made peace with those whom they once considered their enemy.

Youth peace groups are a prime source of ideas for how to move toward full political reconciliation; they should be empowered.

The inspired young alumni of programs like Seeds of Peace could bring their vast experience and innovation to the table. The female participants in similar programs like Creativity for Peace could be the nurturers of healing and understanding. The members of organizations like Combatants for Peace could bring the strength and stamina needed to get through the tough times ahead. Those who have participated in cross-cultural or religious tolerance programs like the Sulha Peace Project could show us the importance of solidarity.

Even now, during this time of transition, these dedicated young peace seekers are making a difference. I recently learned that Shetha, one of my sisters in Creativity for Peace, who lives in Gaza, was critically wounded, and her sisters and cousins killed, in a missile attack on their house during Operation Cast Lead. Eyal Ronder, managing director of Seeds of Peace in Tel-Aviv, helped me get an emergency travel permit so I could visit her in an Israeli hospital. During that visit, I believe I managed to cheer her up as well as ease the sorrow and sense of outrage I felt at the time.

After hearing Shetha's tragic story, many of the people in my peace-friends network also decided to visit her—even those who didn't know her—and they held a candlelight vigil at the hospital, dedicated to her and her slain family members.

The ongoing conflict and the recent tragedy in Gaza have robbed children of their hope for a better future. Even worse, they have stolen the humanity of young and old alike, on both sides. Although youthful innocence can never be regained, hope and humanity can be restored to both peoples. Hope and humanity must be won back because, after all, worse things can always follow even the worst that we have seen. There is no time to lose.



# CAMP 2009

## THROUGH THE LENS OF KAITLIN (NEW YORK)



SPORTS DAY | I think the Camp really felt united—we took a step back and got to see what we looked like to the outside world. I think everyone was so excited to be a part of something unheard of and so bold.



CULTURE NIGHT | The preparation was extensive, even though we only actually wore our nation's outfits for a few hours. People were looking forward not only to showing their national and cultural pride, but also to wearing something other than our beautiful green t-shirts.



PLEASANT LAKE | It was just calling to him. *Carpe Diem*—seize the day.



NIGHT FOG | So muggy but so beautiful—a perfect time to discuss the day's events and reflect (and take pictures of unsuspecting wanderers).



# interview

# tony blair

## The former British Prime Minister answers questions from Seeds about his current work as Envoy of the Middle East Quartet

**How does your role as the Quartet Envoy differ from your past position as British Prime Minister? (Rama, Gaza)**

The biggest difference as far as the Middle East is concerned is that I now have a much greater understanding of the issues. As Prime Minister, I considered a resolution to this conflict to be vital, and I would come out and meet with leaders in both Israel and Palestine.

However, since becoming Quartet Representative I have had the opportunity to spend much more substantial amounts of time in the region and travel throughout the Palestinian Territories.

I have met with ordinary citizens,

PHOTO CREDITS: OFFICE OF THE QUARTET REPRESENTATIVE

the business community and civil society, as well as with the politicians. I now have a much deeper knowledge of the issues and what needs to be done to change the facts on the ground and bring about the two state solution I believe people ultimately want.

**What are the most important lessons you have learned from past negotiations, and how are you applying them to current efforts in Israel and Palestine? (Eitan, Washington, D.C.)**

When I started out in the Northern Ireland peace process, both sides (Unionists and Republicans) told me that this was an age-old conflict and that it couldn't be solved because

the other side did not really want a resolution.

I have also heard that said many times here with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I believe an important lesson is to realise that the vast majority of ordinary Palestinians and Israelis, just like those in Northern Ireland, actually do want peace. So our job now is to provide the building blocks for that peace. I am sure if you ask both Palestinians and Israelis whether they support a two states solution they would say yes, but if you asked them whether they believed it could be realised soon, they would say no.

That is why it is crucial to develop an approach of building that peace from the bottom-up by improving the daily lives of ordinary people on

**"I think increasing understanding of other people's point of view can only be a good thing, and that's why dialogue is important."**

both sides, in parallel with the top-down political process, and that is what I am promoting, as the Quartet Representative for the Middle East.

**What is the hardest issue you've faced in all of your peace making efforts? (Bar, Tel-Aviv)**

I think the hardest thing to do always is meet with those people who have been the victims of terrorism or violence. When I met with people who had lost family members to the IRA there were those who, for totally understandable reasons, would never accept that we should talk to those who had caused them such pain. But I knew that once they had truly accepted and endorsed a policy of non-violence, we had to include them in the process, however painful it was for those who had suffered so much.

**Can you, in any way, help young Gazans pursue academic studies in Europe and the US? (Leith, Jerusalem)**

I have said repeatedly that the current policy of blockading Gaza, and that includes the ban on Gazans leaving to pursue their studies abroad, is counterproductive and should be changed.

I have lobbied and continue to lobby the Israeli Government to change the policy on Gaza so that it does not punish the population.

I have asked the Israeli authorities to allow goods into Gaza, and have promoted several water and sanitation projects in Gaza.

**Can, and should, Israelis and Palestinians be divided by a firm border, so that they do not interfere in each other's affairs? (Farwa, Ramallah)**



In the end, that is something for Israelis and Palestinians to decide upon. We are all striving to reach a two-state solution where a secure Israel can live in peace alongside a viable, independent Palestine, but it will be up to the parties themselves to agree the fine print, and I hope we can get the political negotiations underway shortly to achieve that.

**Is it reasonable to expect Middle East peace before the Iranian nuclear issue is resolved? (Michael, Sharon, Mass.)**

The Iranian nuclear issue is indeed of grave concern to many in the region and beyond and those concerns cannot and must not be neglected. However, both questions need to be resolved in their own right. So I would disagree with those who say we should set aside the Israeli-Palestinian conflict until the Iranian problem is resolved or vice versa. Indeed, I believe solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is crucial not just for Israelis and Palestinians, but is also crucial to removing the ability

of those such as the Iranian regime or groups like Al Qaeda to exploit the situation here to try and create regional instability or to justify unacceptable acts of terrorism.

**Would you recommend instituting interfaith and international dialogue programs like your Faith Foundation on a larger scale throughout the Middle East? (Eitan, Washington, D.C.)**

I think increasing understanding of other people's point of view can only be a good thing, and that's why dialogue is important.

That doesn't mean that people will stop following their own faith tradition, and nor should it. But what it does mean is that we can demonstrate that whatever your faith or culture or race that ultimately people do want to live together side by side in peace, and dialogue can break down some of the barriers that make people doubt that shared vision for the future.

**Do you think that Liverpool will take the Premiership this season? If not, which team do you think will win it? (Bar, Tel-Aviv)**

I dare not speculate, as football can sometimes stir up greater emotions than politics, although one of my sons is a Liverpool fan, so he would want me to say yes.

I think Benayoun is doing well for them, but they will continue to face tough competition from the likes of Manchester United and Chelsea, and possibly also Manchester City this year.

Personally, I am a Newcastle fan, and all I can hope is that we return to the Premier League as quickly as possible!



# In memoriam

YOAV RUBIN  
1993 | 2005 (III) | JERUSALEM  
Yoav died of cancer on April 28th, 2009

# poems

HIDY BOCTOR (LEIPER)

1996 | 2005 (III) | CAIRO

Hidy died unexpectedly in her sleep  
on August 28th, 2009



Anyone who knew Hidy knew her as a cheerful, fun and very caring person. I met Hidy in 1997 at our church in Cairo. I remember we immediately clicked when we found out that we had both attended Seeds of Peace. It was, like with many other Seeds, a common thread that bound us together.

I got to know Hidy better during the 2005 Leadership Summit. Since then, we've teased each other about going back to Egypt, since we both got married and lived overseas.

The last time we were in touch was only a couple of weeks before her sudden passing. She told me she wanted to meet my son.

I really wish we'd had that opportunity.

Even though I didn't see her regularly, I truly miss her; I feel that someone is missing from my life.

I know so many people from our church who are crushed to have lost her.

For a week after I found out about her passing, I could not stop thinking about her and her parents, sister and her husband.

I pray for her family, especially her mother. May God grant them peace in this very difficult time.

I know that Hidy is in a better place now and just remembering her fun and loving nature will always bring a smile to my face and to all those who had the privilege of having her in their lives.

May she rest in peace.

— Passant (Adelaide, Australia)

Hidy was a great friend. She had a contagious laugh that spread joy in every room she entered.

She genuinely cared for her friends. Despite the distance, she always managed to stay close to us. I enjoyed our conversations and our friendship.

I am still in disbelief and I will miss her dearly.

— Tamer (Washington, D.C.)



In 2004, I was asked to help prepare a proper Shabbat service at Camp amid concerns that the Israeli delegation might turn it into a political rally that had nothing to do with the Sabbath.

I turned to Yoav. I knew he loved religion and loved the traditions. Without hesitation, he sat down and wrote out the hymns and prayers that would fit the needs of the campers. "No stream of Judaism would accept this ritual as I wrote it," he said to me at the time, "but I think it'll be perfect for Camp."

To this day, many parts of the Shabbat service at Camp are there thanks to Yoav.

Our strongest connection, however, was intellectual.

In recent months, strong emotions have been expressed in the online graduate Seed forum.

Not, ironically, the international forum for Israelis and Arabs, but the internal one for Israeli Seeds.

Most of the exchanges were by Israeli Jews who were restless—a war in Gaza, an Israeli society struggling for its values, and many young Israelis across the political spectrum who faced sleepless nights unless they expressed to others what was in their hearts.

The internal Israeli discussions were no less intense than those with "the other side." The guidelines of dialogue—often simply good manners—were not often in evidence. Many times the debate was tough; harsh accusations were hurled at participants. Some maintained dignity when they expressed themselves, while others used the platform to insult and humiliate.

In the midst of this disarray was Yoav, sensitive and smart, uncompromising in his opinions, but at the same time accepting and understanding. Yoav pleaded for real dialogue, to take the discussion to a higher level.

Yoav asked endlessly for us to talk about values; he ordered us to get rid of demagoguery and contempt.

This is exactly how I remember Yoav: one of the few who did not have double standards. He never said, "In an ideal world maybe, but not now, not us." Never.

For Yoav, this was an ideal world. And if it wasn't, then it was our duty to make it better—not use excuses to evade responsibility. He really wanted to challenge us.

Yoav owed it to himself to expand the wide world of knowledge about ourselves and others. About Judaism and other religions, the sacred and the profane. Philosophy and science.

But Yoav also asked us and himself, all the time, to apply this knowledge. To implement the values, not simply talk about them.

Many of my most profound insights of the last few months are the result of my encounters with Yoav Rubin. And for that I am very thankful.

— Eldad (Haifa)

Once again my friend

A silent room  
A blurred view  
The darkness is filling the space  
I'm all lost, away from the amusing  
street we walk on.

I'm digging deeply, searching hard  
Looking all the time  
For these memories we have  
When we run together on the field

Hold on my friend  
We're dreaming forever  
Hoping for the peace that lights the sky

So I sing a happy song  
Hope the memories take me there  
To the pleasant lake  
To picture you once again my friend  
Above the clouds from shore to shore  
To be at the place I grow as a seed  
To picture you once again my friend  
To dream with you till end  
To spread the love we want  
To challenge fear by joining hands  
I tell you war will end  
We're reaching for peace that seems  
so far

I draw a smile  
Make you laugh  
I'm standing where I live  
But all that time keeps me  
thinking

We're reaching for peace  
that seems so far  
So I sing a happy song  
Hope the memories take me there  
To the pleasant lake  
To picture you once again  
Above the clouds from shore to shore  
To be at the place I grow as a seed  
To picture you once again my friend  
— Noor (Amman)

sadness deep down inside of me  
is a part  
of every time I decide to start.  
it kills me in my heart  
I can't imagine how strong  
I must be to hold this pain  
that grows like oceans,  
no feelings, no emotions,  
but only an increasing pain chart

I don't know how or why,  
but I believe that flying so high  
or a cry is the only way  
to bid your sadness goodbye.  
I know it's a big lie, but still I try.  
— Ahmad (Gaza)

Harboring Landscapes

There were at first no borders,  
and for a time  
all was mellow in the sea

We found, of course,  
still find ourselves,  
disquieted, restless, quite uneasy  
by boundless landscapes  
and so  
we so imposed.  
— Bradley (Mercer, Maine)

Peace.  
To some it may be just a word,  
But the truth of peace is a jewel,  
Always sought for by generation after  
generation.  
What we need now is the power of  
determination.

When you're at a place like this,  
And you see how youth are the light  
Waiting to shine through a world of  
darkness,  
Spread the word and make a  
difference,  
And fulfill the dream of a life where  
tolerance, sympathy and empathy are  
at every corner of our globe,  
It all becomes so clear,  
And you learn to listen and not just hear.

It brings tears of joy to my eyes,  
When I see two people with different  
lives,  
Look at each other and smile.  
A smile of acceptance, understanding  
and respect.  
Only then do I forget about all the  
hatred we have wrecked.

We stand hand in hand,  
In a world engulfed by atrocity,  
I know that in our hearts there is  
capacity,  
For tranquility, peace and love  
And we shall witness the soaring  
of a pure white dove.  
We are the souls of freedom.  
We are the blossoms of love.  
We are the seeds of peace.  
— Zeena (Cairo)

I Am

I am confident in all that I do—I am a  
leader.  
I wonder how my future and my  
country's future will unfold—will it ever  
unfold?  
I hear my flag waving high in the  
sky—but will it ever happen?

I see my people's suffering come to an  
end—but will it ever stop?  
I want my dreams, thoughts, and goals  
to be achieved—but will I ever achieve  
them?

I am confident in all that I do—I am a  
leader.  
I pretend to see peace—but will it ever  
be achieved?  
I feel happy when I see my people  
rejoice—but will my people ever  
rejoice?  
I touch that land in which my  
grandfather once harvested—but will I  
ever feel it?  
I worry if one day their will be a  
Palestine—but was their ever a  
"Palestine"?  
I cry when I see innocent children,  
women, and men die—but will it ever  
end?

I am confident in all that I do—I am a  
leader.  
I understand that my people are  
strong—but will their strength ever be  
seen?  
I say we will be free—but am I ever too  
optimistic?  
I try to make the truth be heard and  
understood—but is my work ever  
paying off?  
I hope I will see happiness in the eyes  
of my people—but will the aggression  
ever stop?

I am confident in all that I do—I am a  
leader.  
— Leith (Beit Safafa)

Peace

So silently-equipped,  
No weapon needed.  
For an event so sweet,  
For so long pleaded.

Waiting by the door,  
But hesitating to come in.  
The world holding its breath,  
Wondering how long it's been.

The wind howls softly,  
A seed is planted close by.  
The cities are still,  
Empty of a suffering cry.

It is peace that is lost for a while,  
All the more  
We should welcome it sooner,  
There is nothing better worth fighting  
for.  
— Yaala (Modi'in)



# Camp on canvas



## Alex (Philadelphia)

Visiting Camp is always a bit of an overwhelming experience for me: I can expect to be flooded with memories from 15 summers on Pleasant Lake, surprised by familiar faces and welcomed by new ones.

It is an evocative landscape for many reasons, not least of which is its natural beauty.

This July I made a trip to Camp with a primary purpose of visiting Joel Bloom, the director of Camp Powhatan, the boys camp that occupied the site prior to Seeds of Peace and where my father, uncle, brother and I all had once been campers.

Sadly, Joel passed away before I could see him. I decided to pursue a series of paintings at Camp as a way of saying goodbye to Joel.

In the 24 hours I was at Camp, I began six paintings that I continued to work on back home in the studio. The intimate process of painting from ob-



servation requires a concentration that awakens me to a fresh perspective of my subjects. Even the scenes at Camp, which resonate with the years of deep affection I've established, become new when I set them in paint.

I tried to pick up on the timeless elements of the campsite, those iconic spots that have been consistent through my experiences with both Seeds of Peace and Powhatan.

This group of paintings became a helpful window to remembrance for a very special place.

*You can view more of Alex's work online at [www.themagpie.org](http://www.themagpie.org).*



THE OLIVE BRANCH



The Youth Magazine of Seeds of Peace



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