

THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of the Seeds of Peace Program | Volume V, Issue II | Spring 2001



Around the World with Seeds of Peace

COEXISTENCE AND CONFLICT:
BALKAN, CYPRIOT, AND
ARAB-JEWISH EXPERIENCES

ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN YOUTH
PHOTO GALLERY

EXPRESS YOURSELF:
INDEPENDENCE AND IDENTITY



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THE OLIVE BRANCH

The Olive Branch is a quarterly youth magazine written and edited by youth from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, FYROM, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Romania, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen, Yugoslavia and the United States, who are part of the Seeds of Peace program.

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Special thanks to: Abu Larry, Alan Hyman, Alan Ginsburg, The Asleh family, Ben, Beit Berl, Beit Sturman, Berky B, Christine, Cynthia, Dafnalia, Daveed, Dar Al-Jundi, Facilitation Team, Fullbright Foundation in Cyprus, Issa, Jeremy Stein, John Hatch, Julie, The Henshels, Ladel, Mandy, Marieke, Mer, Mike, Michael S., Nicole, Rami, Stanley Abrams. All submissions are the property of Seeds of Peace, and may be edited for length, content or style. Send submissions and correspondence to:

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THE OLIVE BRANCH is printed by Ma'ariv;
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COVER PHOTOS, top to bottom: Seeds from Cyprus at the Presidential Palace during the workshop in Prague, Arab and Jewish Israeli Seeds finish up the 24 hour coexistence marathon, Seeds from the Balkans relax in an ancient amphitheatre on the island of Cyprus.

Letters

Friends From the Start

My name is Liav Hertsman and I'm a Seed from 1994. I wish to tell those who are a year or two removed from camp how important your camp friendships are. They are amazing, like no other friendships you will ever have, and you should do whatever you can to stay in touch. I know it is sometimes frustrating, to see international politics affecting your relationships with close friends. But I know that these friendships are worth it. During the seven years since camp I tried to keep in touch with Egyptian and Palestinian friends. Unfortunately, military service and distance disconnected me from most. But I just came back now from a weekend in Amsterdam with my best Seed friend, Tamer Nagy from Egypt. After years of not seeing each other, the meeting was beyond words. After seven years we still enjoy each other's company. Just imagine yourselves with your Seed friends in five years. I hope in the future we can meet as adults, Seeds from 1993 through 2000. As adults we could arrange it ourselves. So come on, all interested in keeping in touch, contact me. I can't stop accusing myself for not keeping in touch with Asel, who was a dear friend. I cherish his memory. If any people who know me read this, get in touch!

*All my love and support,
Liav Hertsman (Tel-Aviv)*

Remembering the Future

People of Peace, I received the Olive Branch and Asel's book yesterday. I was overcome with emotion by both. I never met Asel, but I am still deeply touched. Through my fellow Seeds I learned so much about Asel. I cried. It was sad and inspirational at the same time. It gave me a deeper understanding of what Seeds of Peace stands for, and how hard we must work for the future, our future!

I was also deeply moved by the Olive Branch. I read articles written by my friends. Some told stories I had never heard. I was shocked. Sometimes I get so caught up in my "everyday American" life that I forget I am part of something much larger; something that will last throughout it all. I am a Seed, a Seed of Peace! The Olive Branch reminded me how much we mean to the future of this world. I was also reminded of the friendships I made and the memories we shared.

*Love Always Your Friend,
Chelsey Berlin (Maine)*

Inspiration

I got Asel's tribute a few days ago. I read each and every word of it, which made me feel spiritually connected to this distinctive individual. I have never felt this way before. I felt I had a friend, a very understanding one, comfortable with his words, peaceful by his looks, and loving to his friends. Knowing that he is dead now, I felt that I lost a source of hope. Someone who was a big supporter of all of us, who made us take the hardest steps in life, who made us believe in ourselves, and do what we think is right. I just keep looking at his face wishing that I had such a person in my life, even knowing that I may face pain later. I remember reading something he wrote, saying that we don't have the power to bring back the dead, but we are powerful enough to remember them. Thank you Asel.

Sara Khatib (Amman)

Learning from the Loss

Throughout past months, my most distinct emotion has been grief. Many times, I have tried to look within me and understand what these horrors are doing to me. Impatience and confusion buried my understanding of how long it takes for the process of understanding to evolve. I have also found that I chose to ignore the external dangers in order to avoid fear, and that for some reason I cannot find anger in me.

My one reaction to all of this has been grief and mourning. I believe that when people die it does not matter anymore who is right, what caused it, and who is to blame, has grown much stronger. I am amazed at people's reactions to death. While they sit and discuss, argue and accuse I sit and think, "people are dying." The sides disappear and I just think about the grieving families, friends and neighbors. All over this piece of land, people are crying.

The moment this emotion struck me most intensely, was when I read Asel's book. I had never met Asel in my life. The only connection I have to him is the one of a fellow Seed. I read what everyone wrote about him, the things he said, and I saw the pictures of him. A person portrayed before me. He is gone. My heart ached like it had never before. When the ones who loved him cannot accept what happened to him, what do they do? What would my family do if it happened me?

As I read the tribute, I felt that I would have done anything to bring him back. To let Asel live his life the same way I want to. To still be here, not to be forced to leave this world. I felt that I would do anything to stop his family's pain, to relieve them, to comfort the people whose lives have been shadowed forever. I couldn't stop crying. I have never mourned like this in my life and I was mourning for a person I never knew. Mourning because, due to all this madness, Asel is a person I never will know.

Avigail Shoham (Jerusalem)

The Secretary of State Washington

March 27, 2001

Dear John:

Thank you very much for your March 9 letter and for the two Seeds of Peace neckties. Seeds of Peace epitomizes the type of effort so desperately needed in the Middle East to bring Arabs and Israelis in contact with one another at a personal level.

Unfortunately the trust and understanding so effectively created by Seeds of Peace among Arab and Israeli teenagers is all too rare, as the past six months have clearly demonstrated. With the level of trust between Israel and the Palestinians badly frayed, both sides need to become convinced once again that they in fact have a partner in peace. The United States has urged Israel and the Palestinians to take steps to restore mutual confidence and reduce the cycle of violence, actions that we hope can lead to the resumption of a political process.

I was especially touched by the Tribute Book that you sent me honoring Asel Asleh. The revolution created in the minds of many Arab and Israeli teenage Seeds of Peace was made clear by the pieces written by Asel's Jewish-Israeli fellow Seeds about him. I believe it is fair to say that the conflict we are currently witnessing would not be taking place if both sides knew and understood each other the way that Asel and his fellow Seeds did.

Sincerely,



Colin L. Powell

From the Editors

We are proud to present the most international issue of THE OLIVE BRANCH yet. We hope that every graduate of Seeds of Peace can take pride in finding that our way of building compassion, respect and understanding between "enemies," begun by 40 Arab and Israeli youth in the summer of 1993, is now reaching hundreds of young people around the world. In this issue, Seeds of Peace from nine Balkan nations, both sides of Cyprus, and a diverse community within Seeds of Peace's home state of Maine, USA, join the Arab and Israeli pioneers of the program as partners in preserving the relationships they began at camp, promoting a dialogue that develops as they grow. This edition documents the intensive coexistence work undertaken by Balkan Seeds in Cyprus (pp. 10-13), Cypriot Seeds in Prague (pp. 14-17), and the children of new immigrants and natives in Portland, Maine, throughout the year (p. 27).

This edition is also a salute to the courageous Arab and Israeli Seeds of Peace who struggle to see each other's humanity against the relentless tide of violence that has hardened attitudes everywhere around them. In this issue, Israeli and Palestinian Seeds document the damage that conflict continues to inflict upon them and their communities (pp. 18-25). They declare once again that weapons will not conquer their minds, will not shake their knowledge that they, as all human beings, deserve to live in freedom and peace. Dozens of Arab and Jewish Seeds of Peace from Israel responded to the destruction of October 2000 by building better understanding between each other and their communities in the 2001 coexistence program at the Seeds of Peace Center in Jerusalem (pp. 6-9).

This OLIVE BRANCH confronts conflicts that divide different areas of the world; ironically, it highlights their common elements. The Arab-Israeli conflict, the Cyprus Problem, and the Balkan wars are each unique situations, produced by different circumstances. Still, the same basic problems of hate and dehumanization are a fundamental cause and result of all, and mutual understanding and respectful communication are fundamental necessities for resolving all.

Identity and independence are at the core of each conflict. Many groups still try to draw territorial borders that block out different identities, despite the reality that in the twenty-first century, people with different identities live on both sides of every border. Diversity is the rule in most countries today, not the exception. It can seem frightening to recognize that different peoples share the same land, but it is true all over the world.

Seeds of Peace recognizes that reality, and encourages young people to overcome their fear and discover the different identities and perspectives of the people who live right beside them. Seeds get to know each other first as individuals, building some trust and chemistry; that way it is no longer so scary to discuss their differences. The key is to understand how much more we share in common as human beings.

The Seeds of Peace staff around the world have been especially important in creating and organizing the workshops and activities that are celebrated in this Olive Branch. We dedicate this issue to all the people who have given years from their life to encourage youth from twenty different countries to identify themselves as peacemakers.

Statement from John Wallach, Founder and President of Seeds of Peace

Dear Seeds,

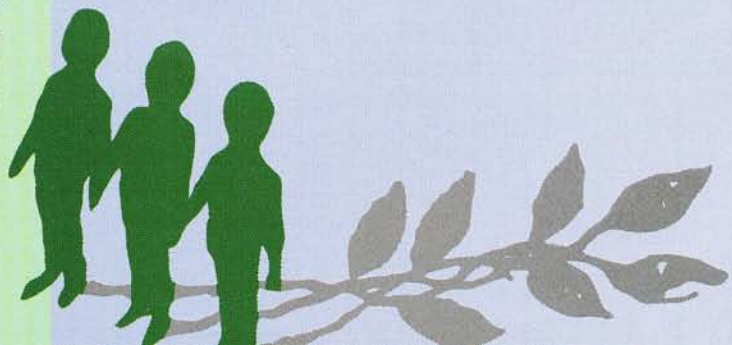
As you know better than I, since many of you are living the daily horror of warfare, this has been the most difficult period since Seeds of Peace began in 1993. Many people have written us off or would like us to disappear. As the American writer Mark Twain said when he read his obituary in the newspaper, "The reports of my death are premature." Don't write us off. Seeds of Peace will have two sessions of camp this summer and in the fall we will be preparing for our 10th anniversary reunion for all the Seeds who have ever participated.

Don't write me off either. As many of you know, I am struggling against a deadly disease. I undergo chemotherapy treatments which are very tiring, but so far they seem to be working. I am getting better, appreciating every day of my life as a new gift from God. I cannot know my future, but let me reassure you: Seeds of Peace will survive.

I still believe coexistence is the only choice. Israelis and Palestinians are destined to live with one another, in states of their own, and to ultimately recognize their interdependence. It may take more years, and more tragically wasted lives, but I refuse to accept that your generation will suffer the same fate as your parents and grandparents. I believe in you. I believe in your ability, when this horrible cycle of violence dies down, to find ways to renew your friendships. Remember how you laughed when I said "Make one friend!." It seemed so easy then. Today it seems almost impossible to have a friend, even one friend, from the other side.

Seeds of Peace will not die. Indeed we are growing. For the first time this summer we will be welcoming delegations from India and Pakistan as well as from several countries in the Balkans and Cyprus. We are working closely with the appropriate authorities in Israel, Jordan and Egypt in hopes they will send delegations. It is unlikely that the Palestinians will send a delegation this summer although President Arafat has pledged his support for Seeds of Peace, continues to wear his Seeds pin, and has promised to reevaluate the situation if the violence ends and both sides return to the negotiating table.

So please do not give up. It is so easy to hate and so hard to keep hope in your heart. Think of what you were able to accomplish at Seeds of Peace. It may not have seemed important then, but you found a way to humanize the enemy, to see the other side as a person, as a human being who was entitled to the same things you want for yourself — a place to live where you will be safe and proud to call home, an identity that is recognized by the rest of the world, opportunities for advancing your education or becoming a doctor or teacher or dentist or whatever you dream of becoming. You earned the respect that each of you deserve for being the unique caring individual that you are. That is what we are fighting for. I will never give up. But neither can you. I still hope that I will see some of you this summer at camp and, if not, in the region when Janet and I travel there in the next few months. In the meantime, I send you all my love.



by Yaara Ashkinazi (Karmiel)

A cartoon illustration of a person wearing a green hat and cape, sitting at a desk and typing on a keyboard. A computer monitor displays the word "Seeds" and some scribbles.

Super seed!

Seed power.

Supply check

100% Love 100% Brain 100% Strength

0% hope

no hope?

No

Problem

EVERY THING WILL BE O.K

FACING THE

In the aftermath of the worst violence in years between Jews and Arabs inside Israel, forty Seeds of Peace formed coexistence groups that met throughout the year to try and understand what happened, why it happened, and how to create real coexistence in their future. The four groups met together every two weeks for intensive discussions of all the issues: identity, discrimination, rights and responsibilities, and violence. They built an understanding with each other, and then worked to spread the word to their friends, families, and communities.

Achieving Understanding

By Tarek Arow (Jatt)

What did we do in the Arab-Jewish coexistence program? How could we make sense in the middle of all of the panic around us? Most important, did we achieve anything? Those are questions I asked myself before, during and after we started to "coexist." At the beginning, I thought it would be useless because we had no Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza, because of the situation. However, all of the Seeds in coexistence felt they must do something about the conflict, and that's what brought us there.

The issue that most surprised the Jewish Israelis in my group was that many of the Arabs defined ourselves as "Palestinians living in Israel" or "Palestinian Israelis." At first they tried to persuade us to call ourselves Arab-Israelis. Some of them said, "I'm more relaxed with the name Arab even if it's without the word Israeli." I stuck by my identity and they began to try to understand why I call myself Palestinian-Israeli, even though it upset them. I discovered that they had a fear of the word "Palestinian," which, after I thought about it, was understandable. The name "Palestinian living in Israel" was new to them and they immediately connected the word "Palestinian" with the enemies of Israel. For them, having Palestinians living in Israel sounded like they have enemies living among them that want to sabotage Israel. This creates a lot of fear for them; both sides have a lot of fear in this conflict. Nevertheless, the Jews in my group ended up accepting my identity.

Then, the discussion of minority rights in Israel broke out. Some of the Jewish Israelis felt that because we do not fulfill our duty to the country by serving in the army, we cannot have

our full rights. However, we don't want to join the army because we know that we might have to fight against our own people. We argued for a long time about whether rights come with duties or rights are deserved by everyone.

In these discussions, I discovered that there are Jewish Israelis that understand our problems, and the problems people are facing in the West Bank and Gaza. Many of them showed that they care about the situation of the Palestinians in Israel. This is very important because we cannot improve our position without the help of the Jewish Israelis. Some of them even agree with some of our points of view.

After those sessions I believe that we can still learn a lot about the other side, and we can solve some of the problems. This type of work together can prevent violence, like what happened in October. It seems that in all Seeds of Peace activities, even if we have a month, we always finish saying, "We need more time!" In what we do, that problem is understood, but I hope that one day we'll meet and say we don't need any more time because there is peace.

Realities of Identities

By Ma'ayan Poleg (Kfar Saba)

This past year, since the start of the Intifada, has been horrible for me. When I came back from camp, I felt empowered. Power to change and make things better; I was proved wrong. No matter how much power I thought I had, I couldn't stop the inevitable. Again, a wall was built between Israelis and Palestinians, between my friends and I. I felt like my power was taken away from me; I felt helpless. For a long time I had a big urge inside of me to do something, anything. That's the reason I got so excited when I heard about the coexistence sessions that were being offered. I was too thrilled to even think about what they meant. Actually, thinking back to that time, I really didn't understand the point of having coexistence sessions with Arab-Israelis. I knew there were problems between Israelis and Palestinian but I never imagined the depth of the conflict within Israel.



Group C's lively discussion at the Bring-a-Friend event.

FUTURE TOGETHER

I came to the first coexistence meeting with no special expectations. I came thinking that we would probably be talking about the Palestinian-Israeli issue, and I thought it would be useless since we were not having Palestinians from the West bank or Gaza with us. I remember when we all sat in that first meeting, raising questions we had for the "other side". The funny thing was that I had no questions to ask. I didn't even understand there were two different sides involved, so I remained quiet for most of the meeting.

After our first meeting, I remember myself reading and watching the news in order to learn more about the conflict. Today I can say that my coexistence friends have taught me more than any source of journalism ever has. I am thankful for that. What was so amazing to me about our group was our ability to listen, understand and respect. Not once did we shout at each other or disrespect what an individual said. This created an environment that allowed us to feel free and to be honest with each other. This situation allowed us to discuss very hard issues, which I'll introduce here.

Before coexistence, I would refer to Palestinian-Israelis, as Arab-Israelis. I do not remember the exact meeting when Diana declared herself a Palestinian-Israeli. She pointed out to the fact the Israelis are afraid to recognize Arabs of Israel as Palestinians. I came home after that meeting, and thought a lot about what Diana had said. I was amazed to find out she was right. We are afraid. Israelis have a hard time distinguishing between Palestinians from the West bank and Palestinians who live inside Israel. This leads to the feeling that we have our "enemy", the Palestinians, living inside our country, and that makes us afraid. So we try to avoid the fact that Palestinian-Israelis are Palestinians, by removing the word Palestinian from their identity, and calling them Arab-Israelis. As funny as it sounds, it helps us deal with reality.

All the Jewish-Israelis in our group accepted the Arab-Israelis as Palestinian-Israelis; we even started to understand why they identify themselves as Palestinians. Our discussion about being a Palestinian-Israeli began after an exercise that dealt with identity. Naturally, the Jewish-Israelis defined themselves as Israelis. But most Palestinian-Israelis claimed to be Palestinians and Arabs first, and only some of them felt Israeli too. This frightened us a bit,

and we began asking questions like "Why don't you feel Israeli?". The reasons we discussed the most were rights and democracy. Israel is a Jewish country. That's the reason Israel exists, to be a shelter for the Jews after all the suffering they experienced. Israel is also a democracy; a Jewish democratic country, but that makes whoever is not Jewish feel as someone who does not belong here. That's what happened with the Palestinian-Israelis, who are not fully recognized by the government, nor by the people, and are often treated unfairly. How can we expect them to feel Israeli, when they are not even treated like Israelis?

The identity issue is connected to issues of the way police and soldiers have faced demonstrations by Palestinian-Israelis, another reason that they feel that they do not belong. When Palestinian-Israelis demonstrate the police and soldiers are harsher than they are to Jewish-Israelis. That is because Jewish-Israelis fear that they have an enemy in their country, so we "need" to treat them like an enemy to make us feel "protected." Palestinian-Israelis demonstrate and protest against discrimination, to be equal citizens with equal rights, but we, the Jewish-Israelis, translate that as a statement of not wanting to be part of our country.

I focused on the issue of identity, because it is the most important thing I have learned from

coexistence, but it leads to a lot more. I can talk for ages about the things I'm taking with me from this group, and it goes beyond knowledge. There is no doubt that these coexistence sessions were one of the most important things I have participated in.



Larry Malm

Elvira, Danielle, Einab and Yaara get to business.



Riyad Al-Jundi

Group D smiles with their friends from Bring-a-Friend.



Larry Malm

Group D builds a pyramid for the scavenger hunt.

What we did was start building trust. People told stories not easy to tell. We started talking about the issues that really bother us. It felt good that everyone could say what they wanted and be heard. I felt like I could say what I wanted without being attacked. We're starting to understand how these meetings are going to be and they won't be easy, but we can try to understand.

Yaara Sarussi (Jerusalem)

GOING THE DISTANCE...

Seeing for Ourselves: Akko and Arabeh After October

by Jen Marlowe (*Olive Branch*)

Every two weeks Arab and Jewish Seeds from Israel met. Sitting in a circle for hours, they discussed burning issues. Sometimes they shouted, interrupting each other. Sometimes they struggled to really listen. Rinat Gilad from Acco and Nidaa Nasser from Arabeh would often insist that if only the others could see with their own eyes what they were speaking about, they would finally understand.

In meetings, Rinat talked often about how the October riots inside Israel affected her home town. "I wanted the Seeds to see what was really important to me. Walking the streets they could see all of the people and their behavior," Rinat answered when asked why she wanted to bring the group there. "Acco is also a good environment for the group to visit because Jews and Arabs are friendly there."

Rinat spoke to the group about the effect of the October clashes on the town, especially the Old City, where we ate lunch in a hummus restaurant, toured ancient and holy sites and walked through the streets getting a feel for the



Group D and Asel's Siblings in Arrabe.

time I visited the mosque in the middle of the old quarter, it was full of people who were praying there. And now, I was the only one. I cannot pray alone. The Jews could not even go and look. It was sad."

According to Yoni Eizenberg from Karmiel, "It showed me how large the gap between Jews and Arabs really is. I know that it could be different in so many ways, and it was hard to see. But I understood it."

At the end of the trip, the group had time to talk about what they had seen. After the next meeting, Nidaa approached me. She wanted to bring the group to her village, so they could see and feel aspects of her experiences first-hand: "I wanted them to come to Arabeh because we always talk about inequality and I wanted them to see it and feel it, to understand why things are going the way they are."

The group agreed, and in time the Seeds were standing together in Nidaa's school. It left a deep impression on Rita Konaev from Afula: "Hearing Nidaa speak in coexistence I could hear the depression in her voice and her feeling of being unequal. When I visited her school I could see why. I could see where this anger and depression comes from. Her school showed me the discrimination between the Jews and Arabs in Israel. It's like seeing for real one of the reasons all of the events happened."

Yoni added, "I was left with many thoughts about the conditions that they study in. I learned how they live, and it is very different than the way I live. There is no comparison with the school. We hear about it in all the coexistence sessions but it was harder to see it in person."

Being in Arabeh allowed the group to confront something painful and extremely important; the death of Asel Asleh, a Seed of Peace and a native of Arabeh, in the October clashes that took place outside Arabeh. Nardin Asleh, Asel's sister, took the group to the spot where Asel was killed by security forces (see Winter 2000/01 edition).

"Seeing Nardin speak about Asel was one of the most painful and meaningful experiences in my life," Rita said. "I didn't really know Asel, but I understood from his friends, the Tribute book, and now from Nardin how much we lost, how huge and indescribable this loss is. It's not only the family's loss, it's a huge loss to all of us as a society. Asel could have been one of the greatest leaders. Nardin made such a huge impact on me. She is so full of courage and so full of strength. She is an inspiration."

Yoni was also moved: "I think that the family are very brave and courageous people, willing to stay talking and friends with Jews even after what happened. I really respect them."

"It wasn't the first time that I went to Arabeh," said Reem Kaldawy from Haifa, who had been to camp with Asel in 1997. "I went there a week after Asel was killed. The first time was much more emotional. The second time I went to see how others reacted. Both sides got to see how the other reacted. It is not a matter of being a Jew or an Arab, what matters is how the human being feels when tragedy happens. It is how you feel towards the death of someone."

I asked Nidaa what she thought was gained by the group visiting her hometown. She said, "I think that the Jewish-Israelis understood what I was talking about. It is different when I tell them in coexistence. I am glad that we did this."

Seeds of Peace is about dialogue between groups in conflict. This group went a step further, not just hearing, but going to see for themselves. They plan to create further opportunities to host one another and catch a glimpse of each other's realities.

Widening the Circle of Peace: Bring-A-Friend

by Lana Mansour (*Tira*)

Having a wide look at this world, I can see few examples of peace. Killings, murders and massacres tend to be absolutely normal things. But Seeds of Peace still do not easily give up on our strong belief. For this reason, our responsibility to make this a better world is becoming greater. And I, as a Seed, was all the time waiting for the chance to do anything for the improvement of humanity.

The sessions with my coexistence group were extraordinary, in the positive meaning, of course. We decide, all together to adopt a project called "Bring a Friend." It consisted of group members bringing one friend each and



Group D hosted by Rinat in Akko.

city, the people and the mood.

Yaara Ashkenazi from Karmiel saw fewer people than before: "You can tell that people are much less open. Before, you would see people walking around and talking and trying to get you to buy things. Now it was empty."

Khaled Zouabi from Tibeh Village was impacted as well. "Some bad things were happening in Acco when we went there," he said. "Before the October events there were a lot of tourists there, but now there is no one. It made me upset. I feel Acco is my village; if the people in Acco are happy than I am happy. If the people of Acco are sad, I am sad. The first

organizing a common meeting, so that they can get to know the other side in a positive way.

Many reasons were behind our decision. We all, for instance, were aspiring to strengthen our connection with that pure dream...peace. It was important for me to bring a friend of mine to one meeting with Seeds of Peace. She was fed up with my praises for it, was really hopeless about Palestinians and Israelis coexistence, and harbored hatred towards Jews. I just needed to simplify things for her, and show her the human side, which is the most important one. I wanted to have the feeling that "Yes, I did something as a Seed of Peace".

Well, I went to Hadil - my chosen friend - and asked her to join me to a very exciting experiment at Seeds of Peace, that may change her ideas about Jews, and may change theirs

Going All the Way: Coex MARATHON

by Yael Nir (Afula)

The Coexistence Marathon was the conclusion of all our Arab-Jewish meetings. I came to the Marathon filled with fear, expectations, and anxiety. It felt like coming to camp again. The opening session, the coexistence meetings, the fun and nervousness of getting to know new people; even the dining hall was like at camp with songs, table cheers, and Jared Fishman's imitation of camp director Tim Wilson. The only difference was with my coexistence group. Because we had already been working together for several months, we were able to reach even higher levels in our discussions.



Group A, scavenger hunt winners, on the way to victory.

...FOR COEXISTENCE



Maya and Diana work on the Scavenger Hunt.

about Arabs. I was surprised to see her agreeing quickly and becoming very happy. She was making me crazy during three weeks with her anxiety about the date of the meeting. And then came the days... they were useful meetings, also for me. We discussed so many topics that constituted obstacles between the sides. It was amazing how our friends worked with us, looking interested to know everything. I'm glad to say my friend changed her opinion about Jews. Now she realizes that they have a human side. Here's what she said - word for word: "Thank you, Lana, for giving me the chance to meet such great guys. I'm proud of myself because I showed them a different picture of Arabs, and so they did about themselves. Thanks a lot, and ask the group for one more meeting...Please!" I also hope the coexistence sessions will continue, as they were really important to me. Now, and only now, I feel my creed and my ultimate aim in life, peace, getting closer to my heart.

In the first day, we discussed our perspectives about the future. We had the feeling of really understanding each other and were listening carefully to each other. That night's discussion was hard and serious but positive. In fact, we reached a peak. I felt like all our previous sessions had been preparing us for this meeting. We spoke about all the topics we had previously avoided. Because we had a lot of time, we could really reach the bottom of things. We reached an understanding that was so deep that the group was completely silent for a full minute. That was the most precious moment I have experienced in Seeds of Peace, after Raya read a poem in Hebrew about the Druze. I think that moment will always be treasured in our hearts.

The next morning we had, once again, a coexistence session. We began in "uni-national meetings," Jews together and Arabs together. This allowed us to examine our own side more critically. When the whole group joined back together, we opened some of the issues that were raised. The next hour we talked about difficult things like the Intifada, and our feelings about the Israeli and the Palestinian flags. The meeting was painful and we argued a lot. I felt disappointed, like we took a step backwards. I found myself trying to understand, why am I in Seeds of Peace? What happened since yesterday? The conversation was penetrating, hard.

Now, when I look back, I know that even though it was painful, the conversation was between true friends; people that managed to

have a real and honest discussion instead of trying to "win" the argument. I realized that this meeting was not a step backwards at all. In the Marathon, I got a lot of answers, but the more answers I got, the more questions I took away. One thing I learned is that questions and doubts show knowledge and awareness more than answers. I also understand that we can't reach a compromise if we don't open our wounds, talk about the problems and try to understand.

In the last hour of the Marathon, my group, like every other group, did the Scavenger Hunt. It was competitive and fun and we really worked together as a team. It reminded us again how much we love each other. For me, personally, I struggled to make it through the push-ups and you should have seen each member of our group try to eat an entire matzah!

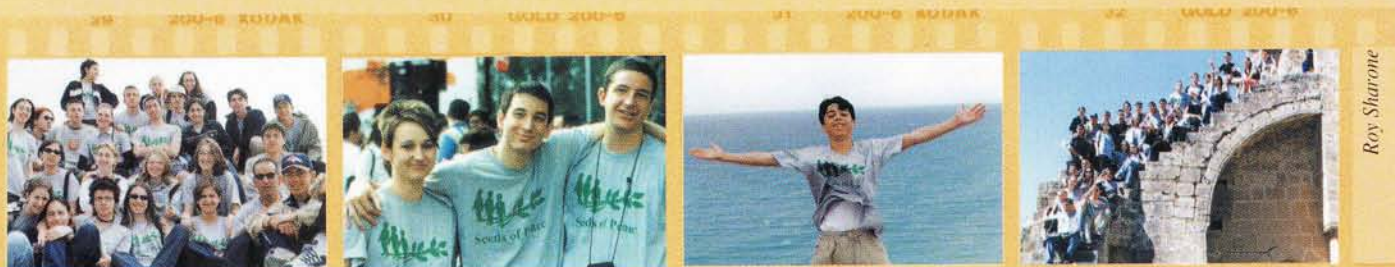
The Marathon was an amazing and wonderful conclusion of an important process. It brought back hope to me. I hope that someday we can have another Marathon just for fun, together with the Palestinian Seeds.

Gili and Adar help each other get the Matza down fast



BALKAN SEEDS REUNION STYLE

Sixty Seeds of Peace from nine Balkan delegations came together for a week-long workshop in Larnaca, Cyprus, to rekindle friendships and to develop the dialogue they began at last summer's Youth Peace Initiative in Greece.



Roy Sharone

Coexistence Program

The coexistence program included two hours each day of facilitated dialogue, and two hours for working on the mosaic project. The youth were divided into four groups — two groups focusing on the Bosnian-Croat-Serb conflicts, and two groups focusing on Slav-Albanian conflicts in Kosovo and Macedonia. To learn more about the complex situations in different parts of the Balkans, see the stories that Balkan Seeds contributed to *THE OLIVE BRANCH* on pp. 11-13.



Larry Malm

Above: Group shot at the amphitheatre. Nikolina, Uki and Marko share a smile. Orce thinks about joining Aphrodite, the monestary above Kyrينيا. Left, from left: Cutting the stones, applying the glue, putting the stones in place. Below left: Balkan Seeds presenting their completed mosaics.



Jared Fishman

Mosaic Project

The mosaic project challenged the youth to work together to deal with the issues in a more creative fashion. The first step of the project was for each participant to make a list of words side by side that indicated fear and non-fear. At that point, the group engaged in different exercises involving their words. Then, on an individual basis, each participant would draw an image of one or more of their non-fear words. Once completed, each member of the group would share his/her image and explain the meaning. The group then came together to create a "Collective Image of Non-Fear" incorporating all of the individual images — a process that required major negotiation. (For example, for

one person the image of a soldier can signify safety and non-fear, while for another person in that group, the soldier can represent the opposite.) Once completed, the group image is transposed onto a 1-meter square tile of plywood. Colors were assigned to different parts of the image, and then the process of laying of individual stones to create the larger image began. While some members of the group were involved in this manual creation, others worked on creating a text to describe the meaning of the group image. These mosaics have been shipped back to Jerusalem and will be displayed (along with those finished by Arab and Israeli youth) at the Center.

GROWING UP IN KOSOVO

Memories of Normal Life

by Jelena Trajkovic (Kosovo Polje)

I have memories of, before the war, when I had an almost normal life. I could go to clubs and cafes with my friends. However, things were not "normal" like all over the world. Before "real war" in 1999, there were problems, like the Albanian's protests, which happened every few months. Sometimes protesters broke shop windows in front of my building. I never knew the reason why, but I was scared. I was just a small child with big fears.

In 1999, when the bombing started I did not know that was the beginning of the nightmare, which has continued until now. In the first days I watched as TV news showed the bombing. I didn't really understand what was happening. One night, while I was asleep in bed, a bomb fell 200 meters from my house. First I asked myself: "Am I alive or not?" I looked around to see if my family had survived. Everything was broken: windows, doors and all around were pieces of the bomb. I heard my mother crying. Luckily, all members of my family were O.K.

Every day after that, we heard sounds of bombardment, and we heard about innocent people who died. I asked myself, "What did we do to deserve this?"

When the bombing stopped, we hoped for a better life; we were disappointed. In one day, half the Serbian population of my town left their houses for Serbia, including most of my friends. That was the worst time; I lived with no hope; I didn't believe in anything. I had nightmares, and woke with tears in my eyes.

When school started, it was really hard. We didn't have enough books, notebooks, a school building or many other necessities..

The situation calmed down, but it is still far from "normal." Almost every month somebody is killed, or somebody's house is burnt. Since March 2001, when eight people died in a bus explosion, we can only leave Kosovo with UN protection. Sometimes it seems to me that my life is a life as a prisoner. I can't go where I want. I can't visit my friends. I have no after school activities. I cannot leave my house to go to discos or cafes. In order to get to school, I need to leave early and walk long distances to avoid Albanian towns.

Sometimes, I lose hope for a better future here, in Kosovo. Seeds of Peace, and my friends all over the Balkans and all over the world, taught me that everybody is important in peacemaking, no matter how old that person is. I learned how to respect people from other sides of the conflict. I became friends with many of them and that really means a lot to me. Now I know that together we can make our future safer.

Memories of Milosevic

by Nita Himaduna (Prishtina)



The open violence in Kosovo began after the government of Slobodan Milosevic revoked the Constitution in 1989. Albanians were forbidden from getting educated in their native language. This meant that the University and all the schools belonged only to the Serbs.

The autumn of 1990 was full of events. It was the start of the war for me. On one side there was a heavily armed military force and on the other side an empty-handed population, condemned for their thoughts, conversations and statements. That year I began school in my teacher's house, with no desks or chairs. My parents had to do work outside of their profession in order to survive, because they were Albanians.

There were police raids in schools and teachers were arrested. In the institutions, it was illegal to speak Albanian. Albanians held elections in houses, which often led to arrests. Even today, there is no information concerning some who disappeared. I finished my first year of high school still studying in a house, never feeling safe, my mother worried if I would come home at all. While we waited for freedom, world leaders met at the Rambouillet Conference to negotiate our situation. Milosevic refused to agree. No solution. What will happen to us?

March 24th, 1999, NATO bombing begins and Serb army attacks increase. Anxiety, nightmares, reports of killings, raping, looting. It's impossible to stay, the army can be here any moment. What will happen with us? March 26th, at night. All of a sudden, the sound of a car at our door. It stops. The Policeman throws a bomb. Fortunately, we were in the basement. Nobody was hurt. We are waiting. They will get inside and massacre us. Horror... Terror...

It seems that they have left. They thought they reached their goal and left. It seemed it would take years until the dawn.

No food left. A lot of missing and massacred people. Home raids separate the men from their families. Crowds head in unknown directions.

Terrors beyond human imagination. Traces of blood in the streets, blood everywhere. I can not find more words to describe it. We did not fear death anymore, but we feared the kind of death awaiting us. I recalled movies about Jewish people during the Second World War.

This is over now. The day arrived when NATO troops entered Kosovo, and Serb troops left. It seemed that I have survived. Freedom? Is it possible? Is it real? Can I express myself freely? Now it is. Now, we hope to build an independent future. It's worth living. It's worth contributing for the future, for peace.



Larry Malm



Above, from left: Jelena, Zana, Miranda.

Below: The table is set for lunch.

Seeds cross the checkpoints separating the Serbian and Albanian communities in Kosovo. This April, with the assistance of the UNMIK police, Jelena, a Serb Seed, hosted Albanian Seeds Zana and Miranda and their friends Tina and Majlinda for lunch and an afternoon of laughs and these photographs.

MAKING SENSE OF MACEDONIA

Holding on to Impossible Hope

by Iskra Klinkarova and Mirkica Popovic (Skopje)

As I write, less than 30 km away from me, thousands of people do not know if they will survive the night. As they are being accommodated in temporary shelters, at friends' or relatives' homes, or trapped in their villages, they are wondering what happened to their homes. As I write this, there are hostages whom the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) will use as shields if the Macedonian army tries to enter those villages. No one can guarantee their safety and the Macedonian army cannot do anything to protect these Albanian civilians. At the same time, there are clashes in several villages and in a city, Tetovo, Macedonia, which is nearby. The NLA targets civilians and recently targeted the water and pipe installation in Kumanovo, Macedonia, leaving the citizens without water. Currently, the estimated casualties are over 50 civilians and soldiers dead, twice as many wounded, and great economic damage.

The situation has been like this for three months now, with one minor difference: in the beginning the NLA proclaimed that Albanians in Macedonia were being denied basic rights and they were fighting for these rights. Now, the ethnic Albanian parties in Macedonia have joined the government, but the NLA is still fighting. Its real goal is obvious: the integrity of the territory of Macedonia, its sovereignty and independence.

As a 17-year old individual, being caught in the bloodshed and the leaders' failure to peacefully resolve the conflict, there is nothing for me to do but sit back and pray for the well-being of my family, friends and relatives, and hope that everything just goes away. But I know it will not, because I did not choose the politics here, the politics chose me. Being faced with seeing all my dreams fade away, I now know that I do not want to be just another statistic. Consequently, I know that I would rather be in a different place.

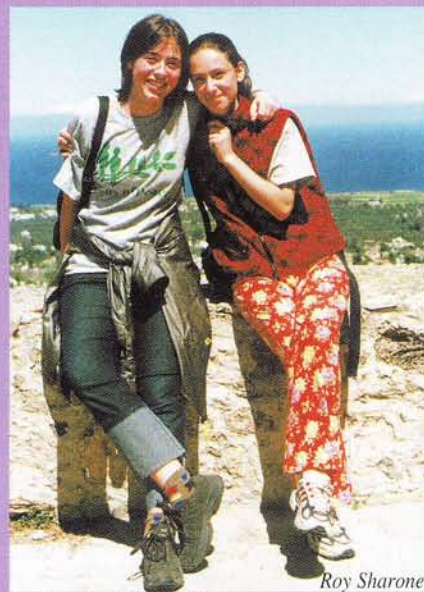
Despite the "positive future outcome", which in my mind is multiplied by zero, I still have hope. Despite the almost certain deterioration of the situation (unless a miracle happens and I haven't seen a miracle since the movie "Pretty Woman"), I still have hope. Despite the very popular saying in my country, "Nothing now can ever come to any good," I still have hope. Despite the international reports that bias the public towards one side, I still have hope. Despite the everyday images of ammunition and bullet-covered foreground with tanks, I still have hope.

I have hope in abundance, but hope is not optimism. It is not the certainty that something will end up good, but the certainty that something makes sense, despite how it will end. Having hope running through my veins, I live through the remains and drawbacks of a childhood in a state of war.

It is never easy. You find yourself lost between the false attraction of a promised peace - a safe day-to-day life, and the strength to keep on dreaming and believing in humanity, in spite of all the events and happenings that make you think the complete opposite.

However, I strongly believe that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that it is just a question of time before things improve. Persistence is necessary. You have to start to search for the light within yourself, deep inside your heart, in spite of all the prejudices. This quest always starts

with beginner's luck and almost always ends up with us failing to pass the first test. Therefore, when a tragedy happens in one's life it doesn't mean a punishment, but a challenge that one has to overcome. Having the Seeds experience helps me to understand better and search for a peaceful resolution, even in times where such a thing seems impossible.



Roy Sharone
Iskra and Zana enjoy the sun at the monastery above Kyrenia during the workshop in Cyprus.

On Both Sides of the Border

by Zana Zeqiri (Pristina)

Things have changed in Kosovo since the fighting in Macedonia began; across the border, we feel the effects. Many Kosovar Albanians feel a sense of brotherhood with the Albanians in Macedonia. The fighting has caused many ethnic Albanian refugees to spill over into Kosovo. Kosovar Albanian families are taking these people in; many Macedonian Albanians provided shelter to us when we fled war with Serbia in 1999. Now it is our turn to shelter them. (I know the people who sheltered me during the Serbian war are still in Tetovo, Macedonia, but they are welcome in my home if they need it.) We are willing to accept crowded conditions to provide shelter to the refugees. Still, there are many homeless people on the streets in Pristina, Kosovo.

Many refugees seem to be quite surprised by the fighting. While the situation for ethnic Albanians has been bad in Macedonia for quite some time, people did not realize that soldiers were preparing to fight. Despite this, most of the refugees are women and children, the men have gone to join the resistance that, a few months ago, they did not even know existed.

In addition, Kosovo has a very small economy. After the NATO bombing of Kosovo, most economic relations between Kosovo and Serbia were cut. This meant that the new UN Protectorate of Kosovo is really dependent on Macedonia. Because of the fighting, the border between Macedonia and Kosovo can be closed at any time. This means that many products, such as fresh dairy products, disappear from the shelves in Pristina. In addition, because Pristina is so small, the Macedonian capital Skopje has functioned as the nearest big city. People wishing to travel outside of Kosovo have to go to Skopje for visas; it is also more convenient to fly out of Skopje. This cannot be done if the border is closed. The fighting in Macedonia makes Kosovo feel more isolated.

Many people are hopeful that the situation will not last long. They look to the other Balkan wars as an example: the West was very slow to get involved in the war in Bosnia, they were much quicker to get involved in Kosovo. Most Albanians from Macedonia hope that the international community will act quickly to end the fighting in Macedon.

REBUILDING BOSNIA

Five years after war destroyed Bosnia's multi-ethnic society, Bosnian Seeds of Peace describe their cities' efforts to pick up the pieces. Sarajevans are proud to restore the intercultural harmony that was their heritage; in Brcko, refugee children forced together struggle even to study in the same school.

The Spirit of Sarajevo

by *Merima Spahic (Sarajevo)*

Seven years ago photographs of Sarajevo went around the world: massacres, murders, horror and fear. The world was shocked and confused. The citizens of Sarajevo couldn't believe what was happening in Sarajevo, a city which from its very beginning was a city of tolerance, love and understanding. The city made of with different cultures and religions such as Catholicism, Judaism, Orthodoxy and Islam. Everybody felt that Sarajevo was his home.

Suddenly strange and wicked men thought that they could destroy, with their bombs and grenades, what Sarajevo represents. The aggression lasted for almost four years. People were murdered, buildings were torn down and destroyed, and the entire city became one huge ghetto. They were able to kill people and destroy buildings, but they were not able to destroy the city, to kill its spirit. The true essence of Sarajevo remained. Love, compassion and tolerance were too powerful of a weapon to beat.

Five years later, the city is still open for all people with humanity in their hearts, no matter where they are from or the color of their skin. Today, I'm walking down the streets of Sarajevo with my friends Aleksandra, Vedrana, Srdjan, Sabina and Emina, and we feel wonderful. We're not talking about war; we're talking about the future. We're listening to the bells of the cathedrals, to the muezzin coming from the nearby mosque, and we are thankful. We didn't consider the difference between our religions as a problem, but as a gift which enriches our spirit as each day passes by. We're talking about going to the concert of our favorite band, because Sarajevo is the cradle of Balkan rock 'n roll.

You perhaps don't understand it, maybe you don't believe it, but these words which I'm writing are true, and to prove it this is an invitation from me to you, from Sarajevo to you, to come and see it for yourself, with your own eyes, to feel it with your own heart.

Future or Past, Now is the Question

by *Mladen Pejicic (Brcko)*

Before the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H) Muslims, Croats, Serbians, and other national minorities lived in harmony. I am Serb, but I had Croatian and Muslim friends and still remember their faces and the good times we had. Before the war, I lived in Bugojno, a small town in the South. Now I live in Brcko, in the north. After the war, Bosnia was divided into two parts, the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, as agreed in the Dayton Accords in 1996. Two years later my city, Brcko, was reunited as a special part of B-H, not belonging to either section.



Today the government of Brcko, which was appointed by the international community, is trying to make a multiethnic society. We in Brcko are mostly refugees who do not want to go back to our homes because they are ruined, like my home, or because different people are living there. I have a status of refugee because I live in an apartment that does not belong to my family. I have been living here for five years and my family and I will probably never go back to my town of my birth.

Today Brcko is a mixed town. There is tension from the demands of the international community for an integrated multiethnic society. They are forcing people to take steps that are too big. In order to make Brcko multiethnic, they put the Serb and Muslim high school students together in the same building. The name of my high-school is Vaso Pelagic, who was a Serbian medical expert from the Brcko area. Now many people want to change its name.

Until September 2000 the students were separated to Serbian, Muslim and Croatian schools. After September 2000 the Muslim and the Serb students started to go to the same school building, but during different school shifts and with different programs. Math and physics are the same in all three schools, but the problems are language and history. The people speak the same basic language and understand each other, but the grammar is different in each. Also, national literature and histories are different. History classes are a real conflict because the history of each group humiliates the others.

The Muslim and Serb students see each other only at the entrance of the school when we change shifts. I have a few Serb-Muslim friendships, but not enough. Recently, demonstrations started because the Serb students had to remove their national symbols from the walls every time the Muslim students arrived. The students were demonstrating against each other. As a result a Muslim student was beaten. I also saw some Serb students set afire the Bosnian flag, which was imposed by the international community. They were saying that they do not want to live with the Muslims. Then the Muslim students organized demonstrations. It is important to say that the Serb students invited the Muslim students to put some of their national symbols on the walls next to the Serbian ones, but the government refused.

As a result of the demonstrations, we were out of school for an unbelievable forty days. Some Serb political parties demonstrated, burned the flag and made extreme comments that were not the opinion of the majority of Serb students. This caused people to think that the Serb students are all national extremists. The political parties just wanted to make points for the elections and to create a feeling that differences between the two people are too large. Unfortunately, most of the people think that way and throughout these demonstrations the number of the nationalist voters magnified.

The next school year brings a new educational system as well as our future. Are the young people in Brcko ready for the future? For next school year the Croatian, Serbian and Muslim students are going to go to the same school, not just in the same building, but also in the same classrooms. Well, we will see if we are ready for this step.



Come Together

In April, Seeds of Peace brought together 20 Greek Cypriot and 20 Turkish Cypriot youth for a workshop in Prague to focus on bi-communal work that they can organize on their divided island. They were selected because of their dedicated work in Seeds of Peace and other in youth-initiated dialogue programs on Cyprus. They have translated the accomplishments of one intense week in Prague into a full year's schedule of bi-communal activities in Cyprus, and a lifelong commitment to making peace.

An Experience That Changed Destiny

by Cise Sakalli & Sevillay Kucuksu
(Lefkosa)

We are extremely lucky teenagers, given the chance to spend a week in Prague with young people from the Greek Cypriot community. We got in the airplane on April 15, and when we woke up, it was April 22 and we were on our way back. In between we had been dreaming. This is the best way to describe the Prague experience. Family and friends have been asking us about our week in Prague and we can't find the appropriate adjectives. This is not because our vocabulary is limited, but because what we lived through was so unique and priceless. We had the best week of our entire lives. We cannot stop thinking of the days in Prague with our supposed "enemies."

In Cyprus, we have had a problem for over twenty-five years. Our island is divided. It is almost impossible to

meet friends from the other side. As the youth of Cyprus, we strongly believe that the younger generation must be involved in problem-solving since the future belongs to us. Building bridges of peace across the border requires us to come together and work harmoniously. Working together necessitates that we know each other through healthy interaction. Unfortunately there are stereotypes among both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, because the pain of 'one side' blinds them to the pain of the 'other side'. As Turkish Cypriot youth, we have not lived a common past with the Greek Cypriot youth. Therefore, our knowledge about 'others' are only limited to the painful experiences of our elders who are often unwittingly biased in their attitudes. This, in turn, causes the youth to have a limited point of view and stereotypes about the 'other'.

At the beginning of the workshop, when everybody expressed their goals, I envisioned a successful week. Everybody knew why they were there; this was apparent from the expectations each of us had, such as finding the

mistakes in our history in order to avoid new ones, getting to know the needs of each side, understanding each other, discussing options, coming up with a solution, creating strong bonds, and having fun! We absolutely created bonds and had fun—this must be why we now exchange about 20 e-mails a day!

In Prague, we devoted five hours a day to workshops in which we taught each other about our communities, political, social, and economic situations and daily life. The most challenging part was talking about history; an honest expression of our feelings and building of trust guided us.

The positions of Greek Cypriots were: no recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus; the formation of a federation; and no lifting of the



Rox Sharone



A wet group of Cypriots smiles at the Presidential Palace in Prague.

Roy Sharone



Mary and Kiki on an outing down by the river.

Larry Malm

embargo. The positions for Turkish Cypriots were: the recognition of TRNC; the formation of a confederation; and the lifting of the embargo. It was clear that we were in the middle of a serious conflict, but why were we there? Wasn't it to overcome all those conflicts? So we discussed in more depth. As we began understanding each other better, we came up with a lot of ideas for solutions. We had the will to achieve—what could stop us?

In addition to talking about such heavy matters, we had a lot of time to enjoy each other's company. In Prague, we were together with beloved friends and with the enthusiasm of little children. Despite the cold weather, we were "hot" enough inside; this is why the poor Prague people had to suffer listening to forty Cypriot teenagers shouting their favorite songs all over the place. Every moment we had together was fun.

Some of our other aims were to create new projects to promote peace, and to develop bi-communal activities to involve more people. We had started a drama project before Prague, and had a first draft of a play. In Prague we developed the content and performed it on our last night. In our play, an alien comes in during one of our workshops and we try to explain to her the situation in Cyprus. Prague was the first time we performed the play for spectators. We all shared the anxiety of forgetting the words and the excitement strengthened the solidarity between us. When we returned to Cyprus, we spent a whole Sunday video-taping the play. We hope to perform it soon and I believe it will be influential.

Now we are back at home. That amazing week is a memory, but our mission is just starting. We have to involve more people in building trust between the two communities.

We have organized many festivals attended by thousands of people. Now we have come up with an idea to double the 'thousands'. Our new project is called: 'I Want to See My Friend.' Any person who knows anyone from the other community whom s/he wishes to see will write a simple statement expressing this desire and send this paper to us so we can find his friend. By September there will be more than 1000 forms. During the festivals, we will post them and we will perform our play. We are thinking of forming a bi-communal folk dancing group! The ideas we are coming up with are too much to keep all in mind. I believe enthusiastically that we are going to achieve something serious. We have our slogan: "WE DESERVE BETTER."

We have a full schedule for September. Beginning September 1, World Peace Day, we will organize press conferences and festivals to show people that we understand the suffering each community went through and that it is time we had confidence in each other. As the youth of Cyprus we have already done much work.

After the dream-like week in Prague with new friends, we know what it is to be Seeds of Peace. We may be two different communities with slightly different cultures, but we are in heart Cypriot brothers and sisters. We know we can't change history, but we can change the future. We are all aware that we have to stand hand-in-hand to bring Cyprus up to modern living standards. As great believers in world peace it is time we got moving. In Prague we found that little light of ours and we are going to let it shine to show other people the way to a happy end.

Working Against All Obstacles

by Anna Pieridou (Nicosia)

Bi-communal work in Cyprus is all about motivated young people who work for peace because they believe in it. Genuine peace builders that are ready to overcome any obstacle that appears, feeling it's their duty to for the sake of our island.

We are faced with many difficulties that hold us back but never let us give up. For example, we still haven't found the ideal place to meet. We always held our meetings in Pyla, which is a small village in the buffer zone, where people from both sides can meet. Pyla can sometimes get dangerous because of incidents that involve drug dealing and other unpleasant situations. As a result our parents hesitate to allow us to go there and we miss a lot of meetings.

People confronting us about our work are a usual phenomenon. Some call us traitors and we don't get much support. However we gain a few but devoted members in bi-communal work since we keep spreading it.

I want to mention what happened to a bi-communal group that met for a 2-day workshop. The bus of the Turkish Cypriots was stopped by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, because the bus did not have a permit to enter our meeting place. This was quite strange since the day before there was no problem. Nevertheless the Turkish Cypriots got out of the car. They were determined to walk all the way to the meeting place in Pyla if necessary. The authorities, shocked by this reaction, finally let the bus enter. We are being noticed, we showed them that we don't give up so easily. We proved that there isn't any kind of obstacle to stop us: just to make us more determined to continue.

The government does not support us; our island is divided in the middle; we are not officially recognised; we are only young volunteers that can not work fulltime for peace. All this stands against us.

Our common ambition to see Cyprus in peace, our common love for our island, our friendships that are being developed, are what make us carry on, overcoming obstacles and finding new ways to build peace.

Beginning September 1, we will organize festivals to show people we understand the suffering each community went through and that it is time we had confidence in each other.



Larry Malm



Larry Malm

Where Were

Cypriot Seeds asked their parents what happened in the war that divided their island; Memories of a painful past emphasize the need to build a different future.

Claiming our Future

by *Marios Spyrou*
(*Xylophagou*)

My grandfather was one of the innocent people to die in the 1974 war in Cyprus. I tried to ask my grandmother about his death, but I can't get a word from her. Every time she thinks about it she gets upset, so I talked to my father instead.

My grandfather was the only one who had a bus in the village. In 1974 when the war came, he volunteered to carry UN soldiers in his bus. On August 14, when he was carrying 3 UN soldiers, a Turkish airplane dropped Napalm bombs close to the bus and killed my grandfather. He left five children and a wife. My father misses his father until today. He was 16 when his father died, a teenager like me.

For my father, his dreams fell fast. When he finished school he immediately got a job to help the family. He had to take care of his 4 young siblings and work. My grandmother had to raise all her kids with no government assistance, as all government systems collapsed in the war. But despite all the problems, my dad's family found the strength to help a number of refugees in the village find food and shelter.

To all the people who are reading these empty words that I am trying to pass to you - I hope that God will never "take" your father or a person that you love away because of a war. Even I don't know how it is to lose a father from a war, but I can understand how it feels when I see my father.

Every time I think about my grandfather, I ask myself why innocent people die in war. I may never find the answer. The person who dies is not the one who suffers. We are the people who suffer because we lose a person that we love; we spend our lives with an empty space in our hearts which "belongs" to that person. We are the ones who are making the wars so we are the ones who will suffer from them.

The future belongs to us and we don't want it to be a future of blood, bullets and death. We want a future of love, prosperity and PEACE!



1963-74: Prelude to the War

by *Melek Meray*
(*Nicosia*)

My mother was 12 years old in 1963 and was living in the Turkish Quarter of Nicosia. She said, "The women and children who managed to escape from Greek attacks were like a flood through the Kyrenia Gate. We all opened our doors to let them in. We were sharing everything we had, including our beds. There was no food. We were terrified, listening to gunfire, watching the lorries carry the wounded and dead bodies covered with blood all over to the hospital. The leaking blood from the passing lorries covered everywhere. I witnessed a secret conversation between my mom and dad. My mom, in tears, asked my dad to promise that if Greeks managed to come to our street, he would first kill her and then the children before they knock down the door. I was shocked. I kept watch on my father for weeks, checking in fear if his hunting gun was still in the wardrobe..."

Today whenever I ask my grandfather, "Did you promise to do that?" He answers in tears, "Could I ever kill my children and my wife!? I would die for them."

My mom continues, "It was the beginning of the summer. I really wanted to go swimming in the sea. I took the bus with my little brother. As the bus passed through Famagusta Gate it was stopped by the Greek Police. They asked us to get off and line up men and women separately.



After searching the bus, they asked me to take off my clothes in front of everyone. I refused and started crying, but they searched me anyway. I was so embarrassed..."

On 15th July 1974, a "cleansing" operation against the Turkish Cypriots started. One night Greek soldiers attacked my aunt's village, locked all the women and children to the school, dropped three bombs into the building. Five women died and many were injured.

My aunt says, "I bent over my son to protect him, so I was injured on my head and on my back and my son was injured on the bottom. Greek soldiers took all the men aged over 13 away to an unknown destination. My husband was taken away too." Her husband, was taken away to the camp as a prisoner of war. He only came back after the war.

My grandparents' families, living in two small Turkish villages, were attacked by Greek civilians and national guardsman. After the attacks, many villagers were found, some still alive, in mass graves.

In order to protect the lives and property of Turkish Cypriots, Turkey intervened in Cyprus, in accordance with international law (July 1974). In the 26 years since, there have been no killing and no massacres.

My mother adds, "Propaganda tells how Greeks and Turks lived happily together. But what happened during these years is the reality. We have reasons to be afraid of Greek Cypriots and Greek domination. Cypriots living together in peace is a nice idea but it's a dream..."

My mother doesn't like talking about it. She relives every second and every emotion. Hearing her story I felt desperate by not being able to do anything to soothe her pain.

My grandfather is 90 years old and every time he is reminded of those years, he can't hold back his tears. He is a religious man and can't hold hatred in his heart but he never forgives.

When I heard these stories, I thought about my Greek Cypriot friends and the moments we shared together. I was confused. I realized things aren't as simple as our peace songs make it sound... but I believe everyone should take a lesson from these experiences and work harder for peace.

After hearing my
parents' stories, it
isn't hard to
understand how
much they want
peace and hate war.

We in 1974?

Leaving Everything Behind

by Kyriaki Papaioannou
(Nicosia)



My grandmother cried as she told me about 1974: "It was August 14. At 5.00 a.m. of that fatal day, a new nightmare jerked us awake. Turkish aircraft were bombing towns and villages. The Turkish army was invading.

Turkish soldiers knocked on our door. With hands raised and our thoughts on loved ones, we were taken to the front. We could see a man almost dead in the road, next to a woman and a teenager who had been killed. As we walked away we saw our churches burning. When reached the town square, we saw Asha's streets filled with Turkish tanks. About 800 people, their eyes cast down, were gathered in the square. We were loaded on the army trucks, men and women separately, without knowing where we were going. The Turkish soldiers had bound the hands of the men and forced them to take their shoes off. Your grandfather and almost all the men had been whipped.

"I can clearly remember the day that three Turks came to our house. They took everything we owned: jewelry, food, clothes, and beat your grandfather with an iron bar until he fainted. I didn't know what to do. I felt helpless until George our neighbor came and helped us.

"At last, on the 28 of August we were taken to the village of Troulous, having nothing but the clothes we had been wearing for 14 days. In Troulous we were picked up by Greek buses and transferred to Larnaca where I saw your aunt who also had become a refugee. On that day I found out that your father was injured (thank God slightly) and your Uncle Andreas was dead. Two neighbors recognized him with other dead stowed on trucks for burial."

My grandmother told the story in tears. I cried too because I could see in her eyes all the pain. She used to repeat to me that she never cared about losing her house and her property; she only cared about losing her son.

I believe that the past doesn't have to affect the present. Both communities have shared the ghosts and demons of the past. It is time that we acknowledge that by communicating with each other.

Past without Protection

by Umut Aypar
(Famagusta)



My family never told me about the events in Cyprus in 1974 and what they lived through. They wanted to protect me from the idea that Greek Cypriots are the enemy. They knew it was all in time of a war and they believed in peace.

I asked my mother to tell me about what she faced in 1974. She got this expression on her face and became so sad that she refused to talk about it. I didn't push her to tell me and I just kept quiet. However, the next day in the evening, my mom came in and, without saying anything as an introduction, started talking about what she and her family lived through in the war. I could feel her sadness because as I heard her story I felt the same. We were trying not to look into each others eyes in order not to see the drops of crying.

In 1974, my mother was 12 years old. She was living in Limassol in South Cyprus. She told me that it was a nice, sunny day on 15th of July when the fighting started between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots. My mom and her cousins were so frightened that they went under the beds. On the 20th of July, the real bombings and chaos started. There was a big apartment building near my mother's house where all the bombs were being dropped. All the men were fighting, so women, elderly and children were alone. They ran out of the house into the backyard, into that apartment building, through the alley and into the hospital safely.

"Inside the hospital I saw blood everywhere" Mum said. That night Greek soldiers, holding big flashlights, searched for boys ages 15 and higher. My uncle, then only 13, was nearly

taken. The next day, my mum's family went back home. Mum's father, uncles and the other men were being held in camps, so they went to stay with neighbors. One night, some Greek soldiers came into the house where Mum was staying. Fearing rape, my mother and her family ran out of the house through a hole they had broken in the wall and escaped to the hospital. They were so frightened the next day that they went to the British Base where they slept on the grass in a tent. They ended up staying there about 6 months; 11 people living in the same tent. Her mother would sometimes go back to their house to take things they needed or to cook a meal to bring to mum's father and uncles in the slave camps. After 6 months Mum's mother packed everything in their house to be sent after they left. They never saw a trace of those belongings again. They took one piece of luggage each and went to Adana, in Turkey. She said she can't remember how or from where that flight took off. They stayed at a school in Adana for two days and then went to Famagusta by ship. Soon after, they went to Morphou to start a new life.

After finishing her story, my mother left the room leaving me with sadness and a lot of questions. I thought it was time to talk with my father as well so I went downstairs and just asked him. I had never seen my father like this before; so sad and almost crying.

At that time my father was a 16 year old boy living in a village near Paphos, in South Cyprus. There was only one attack on my father's village but in order to live a more secure life and to have an education, my father and some of his friends decided to run away from their village to the North side of Cyprus. My father took with him only some clothes and a white handkerchief to swing when they reached the Turkish area. Some of his friends took nothing at all. All alone, they had to climb the mountains on foot to reach their freedom. After nearly two days walking, they saw some settlements far away. Not knowing if it was a Greek place or a Turkish place, they didn't know whether to be worried or happy. Dad's friend crawled a bit to investigate when he saw the Turkish flag. They started swinging the white handkerchief, so happy for being saved.

After hearing my parents' stories, it isn't hard to understand why they did not tell all this to me before, or to understand how much they want peace and hate war.

Both communities
have shared the
ghosts of the past. It's
time we acknowledge
that by communicating
with each other.

KEEPING FAITH

Soldiers at School

by Asmaa Maloul (Jenin)

Day after day our life becomes harder than the day before. We face death on the street, at school and inside our homes. We leave our homes each day without knowing if we will return to be with our family again. Each night we wonder if we will live until morning.

I was sitting in my class, trying to listen to what my teacher is saying, but it was hard to focus because there was a lot of shooting and fighting not far away from my school. On that day I asked my teachers what happened and if someone was injured. Every time they gave me the same answer. "Don't worry, nothing happened." But I heard one student saying that two boys had been injured inside their school. At that time I didn't think for a moment that one of those two is so close to me.

When I returned to my home I found my mother sitting on the steps and she seemed worry and sad. I asked her "What happened?"

She told me that my brother was shot and he is in the hospital but that no one can go to hospital to be with him because soldiers closed the streets between my village and other villages.

I thought about what my mother said. I felt so angry and I didn't want to speak with anyone from the other side at all. A few days after what happened, one of my Israeli friends, Yael, called me. At first, I didn't want to speak with her but when I knew that she knew about my brother and she called to ask about me and him, something pushed me to answer her. She is so brave to speak with me when she knows that it was Israeli soldiers who shot him.

Each time I think about what happened and my friend who cares about me and my family, I realize that if there a few people like Yael in the other side, it's not impossible to find peace in Palestine some day.

Five Minutes from the Center

by Liat Margalit (Jerusalem)

It was one day that completely changed my life. As a teenager who lives in Jerusalem, during the Intifada, life and death is something you talk and think about quite a lot. It is known that Jerusalem is a target. And in wars like this one there is no difference between a fighter and a civilian. As I was starting, it was on one Tuesday morning, after I found out I have a few free hours in my schedule, that I decided to go and pay a visit to the Seeds of Peace Center in the French Hill. Bobbie was just in town for a visit, and so I stayed in the Center and we talked, until it was about time for me to leave back to school. I was saying goodbye to Bobbie, and I remember saying I'll give her a big hug because I don't know when I'm going to see her again. So, I went to the bus station, around 1 pm, then I thought about going back home. One stop before the station, I thought it will be better to go back to school, since I had one hour of civics, a subject in which I am being examined this year. I sat down and a few minutes later, about five minutes, which is the time it would take me to reach the station, a huge "boooooooooom" was heard. A Palestinian terrorist blew himself up at the station. I could have been there. It would only take me five minutes to get to the exact same place of the attack. I was extremely shocked. I had one million thoughts going through my head.



Asmaa and Yael in 1999 at the Center

We leave our homes each day without knowing if we will return to be with our family again. Each night we wonder if we will live until morning.

There was so much noise, so many screams, the sounds of police and the ambulance. I can say I never saw anything like that in my entire life. I knew how worried everyone will be, thinking I might be there. But luckily I wasn't there; I stopped one kilometer before, a few minutes before. I went back to school and all my friends who knew I was going to the Center were worried. When I went home about two hours later you can only imagine how worried my parents were, when they found out I might have been there. It was a day I will always remember. Now, when I think about it, that hug I gave Bobbie, could really be the last.

After this event people asked me if I am still going to remain active in a peace organization. I say it whole-heartedly, if it wasn't for Seeds of Peace and the people there, I would lose my faith in peace, and my trust in the people with whom we are in war now. It is only because of Seeds of Peace that I still believe someday we will all put our weapons down and we'll sit talking, rationally like human beings. We'll stop fighting, giving people a place to be secure and live their lives with no worries. God gave us grace to purge this place, and peace all around will be our fortune.

Wake-up Call for All

by Karen Karnial-Tambour
(Netanya)



This article was posted on SeedsNet Sunday, April 29, 2001. Tomorrow morning, you'll all wake up and hear the news. This is what you'll hear: "One Israeli dead from a shooting on Wadi-Ara road. Shots were fired last night towards a family driving in their car close to the Umm El-Fahem intersection. The family's car stopped at a streetlight, when a car with the shooters stopped by it. The shooters talked to the family and then started shooting. A man died and four women were injured." and the news won't really get to you. Whether you are Israeli or Palestinian, you hear this kind of news every single day.

UNDER FIRE

Fear From the Skies

by Lina Jarad (Tul Karem)

It was about 9 o'clock at night. My brother and I were going out to the terrace to look for helicopters, as we do a lot these days. Suddenly, we saw a big red light falling quickly toward the earth. Then there was a big boom. There was a flash of bright light and the electricity was cut so everything became dark. We have been through so much over the past months, but my brother and I could tell this was worse—he was shouting as we ran inside. For the first time, water and phones stopped. We could hear kids crying and women worrying frantically. The bombs came again and again.

I felt that they might do anything— including bombing all the houses. The missiles caused a brilliant light that lit everything up the way that I picture the end of the world. For the first time in this whole conflict I was scared. Even though they were using bullets, before this point I was more worried about other people. Now, with the F-16 fighter jets bombing, I could picture myself dying from bombs as if I was on TV.

We were in shock; I felt like I couldn't move. I couldn't sleep. We have learned to try to forget about the war and the fighting, but this was too much. We didn't talk in the morning. We just exchanged looks and ironic smiles. The feeling could not be talked about.

The next day at noon, the bombing was even worse, the helicopters right above our house. I had to find a mobile because the phone didn't work. I had to call my father and brother because I was afraid they had been where the bomb was. I went from house to house trying to find a mobile but I was so afraid. I couldn't cry. The schools are close to the place where the bombs were. Several girls from school went to the hospital with shock. They couldn't speak from fear for over half an hour.

It wasn't until mid-afternoon that I could try to sit down and relax and see what was happening. All I could think was that the Israelis say that



Hamas killed innocent people. But we are innocent too. And now my mother sleeps in my brother's room because he is too scared. Every time that planes go over our house, it terrifies us. We have no idea if one will shoot and there is nothing to do. The terror is with us all of the time.

The Israelis say that Arafat is responsible for everything. But they are the ones with the force and the power and they have to stop all of this stuff before we can go on with peace. They have the power so they must take the first step. I think that the rest of the world needs to be objective. People in the world must realize what is happening to me. Not only must the Palestinians stop the attacks, but the Israelis must stop also, because my life is affected by the violence too.

Hitting so Close to Home

by Yaara Man (Netanya)

Netanya, Israel is where I live. I've been living here for 16 years. Sadly, I don't feel the same safety that I used to feel in Netanya. Netanya's geographical place is in "the triangle" near Tulkarem and Qalqilya. Ever since the violence and terror increased, my home city has suffered dozens of bombing attacks. In one of them my parents were involved.

I was near the central bus station when I heard a dreadful, gruesome, loud booming sound. At first I thought it was nothing, but then I saw lots of people running in the streets. All of my friends started panicking. I knew my parents were at home and that they knew I was fine, so I had nothing to worry about. They tried to reach me to speak to me, but the phone lines were overloaded. When they eventually did reach me, we agreed to meet at my grandparents' house, which is near the bus station. When my mom saw me she was shaking and crying, still trying to grasp what just happened. Then I knew something was wrong — my parents had been 5 meters away from the bomb. They suffered from shock. Only when we sat and watched the news did I realize that my parents could have been killed and only then did I realize everything this would have meant for my life. Ever since the incident I live in constant fear of what will happen next. Every day, I ask myself "Should I go out or maybe stay home?"

I don't think that these thoughts should occupy anyone's mind, but they do and we cannot escape them. I try to live as if nothing bothers me though I have to look over my shoulder everytime I go out and I have to stay alert to anything that might not seem right.

I write these words not in order to compare, but simply to share what I feel: No one benefits from this war. These words are written in order to regain the trust or maybe the hope I once had which is fading every time I hear the news. I was lucky that day in Netanya; two of my friends were not; they were killed two weeks later by a bombing in Tel-Aviv.



My parents had been 5 meters away from the bomb. Only when we sat and watched the news did I realize that my parents could have been killed.

By now it means nothing at all. Only to me, of all seeds, it will mean something. I will know the people in that car. I will know the guy who died when his life barely began. I will know his girlfriend's trauma, after seeing her boyfriend shot dead. To me it won't be just another incident, more casualties.

It's yet another person losing his life to some stupid battle that he was unfortunate enough to be caught in the middle of. Somehow, after I lost one person to this violence, it seems almost acceptable to lose another. Just for equality's sake, to have lost one Israeli and one Arab in this years' intifada. Maybe it's supposed to be my wake-up call—Asel's death was not enough to wake you up, so here's another. But beyond the political meanings, beyond the interpretations, I feel a pinch in my heart, and this pinch just won't let go. A great guy who will never get to live, to keep on loving his girlfriend who he's loved for two years, to have a family, to try and achieve his dreams.

Individuals

by Inbal Shacked (Beit-Aryeh)

I am Jewish, not because I chose it but because I was born a Jew. How can I know it is the right religion? How can I call myself a Jew when I almost never practice? Unlike my Muslim friends, I was never taught too much about Judaism because my parents are secular. I suppose no religion gives you all the answers. It is easier to just be born Jewish, Muslim, or Christian than to have to decide.

I am an Israeli, but I am much more than that. How can you define another by his nation, land, or religion? How can people see me only as an Israeli? Many times I was attacked for where I live. I am what people call a settler. I dislike that title, not that I have any problem being one, but because people look at me differently when they hear it. Once, I even got beaten up by an Israeli girl. With so much hate between us, how can we live in peace with our neighbors? How can people see me differently

Inbal Shacked

because I live in a certain place? Many people assume I'm religious. Do I represent all settlers? Do my opinions match all settlers' opinions? I am sure not.

I wish people would stop looking at others as

representatives of groups and start treating them, and me, as individuals. Then, prejudice and hatred will vanish and we will live in peace with all our neighbors: Israeli, Palestinian, but first of all human.



THROUGH OUR LENS

Patience is Blessed

by Rasha Mukbil (Arroub Camp)

The only remaining part of a ruined house in Arroub refugee camp is a door with the words "Al-Saber Jayyeb" which means "Patience is Blessed." This symbol expresses how passionate Palestinian refugees are about returning back to their native villages and cities. I, as a Palestinian refugee, feel so proud being part of these people who have not lost hope of going back to their houses, even though they have lost everything and have been suffering since 1948. Their will gives me strength, courage, and pride and the dream of returning to my native village, Iraq Al-Manshiye, as been with me since the day I was born. It is hard for me to stop dreaming. I still believe that it does not have to all be black or white. I wish to live with my Israeli friends in my native village. This is the hope that I live for.



Rasha Mukbil

Who is Safe?

by *Mai Abu Emara*
(Ramallah)

We are here and we are going nowhere. I guess you do not have any plans to leave either, so that makes both of us here on this holy land. I hate this green uniform and your large weapon terrifies me. Can you take it off? Well, to be honest, I know you will never do that. Is it because you do not feel safe? Yet, with you looking this way I can never be safe either. Hard choices to make? Maybe it will help if I say that I believe that one day we will both be safe and satisfied.



Mai Abu Emara

Working alongside professional photographers Hally Pancer and Nayef Al-Hashlamoun, 10 Israeli and Palestinian Seeds spent ten weeks developing skills and exploring their own identities and each other's communities through the camera lens on field trips to Hebron, Al-Aroub refugee camp, Tel-Aviv, and all sides of Jerusalem.

Hope of Generations

by *Shira Shamban (Hod-HaSharon)*

When my father was born, my grandfather said that when he grows up he will not have to serve in the army because by then there will be peace. Nevertheless, my father fought in wars from the day he enlisted until the day he was discharged. Some take the army as an adventure. Others see the army differently. During every military service, there are joyful moments, but there are also other experiences. Which soldier enjoys going to Gaza with a gun, among small frightened children and adults who are not too sympathetic, and risk his life, while those same children remind him of who is waiting for him at home? Me! I waited for him at home! I couldn't understand why he had to go or why Mom was so worried.

When I was born, of course they said that when I will be 18, we will only have an army of peace. It will not have guns, and we will not have to serve in it. I remember when my father told me that I will not have to serve in the army. Today, it is clear that in three years I will not be in university and not on a trip abroad. When my brother was born, they no longer had

expectations. My mother became depressed; she did not want my brother to be in the army. That was the only reason she did not want a son. My brother was not even 18 months when the Oslo agreements were signed and the package of hope arrived. "We do not have to worry, to the army he will not go," they thought, but reality contradicted their hopes.

No, in ten years we will not reach a situation where we will no longer need an army, but it is

in our strength to try to bring that situation. Together, we must prevent that knock on the door, that will awaken that mother from her sleep to a never-ending nightmare. It is in our power to realize the same dream that has existed for three generations: "This child will not have to serve in the army" or, "He will see a gun only in the museum". I hope that in 15 years I will be able to say that my son will not go to the army, and mean it.



Shira Shamban

STRUGGLING WITH THE

Tears, Pride, Hope

by Inbal Lebovitz (Haifa)

I am sitting in front of the computer and trying to find the right words about Israeli Independence Day to represent Israel, but I also want words that will find a path to the Palestinians' hearts. Basically, I am trying to be politically correct. But when the issue is so controversial there is no such thing. So excuse me, but I guess I'll just write what I feel.

Israel, in case you didn't know, has a few problems. Interior problems, exterior problems, war, terror, money, etc. There is one day in a year when I only think about the good things. This day is Independence Day.

53 Years ago, we were a small insecure nation. We didn't know where we were heading. We didn't know how we would survive. Today, we have plenty of reasons to celebrate. We have reasons to be proud. The last 53 years have been years of achievements, years of success, years of development, years of recovering. Recovering from the Holocaust, recovering from wars, trying to put ourselves together, trying to unite, trying to understand the mistakes we've made, and trying to correct them.

For as long as I can remember, I have loved Independence Day. I used to collect the pins we received in kindergarten. I read books that made me be proud. I read about the courage of the first pioneers and of our leaders, about the faith of my people back then. I was so excited whenever I saw the fireworks, I felt so patriotic, and so happy. I danced with my family and ate all kind of odd candies.

Last year, I celebrated the 52nd Independence Day. It was about seven months after camp. I went with my parents and my younger sister to see the fireworks. We were standing there, among dozens of other people, waiting to see the fireworks. I was standing there, looking toward the sky, looking at the beautiful fireworks. So colorful, so special.

I was crying.

I was so happy to be an Israeli, so happy that I was celebrating my state's Independence Day. But that wasn't the only reason for my tears. Because when I was standing there with my face up to the sky, I was thinking also about Palestinian friends, about Lina and Heba and the way that they feel. I knew that they weren't so happy (gently speaking). It was the first time that my happiness wasn't whole. Another year passed and now I am celebrating Independence Day again. For Israel's 53rd birthday, there are a few things I would like to wish her:

Dear Israel,

I wish you to keep being as beautiful as you are. I wish you to be strong and powerful. I wish you will learn when and how to use your strength and when and how to use your brain, your beauty, your tenderness. I wish you will keep on developing, achieving, succeeding and recovering. I wish you will learn from your mistakes and won't repeat them. I wish that you will find a way to unite your people and I wish that you will find a way to keep them safe. I also wish that you will celebrate many more Independence Days, preferably, with a neighbor friend. Because, as you probably know, friendship can make things better.



Al-Nakba Days

by Nidaa Nassar (Arabeh)

To talk about al-Nakba as Palestinians, we have to understand the meaning of the word first. Al-Nakba means "the catastrophe" in Arabic. To me, the day of al-Nakba is about many catastrophes. It's the Nakba of many things in this world. It's the Nakba of the dignity of a people. It's the Nakba of the conscience of the world. It's the Nakba of lost rights. And it is the Nakba of hatred. I think the people of world should take part in remembering these things that they created and even supported.

Here I am counting the fifty-third year of Nakba for my people. I do not know what to say. Many people talk about history on al-Nakba day, but I have mixed up feelings because I can see this "memory" through the mirror of the present. I do not know why we have to memorialize something that is still happening. The many different Nakbas that I have talked about are still going on till this moment.

I do not think we need our memory now, all we need are our eyes and ears because Al-Nakba is not only about 1948. It's about today, yesterday and tomorrow. 1948 was only the beginning of this long, long difficult way that we are forced to walk on.

The Nakba is like a big wound for the Palestinian nation that is still bleeding now and its going to keep on bleeding as long as there are refugees, as long as the Palestinian state is not on the map, as long as the Palestinian flag is not on our holy mosque in Jerusalem, as long as the settlements are still increasing and as long as all of the world



As Israeli people feel proud of

their state , we feel

proud of our dignity, strength,

hope and efforts for legal rights.

(starting with the Arab countries and ending with the United States) continues to close its eyes to the plight of our nation.

In spite of our sadness and deep-rooted sorrow, we will all the time get stronger. We will always get this strength on the remembrance day, this day that reminds us about how powerful our will is and how strong we are. On al-Nakba day, we stand on midday to observe a moment of silence. During these moments, we not only remember all of the people who have died and the things lost, but we breathe deeply to strengthen our hopes and dreams for rights as Palestinians, regardless of whatever country we are living in. And as Israeli people feel proud of their State on their Independence Day, we feel proud of our dignity, strength, hope and efforts for legal and national rights.

PAST IN THE PRESENT

Independence and Sacrifice

by Rita Konaev (Afula)

Israeli Independence Day: Seeing those words I think how hard it was to bring them together.

During the week that the Israeli people celebrate Independence Day, we also memorialize two horrible events that happened to the Israeli people. The week begins with the holocaust memorial day, the day when all the Jews all over the world remember the horrible catastrophe that happened to our people in the World War Two. As the week goes by, we observe Memorial Day for all the Israeli soldiers that died in all the Israeli wars since 1948. These two horrible days are ironically followed by the most happy day to the Jewish Israeli people: Israeli Independence day.

"Independence Day." It took us 2000 years to say those words again. It cost us millions of victims to be able to stand on our holy land and live with pride of being Jews and not to be ashamed of it, not to be scared that we will get hurt because of it. After 2000 years, we just feel pure joy that we are Jews and that finally we are back home.

For me, as a Jewish-Israeli girl that also a Seed, this day symbolizes a lot of mixed-up feelings. The thought of the Jewish people finally living free on their historic land brings me joy and happiness. But again the thought of all those innocent people that died and lost their homes when our county was established makes me feel sad and maybe even guilty.

Thinking that the day that means so much to me and to all the Jewish-Israeli people is also the day of disaster to other nation, to live with the thought that not everything that was done here when the country was regained was as pure as we told in schools, is not easy. But still this day is a day what I feel most close to my nationality and identity. I feel that although the pain that we been through as Jews and the horrible sacrifices were finally paid off on this one day.

The Israeli people are not the most united people in the world. There are a lot of differences and gaps between us on almost every level: political, religious, ethnic, etc. But on this day, when we sing the anthem and go to the centers of our cities during the evening to watch the fireworks and all the shows, we finally see no border between us. Finally, we all act the same without caring who came from where, and who believes in what; the love for this country unites us all in this one special day.

The Jewish-Israeli people see this day with eyes of pride and happiness but mostly I think that they see it with the eyes of hope for a better future, for a safer life, on this land, in this independent country. I see this day with the hope that one day, we will have two states celebrating their Independence Days with no hate, with no violence, just pure love of this land and pride in their country.



Refugee's Reflections

by Ramzi Abu Jazar (Hitteen Camp)



Al-Nakba Day. That day holds the worst memory for me and every other Palestinian refugee. That day our land, our dignity were taken away. That day we became refugees. That day a nine-year-old handicapped kid and his family left the place they had lived all their lives. They moved to Gaza to a refugee camp. That kid grew up and moved to Jordan to another refugee camp. When he got married, he moved to another camp. From one camp to another. His whole life was about being a refugee.

That man was my father, Musa Abu Jazar, who taught me how to be strong with his strong will. He was the man who gave me faith, and the man who taught me to love the purity of the snow. He shaped my soul. He lived his life with the hope of seeing his home one more time. In 1994 my father died without seeing his hometown again, and without smelling its air again. He couldn't because he was a Palestinian and a refugee. Now, I can't see my home for the same reason: I am a refugee.

Being a refugee is very painful and very hard. Not because of the bad conditions or the poverty. Because there is something very important missing in your life, something called HOME. It is very hard because someone took something that is yours, and you can't do anything about it. It is the feeling of being denied. I live with this feeling everyday.

Since I was little I heard about this beautiful magical place. I imagined it like heaven, the place called home: Palestine. As I grew up, I realized heaven is nothing compared. Home is sweeter, bigger, more beautiful.

I grew up with a lot of questions like: Who am I? What am I? I answered all, except: Why did they take my home from me? Why did they force me

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out of my home? I couldn't find an answer. I met people and asked them. Some answered that it is written in their Bible that the land is theirs. Well, I don't believe in the Bible. Some said because of the Holocaust, which makes me feel I am being punished for something I didn't do. Some said, "If it wasn't you, the refugee would be me." This only tries to hide from what is behind what never was. I still ask myself everyday, but I never find a good answer for it. I don't know. Maybe there isn't any answer!

God knows how I cried writing this. There is one last thing I have to say that stopped my tears: my name is Ramzi and I'm a refugee, but I don't intend to stay a refugee all my life. William Shakespeare wrote "To be or not to be, that is the question." For me the question is: to change or not to change. I intend to change my reality and my life into better ones. As a matter of fact, I intend to change the world into a better one. Care to join?

IN DEPTH: CLOSURES

Barriers to Peace

by Zeina Aljalad (Jericho)

6:30 in the morning. You leave your home, without any idea if you're going to come back. 6:30 in the evening. You drive down several routes to by-pass checkpoints around cities. You find yourself waiting in a long line of cars under the sun. You have no idea if you will pass or if the army will turn you back.

If you're a student, these closures mean missing classes, lectures, and exams. Students from Gaza studying in the West Bank haven't been able to go back home for 8 months. If you're a worker, you reach work late if you reach it at all! And, pregnant women have given birth at checkpoints. There are others stopped at checkpoints and prevented from getting to the hospital like what happened to our friend Asel Asleh and others.

These are humanitarian effects. What about economic effects? Thousands of workers have no work. There is great loss in agriculture. Farmers can no longer transfer their products. Other industries face the same problem; for example, dairy farms. The milk from dairy farms can't be transported in time; it spoils and is thrown away.

Why do the closures happen? The Israelis claim that it is for safety and security reasons. Do you think that the closures achieve that goal? Have closures really brought safety to Israel? I think not. On the contrary, the Mitchell Report said that over these past eight months, with tight closures in place, there have been dozens of bombings and bombing attempts. The closures did not freeze the bombings, they added fuel to the fire.

For every action there is a reaction. Closures plant seeds of fear and hatred, cause depression and lead to economic hardships. Palestinian cities become pressure cookers ready to explode. They demonstrate against closures: first peacefully, then with stones and later with guns.

Israel claims that closures are in place for security reasons. I have already shown they bring less safety by creating desperation and anger. I believe the reason is different. Israel creates hardships on the Palestinian population to create conflict between them and the Authority, to cause its collapse. Then the Israeli government can expand settlements. The army is also trying to convince people to go back to the situation that existed before the Intifada. Instead of Palestinians looking forward to achieving their rights, their hope is to return to how things were before this Intifada.

By using closures to punish the Palestinian people, the IDF is treating us as a stepmother who tries to stop a baby from crying by hitting him. Does that stop the baby from crying? It only creates more anger and despair in the baby. Instead of treating Palestinians as equals, it is absurd that Israelis treat them as a naughty child.

If Israelis want safety and security, they need to pull back their tanks, ground their helicopters, remove the checkpoints and settlements, allow the refugees the right of return and give compensation to Palestinians injured by the Intifada. Only then will both sides feel security.

Closures plant seeds of fear and hatred, cause depression and lead to economic hardships. Palestinian cities become pressure cookers ready to explode.



Preventing Violence

By Elad Schaffer (Giv'at Ze'ev)

During the last few months, Israel has enforced closures over Palestinian cities from which Tanzim shoot at Israeli cars and houses. The last few months we've experienced a new way of living—with terror.

Every day, Palestinians shoot at Israeli cars and neighborhoods and bomb buses in Israel. Israel has tried many ways to fight terror: Barak negotiated while he was in office; the army destroys houses of terrorists. Still, the violence has not stopped.

Israel is now trying a new and more effective way of preventing innocent children and women from dying: closures. This way, terrorists are not able to bomb our cities or kill Israelis. One thing must be understood: closures are not used for starving people, or preventing medical needs, even though the Palestinian media is trying to show it that way. The Palestinians have food, fuel, ambulances and medicines. I know that innocent Palestinians suffer due to these closures; I can feel their pain and their anger. I am against collective punishment, but there is no other way to prevent our people dying from acts of terror.

Palestinian cities that cannot prevent terrorists from shooting at Israelis and bombing public places will be put under closure. The Palestinians are



I can feel their pain and anger. I am against collective punishment, but there is no other way to prevent our people dying from acts of terror.

responsible for their situation. If they stop terror, there will be no closures. If Palestinians do not stop terror, then Israel will; it is as simple as that. Israel will not sit quietly and watch its citizens die and get shot on their way to school and work. Israel will not let Palestinians shoot a baby in Hebron with no response. The terrorists are taking advantage of the fact that in the past Israel let hundreds of thousands of Palestinians work inside Israel to kill as many Israelis as they can. Closures significantly reduces the chances for terror actions. At the beginning of this intifada, Yasser Arafat released terrorists in Palestinian areas from jail, signaling that he supports terror.

A recent example of the efficiency of a closure occurred in Ramallah. The closure lasted about two weeks; during that time there were no shootings. Israelis started to feel safe again. Arafat said that the economic situation was bad, so Israel opened the closure and gave 1,500 Palestinian workers permission to enter and work in Israel. Israel did this because it believed Arafat was stopping the terror. The closure was removed at 6:00 am. At 8:00 am an Israeli, Arie Herskovits, was shot on his way from Ofra to Jerusalem, on a road passing next to Ramallah.

The conclusion is that closures create quiet. Closures might not bring peace and that they are hard on the innocent people, but it is one of the most efficient ways of protecting Israeli citizens. Closures are not the solution to reach the peace, but it is the way to make the Palestinians stop the terror, which will bring my deepest desire — PEACE.

IN DEPTH: WHY VIOLENCE DOESN'T WORK

Both Sides Will Fall

by Assad Hassonih (Ramallah)

Palestine and Israel are now in the center of attention all around the world. Many mistakes have been made by both sides and they defend their own beliefs and principles. Many things have happened recently that shook the world. One of the most important things that happened here recently is the use of the F-16 aircraft against the Palestinians, and I would like to about this incident and the things that this incident reflects.

On May 19, 2001, Israel, for the first time since the war of 1967, used her Air Force in the West Bank. Several bombs fell on the main prison in Nablus and several other bombs fell in Ramallah on the Palestinian Police headquarters. The attack killed 11 Palestinians in Nablus, another one in Ramallah. Israel killed 12 Palestinian prison guards that night; regular Palestinians with low-paying jobs and families back home. Why were they killed? What did they do? I don't think they had weapons with them. Maybe it's the Israeli government's way to show their people, "Look, we are doing something to protect you, we're killing them."

Or maybe this tactic is the end of the way for the Israelis - one last try to bring safety using violence. They used bullets against us, but it didn't work. They used tanks, and that didn't work either. They used helicopters, and even that didn't bring safety to Israel. Sharon promised Israelis safety when he was elected as Prime Minister, and now, after all of those things didn't work, he used F-16s. I don't think he will launch nuclear missiles, because then he will demolish us all.

Is this the peace that we learned? I want to ask every one of you, Palestinians and Israelis, Turks and Greeks, everyone who considers himself to be a part of the Seeds of Peace family. Is this the way? A Palestinian bombs himself and kills six men and women, Israel bombs Palestinian cities with different kinds of developed weapons? Is bombing us with F-16s going to get us on our knees begging for negotiations? You must understand that both sides say, "We will stand and we won't fall

Think about the times you spent with your Palestinian or Israeli friend-do you want to lose a person you worked so hard to understand and make into your friend?

down and we won't give in." But this is impossible. If one side does not fall first, then, in the end, both sides will fall. Then they will understand that all these action are a big mistake and that we must get back to talking.

I am sure that each and every one of you still remembers the Seeds of Peace song that we sang whenever we felt sad, happy, or angry. Why don't we be the new generation of hope for our land and future? It's not so hard to understand the other side and try to give solutions for our difficult situation. Our main problem is that we only want to talk, not to hear the others. We only want to hear and believe what people in the street or on the media say. We must first listen to each other.



Killing the Chance of Peace

by Inbal Shacked (Beit Aryeh)

It's been eight months of intifada, of terror, blood and tears. To Israelis, the killing of our people means one thing: The loss of hope that peace can work, that any agreement will satisfy Palestinians.

Many Palestinians saw the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon as proof that violence works. Israelis saw it differently, as a victory because we would stop sending our sons to get killed beyond our border. One cause of the intifada is Palestinians' belief that the Lebanon withdrawal will repeat itself in Jerusalem and Israeli cities, settlements and villages. That's where they are wrong. Every day Israelis are killed only makes them lose another piece of the Palestinian dream. Unlike in Lebanon, Palestinian violence makes us less willing to compromise.

The first step of saying "No giving up to violence" was electing Ariel Sharon. After Ehud Barak's offer was answered with an intifada, Israelis



As a Seed, I know violence is never profitable, and no matter what we gain in the present, the one thing that counts is the future.

felt the Palestinians are not seeking peace or a state, but revenge. Unlike in Lebanon, we cannot withdraw from our state, and leave Jerusalem. We have to live next to the Palestinians; when they attack us, it makes people believe we should conquer the Palestinian Authority again. That is the exact opposite of what the Palestinians want.

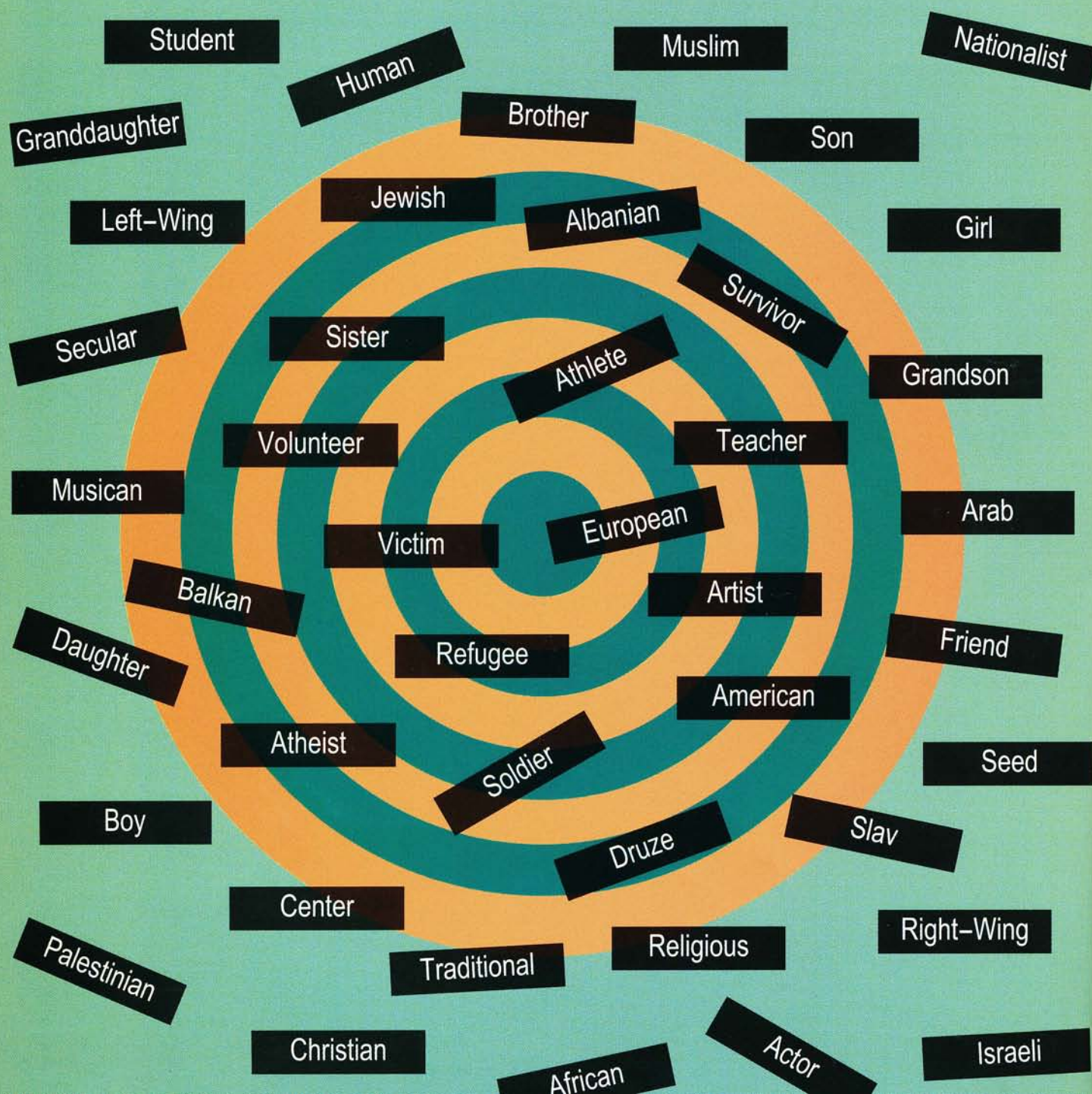
The Palestinians enjoy Israeli fear of world opinion. But now Israelis are saying we should ignore world opinion and do what's good for our security. People say it doesn't matter what the French think of you when you're dead, when you can't walk freely in the street. People are living in fear, and the Israeli street doesn't care anymore how much it hurts the Palestinians, we want quiet, and peace is not the solution anymore.

Israel is ruled by a unity government now, with Ariel Sharon elected by a huge majority but Shimon Peres as Foreign Minister. Peres is known as a man of peace, so if he agrees with Sharon, you can understand that the situation is bad. And it is.

I believe the only way to work our conflict is to have everyone in the Middle East go through Seeds of Peace. My dream is to see everyone who believes in violence come to camp. As a Seed, I know that violence is never profitable, and no matter what we gain in the present, the one thing that counts is the future. So, instead of seeking revenge, why don't we think about all the kids who were killed, all the lives who won't continue, all the precious souls lost from both sides, and you tell me: Can anyone in the world gain from an endless situation of killing innocent children???

BULLSEYE

Who, at your core, are you? This question is posed to you, the reader. Choose eight words from the list below that describe part of your identity. Then, explore your identity further by ranking the words- place the words closest to the “core” of your identity in the center of the circle and move progressively outwards on the circle as you encounter words that less directly describe your identity. Add words if you need to. The exercise can be used to spark many profound discussions about identity and the way it is shaped.



PORTLAND PROJECT

Coexisting In Portland, Maine

by *Britany Dupee (Maine)*

As you have heard, we are the Portland Project. It is our job as Portland Seeds to educate our community about the problems occurring with the growing diversity of our city. In order for us to accomplish this we have taken many steps. We hold group meetings every other Thursday at the Portland Boys and Girls Club. These meetings are very similar to the co-existence sessions we had at camp. We talk about stereotyping, the groups we put others in, and the groups others put us in, fights that may be because of race or religion and how to go about dealing with and stopping them. We also use activities to help us see how our actions effect others. We also spend time during these meetings to learn about where our group members came from and why they moved to the United States.

Throughout the year we have participated in several special events, including the Jewish Film Festival, a presentation about the camp at Westbrook Warren Congregational Church, and a holiday party where we took time to learn about different holidays celebrated. I learned a lot about my fellow Seeds and their home lands from this party. We talked about Ramadan and the fasting, Chanukah and the menorah, Kwanza and the days of remembrance and about the Cambodian New Years. As the school year is ending we are going to other schools in our area to talk about diversity and how to see past stereotypes and get to the people inside.

Taking Action in Middle School

by *Lindsay Cope (Maine)*

Within King Middle School we have weekly meetings. At these meetings we talk about any issues that come up in our school regarding violence and racial stereotyping. We have a bulletin board that is updated weekly with articles on school shootings, racial discrimination and news from the region. We summarize the articles so people can understand what is going on. Our poetry on discrimination and life as an immigrant in Portland are also posted. We also have a quote of the week, often about overcoming a great struggle. Tim visits us often and brings news of camp and other stories about Seeds around the world.

*Portland Project Mission Statement:
It is our goal to educate our peers and ourselves, to understand accept and respect different cultures and to make our community a safer place to live.*

The Spirit of Camp Lives On

by *Josephine Otunnu (Maine)*

Lately I have been feeling very empty, as if I have not been doing enough for peace, wishing that it could come with a hand book! Now I realize what it takes to achieve peace. Peace is a fight with yourself, the hardest fight you will ever fight, and you must win it!

It is easy for you to give in when the whole world is telling you that you cannot win but once you say that you can win nothing can hold you back. Their words will no longer have any power, your dreams are your own and will never leave you. You must believe in the dream, you must believe in your power and live life with a passion that burns through the rain. I have my dreams and you have your own dreams, but remember that we all share a common dream for peace, and we are not alone. This knowledge gave me the will to go on and let me talk to people and show them that the war and hate can live inside so many of us.

Thank you Seeds for being my inspiration. I love you and hope you have a great summer!



Who Am I? IDENTITY

Sharing our Identities

By Amitai Sawicki (Jerusalem)

I am a Jew, an Israeli, and a Zionist. What do these labels mean? Do they mean that I am religious? That I am an enemy of Palestinians? Maybe I should identify myself differently: as a teenager, artist, athlete, and human being. Now I am anybody: a kid from France or Ramallah.

Identity labels can cause misunderstanding between people. Our identities can also become stronger as a result of differences, widening gaps between us. Our societies tell us that we must strengthen our identity so we can survive, so we won't scatter and lose our culture. Of course this is important. But we must also understand we are born with identities that we share with other nations. I was born Israeli; I was also born human. We should define ourselves by all we are and not what we are not.

I am an Israeli, because I am a citizen of this country, a part of its culture. I like its food and music. This is a good definition of myself. A bad one would be: "I am not Palestinian." Palestinians belong to a different culture, and they enjoy different food and different music. Now that differences are established, we can come to a neutral to discover what "I am" and "I am not" have in common. We are all humans, and can be teenagers, artists, and athletes.

After we acknowledge differences between what we are and aren't, we need to think what lies at our core, to find what makes us special. Every part of our identity is important, adding spice to our lives: it dictates what we do on Fridays, or how we eat on Friday nights. It is very important to develop these identities.

After we discover who we are, we should understand what these identities mean to others. What "Jew" is not what it means to an Arab. This is important to remember. We should not judge others, and be respectful of each other's identity. We must not expect people to change their identity to suit our needs. I am sure one day we will not defend ourselves from those who are different, but instead learn and grow from them. My advice is to embrace the identity of others so that we can enrich our own. This is the way to have a strong identity, one you can be sure about. This is also the way people with different identities can live side by side.

Stamps of Humanity

By Emma Abdel Baki (Kafr Qara)

A while ago I was looking at my brother's stamp collection. He has a huge book, and every two pages have stamps from a different country. Each stamp is unique; the only thing in common between them is that they are all stamps.

When someone asks me to define myself, the first thing that comes to mind is that I am a human being. That is the thing we all have in common. The second thing is that I am a Palestinian. Although I don't remember my parents ever telling me that I am Palestinian, this is who I am, who I'll always be. I came to that understanding of who I am after different experiences, which made me feel strongly about my identity. However, things weren't always this way. I used to think that I was an Israeli for the simple reason that I was born in Israel and I grew up here. It didn't matter to me that my parents consider themselves to be Palestinians.

Then I started to get confused. On one hand I live in Israel, but on the other I am an Arab. I started looking for some sort of answer to my confusion. It took me a while to understand what was there all along: one of those moments when you think of history and you realize who are the people with whom you share the same background and things you can't put into words. It takes a while to understand but once you do, it's a strong feeling. Everyone finds his own way there. We are like stamps; everyone has his own "shape" and "country", yet we are all made of the same material. We're all humans.

I am sure someday we will not defend ourselves from those who are different, but instead learn and grow from them. My advice is to embrace the identity of others so that we can enrich our own... This is the way people with different identities can live side by side.

The "Real" Me

By Fayeza Aziz (London)

I was confused from the start. Beside the stress of teenage life, I was unsure about where I am "from" and about my adoption. I was missing a purpose. It seemed everyone knew what he or she was doing except me.

I was born in Morocco, adopted by Pakistani parents, lived in Turkey for three years and moved to London. Not simple. I wondered why my biological parents left me. Over time I've answered a lot. It was selfish to expect answers since I know nothing about the circumstances. I am not angry with my biological parents. Instead, my 'adopted' parents chose me, and that makes me feel better. Anyway, are parents the people who give birth to you? Or are they the people who raise you and love you?

Identifying my religion is harder. I try to be a good Muslim, but London isn't a supportive environment. I feel religion is a personal thing. This topic forces me to be honest with myself, and sometimes I don't like what I see. People can't escape themselves.

It's strange for me to find a purpose in life. Mainly, I found it unfair that my parents sheltered me. I lived in a "perfect" environment, but something inside knew this can't be life. I was missing something. It wasn't the sheltering, it was my ignorance. I didn't want to see the problems in the world. At the time it seemed a punishment to be sent to Seeds of Peace. Can you imagine? I would have rather spent a summer with friends. After camp I could feel the difference in my camp relationships. Back in London I realized we all have much to learn. It wasn't easy to see reality. But my camp friends are all part of that reality now. We have to invest energy in something greater than ourselves. Our mission is peace. I refuse to leave this world unchanged, but I can't change it on my own. I ask you to come with me.

Our identity is not our race, religion or culture. These are things we have acquired without any say. Although they are important, there are more significant things about us: to be a valuable person. That's how we gain respect from others and from ourselves. Camp taught me that. And, no matter how confused I get, I always have my Seeds family.

who am i who am i who am i who am i who am i who am i who am i who am i who am i

Some people identify themselves with their nationality, which can have several different meanings... What happens if someone has two different passports, or parents of two different nationalities?

Express Your SELF

by Shereen Adel (Cairo)

What makes you who you are? What do you consider your identity to be? Different people use the word identity differently; it conveys people's personal opinion of themselves.

Some people identify themselves with their nationality, which can have several different meanings. Is nationality where you were born, the nationality of your parents, or what's on your passport? What happens if someone has two different passports, or parents of two different nationalities? Some people identify themselves by their age, sex, or job. With all the options, people choose how they want to be identified. I have made that choice along with everyone else.

I have decided that I want my identity to express myself as much as possible. Growing up with a Christian American mother and a Muslim Egyptian father left me with a choice as to who I want to be. As I pondered these questions, I realized the values and beliefs that I have developed through my life. My parents taught me many different values. As I thought about my different beliefs and values, I realized that they didn't fit under any label. It came to the decision that identity is a personal opinion.

I do not deny the labels to which I was born. I fully accept being a girl, an American citizen and an Egyptian, but it is not what I would want to base my identity on. I would rather base it on my achievements, my personality, on my opinions, and my way of thinking.

Someone once said that not having land equals not having an identity. Though I respect that opinion, I disagree. Too often people feel they need to identify themselves with material aspects. I think, in reality, that people without land can create their own valued identity.

Generally, people base their identity on what they are proud of. To me, identity is what I have achieved; that is what I am proud of.

Diverse and Colorful as a Bosnian Carpet

by Dzemila Helac (Sarajevo)

People call it the land that bridges the East and the West. People call it the land of spite. People

call it the land precious to God. Living between spite and spirit is not easy. We didn't choose it; this title came with the land.

When Europeans sent Crusaders to the East, the East also came to us. We chose to be good Muslims, holding on to our beliefs. We were not Turks, but their servants. Not Slavs, but their enemies. As the East left and the Western influence grew, everything changed except us.

We became part of the homeland of South Slavs, Yugoslavia. We saw hope in acceptance by the surrounding community. However, no one wanted us the way we were. Everyone was supposed to be equal, but it wasn't so. The people in our school books were not our people; The history in our books was not our history. Bosnian culture was no longer good enough. Loving people for their tradition and history was no longer possible. We began to strive not to be ourselves, but to be someone else. Bosnian tolerance was visible through the influence of a foreign languages, foreign architecture, foreign cuisine, and foreign music.

My great-grandparents spoke a language not which had Turkish, Italian and German words depending on the part of Bosnia they lived in. Words meaning the same thing were not the same. One was slang and the other academic depending on where it came from: Sarajevo, Zagreb or Belgrade. In public you had to be careful how you greeted people: salaam, merhaba, ciao, or wie get's. You were supposed to be the way you were told to be. If you were different there was jail.

The whole farce of Yugoslav unity became obvious as hundreds of years of old aspirations of our neighbors surfaced and killing spread in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was impossible to "ethnically cleanse" these places. A decade ago, when attempts were made to ethnically divide these areas, the only place that actually had been separate in

Bosnia, the graveyards, now became mixed. That's what our country became: a big graveyard.

Bosnia, do not cry because of your children's blood. You have been a good mother to your people. You never asked us where we came from, or who we were. As you have loved your children, others have slaughtered them. You have loved us as pagans, Christian heretics, Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics and Jews.

Those who want to destroy you do not know who you are. You have proven that you cannot be destroyed. You are tired, but not dead; the more others try to destroy you, the more strength will you have to survive. Bosnia and Herzegovina, thank you for existing and for proving that different people can live together in peace.

Do we have an identity? Perhaps we're bound not to have an identity because that would involve hating half the world. Those who do not remember their past are bound to repeat it. We remember medieval Bosnia as free, while in reality the land was divided among kings and feudal families with the ordinary people lived in poor conditions. We remember the Turks as friends, while during their rule citizens rebelled because they weren't allowed to express themselves. We remember the Austro-Hungarian Empire as good a good empire that brought peace and order, while in reality many people hated it. Finally we remember Communism as a time of love, although that love resulted in hate. What can be done? We do not have two hearts: one for love and one for hatred. We have one; now it belongs to sadness.

We search for our identity, but we search wrongly. We cannot find our identity abroad, for that offers only assimilation. We need a friend, yet our friends either betrayed us or are unable to help. Maybe it's time we stop searching, for maybe our identity is with us. Some think that having identity means being the same, believing the same; yet maybe our identity can be as diverse and colorful as a Bosnian carpet. One day people will realize that tolerance is not a compromise for personal comfort, but the way to make a full life fuller. Perhaps this realization is our Bosnian identity.

FACES IN THE CROWD



Ana Radu won the National English Olympics in Romania. She demonstrated a command of English grammar and literature unmatched by people her age in Romania.



Jawad Issa was awarded the Arrupe Scholarship for Peace, which covers all expenses for a bachelors degree at Georgetown University.



Nita Gojani was awarded a scholarship to finish High School in the United States by the George Soros foundation. Nita will spend her senior year in Hawaii.



Shir Givoni was accepted to the United World College in Trieste, Italy. She will finish high school there.



Shouq Tarawneh, a senior at Georgetown University, will spend the summer as an intern at Merrill Lynch in New York City.



Tamer Shabaneh traveled to Norway on an 11 day school exchange program between Vennesla High School in Vennesla Norway and the University Graduate Union in Hebron.

Seeds of Peace would like to congratulate the following Seeds, who, at the time of Olive Branch printing, had decided to attend University in the fall of 2001. Many of these Seeds have been awarded substantial partial scholarships and Seeds of Peace would like to publicly thank all of the Colleges, Preparatory Schools and Universities that make scholarship money available to Seeds of Peace alums.

Adam Abelson, Princeton University
 Ahmet Dervis, University of Virginia
 Ahmet Burukan, State University of New York at Stony Brook
 Aly Salem, Earlham College
 Arda Kuran, Macalester College
 Cise Sakalli, College of William and Mary
 Dana Omran, Georgetown University
 Dina Jabr, Mt Holyoke College
 Erdem Serifoglu, Florida Institute of Technology
 Erez Sheiner, Bar Ilan University
 Fadi Elsalameen, Earlham College
 Hamdan Qeshta, Hiram College
 Hend Medhat, Manhattanville College
 Izzet Zorlu, State University of New York at Stony Brook
 Jamil Zraikat, Bates College
 Jawad Issa, Georgetown University
 Jonathan Oren, Duke University
 Melek Meray, University of Missouri at Kansas City
 Ovgum Aki, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
 Ramy Nagy, Bard College
 Tanyel Cemal, Earlham College
 Umut Aypar, Ohio Wesleyan University

COEXISTENCE HOTLINE

The author of this letter faces a dilemma. She wrote to THE OLIVE BRANCH seeking support, understanding, and answers. We asked you to provide guidance

Light Your Way

Dina, Looking back at these months I spent in the US I see how sad, frustrated and worried I was. Though my family called me often, I had doubts they might be hiding something and that they were suffering. I worried for my sister who takes eighty minutes to get to school because of closures. I worried for my brother whose school was once attacked by soldiers. I felt guilty being in a safe place while my family, friends and people were in danger.

Dina, tell you the truth, what kept faith inside me when the situation heated up was receiving calls and e-mails from some Israeli friends, especially Sivan, Avigail, Noa and her family. The first phone call that I got since the Al-Aksa Intifada started was from Noa and her mom. Knowing that somebody from the other side wants to stop violence and bloodshed kept the hope of peace alive in my heart when I was about to lose it. I know some might think I'm just saying that, but that's what happened.

Dina, I also got outraged when I watch the American news. I felt it was one-sided and that they always blame the Palestinian people. I decided to go with the Chinese Proverb that states: It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness. I and my friends organized a teach-in about the situation in the Middle East. We invited a Jewish and a Muslim professor to talk, and we Seeds spoke about our experiences.

Bushra Mukbil (Al-Aroub Camp)

Take Your Chance

Dear Dina, It is always hard to be far away from family and friends when they might be in serious danger. When the Intifada started, I was afraid to check the news. My worst experience was opening my e-mail and finding out about Asel's death. I felt lost, and as you put it, "I have to be with my family right now!" For many students here this was 'just another bit of news' and it was not easy for them to understand me.

It is hard Dina, but I know you are strong enough to get used to new, challenging, exciting circumstances. Always think how lucky you are

to have the chance to travel and take your own adventure.

I am now in Sweden, and this morning I saw the news about the bombing in Tel Aviv. Many children our age were killed and I had no idea if I knew any of them.

You will always 'be' with the people you love, even if not in person. I know you will establish another supportive 'family' around you. We cannot stop living during this nightmare. Go ahead, live fully, and you will be with your family and friends when you return. Lots of love,

Noa Epstein (Mevasseret Zion)

Because I experienced the Intifada these last eight months, I know how bad the situation is. This fall I'm leaving my family in Palestine and going to America. I know when anything happens back home I will start to imagine all the experiences of this year and what happened when I was there and I'll think, "Oh my God, it's happening again and I'm not with them."

This past year, it was hard for my friends in America because they couldn't get the details of the situation from the American news. After talking to me, they would get even more worried. I can see the same happening next year with my family when I call.

I am expecting to often feel that "I have to go be with my family right now!" But, I will be stuck. What can I do in those moments where I really just want to get home and be with my family who may be in danger and I'm stuck in a place that is a 15-hour flight away and I can't be with them?

Dina Jaber, Nablus

Develop Perspective

Dina, I found that even in the US you can access good information about the Middle East. If you don't want American sources you use the web. I used to read news on the web every day.

I think there is a tendency for your mind to exaggerate how horrible it is. You want to feel close with your friends and family and have contact with them. I used to get emails from my friends telling me how depressed they are. Writing to them and sharing my views wasn't enough; I felt like I needed to be in physical contact with them and to actually be there.

There's also a good side of being away from. I was talking to my friend Meredith once and she gave me a good analogy of the situation. Being there, amidst the violence, is like being so close to the sun that you are blinded. Being farther away, you can still see the light but you are not blinded and can form your own opinions. You can still feel the pain of your people but you are not living through it so your opinions, ideas, and feelings are different. You can see different perspectives from as well as Palestinian web sites. In fact sometimes I would log onto an Israeli website to see what they thought. Use being away to look at different perspectives.

It is hard but you have to find some balance so you can go on living without being distracted and in constant worry and pain.

Shorouq Swiety, Jericho

Deliver a Message

Dina, I understand what you are saying. There were times I felt I was going mental. Here is my advice: Call your parents always. When the situation was bad I called twice a week. Call friends, and try to visit other Seeds in the US, like at Thanksgiving at Bobbie's. When Asel was killed I went to visit Rami and protest. It was important to stay connected. Also, speak out about your ideas and beliefs. You will feel that you are doing something for home, instead of feeling like you abandoned home. It feels bad to be where it is safe and green and

beautiful; you can feel like a traitor, but you will feel better if you are working for your people.

You are in the US to deliver a message. In addition to getting an education, you can be helping your family and country and people in a different way. Remember you will be getting a great education which will help your country because we need more educated people.

Most important never let the bad situation at home affect your studying. Instead use it as a motivation to work harder to do better.

Amer Kamal (Jerusalem)



“Meeting the other side, I realized each human is like a book of stories; once you open the first page, you can’t stop until you’ve read every chapter and you understand.”

Bashar Iraqi (Tira) SOP ‘99